JAMUP
published by Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Dongola, Illinois
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Our Place... Karnak

When you pass through Karnak on Highway 169, you may notice a quaint little restaurant called "Our Place". Once you step inside, be prepared for a warm, family atmosphere, an interesting menu and delicious food. Owned by Brent and Channie Anderson, Our Place has been serving food for over 22 years and has been receiving power from SIEC for decades.

It began in 1932 as a grocery, hardware and dry goods store and was owned by Noah Wilson. It then passed hands to Noah's brother Lee. Lee Wilson sold it to his son, J.M., and wife Peggy in 1967. Twenty years later and after the hardware store had closed, they opened up the restaurant, which we now know as Our Place. In 2000, J.M. and Peggy Wilson sold the store to their daughter Channie and her husband Brent.

Local residents and passers-by keep this restaurant alive for several reasons ... the hard work of this local family, great food, a successful catering business, fresh homemade bread made daily for all the sandwiches, an intriguing menu based on antique modes of transportation, specialty desserts and wedding cakes, and the friendly personalities of each family member and employee, just to name a few.

Our Place is open Monday through Thursday from 10:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. for lunch and dinner. On Fridays, they are open from 10:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. They offer homemade soups, pizza, daily lunch specials, and on Fridays Channie has an Italian Buffet that has a reputation for being some of the best lasagna and spaghetti you can find.

Channie says, "Our customers think it's like going home when they eat here. We treat them just like family because we enjoy making people feel comfortable. Although it's hard work, I am very fortunate to have a good crew that assists me."

What causes my lights to blink?

You have just come home from work and notice that all of the digital clocks in the house are blinking. Must have been a power outage sometime during the day, right? More than likely, it was just a power "blink" and not an outage. A "blink" occurs when the power momentarily goes off for a couple of seconds and then comes back on.

Overhead and underground electric lines are susceptible to "blinks." Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative has a network of over 2,100 miles of line. This network is divided into sections called distribution feeders. The feeders are protected by devices that interrupt the power when a problem or "fault" occurs on the line. The device will turn the power back on after a short period of time. If the fault is still present, the device will operate again, causing another "blink". If the fault clears, then the power stays on. If the fault is permanent, then the power goes out and stays out. The "blinks" that you see are operations of the protective devices. Because most faults are temporary in nature, your lights just "blink" and come back on. The protective devices are designed to prevent permanent outages when possible.

What problems occur on the lines that cause blinks?

Faults may be caused by several problems:

Lightning

During storm seasons, electric lines are hit by lightning numerous times. Insulators, lightning arrestors, transformers, and other line equipment are exposed to high voltage surges caused by lightning strikes. Lightning puts an enormous amount of stress on this equipment. An example of a problem would be an insulator slightly damaged during a storm. The damage at the time of the strike would be small and the line would operate normally. A month or two later, regular operating stress may break down the insulator. The line then starts to "blink" occasionally.

Tree Limbs

Tree limbs contact lines and cause "blinks". Southern Illinois is abundant with trees. It is difficult to find a Cooperative distribution line that is not in close proximity to trees. The Cooperative utilizes its own crews and hires contractors to maintain the right-of-way on its 2,100 miles of line. New pruning and spraying methods are being utilized to gain better control of the right-of-way. Because of the abundance of trees, work often is slow. The Cooperative appreciates members' patience when it comes to tree pruning/cutting requests. You can do your part to help the Cooperative most efficiently improve service reliability:

(1) Do not plant trees within 60 feet of electric lines.
(2) When possible, allow Cooperative crews to remove trees rather than just trim them. Trimming is only a temporary measure.
(3) Please be patient. The Cooperative has a program to maintain the right-of-way on your line.

Animals

Animals cause problems, too. Squirrels, raccoons, snakes, and birds cause "blinks" on the system. Animals may come into contact with electric conductors and other equipment at the same time, causing a fault. Livestock that rub against guy wires can also cause problems. The Cooperative uses some animal guard products to help prevent animals from causing "blinks".

Ice and Wind

Electric conductors that have ice on them tend to "gallop" in the wind. Lines may flop together, and cause "blinks". Fortunately, the Cooperative does not experience this problem very often. Minimal ice build-up and hilly terrain discourage the "galloping" effect.

Roy D. Faughn

What if my power continues to blink?

