



Mock exercise shows danger of downed lines

MY CO-OP

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Sunny skies and warmer conditions would have made it easier for emergency crews responding to a downed power line that trapped three people in a car.

But a mock exercise showing how emergency response teams handle situations after power lines have been shut off was made all the more real Tuesday by persistent rain and muddy ground.

Watching the scenario unfold in a pole field adjacent to Chippewa Valley Technical College's West Campus were a group of about 122 professional linemen and another 50 emergency response students participating in Hotline School, part of lineworker training provided by the college.

The purpose of the accident scenario, a first for the college that drew together linemen from other parts of Wisconsin

as well as Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota, was to draw attention to each department's role in a disaster situation.

Kim Nessel, CVTC adjunct instructor and retired Eau Claire fire battalion chief, said Eau Claire fire crews have close relationships with utility workers, so much so that he knows most of the linemen on a first-name basis.

"We work with them almost every day on incidents," said Nessel, who led the training.

That kind of coordination doesn't occur everywhere, and he hopes the training will help to improve communication among all responding agencies.

It's important for lineworkers, firefighters, and emergency response crews to understand the procedure of a car versus pole accident, said Randy Larson, CVTC apprenticeship line worker instructor.

"Typically, we're the last ones to show up," he said of lineworkers, mentioning that sometimes they respond to

Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative lineman Mike Sedlacek of Cornell grounds wires on a downed power line during a demonstration on April 19 at Chippewa Valley Technical College's West Campus on Eau Claire's west side. CVTC held a demonstration for how rescue workers, first responders and electric linemen must work together to ensure safety when power lines are involved in any type of accident.

accidents to shut down power to the area only to find the car that was involved in the accident had already been moved.

Such was the case for lineman Scott Bailen from Clark Electric Cooperative in Greenwood, who was at the mock exercise Tuesday.

"(Response crews) really just wanted to get in there but didn't look at the whole scene," Bailen said of one experience in which he arrived on the scene to find the cars involved had been towed away.

Lineworkers who arrive at a scene ►



must de-energize a system by cutting off power to live lines and installing grounds to make the area safe, a task re-enacted Tuesday by Cornell-based Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative lineman Mike Sedlacek.

“They’re counting on us to make sure the lines are dead,” he said of emergency response crews. “Every circumstance is different.”

Said Larson: “We need to keep everybody safe. Assuming wires are off—that’s not good.”

Sedlacek donned gloves tested at 17,000 volts and a fiberglass hot stick, an insulated device that allows a lineman safe contact with the lines.

Electricity distributed through Eau Claire’s lines to the consumers vary in voltage from 24,900 to 44,160, Larson said. In comparison, 0.07 volts—hardly enough to light a light bulb—can kill a person.

“Some people survive high voltage,” Larson said. “But it’s rare.”

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TAKE THESE STEPS WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT

If the power goes out in your home, there are a few things that you should check. A few simple steps could save you money.

Check your meter

Take a look at your meter to help determine if the outage is CVEC’s problem or a problem within your home. A meter with a digital display will have a blank screen which indicates that the problem is on the co-op’s side. When you see something displayed on the screen, this means that power is getting to the meter and it is not a co-op outage; it is an outage within your home. If you have a meter that does not display a digital reading, then check for a red light on the lower left side of the meter. When you see a red light, this indicates that power is getting to the meter and the problem is with your own equipment; you should check your breakers or contact an electrician. If there is no visible red light, contact CVEC to report an outage.

Check your breakers

Be sure to check your breakers inside your home at your electrical panel and also outside at your meter pedestal (if you have one). The photographs at left indicate where to find the breaker within a meter pedestal. If a breaker has been tripped, push the handle to the “Off” position before flipping it to the “On” position. It is important to check the breakers at both locations to avoid a service call if the outage is found to be your responsibility.

When you have determined that the power outage is not due to your own equipment, call Chippewa Valley Electric to report the outage at 715.239.6800 or 800.300.6800.





