

Outage Reporting When You Have Poor Signal



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

RECENTLY A MEMBER ATTEMPTED TO REPORT her outage using Facebook. The Cooperative Facebook account is not monitored all the time and is not connected to our outage management system. Therefore it could be a while before anyone sees the Facebook post and most likely they will not have access to the entry part of the outage management system. In addition, names on electric accounts seldom match Facebook user names. Facebook is not the way to report an electric outage. Although she had Facebook, she did not have a good cell signal to report her outage. One of the great technological mysteries is that power outages don't seem to affect the ability to use Facebook. It appears many folks are not aware there are other ways to report an outage, other than having a good phone signal or making a land line phone call.

Don't get me wrong; all successful phone calls will be answered by a live person and we like talking to our members. We know completing the call can be difficult when 100-500 people try to call at the same time. Our phone system handles 8 calls at a time. The result is many people will get a busy signal. Wait a few minutes and try again if you want to speak to us. Eventually you will get through to a live person. A lot of folks have disconnected their home telephone and rely on a cell phone signal. If you can access Facebook but don't have a good cell phone signal, you still have options. Many times a poor cell phone signal is still good enough for a text.

Reporting an outage using Text is easy and even gives you a reply Text. Texting an outage can only be done if you have completed a short registration process that helps us identify your text with your electric account. This process also keeps us legal. (None of your information or cell number is ever sold or released to outside parties) The process starts with making sure we have your cell phone number on your account. Simple step by step instructions can be found by going to the Lamar Electric web page www.lamarelectric.coop and click "Outage Texting" on the blue ribbon across the top of the Home page. Once you have successfully completed the registration, you will receive a text thanking you for joining the outage texting service, but making sure we have your cell phone number on your account is the first step.

If you have more than one account with Lamar Electric,

you will be provided with instructions on how to set up key word indicators for each account. Key words could be such as "home", "barn", "shop" or "cabin". This allows you to text an outage for the location that is out of power. During the registration process you will be provided the number to which texts should be sent. I recommend you add this number to your cell phone contacts list as "Report Outage" so you don't have to remember the number. When you text the word Outage to this number you will receive an "Outage reported successfully" text message. A text will also be sent when the outage has been restored. I really like the text letting you know the power has been restored because it lets you know when you can go home.

The Lamar Electric outage management system is immediately updated with your outage report when you report the outage by text. This outage system keeps track of all outage reports, 24 hours a day - seven days a week, regardless of how they were reported. A text outage report shows up on the dispatchers computer screen the same as an outage reported to an employee over the telephone.

Internet access using cellular data, automobiles with hot spots, battery back up on home internet modems and other methods are now providing internet access when power to your house is off, which allows the use of "Apps" on your cell phone/tablet. Lamar Electric has an App called SmartHub.

You will find detailed instructions and a video about SmartHub by clicking "Member Info" on the blue ribbon at the top of the Lamar Electric web page. SmartHub is the 4th item down. The App can be downloaded for Apple or Android phones. Once you have linked the App to your electric account a simple click gives you the option of paying a bill, looking at usage or checking on "Service Status". Every time you open SmartHub, it will check on the current condition of your account. Normally service status will show "No known issues" with a green background. If Lamar Electric already knows your electric account is part of a bigger outage, the green turns to red and tells you we know your power is out. At that point you can skip the phone call. You also have the option to report your outage with one click.

These are just a few ways your electric cooperative is striving to give you better service.



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**GENERAL MANAGER
AND CEO**

Jerry D. Williams

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Member Benefits

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and Mastercard accepted

Your Local Pages

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* is produced by LEC each month to provide you with information about current events, safety, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the local office.

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(903) 784-4303

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www.lamarelectric.coop



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5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 811 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

1. NOTIFY

Call 811 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



SOURCE: CALL811.COM



JOHN MARTIN | BIGSTOCK.COM



MIKE BARNES

The Life of a Lineman

YOUR CELLPHONE RINGS. YOU LOOK AT THE CLOCK.

It is 2:37 a.m. You answer the phone. “Hello?” you say with a groggy and grizzled voice. A woman responds, “This is dispatch for Lamar Electric Cooperative. We see you are on call tonight. We have an outage on map 35. Are you available?” The perkiness in her voice irritates you, but hey, she works nights, so this is probably “midday” for her. While you are glad Lamar Electric has an after-hours dispatch, you are less than thrilled to be woken up in the middle of the night. But it’s part of the job. “Map 35?” you pause and rub your eyes. “It will take me about an hour to travel over to map 35. If anyone else calls in, make sure they know I’m on the way.”