The Cooperative realizes that blinking lights are a nuisance. If you are experiencing an extraordinary number of "blinks", please write down the dates and times and call us. Let us know if you see any flashes or arcing on the lines. We will do our best to try to find the problem as soon as possible. Because many problems are not obvious, it may take us a while to track down the problem. We do have devices that can be put on the lines to help isolate the problem. And, with our new Automated Meter Reading system, we may be able to tell how many times your meter sees a "blink". With your patience and cooperation, we will eventually find and correct the problem.

Will power blinks cause damage to appliances and other equipment?

As stated earlier, the operation of a protective device on electric lines causes "blinks". Some people refer to "blinks" as power "surges", but, unless lightning is involved, probably no "surge" occurs on the line. When the power goes off and back on during a "blink", it is often just like turning your appliance or other piece of equipment off and on with its own switch. No damage to your equipment should occur. If lightning is involved, a surge may occur and could cause damage. The Cooperative installs lightning arrestors on its lines to minimize the effects of lightning; yet, lightning can still cause damage.

What can I do in my home to lessen the effects of blinks?

Members can do several things to help prevent annoyances due to power "blinks".

(1) Buy digital clocks and VCRs that have a battery backup. The battery will ride through power "blinks" and you will not have to reset the time.
(2) Purchase an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) for your computer. Nothing is more annoying than losing data on a computer because of a power "blink". A relatively inexpensive UPS will ride through the "blink", preventing data loss. More sophisticated UPS's can be bought that keep your computer up and running for several minutes after a permanent power outage, allowing you to save your data.
(3) Safeguard solid-state equipment, computers, and household appliances by installing surge protectors. Nothing is available that will protect your home from a direct lightning strike, but small surges often can be prevented. Whole-house secondary surge protectors that prevent surges from coming into the home can be purchased from the Cooperative. Sensitive equipment should also be protected independently.

Cooperative personnel can answer your questions regarding any problems or concerns you may have involving power "blinks". Please give us a call!

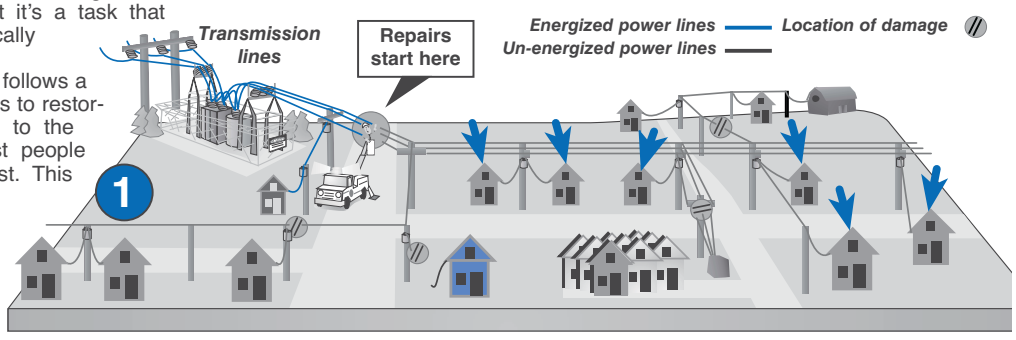
Getting back on line

When a major storm hits our Cooperative, this is a simplified look at how we typically restore electric service.

Mark Taake

We have come to expect that if we lose electric service it will be restored within a few hours at most. But when a devastating event, like a tornado, ice or snow storm causes major damage to a co-op's system, longer outages cannot be helped. Crews work long, hard hours restoring service, but it's a task that needs to be done methodically to be done safely.

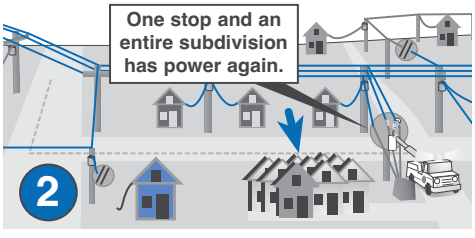
Every electric cooperative follows a basic principle when it comes to restoring power — priority goes to the lines that will get the most people back in service the quickest. This usually begins with main lines from the substations that can affect 200-600 members, and continues out to tap lines, which may affect 30-200 members, and then to individual service lines affecting just 1-5 members.



