

INSIDE THIS EDITION

- 2 | Mutual Aid & Recipe
- 3 | Winter Weather
- 4 | Lost Members



Ice storms wreak havoc on power lines.
Photo courtesy of OAEC

ICE STORMS CAUSE DEVASTATING DAMAGE TO POWER LINES

Some winter storms can be devastating to an electric distribution system. A snow-storm, unless a very heavy, wet snow, usually does not cause a lot of trouble. There may be occasional outages that are not actually caused by the snow, but restoration efforts may be slowed by the snow.

The real problem is ice. Take Oklahoma's most recent ice event for example: On October 26, Gov. Kevin Stitt issued an Emergency Declaration for 47 Oklahoma counties due to severe winter weather, freezing rain and ice accumulations. At its peak, Oklahoma's electric cooperatives experienced 74,439 outages.

When the ice begins we may have some minor outages caused by the high voltage tracking

along the ice on weak or damaged equipment; this could blow fuses or trip breakers. The restoration times are also slowed by the road and work conditions. As the ice gets heavier, large trees—even those out of the rights-of-way—will lean and sag because of the weight and get on the lines and blow fuses or trip breakers. As the ice gets heavier the limbs or lines may start breaking, causing a domino effect. When a heavily strained pole gets broken several more may break on either side.

A wide-spread power outage like in past ice storms can cause problems on many levels.

Continued on Page 3



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REPORT OUTAGES ON SMARTHUB

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Power Circuit is published monthly by Verdigris Valley Electric Cooperative, Collinsville, Oklahoma (ISSN 10884378) for its members in Tulsa, Rogers, Washington, Nowata and Osage counties. Periodical postage paid at Tulsa, Oklahoma and other additional mailing offices. Subscription price is \$0.19 per month.

POSTMASTER - send address changes to Power Circuit, P.O. Box 219, Collinsville, OK 74021.

MUTUAL AID

VVEC LINEMEN PROVIDE MUTUAL AID ASSISTANCE AFTER ICE STORM



VVEC Linemen (from left) Mike Mattox, Jeff Lorton, Danny Bement, Robert Rouse, Ricky Rimpley and Roger Salisbury helped with power restoration efforts in CREC territory after the October ice storm.

When the late-October ice storm put communities served by Central Rural Electric Cooperative in the dark, VVEC sent three maintenance crews to provide assistance in the restoration efforts for CREC, headquartered in Stillwater. Mutual aid crews from neighboring cooperatives and four surrounding states combined efforts to restore power to the approximate 10,000 CREC members that were without power, with some outages lasting up to 8 days.

Leaving for a mutual aid assignment means time away from home and family, working long days and most often in a challenging environment. In times like these we are reminded of the dedication of linemen everywhere to work quickly and safely to get the power back on for the members. We want to say thank you to our linemen and their families for allowing us to stand committed in our cooperative purpose, principles and in being a good neighbor helping a neighbor in their time of need. ■

HOLIDAY POPCORN SNOWMEN YIELDS 5 SNOWMEN

- 16-ounce package regular marshmallows
- 1/4 cup margarine or butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup milk
- 10 cups popped popcorn
- Sprinkles
- Licorice
- Gum drops
- Cinnamon candies



Holiday Popcorn Snowmen

In large saucepan, melt marshmallows and 1/4 cup butter. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Let stand 5 minutes. Pour marshmallow mixture over popcorn and stir. Butter hands well and form into balls. Decorate with sprinkles, licorice, gum drops and cinnamon candies, if desired. *Recipe and photo courtesy of the Popcorn Board*

WINTER WEATHER: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Broken lines, broken power poles and large trees on lines covered with ice are just a few of the problems. Getting to the outages and making repairs when everything is covered in ice makes the work much more hazardous.

Our communications between crews and the office is much improved since our last major storm in 2007. Our two-way radio system has been replaced with a state-of-the-art digital system that allows truck-to-truck communications anywhere on our system as well as vehicle location technology. This will allow for more efficient and safe restoration procedures.

Our communication with our membership has also improved since 2007. Our website was actually pushed out early because of the storm and there were a lot of bugs to work out. The website we use today is much more user-friendly, with easy access to outage information and other helpful information.

Our Facebook page is another means of communication we have added since 2007. We

use it as a tool to update our members on current events at VVEC, including outage information.

The best way to report outages is with the SmartHub application, available to all of our members, either through our website or via smart phone. With SmartHub members can instantly see if their account is affected by an outage that has been reported. If the outage has not been reported the member can report it from the app within seconds.

We understand a lot of our members want to talk to a person to report and get outage information, but answering hundreds or even thousands of calls during an outage is very difficult.

Our phone system has 50 incoming lines to our offices entering our building via fiber optics. Our phone system was upgraded this summer to allow more representatives to answer calls, both during working hours and after hours. Busy signals are frustrating for some of our members during outages

wondering if their outage has been reported. When we have a large outage affecting a few hundred to several thousand members and they are all trying to call, it is very easy to tie up 50 lines

Reporting when a large outage will be restored is largely a guess in most cases. When Mother Nature creates havoc with our lines, it is very difficult to estimate the time it will take to restore power. In more cases than not when a storm does damage to a line it does it in several places. It is difficult to know how long each repair will take. We try to let members know when we know. We hate to publish that an outage will be restored in 30 minutes only to find when we tried to re-energize the line there were more problems we had not uncovered.

One thing we can tell the members of VVEC is our crews and staff do everything we can to keep the power on and restore the power when it does go out as quickly and safely as possible. ■

OFFICE CLOSED NOTICE

VVEC offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, December 24th and 25th, in observance of Christmas and January 1 in observance of New Year's Day.

IN CASE OF AN OUTAGE

- First, check your fuses or circuit breakers. Every service is different. You may have fuses or circuit breakers in your house, on the side of your house, under your meter, or all three places. Check to see if your neighbors have electricity.

- Then, call the Co-op at 371-2584, or 1-800-870-5948. Have your account number, name as it appears on the account, and address handy to give to the dispatcher. If you should get a recording, leave your information; every message will be answered. Or, download the SmartHub app to report outages from your smartphone.

WINTER RESIDENTIAL RATES

October through March usage, November through April billing

Customer Charge | \$30.00

Energy Charge | \$.07772/kWh

A power cost adjustment (PCA) will be applied to all bills when the actual cost of power purchased exceeds or is less than 59.87 mills per kWh.

In addition, a gross receipts tax of 2% of revenue will be included, plus additional taxes if applicable.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider & employer.

**VOLUME 79 | NUMBER 12
DECEMBER 2020**



VVEC's headquarters in Collinsville, Oklahoma

VVEC IS LOOKING FOR LOST MEMBERS: CURRENT ADDRESSES NEEDED

If you see a name on the list that you recognize and you have information about a current address, please contact us at 918-371-2584. Additional names will be printed in coming months.

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