

Sent to you by Gibson EMC – your Touchstone Energy cooperative

The Tennessee Magazine

March 2009

**Ice Storm
Aftermath**

**History for Kids:
First Seeing Eye Dog**

**It's Time to Plant
Gardening Special**

50th
1958 • ANNIVERSARY • 2008

Free audit, kit help reduce energy leaks

Turn in your home energy audit by Sept. 30 and receive a free energy conservation kit

Every home has energy leaks. If you could see yours, you'd fix them.

Let Gibson Electric Membership Corporation help you pinpoint the sources of costly energy loss in your home with our free energy audit and conservation kit. Our *energy right* Home e-Valuation is an easy questionnaire you can complete in about 20 minutes. You answer the multiple-choice questions about how you use energy in your home and then return your responses to us.

We carefully analyze your responses and prepare a detailed report highlighting your sources of major energy use and offering expert suggestions on how you could use that energy more efficiently.

Best of all, if you submit your questionnaire by Sept. 30, 2009, you'll receive a free energy conservation kit that includes two compact fluorescent lightbulbs, outlet and light switch gaskets, a filter whistle, two faucet aerators, a



hot water temperature gauge, a home thermometer and a brochure full of energy-saving ideas.

Gibson EMC offers two easy ways of completing the *energy right* Home e-Valuation: online or by mail.

For an online version of the questionnaire, go to www.gibsonemc.com, click on Home e-Valuation on the home page, complete the questionnaire and e-mail your response.

To receive a questionnaire by mail, complete the request form below and either mail it to us or drop it by any Gibson EMC customer service center. Once you receive your questionnaire, just complete it and mail it back in its self-mailer. The postage is prepaid.

Contact us today for more details on how our *energy right* Home e-Valuation and conservation kit can help you fix those costly energy leaks in your home.

Please send me a free *energy right* Home e-Valuation questionnaire.

Customer Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Gibson EMC Account No.: _____ Daytime Phone No.: _____

Fill in the information, above, and drop this form off at any Gibson EMC customer service center or mail to: Gibson EMC, Home e-Valuations, P.O. Box 47, Trenton, TN 38382.

A red flag notice: Identity theft concerns us all



Identity theft is a serious concern to everyone. To help safeguard your personal information, the Gibson Electric Membership Corporation board of trustees approved an identity theft prevention policy at its October 2008 meeting.

The policy and new security procedures will help protect customer-owners and bring Gibson EMC into compliance with the "Red Flag Rule." Mandated by the Federal Trade Commission, the Red Flag Rule, effective Jan. 1, 2008, requires entities like Gibson EMC to come into compliance by May 1, 2009.

Specifically, it requires all financial institutions and creditors to implement an "identity theft prevention program" in order to detect, prevent and mitigate identity theft for their covered accounts. The

rule applies to "creditors" who maintain one or more accounts and, in the rule, the term "utility companies" defines Gibson EMC as a creditor.

Gibson EMC's new policy and security procedures will help ensure every effort is made to prevent the possibility of someone gaining personal information that could be used to steal your identity. For your protection, the changes will require you to provide additional information and identification when you make inquiries regarding or changes to your account or service.

We will appreciate your patience as we work to keep your personal information secure. Feel free to contact us through your local customer service center if you have questions.

Thank you...

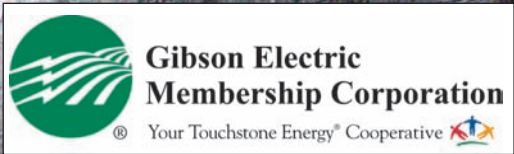
West Tennessee's ice storm of 2009 is for the history books. The damage done to electric lines and equipment and the number of customer-owners who were without power for an extended time made it the worst outage event Gibson Electric Membership Corporation has experienced in its 72-year history. Now that the lights are back on and we've had a chance to get warm again, we have many, many people to thank.

- First, thank you to our customer-owners who lost power because of the ice storm. We thank you for your patience and the many expressions of support you gave the lineworkers as they worked in cold and dangerous conditions to restore power. Your support brought the warmth of being appreciated.
- Thank you to the more than 125 lineworkers from 15 neighboring utilities and two right-of-way contractor companies who did not hesitate to help.
- Thank you to the public officials, emergency response workers and others who swung into action to help us (Gibson EMC and our customers).

■ And, thank you to the Gibson EMC employees, who worked long hours for 12 days. They fielded thousands of calls from customers and practically rebuilt the electric system in Lake, much of Obion and parts of Dyer and Gibson counties. They did this because they care about you, the customer-owner. Finally, thank you to the families of our employees, many also without power, who understood the need for the long hours of work.

Electricity powers the necessities and conveniences of our modern world, but it takes old-fashioned hard work to repair damages after an emergency like January's ice storm. That effort demonstrates our commitment to serve you, our customer-owners.

