



Many cross arms like these were damaged by high winds in RECC's area on February 1, as spans of ice-covered wires "galloped" up and down. Wires then slapped together, knocking out fuses and causing power outages.



February snow storm packs a wallop

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative outages last up to two days

The good news is, it didn't last long. The ice and snow that hit central Illinois on February 1 made travel miserable, knocked out power to thousands of consumers, and built drifts like we haven't seen for years, but then it got clear (and cold).

Most of RECC's members were affected at one time or another by power problems, from short blinks to overnight outages. Our crews were hampered by blowing snow, and problems with high-voltage transmission lines feeding our nine substations.

The ice that accumulated on wires on Monday, January 31 led to lines "galloping" in the wind on Tuesday, causing blinks and sometimes knocking out protective fuses. We were able to "back feed" power from one substation to another at times, to minimize the outages, but as

many as five substations were out at times on Tuesday, making back feeds impossible.

RECC was fortunate to have no broken poles and little damage from trees in the line, said Lou DeLaby, manager of operations and maintenance. "The benefits of our pole testing program really showed through in this storm," he said. After our linemen worked all day Tuesday and into the evening in blowing snow, DeLaby said crews were ordered in because of the dangerous road conditions and visibility problems.

Once the transmission lines were stabilized by Wednesday morning, February 2, co-op crews were able to concentrate on the remaining distribution line damage. Five extra contractor crews were called in Wednesday morning, plus a construction crew assisted from CWLP

in Springfield.

The heaviest damage to RECC's lines occurred in the New City and the Lowder-Loami areas. Broken or damaged cross arms and insulators were the most common problems, caused by the galloping action on the lines. About 20 cross arms were broken in an area north of the Kincaid power plant, while damage was more dispersed in other parts of the system.

RECC had most of its member-consumers back in power as of late Wednesday afternoon, and the final repairs were completed around 9:00 p.m. With below-zero temperatures arriving on Thursday morning, we were fortunate to have all members back to normal power, even as our crews hit the road again to check on minor problems and finalize repairs on the lines.