

# Farmington Observer

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## Sister cities brighten up after blackout

### Old areas hit worst in county

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

With 50 percent of Farmington and Farmington Hills left without electrical power late Tuesday, police and utility crews worked to repair fallen lines and compensate for the loss of traffic lights.

At the peak of the power loss caused by Sunday evening's ice storm, 80 percent of Farmington and Farmington Hills was left without electrical service. Residents of the two cities were among 52,000 in Oakland County who were affected by the storm, according to John Lobbia, manager of the Oakland division of Edison.

In Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, 5,500 residents were left without telephone service due to icy tree limbs falling on lines, according to Michigan Bell spokesman Haze Wilson. The situation was complicated by power lines falling on top of telephone lines and burning through them.

While telephone installation crews were placed on repair duties, spokesmen said that their problem was one-tenth the magnitude of Edison's.

EDISON CREWS in the Farmington area were reinforced by 30 employees from Commonwealth Edison of Chicago. The men were among 25 crews from Chicago and Toledo Edison offices dispatched to help repair storm damage.

Consumers Power sent 21 crews from Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, Grand Rapids and Traverse City to help restore power to Oakland County residents.

Farmington and Farmington Hills were among the worst hit in Oakland County taking a back seat to the major problem areas in the townships southeast of John R. and Greenfield and between Eight Mile and Fourteen Mile.

Older areas, with taller trees, were the most damaged, according to Lobbia.

In Farmington and Farmington Hills power loss left many intersections without traffic lights. Farmington Hills police sent its detectives, officers, Community Service Officers and auxiliary members out to direct traffic at clogged intersections.

Farmington and parts of the Hills also relied on temporary four-way stop signs set up at stricken intersections.

While traffic ran slowly but usually smoothly, a few feeder benders were reported.

A FARMINGTON HILLS police officer was sent to the hospital and released after being grazed by a passing automobile while directing traffic. He was bruised on the leg.

In Farmington, police transported an elderly woman to the hospital when her electrically powered breathing apparatus stopped.

Farmington Public Safety officers Monday put out a fire at 21567 Birchwood, indirectly caused by the power loss. The fire started in the living room fireplace. Police say the family had used the fireplace to warm themselves through the power loss.

Embers ignited drywall surrounding the fireplace, according to public safety officers. Damage was estimated at \$2,500. No one was injured.

By Tuesday, Farmington Public Safety officers had received between 70-80 reports of downed wires. In Farmington Hills, during the peak of the storm on Sunday, firefighters received 70 calls reporting downed wires.



Ada Clingman forlornly examines her son's automobile which was the victim of a falling generator during this week's ice storm. Her street, Shady Ridge in Farmington Hills, was scattered with branches and entire trees as were many other area streets. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

### Road crews tackle mess around clock

By MARY GNIEWEK

If you walked outside Monday and found nothing more than an ice covered windshield and fallen branches, consider yourself lucky.

Lucky that you weren't the owner of the Volkswagen parked on Snady Ridge that broke the fall of a huge utility pole, smack dab in the center of its rounded rooftop.

Or lucky that you weren't part of the DPW road crew that worked nonstop Sunday and Monday on the repetitious task of removing branches and whole trees from the streets of Farmington Hills.

Road foreman Tom Trice was weary but still gung-ho Monday morning. He had been chopping branches, dispatching crews and taking calls on the one DPW phone line that worked since 9 p.m. Sunday. His shift would end at 4 p.m. Monday, then begin again at daylight Tuesday.

Trice was running the show because his assistant, Walt Karolak, who usually takes responsibility for half of the 33-square-mile city, was on vacation.

"Section 36 in the southeast part of the city was worst hit," Trice said of the crippling ice storm. "I guess because it's the oldest part and the trees are big and brittle."

The foreman did a mid-morning spot check of his crew, some of whom had been working nonstop since 11 p.m. Sunday.

"SUNDAY WAS like the Fourth of July," he said, driving his pickup down winding subdivision streets as frozen branches banged against the windshield.

"The sky lit up blue, green and red each time a power transformer went out. Last night we could stand outside and hear the trees crack and fall. It was eerie."

Trice stopped to check on the crew called out on the first run Sunday — the three men were still chopping and ducking occasional barrages of branches that would crack and fall without warning.

Working in Forestbrook Estates, crew member Larry Dahlberg told his boss why he was using an axe instead of a chainsaw.

"The chain came off the saw when it was hit by a big falling branch," he said.

The mishap left a tear in one pantleg, but Dahlberg was not hurt. "We cut them never knowing when they'll break. We're trying to get the broken branches out so the people can get through, but the branches keep crashing down while we're working," he said.