Dan Rodamaker, President and CEO
The Board of Trustees
Gibson EMC



Plan before you plant trees this spring

The January ice storms proved the importance of trimming trees on Gibson Electric Membership Corporation's electric system and carefully selecting where we plant trees.

Trimming trees and the placement of trees have a significant impact on service reliability, says Gibson EMC Forestry Supervisor Mark Greene. Trees that touch or fall onto electric lines can cause power outages, property damage and personal injury. This is why Gibson EMC discourages customer-owners from planting trees near electric lines, Greene explains.

"If you plan to plant any trees this spring, carefully plan the placement and selection of your trees."

Looking up to see if electric lines are overhead or calling Gibson EMC to check the location of underground electric lines can protect your safety,

your electric service reliability and the beauty of your trees.

"If you do plant beneath or within close proximity to an electric line, you should choose a species that will never exceed 25 feet in height," Greene says.

"You should plant medium-sized trees, those that grow no taller than 40 feet, at least 40 feet away from the electric lines," he continues. "And trees that grow taller should be planted at least 50 feet from the electric lines."

Contact Gibson EMC if you have questions about planting trees near electric lines or visit www.treesaregood.com or www.arborday.org.



Mark Greene
Forestry Supervisor



Historic ice storm



Lake County resident Jim Johnson, without power for 11 days, was grateful to see electric crews on his road.



Ice and snow covered trees and power lines like a crystal blanket, so heavy that they snapped trees, distribution lines and poles.



The forecast for Monday night, Jan. 26, predicted freezing rain and ice — a threatening prospect for any electric system. Gibson Electric Membership Corporation's employees prepared so they could respond quickly should damage and outages occur.

Most of the cooperative's 85 employees had worked through ice storms, even memorable ones like those in 1994 and 1998, but this one turned out to be Gibson EMC's worst.

Ice began blanketing extreme northwest Tennessee on Monday night and continued through Wednesday. The one- to two-inch-thick coating of ice weighed down and snapped trees, electric poles and power lines.

The severity of the damage, combined with the enormous area over which it was spread, made service restoration a challenging and lengthy process. More than one-third of the cooperative's 35,000 customer-owners had outages, some for as long as 12 days.

Almost all of the 166 miles of electric line in Lake County, much of the 956 miles of line in Obion County and sections of line in Dyer County and Gibson County were damaged. Before the restoration was completed, damage estimates grew to \$7.2 million.

'We were ready'

"We had been closely following the weather, and we were ready when we started having outages," said Gibson EMC Vice President of Operations Barry Smith.

The first calls came at 12:10 a.m. Tuesday from customers in Tiptonville. Crews were dispatched immediately. As the outages rose, Gibson EMC's crews from throughout its

eight-county area traveled north to help restore power.

Smith also began calling neighboring electric systems for help. By 9:45 a.m., crews from Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation, Pickwick Electric Cooperative and Jackson Energy Authority were working alongside Gibson EMC's crews. Milan Department of Public Utilities sent help that afternoon.

Crews systematically worked to repair the damage and restore power, starting at the substations and working outward. Primary lines were attacked to restore power to the largest number of customers. Once this work was completed, crews concentrated on single-phase lines and then individual services.

But throughout Tuesday, ice-coated tree limbs and electric lines fell, causing more outages. By 9 p.m., 8,200 customers in Lake and Obion counties were without power.

'Pole after pole down'

"The first round did a lot of damage," Smith said, "and we knew the system could not take much more ice. Then, early Wednesday morning, after the area received more ice, crews reported pole after pole down."

By 6 a.m., more than 12,600 customers were without power. All of the cooperative's Lake County customers, about 8,400 Obion County customers, about 1,600 Dyer County customers and about 100 Gibson County customers were experiencing outages.

Crews from Tennessee Valley Electric Cooperative, Chickasaw Electric Cooperative and Humboldt Utilities arrived. Before the day ended, service was restored to the cus-



ravages electric system

tomers in Gibson County and to about 900 of those in Dyer County.

By 11 a.m. on Thursday, about 7,800 customers were still without power. Most were in Lake and Obion counties, but some remained in Dyer County. Lexington Electric System and Standard Electric Company as well as Deviney Construction and Townsend Tree Service arrived and began helping out.

'Catastrophic' damage

President and CEO Dan Rodamaker described the damage in Lake and Obion counties as "catastrophic." He estimated that about 5,100 or 17 percent of Gibson EMC's 30,000 poles in Lake, Obion and Dyer counties had sustained ice storm damage.

Even as power was being restored to some customers, new outages continued. With tree limbs falling onto lines and the lines breaking under the weight of the ice, outages continued to mount for several more days.

While frustrating, Smith explained that this was not unusual with ice storm damage. "Crews repaired one section of line three times because it collapsed the first two times under the weight of the ice."

