

RELIABILITY MATTERS



REC NEWS

April 2022

Combating Top Causes of Power Outages

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC) works year-round to address the leading causes of power outages.



TREES

Trees are the top cause of power outages. Using careful pruning and following integrated vegetation management practices to protect trees, REC's vegetation management team manages more than 1,500 miles of right of way each year on a five-year rotating schedule.

They use a variety of tools, including piloting a program to use cutting-edge LIDAR technology, which uses remote sensing to detect which trees are likely to fail and cause an outage; drones, which help tree crews get a clearer view of rights of way; helicopters, which clear branches from lines in mountainous regions; and a machine called a Jaraff,

a specialized saw that can reach branches and trees up to 75 feet high. They also use FECON-head mowers and side-by-side ATVs to access hard-to-reach areas and are looking at satellite imagery of trees as part of a pilot project.

"As certified arborists and foresters, our Vegetation Management team members approach their work with a deep appreciation for the trees that surround us," said Cindy Devlin Musick, Director of Vegetation Management Services. "On the other hand, we also recognize how critical our work is to keeping power flowing to homes and businesses. We work year-round to get the job done."

ANIMALS

Snakes, birds and especially squirrels can wreak a surprising amount of havoc on the electric grid. To protect those animals – and keep power flowing to your home or business – REC regularly adds covering to transformers and other electrical equipment to keep critters away and the lights on.

EQUIPMENT FAILURE

REC works to identify and replace underground and overhead lines before an equipment failure can cause an outage.

LIGHTNING

In 2021, REC installed more than 100 lightning "arrestors" to protect insulators and conductors from lightning strikes. The Cooperative analyzes data to determine where they will be most effective in preventing potential lightning-related outages.

MULTIPLE FACTORS

Sometimes a variety of factors combine to cause an outage. That's why REC works year-round to upgrade or replace poles and other utility equipment. Last year, for instance, the Co-op installed or replaced more than 2,700 poles and nearly 2,500 transformers.



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