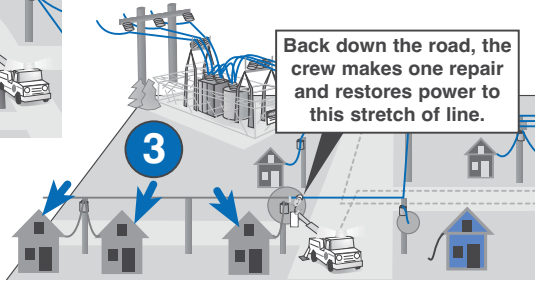
Step 1: The substation is energized but a main distribution line is damaged near the substation, leaving most members without power.

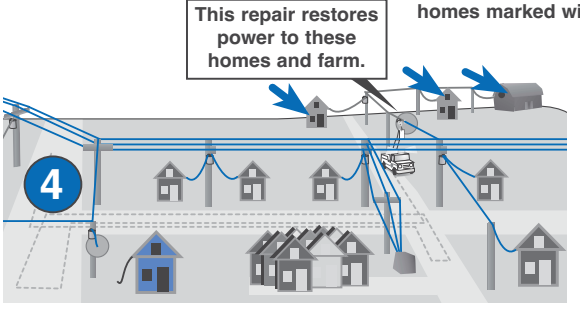
All repairs start with the main line. A large number of members (shown with blue arrows) will have power returned once the main line is fixed. All other repairs would be pointless until this line is restored as it feeds all the other lines.

Step 2: With the main line restored (now shown in blue), the line crew can isolate other damage and prioritize re-pairs. Though a couple of repairs were closer, fixing the line that serves this subdivision down the road will get a larger number of consumers on more quickly.



Step 3: Moving back down the road to fix this tap line will restore electricity to the three homes marked with arrows.

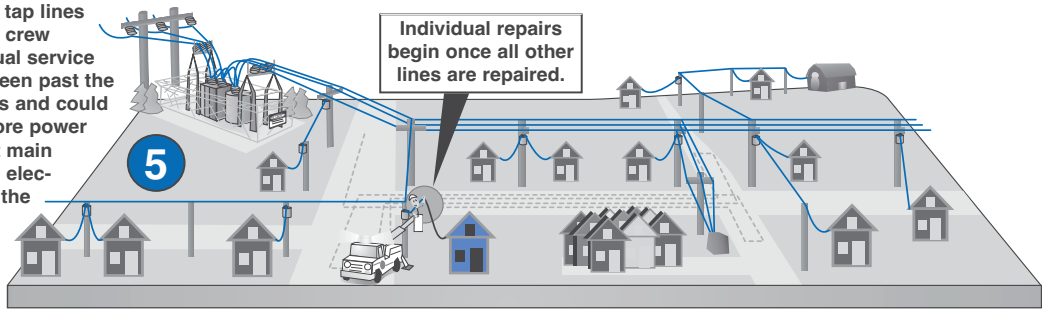




Step 4: A smaller tap line serving a number of homes and the farm on the hill is next on the list for the line crew. The move probably doesn't make the folks in the blue house too happy. They've seen the crew driving by their home and working right across the road. They see lights in homes of all their neighbors but they don't have power!

That's because even though electricity is coming to their pole (that happened with the first repair in Step 1), the service line from their pole to their meter is damaged. Individual repairs come after all distribution and tap lines are restored.

Step 5: Only after the tap lines are repaired does the crew start work on individual service lines. The crew has been past the blue home three times and could have stopped to restore power anytime after the first main line was repaired and electricity was flowing to the pole nearby. But it's not fair to other members for a crew to spend hours fixing one outage, when the crew can move down the road and restore power to dozens of homes in the same amount of time.



Electric Consumer graphic by Richard G. Biever

Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment Scorecard

Usage Month	Billing Month	WPCA	Savings to Members	Cost to Members
November, 2009	December, 2009	-$0.00466	$68,188	$0.00
December, 2009	January, 2010	-$0.00450	$71,095	$0.00
January, 2010	February, 2010	-$0.00891	$204,873	$0.00

Member prize

In this issue of the JAMUP, we printed the names of three SIEC members who are eligible to receive a $10 credit toward their utility bill. If you find your name printed in this center section and it's not part of the story, call Jerri with your account number at 800-762-1400 to claim your prize.

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