The power of safety



Left: CVEC lineman Tim Gingras explains the danger of a 7,200-volt power line. Right: Using a hot dog to simulate human skin, CVEC lineman Terry Capek shows students what would happen if a person came into contact with a high-voltage power line.

The sight, sound, and smell of contact with electricity delivers a powerful message—one which we hope will not be forgotten.

Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is committed to educating youth and first responders in the community. This past March, local fire departments and fourth-grade students from Cadott and Cornell Elementary were invited to the new CVEC shop to view a live electricity demonstration.

CVEC linemen Terry Capek and Tim Gingras, with over 64 years of combined experience, did an excellent job presenting safety information to the groups. All eyes were on Terry and Tim as a tree branch was placed on the 7,200-volt power line. The branch began to smoke as the sap boiled out of the branch and then ignited. As the branch burned, it crackled and began to resemble a large sparkler. The soot and carbon created an electrical arc, similar to a lightning bolt.

Later in the presentation, Terry and Tim used hot dogs to simulate human skin coming into contact with power lines. The audience quickly saw the harm caused and understood exactly how dangerous electricity can be. A wagon

was also used to simulate a vehicle with a “hot dog man” inside. They demonstrated the importance of staying inside the vehicle until utility crews ensure that the power lines are de-energized.

The safety demonstration is a captivating show of the power of electricity. Yet, as you can see from the thank you notes created by the fourth-grade students, they definitely remembered the safety messages that are so important to know and to share with others.

Safety Tips

Always remember to:

- Call before you dig! Call Diggers Hotline, dial 811 or (800) 242-8511 at least three business days before digging.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electric boxes.
- Never touch or go near a downed power line.
- Don't touch anything that may be touching a downed wire, such as a car.
- If your vehicle comes in contact with a downed power line...
 - Stay inside! The safest place is in your car.
 - Honk the horn, roll down your window, and yell for help.
 - Warn others to stay away.
 - Use your mobile phone to call 911.
 - Fire department and police will guard the area until electric workers tell you when it's safe to exit your vehicle.
- Keep a safe distance from overhead power lines when working with ladders or installing objects such as antennas.
- Never fly kites, remote control airplanes, or balloons near power lines.
- Don't climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, do not try to remove it. Call CVEC to report.



MY CO-OP



We have expanded our Med-A-Lert offerings to better meet the needs of our clients!

Today we are introducing three new offerings to our Med-A-Lert service.



Med-A-Lert *in case of emergency*

We still have our **Basic** package, with Linear equipment, tried and true, and only **\$25/month**.



We have added an option with **Fall Detection**. We still use the Linear system, but have added a pendant that has a Fall Detection feature. The Linear system with Fall Detection is only **\$27/month**. This pendant is water resistant (not waterproof as with the Basic package), and has a replaceable battery.



Two-way voice is now an option with our **Enhanced** system. This system has all the features of our Basic package, but in addition allows you to communicate with the Response Center directly via the pendant. This is a great option for those who are frequently outside of the home, gardening, doing yardwork, or even going to the mailbox. A spare rechargeable battery for the pendant is kept charged in the base unit. The Enhanced system is only **\$30/month**.



All of the above systems have the basic requirements: Working landline phone jack & power receptacle

Complete mobility is available for the active individual with the **Mobile SentryPal** option. The SentryPal is a cellular device, about 2 inches square. Pressing the alert button on the unit immediately puts you in direct contact with the Response Center. Your location is sent along with the call. Alerts can be sent as a text message to a number you choose to notify of an event, low battery, or power on/off. The cellular service provider is AT&T. The SentryPal is an option wherever there is reliable AT&T cellular coverage. The mobile system is **\$35/month**.



Installation is available with all of our systems for a one-time fee of \$38.50. During the installation we will review all of the features of the system, place a test call, and verify the list of responders.

CALL TODAY - 715.239.6800 or 800.300.6800

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Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative

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