"We've seen some huge trees uprooted. We can't get into some areas until Edison does its work and removes lines that are down. I've only seen one Edison truck so far."

Downed trees over fences also provided an escape route for ducks at the steep intersection of Inxter and Ten Mile. Three of the web-footed fowl waddled across the road without much regard for traffic.

FURTHER DOWN, at Liberty and Wheeler, a stately old tree resting on its side became a natural barricade for a dead end street.

"We cleared the big trees off Nine Mile this morning," Trice said. "It poured rain until 2 a.m., then changed to snow until 6."

"We have 18 men and 11 pieces of equipment out. We're handling the emergencies first. And we're working hand in hand with police, fire and recreation departments. I don't think we'll know what we've got until its over with."

In hard hit Section 36, residents were juggling odd-shaped branches into ditches alongside the roads.

"I saw one guy come out of his house wearing just an overcoat with nothing underneath to move a tree," said Wayne Smith, part of the DPW crew stationed in the parking lot next to Fire Station Three.

In the lot, Dave Edwards was in charge of the crew that ground truckloads of branches into wood chips. The small but noisy machine digested two truck loads of debris in short time — blowing a black film against the wall of the fire station.

"We'll leave them here for now and decide what to do with them later," Edwards said of the small mountain of wood chips.

"We'll either haul them or give them away," Trice added.

## Residents demonstrate ingenuity in coping with the cold and darkness

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

As administrators worked in darkened city halls to cope with the problems brought on by the power failure, Farmington and Farmington Hills residents made the best of a bad situation.

After a night without heat and in some cases without water, residents turned to restaurants and hotels for warmth and food.

The Sanders restaurant in the Downtown Farmington Center was one of the few stores in the mall which had electrical power. Customers bearing thermos bottles filled them up with hot beverages and soup, according to store manager R.J. Scott.

"We saw a lot of new faces," he said. "People called us up to ask us if we were opened."

Waitresses brought their perishable foods to work and used the freezer in the back room, according to Scott.

When electrically pumped wells quit supplying water to some subdivisions, residents searched for alternatives.

Scott's daughter filled four gallon containers usually used for fudge with water.

So many residents called the Farmington Hills police department complaining about losing water power and ruined food that Capt. Russ Conway attempted to order two tons of dry ice and 50 generators from Oakland County on Tuesday.

FARMINGTON CITY hall, darkened by the power loss managed to keep phone lines open on Tuesday. Residents called to complain to City Mgr. Robert Deadman about their power loss. Deadman, decked out in several turtle-neck sweaters, braved temperatures in the high 40s and low 50s to sit in his city hall office.

One determined and irate resident showed up at city hall Tuesday morning wielding his electric shaver. He demanded to use the city's electrical power for his morning shave. He was disappointed.

An elderly woman walked into the Farmington police station and asked Lt. John Santamoro if it were safe for her to heat her house all night by keeping her gas oven lit.

"Don't do that," said an alarmed Santamoro. "That's very dangerous."

"I didn't know," the woman answered. "But I was worried about it. I kept on getting up in the night to check the house. Then I would go back to bed and sleep a bit."

Normal activities became monumental tasks.

FARMINGTON ADMINISTRATORS were hoping power would be restored by the end of the week so the city's computer payroll system would be usable. If power continued to be unavailable, administrators were considering taking the data to Novi.

Electric garage doors became useless. Televisions became empty boxes.

An emergency shelter was set up at Dunckel Junior High School on Monday afternoon. Harrison High School was also used as an Red Cross shelter for the area.

Many families sought shelter in hotels and in libraries. While the Farmington Community Library on Liberty was a victim of the power failure, the Twelve Mile branch was a haven for cold families.

"Generally we have 800-1,000 visitors on a day with bad weather," said library director G. Graham Lewis.

"Today, we're 25 percent over that." "A lot of people ask if they can stay here all day," said Marge Patterson, a library employee.

Others were using the library as a source of survival information. Librarian

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A day off from school isn't always what it's chalked up to be as John Potts, 11, found out during this week's ice storm. John, a student at Longacre School, found himself picking up mounds and mounds of branches. (Staff photo)

### Hills snares county funds

Detroit Concrete Products of Novi was the low bidder for the construction segment of a paving project in Farmington Hills.

The contract, in the amount of \$10,561, covers construction of an over-lay on Ten Mile from Powers east to Orchard Lake. The work is expected to be completed this year.

The project will be one-third funded by the city of Farmington Hills, with Oakland County and the Oakland County Road Commission contributing equal shares of the balance.

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