

WFEC crews making repairs, assessing possible damage across service territory

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ANADARKO - A major storm system that has brought several blasts of freezing precipitation to Oklahoma and parts of New Mexico and Texas is having crippling effects on electric systems in some areas. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), the power supplier for 21 rural electric distribution cooperatives, across Oklahoma and parts of New Mexico, has been actively involved in restoration and assessment efforts.

WFEC transmission line, substation and maintenance crews have been out in the field making repairs, as necessary, plus checking for potential problems or pinpointing specific trouble areas along power lines. However, as of early afternoon on Tuesday, damage has been somewhat minimal, so far. But, that doesn't mean problems might not appear later, as another round of winter weather is set for later today into Wednesday. Plus, it is still early in the storm assessment phase and additional damage may be located with the changing conditions.

Primarily, structural damage has included broken crossarms or minor structure damage. There are areas where structures may be down, but these are still being assessed at this time.

WFEC has had some issues with galloping lines caused by windy conditions in areas where power lines are already coated in thick layers of ice. Galloping also causes lines to hit together, which can damage the power lines or cause blinking and other problems at substations.

Since the beginning of the ice storm, WFEC has experienced numerous substation issues, ranging from minor troubles to blinking problems to longer outages. However, crews have been able to sectionalize lines in some of the harder hit areas, which helps to return power to area substations, while repairs continue to be made.

Icing has also occurred on both phase and static lines and insulators, as well as equipment on the transmission structures. Melting occurs at different rates on these structures, which also causes potential problems.

“We really need some melting to occur on these lines, before the wind picks up, as forecasted for later today,” commented Ricky Allen, Transmission Services Superintendent at WFEC.

On the other hand, for many of WFEC's member distribution cooperatives, this “early season” ice storm has caused devastating impacts across parts of their respective service territories. Among those being most impacted are Cimarron Electric, CKenergy Electric, Oklahoma Electric, Cotton Electric, Harmon Electric, Southwest Rural Electric and Rural Electric. Several others have also experienced some damage, but not to the extent of the areas hardest hit within the state.

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