Gibson EMC warned customers to brace for a lengthy outage and encouraged those without an alternative heat source to seek emergency shelter.

Customers also were encouraged to check on one another and urged to stay



Repairing damage to Gibson EMC's distribution system was cold, dangerous and frustrating work; at times lineworkers had to chip away at the ice to even get to the electrical equipment.



clear of downed power lines.

Knowing many would turn to generators as a source of power for their homes, Gibson EMC warned customers, for their safety as well as that of its workers, to inform a Gibson EMC customer service center before installing a generator.

On Friday morning, 5,470 customers were still experiencing outages. With the addition of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation and Dyersburg Electric System, a total of 13 systems were helping Gibson EMC.

The National Weather Service issued a

falling ice warning, saying "large and dangerous pieces of ice will continue to fall from trees and power lines."

Melting ice

The melting ice also led to more outages. Outages climbed to 7,600, before crews whittled them down to 4,900.

Rodamaker explained, "As the ice melts from the trees, the limbs spring upward into our lines, causing more outages. With the melting ice, we also have lines whipping into other lines. Although it's typical in ice storm restoration to see new damage and more outages, for customers and our hard-working employees, it is also disheartening."

For some customers, the sight of electric crews working near their darkened homes brought gratitude and hope. Once power was restored to

their Obion County home, Cindy and Doug Hill e-mailed an encouraging thank-you:

"When we saw the trucks pull up in our driveway, we couldn't have been happier if we'd won the lottery. We know those men were working around the clock in frigid temperatures and dangerous conditions, and we just wanted them to know how much they are appreciated."

By late Friday afternoon, power was restored to most Dyer County customers. The worst damage and the remaining outages were in Obion and Lake counties.

On Saturday, Newbern Electric System

Continued, next page.

The ice and snow turned the area gray and cold. Electric pole after electric pole snapped or leaned along Madie Road, between Ridgely and Wynnburg in Lake County. The scene was repeated throughout Lake and Obion counties, the hardest hit areas in northwest Tennessee.



Historic ice storm ravages electric system

Continued from previous page joined the restoration effort.

Throughout the weekend, the temperatures rose and crews made steady progress in restoring power to the area. By Sunday night, the outages were reduced to 2,250.

Crews worked hard

The addition of Union City Electric System on Monday pushed the number of neighboring utilities providing assistance to 15. They were doing outstanding work, but the damage to Gibson EMC's system was so severe and widespread that crews had to do an enormous amount of work to get just a few customers' electricity back on.

For example, crews worked on one section of primary line where 52 poles and lines were downed. To replace one pole takes a crew anywhere from one to four hours depending upon the circumstances.

When all of these 52 poles were replaced and lines strung, power was restored to only 108 customers.

Gibson EMC Operations Supervisor Butch Bunch said, "It looked like a tornado had come through most of Obion and Lake counties, except the houses and businesses were still standing."

Vice President of Engineering and Information Technology Charles Phillips added, "Literally, there are large areas in which 100 percent of the trees have been damaged. It's really



An icy branch frames a Gibson EMC crew restoring power in Lake County.

hard to imagine until you have seen it."

By Monday night, 1,850 customers remained without power.

Utilities provide help

More help arrived from Weakley County Municipal Electric System and Bolivar Energy Authority on Tuesday. This brought the number of neighboring systems and contractor companies providing assistance to 17. Before the day's end, outages were reduced to 1,400.

The number dropped to 900 by

Wednesday afternoon and to 600 by Thursday night. Rodamaker said, "The priority was to safely restore power to customers, but Gibson EMC also worked closely with TEMA and FEMA officials throughout service restoration."

By Friday, all but two sections of primary line in Lake County were repaired. The remaining outages were scattered and affected small groups of members or individual customers. Before the day's end, power had been restored to everyone, except for about 100 customers in Lake and Obion counties.

By Saturday afternoon, the outage was over for all but a few customers who still needed to have repairs made to their individual services before Gibson EMC could restore power.

Rodamaker said, "This has been a challenge that has shown the strength of cooperation. Without the help of our neighboring utilities, restoring power to our customers would have taken much longer. We truly appreciate the expert help they provided."

He commended Gibson EMC's employees, too: "They demonstrated their commitment to provide top-notch service to our customers, attacking an overwhelming workload with determination and professionalism."

Most importantly, Gibson EMC thanks its customer-owners who withstood the hardship of a lengthy outage with understanding and support.



Change your clocks, change your batteries

As you spring your clocks ahead one hour for daylight-saving time on March 9, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reminds you to change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

If your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are hard-wired, this is also a good time to test

them to make sure they work.

While about 90 percent of U.S. households have smoke alarms installed, a CPSC survey estimated millions of those households, about 20 percent, do not have alarms that work, contributing to an estimated 2,850 deaths and 16,000 injuries in residential fires each year.