

current lines

A monthly publication for Tri-County EMC members

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Irma Deals Severe Blow.....

On September 11, 2017, Tropical Storm Irma moved into the Tri-County EMC service area dealing our members and community a severe blow. We spent the week before gathering supplies and preparing to feed and house employees and visiting linemen for multiple days – activities we’d hoped were precautionary. As Irma’s path shifted, we knew the storm would affect our service area. We experienced 6 hours of sustained winds of 30+ mph, with gusts up to 66 mph recorded, causing hundreds of trees to fall taking poles, wires and transformers with them.

By Monday night, power outages rose to nearly 19,000 members, 88% of our members. This was the worst outage in Tri-County EMC’s 78 year history – even worse than damage seen during Winter Storm Pax in 2014. With more than 70 broken poles and many miles of wire on the ground, much of the system had to be rebuilt.

We quickly went into storm mode, with employees working around the clock to repair power lines, cut trees, answer phones, log power outages, prepare food and communicate to members. Linemen from Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio and Arkansas traveled to Tri-County as soon as it was safe for them to be on the roads.

“Electric Membership Cooperatives (EMCs) have contracts in place that allow them to get additional linemen from other EMCs to come in and work during times of emergency,” said Keith Brooks, vice president of operations. “We were fortunate to have an extra 103 linemen and right-of-way con-

tractors, in addition to our regular employees and contractors, to help us get power restored.”

Aside from the damage to the power lines, Irma also caused a widespread internet outage and cell tower outage in our area, making communications a challenge during the first two days of power restoration. Reporting an outage by text or mobile app was unavailable during that time. “We realized that the only way many of our members could communicate with us was through social media,” said Greg Mullis, vice president of corporate services. “We gave members updates through video each day to show the crews at work and the damage that they were seeing.” (66171001)

Another challenge came Monday morning, before the storm truly arrived, when we lost a power transformer at Clinton Substation – an issue not related to the storm. Luckily, we were able to back-feed most of the customers served by this substation through other substations. More information on this is on page 2.

“Irma presented us with many challenges,” said Brenda P. Green, chairman of the Tri-County EMC board of directors. “Our employees stepped up as a team and worked relentlessly with resolve until each member’s power was restored.”

“We were working around the clock to get power restored and we are grateful for the patience our members showed,” said Ray Grinberg, CEO. “The support from our community was overwhelming.” Tri-County EMC received hundreds of thank you messages on social media, thank you notes, casseroles, flowers, baked goods and more. “The kindness of our members really helped keep us motivated throughout the week.”

All power was restored by Sunday, September 17. But the cleanup effort continued, as our crews worked the next few weeks to pick up broken poles, damaged transformers and wire.

IRMA BY THE NUMBERS

88%

PEAK NUMBER OF OUTAGES

60

EMPLOYEES

135

CONTRACT LINEMEN & RIGHT-OF-WAY WORKERS

4,697

EMPLOYEE HOURS WORKED

70+

BROKEN POLES

0

LOST TIME ACCIDENTS

14,000+

PHONE CALLS TAKEN

MORE ON TROPICAL STORM IRMA INSIDE...



Backfeeding Helps Keep Power On

One of the success stories of the Irma restoration was the ability to shift load and backfeed circuits, particularly after the failure of a substation transformer just as the storm's fury arrived. Instead of leaving several thousand members in the dark until a replacement transformer was installed, shifting load to circuits served by other substations allowed the outage experienced from most of these members to be shortened by over 48 hours.

Just before noon on Monday, September 11, the Clinton Substation transformer failed. This transformer, owned by Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC), steps power down from 115,000 volts to 14,400 volts before it is distributed out to meters in central and northern Jones County. A replacement transformer costs well in excess of one million dollars and the nearest available was in Forest Park, 90 miles away. Weighing 97,000 pounds when filled with the 3,200 gallons of oil used for cooling, it had to be replaced by a large crane. GTC replaced the transformer as quickly as possible, and the station was up and running by Friday.

Preparing for a storm like Irma doesn't happen the week before the storm. "We are constantly working to increase the reliability of our system," said Lee Marsh, vice president of engineering. "Over the past 10 years, we've worked to rebuild lines with larger wire to handle more electric load. As we are working to finish reconducting, we are also focusing on system automation to automatically backfeed lines in a power outage."

