

NPPD Urges Safety Around Downed Power Lines

Columbus, Neb. – Weather on the Great Plains of the United States can be unpredictable in the spring. A snow storm one day, 70's the next day, followed by the threat of tornadoes, an annual occurrence in this region.

Nebraska Public Power District, in observance of the state's Severe Weather Awareness Week is urging Nebraskans to be vigilant of these changing weather conditions and to be prepared in the event of power outages due to spring storms.

"In 2014, we had numerous tornadoes that took down power lines in the central and northeast parts of the state during May and June. We had 228 transmission towers and numerous smaller distribution poles damaged during those months, leaving hundreds of customers without power," said NPPD's Distribution and Transmission Manager Joel Dagerman. "Our crews respond as quickly as they can to restore power, but we emphasize safety in adverse weather conditions for our line crews which is extremely important."

One of the by-products of severe spring storms can be downed power lines. Tornadoes can bring down transmission lines in rural areas, but trees damaged by tornadoes or high winds can come down on local distribution lines, creating an outage over several blocks or an entire community. "We urge the public to avoid downed power lines, consider them to be live, and do not attempt to move them. It is important to allow trained linemen from NPPD or other electric utilities in the state to safely move any power lines to avoid the possibility of electrocution," Dagerman added. "We also ask that if a power line is down across the roadway do not attempt to drive over it."

He also pointed out that if a person driving in a car has a power line fall on it to remain in the car until power utility personnel arrive on the scene. If that is not an option due to a fire or other unsafe conditions, jump clear of the vehicle and shuffle approximately 20 feet away, keeping your feet together and on the ground.

When weather conditions are anticipated or begin to worsen, NPPD crews prepare for emergency response and will have trucks fueled up, equipment readied and awaiting to restore any power outage.

But there will be a period of time before crews can restore power, depending on the extent of damage.

If the power goes out, turn off or disconnect any appliances, equipment (like air conditioners) or electronics you were using when the power went out. When power comes back on, it may come back with momentary "surges" or "spikes" that can damage equipment such as computers and motors in appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washer, or furnace. Leave one light turned on so you'll know when your power returns.

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