Your wife and kids are asleep. Your son has a soccer game in the morning. As you get dressed, you say a quick prayer for safety and for this to be a quick fix so you can make it to the big game tomorrow. You leave a note for your wife and let her know what time you left. She worries so much.

A lineman’s job is one of the most dangerous jobs in America. Your wife never lets you forget that when you don’t call and check in after being out all night during a storm. As you head out the door, you put a call in to a fellow lineman who is also on call and leaving their house as well. You both decide to meet up at the co-op and travel together in a big bucket truck.

Your partner snores as you drive from Paris to south of Clarksville. You are wishing you had thought ahead to make coffee as you catch yourself blinking often and rubbing your eyes. You arrive to the home that called in the outage. It is pure



BY KATIE MORRIS

darkness down the entire county road leading up to the house. Thinking it could be an issue with a breaker, you turn around and head to the breaker you just passed a mile back. You snag your flashlight and hop out of the bucket truck, slamming the door to wake up your partner. Your partner sleepily stumbles out of the truck as you shine your flashlight at the breaker. The lever is tripped, so there has clearly been a fault down the line.

As you slowly drive the mud and gravel road, your partner keeps the spotlight focused on the wires on his side of the truck. When the wires go across the road, you keep one eye on the road and one eye follows your spotlight trained on the wire. Pretty soon the wires go behind a bunch of trees. This means you must stop and try to jump the muddy ditch to look down the wires while standing in weeds chest high. The fog rising from the ground up ahead tells you the wires are crossing a swampy area.

Returning to the truck, you drive till the wires angle back to the road. Your partner gets out to walk the line behind you that was not visible earlier. As you ease on down the road, it occurs to you that swampy areas are often home to cottonmouths. You hope your partner’s rubber boots are water tight and higher than a snake’s strike.

Your partner hops back in the truck, spotting nothing unusual. You both continue patrolling the line for a few more miles and excitement sets in when you spot a navigator device hanging on the hot wire. The device is not flashing, which indi-



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cates the fault is not downstream. While this is good news, you are still puzzled because that means the fault is behind you. You and your partner head back to the breaker to see if you missed something there. Your son's soccer game starts in three hours and you are about an hour away from home. "There has to be a reason for this outage!" you say. "We've just got to find it!"

Finally, you begin looking at the ground around the breaker. Maybe there will be some evidence on the ground. Everything looks normal, but your partner spots a few feathers on the ground. You hop in the bucket of the truck, and your partner helps guide you to the top of the breaker. You breathe a sigh of relief. You found the cause of the outage: A bird must have decided to keep warm and made a wrong move, touching the wire, meeting an unexpected demise. This is bad news for the bird but good news for you. You may make that soccer game after all! Now that you know the cause, you remove the bird and reenergize the line by closing the lever at the breaker. You call dispatch and relay that the line is hot.

You tell your partner that he is driving back so you can be the one who snores obnoxiously this time. You head back to the co-op to drop off the bucket truck and go home, where everyone is still asleep. You shower and lay down hoping for a few moments of rest when your alarm clock goes off. Your wife stirs and says, "The game is in an hour. What's for breakfast?"

This is the life of a cooperative lineman. They work all day and sometimes all night and still manage to carry on a life at home. They support their community by working hard to keep the lines energized while still making it home safely to their families each and every night. They take an abundance of safety measures to make sure they get to continue to do this day in and day out.

Working with electricity is a risky job. It requires 24/7 high-risk manpower. If you see a lineman today, give him a pat on the back and tell him "thank you." You never know how long he's been awake, how hard he has been working or how many eggs he's had to cook for breakfast after removing a bird from a large piece of electrical equipment.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



NOIRCHOCOLATE | ISTOCK.COM

Cindy's Marinated Mushrooms

- 1 pound button mushrooms
- 2 red bell peppers
- 1 bunch green onions
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup red wine vinegar

1. Chop mushrooms, bell peppers and green onions (including tops) into 1-inch pieces. Place in a large bowl with a lid that seals, leaving the bowl uncovered. Add fresh herbs, garlic and pepper, and mix well.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together olive oil, soy sauce and vinegar. Pour over mushroom mixture. Seal bowl. Turn over several times to coat vegetables.
3. Refrigerate at least 2 hours, turning once or twice.

COOK'S TIP Serve this umami-infused dish as a side, part of an antipasto platter or atop a burger or salad.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at **TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**