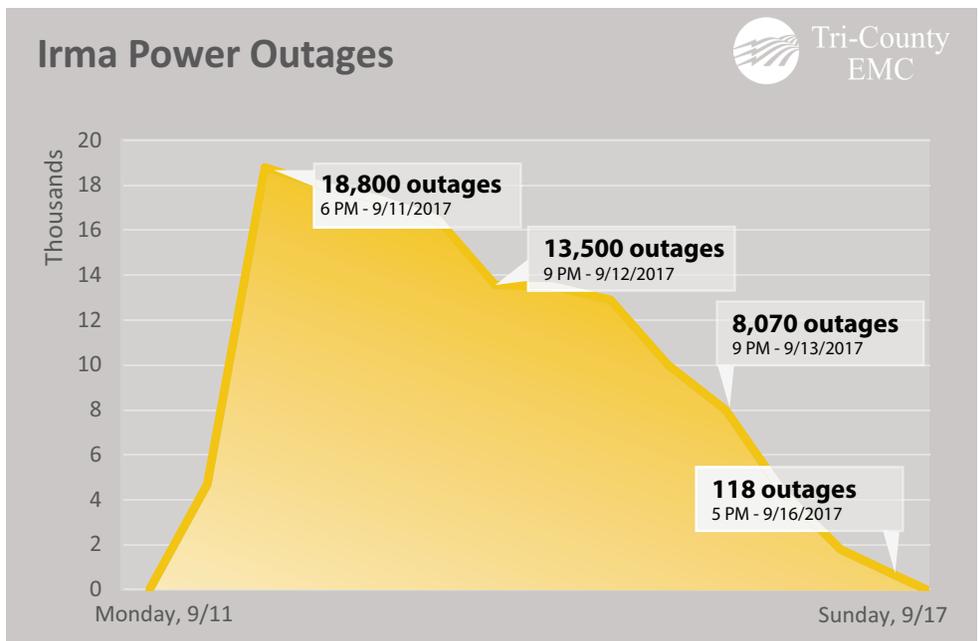
During Irma, many circuits were damaged by fallen trees, and meters could not be backfed until those were repaired. Thanks to load shifting, power was back on to all but about 10% of the meters normally served by the Clinton substation by Wednesday night. This also restored power to critical loads such as a school and county water system wells.

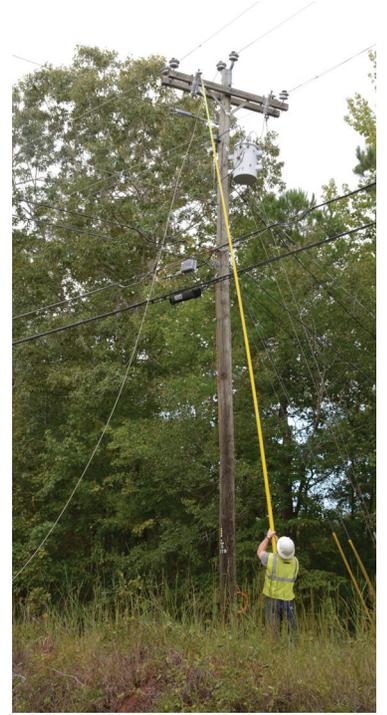
Throughout the Irma restoration, about 2,900 meters were backfed, speeding restoration for our members while lines were being restored. As we discussed in the April issue of *Current Lines*, the next step in this resiliency effort is system automation. This year, Tri-County began the installation of automated breakers which sense when faults have occurred and automatically shift load, almost immediately restoring service to many members.

"This will be a multi-year process, but the result will be decreased outage times for our members," said Marsh. (67163001)



A power transformer weighing 97,000 pounds was replaced in Clinton Substation using a crane during Tropical Storm Irma power restoration.





Did you find your account number?

Find your complete account number inside parentheses in this issue of Current Lines and win a \$50 bill credit. Call 478.986.8126 to claim your bill credit.

Christmas Card Art Contest

Artwork Due November 10

Tri-County EMC is seeking students (grades Kindergarten through 5th grade) to design the Tri-County EMC 2017 Christmas Card. Artwork provided by the students should be Christmas/Holiday themed and will be judged by a committee of employees. The overall winner's design will appear on Tri-County EMC's Christmas Card, which will be mailed to friends and associates of the cooperative. The artwork will also be featured in the December issue of *Current Lines*, on www.tri-countyemc.com and on Tri-County EMC's social media pages.

If you are interested in having your child participate, please fill out the release form at www.tri-countyemc.com/christmascardartcontest.cms and return it with the artwork to:

Tri-County EMC
Attn: Christmas Card Contest
PO Box 487
Gray, GA 31032

You may also turn in entries to either office location. **Please do not fold the artwork.** The deadline to turn in entries is **Friday, November 10**. The winner will be announced on social media and our website by 5pm on Wednesday, November 15. If you have questions, please contact Kim Broun at kimb@tri-countyemc.com or 478.986.8126. (82377001)



Prizes!

The first place winner's artwork will be featured on the Tri-County EMC Christmas Card, in the December *Current Lines* on tri-countyemc.com and the cooperative's social media pages. The winner will also receive \$50.

Overall 2nd Place: \$40
Overall 3rd Place: \$25
Grade Level Winners: \$10

Recipe Box

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Corn Casserole

Thanks to Darlene Coley of Baldwin County for sharing this delicious recipe! **Did you know that your recipe is worth \$20 if chosen? Send your best recipes to kimb@tri-countyemc.com or mail to P.O. Box 487, Gray, GA 31032.**

Ingredients:

- 1 stick of butter
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup of milk
- 4 (11 oz.) cans of Chipotle corn, drained
- 2(4 oz.) cans of green chilis, chopped
- ½ tsp. garlic powder



Directions:

In a saucepan, melt the butter, cream cheese and milk over medium heat. Stir until smooth. Add corn, chilis and garlic powder and stir to combine. Place into a greased 9 x 13 baking dish and bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees.



**Tri-County
EMC**

Owned By Those We Serve

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