

Ice+Wind=Disaster

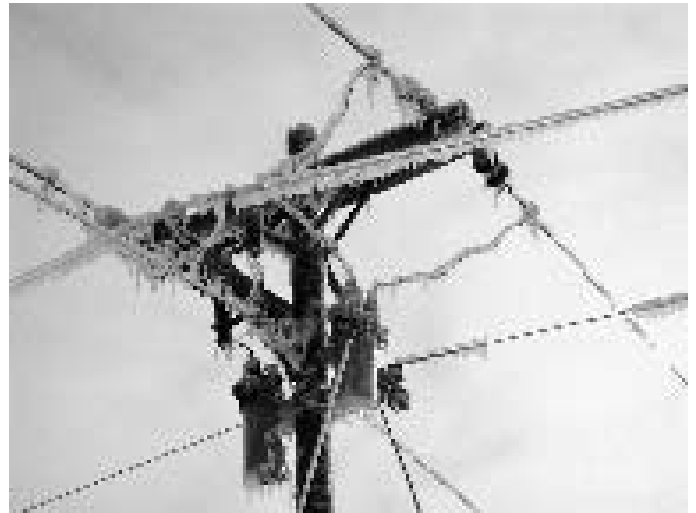
THE FREEZING RAIN STARTED falling on Sunday of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, and by early evening, up to two inches of ice coated tree branches and power lines. Add 50+ mph winds, and it's a recipe for disaster. The post-Thanksgiving storm is being called the worst ice storm in South Dakota history.

CME customers began losing power early Sunday evening. Before long, all available employees were on duty answering phones, preparing lists of members with outages, and doing damage assessment. By early Monday morning, additional help was requested from SDREA. By this time, the rain had changed to snow, and blizzard conditions hampered crews in their efforts to patrol lines and assess damages.

By Tuesday afternoon, crews arrived from LaCreek Electric in Martin, and from Cherry-Todd Electric in Mission. Mid-Plains Power, an independent contractor from Grand Island, Nebraska, also provided a 15-man team. At this point, crews were concentrated mainly in the Lake Andes, Geddes, and Platte

areas, with power being restored to various areas throughout the day Tuesday. Several more circuits were restored in this area by Wednesday evening.

Progress reports from the Wagner, Marty, and Dante areas, however, were much more grim. The Wagner substation, which provides power to over 800 members, was one of the 35 substations that required major repairs from East River Electric. Without power to the substation, repair efforts in this area were futile. Once East River Electric was able to provide power to this substation, which didn't occur until Thursday afternoon, we were able to concentrate more crews on setting poles and raising lines in this area.



It didn't take long for poles to accumulate a thick, heavy coating of ice. CME estimates 600 or more poles damaged by the storm.

By this time, more assistance had arrived, in the form of eighteen workers from PAR Power in Des Moines, Iowa. By Thursday evening, a few members south of Wagner had power, and we looked forward to much progress in this area on Friday. Friday also saw power restored to many homes in the

2005 Ice Storm - By the Numbers

- 35 - East River Electric substations without power
- 1200 - East River transmission poles down
- 600+ - CME broken poles, 9,500 poles down across 19 co-ops in eastern SD
- 39 - additional crew members assisting CME
- 8 - loads of poles delivered to CME
- 575 - additional workers from eight different states assisting with repairs, along with 260 local line workers
- 2 days - before power restored to first customers, 12 days before all repairs completed
- 200 miles - length of corridor through which the storm extended
- 9,300 miles of line damaged
- 21,800 - total number of people estimated to be without power, approx. 1,000 CME members
- 550 - sack lunches prepared for crews; 38 doz. eggs used for breakfasts
- \$20 million - estimated damages for SD rural electric co-ops, compared to approximately \$10.5 million for 1995 storm. CME damages projected to top \$1,000,000

Marty area along with Marty school, and several more north, south, and east of Wagner. Saturday and Sunday focused primarily on the Dante area, and by Monday afternoon, a major three-phase line south of Dante had been energized. Power was restored to all members by Thursday, December 8th, 12 days later.

After a major disaster such as this one, there are so many people to thank, it's hard to know where to begin. Besides the efforts of the line crew and all assisting crews, which are obvious, there are so many behind-the-scenes helpers that need to be commended. Local grocery stores opened early to provide food and supplies, and prepared sack lunches daily. Spouses and families of CME employees helped cook and serve meals, and put a hot breakfast on the table for 60 every morning by 6:00 a.m. A visiting crew member remarked, "We've done this at a lot of places, and we *never* got fed like this!"

Thanks to everyone who stopped by with roasters of hot soup, baked goods, etc., or offered the crew hot coffee. The VFW ladies' auxiliary prepared suppers for us almost every night. Farmers assisted with snow removal and opened roads for line trucks. Local law enforcement officials coordinated the use of a state snowblower as well. Thanks to the LA Fire Department and LA Ambulance crew for ensuring safe working conditions after a carbon monoxide close call.



Rod Payer demonstrates how thick the ice accumulations were on this downed power line. This line was south of Wagner, not far from Jerald Ehrisman's farm.

There are many more, so even if you don't see your name in print, please know that we appreciate every single offer.

Most of all, thanks to all of our members who were without power for several days, who were cold and frustrated, and still provided encouragement, kind words and understanding for our employees. You are the ones who truly exemplify "cooperative spirit."



This pole, just east of Larry Smejkal's farm south of Wagner, was one of many that was snapped off just above ground level. Looking down the fenceline, not a pole is standing as far as the horizon.



Not only did local farmers do a great job plowing roads and providing access to poles, they also were invaluable in lifting power lines. Lines were literally frozen to the ground, and then buried by several feet of snow. Here, Tim Krcil uses a little horsepower to rip the wire out of the snowbank, to be re-strung on the pole.

Thank You!