

THE YEAR 2000

Utilities: It's A-OK for Y2K

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Just another day. That's what utility companies are expecting on Jan. 1, 2000.

The most critical service is electricity. Detroit Edison has spent \$80 million to ensure electricity is supplied to its 2 million customers and expects 2,000 employees to be available from Dec. 27 to Jan. 7.

Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey believes an Edison outage would only occur if something "unexpected" were to fail. Kirksey chairs a Conference of Western Wayne, a legislative consortium of 18 communities. That group has heard from several utility companies this year, including Edison, on Y2K compliance.

"They have grids, technicalities, switching equipment, safeguards and everything they do on computers," Kirksey said. "I know it's redundant, but they've done all they can do."

Edison officials said they have inventoried, assessed, repaired, and tested about 140,000 critical software programs and devices that generate and distribute electricity. On June 30, Edison notified the North American Electric Reliability Council and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that it has all systems "critical" to generating and distributing power ready for the year 2000 rollover.

New Year's Day will be "like any other day" that Edison provides customers with electric service, said Paul Childs, Edison's Y2K program manager. One difference: All substations will be manned.

"We expect there will be a greater likelihood of a service interruption resulting from bad weather or a vehicle hitting a utility pole and bringing a power line down than something related to Y2K," Childs said.

Edison also rehearsed the Dec. 31-Jan. 1 rollover in early September with 70 employees simulating the operation of its electrical system under Y2K-imposed scenarios.

The drill was completed on Sept. 9 to check for "9/9/99" glitches, and involved deploying Edison employees and using backup voice communication systems. Personnel tended to substations and other locations to read and monitor equipment.

More than 30 million lines of computer code have been involved in the testing, Edison officials said.

"We feel we are ready for Y2K," said Scott Simons, Edison spokesman. "We are finishing up contingency plans for the rest of the year and basically, we're ready."

Kirksey believes there won't be any disruptions when the year 2000 strikes.

"I'm not overly concerned with electrical and gas energy, but I am still somewhat with Detroit Water and Sewerage (Department)," said Kirksey, adding that his concern stemmed mainly from receiving "mixed signals" from the DWSD on generators.

Water

Much of the water delivery in western Wayne County depends on electricity delivered to the Detroit Water and Sewer Department.

The DWSD system pumps about 280 million gallons during a typical day in January. The DWSD purchased an additional 108 megawatts of electricity, which cost \$55 million.

The systems are older and do not use a lot of computer technology to run the plant or the distribution system. It still can run through manual switches, if necessary.

The DWSD is also buying backup generators for their critical pumping stations for both water and sewer systems, to ensure water delivery, water treatment and the removal of wastes.

Natural gas

Michigan Consolidated and Consumers Energy provide all the natural gas to Wayne County.

MichCon has tested all of its substations, said Cheryl Conway, MichCon spokeswoman. "We're confident that Y2K will be a non-event for our customers," Conway said.

MichCon has assessed, remediated, repaired and retested equipment so that its customers will not lose gas needed for heat or cooking on Jan. 1.

"We have large compressor engines that pull gas out of the ground and flow out of the pipeline," Conway said. "We can fall back on backup generators (for electricity to operate the compressors) if we need them."

And as a backup to the generators, the gas distribution system can be run manually, Conway said.

MichCon has more information on Y2K on its Web site, www.michcon.com, and includes a list of manufacturers' phone numbers for consumers who wish to check the Y2K compliance of thermostats, water heaters or other gas-related appliances or equipment.

Telephone

American officials believe their Year 2000 remediation effort has been substantially completed. The phone company continues to "fine tune and test the year-end business and contingency plans," according to the company's Web site.

The following services were pronounced "ready" for Y2K: Local switched telephone service and long distance services, Centrex service, dedicated and special access transport services, 911 emergency services, switched cellular voice and data services and wireless paging services.

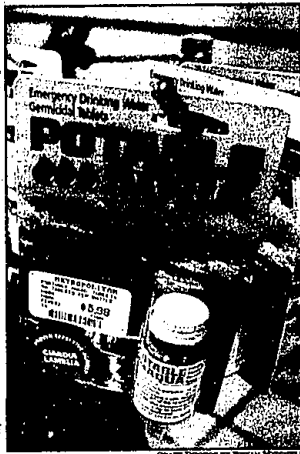
Traffic signals

County-managed traffic signals will work as long as there is power, which goes back to Detroit Edison's service.

Wayne County has issued all different types of signals and they are Y2K compliant, said John Roach, public information manager of the Wayne County Department of Public Services.

"We're confident we will have no traffic problems," Roach said.

Wayne County is working with local communities to put stop signs at intersections off to the side of intersections, where they can be moved into place by city workers if power goes out and no backup generators are available at the intersection.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEBRA MITCHELL

For sale: Tablets to make sure your water is drinkable, shown above, are among the products ready to help make people feel sure they're ready for Y2K.

Check computer service shops, Web sites to rescue your PC

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Before you start worrying about your computer doing on Jan. 1, what kind of personal computer do you have? If you have an Apple product, such as a Macintosh, you don't need to worry too much about your computer — the Y2K problem is pretty much a disease of Windows/Intel-based computers.

But since almost all home computers are Windows/Intel-based computers, a lot of people should be concerned. The newest models of Windows-based computers have already been prepared for Y2K. But how about those of us who have older models?

The Web, a child that grew with the explosion of the home computer, may be able to come to your rescue. Or at least it will tell you whether you will have a working computer come New Year's morning.

One Web site for checking Y2K compliance is the Web site run by Zix/Davis, the company that publishes PC Magazine. Not only does the Web site have a test available for you to download, it has a list of many other sites that provide test programs or fixes or both. Some of these other Web sites will want to sell you software. It's your decision

whether you want to buy. The address of the Zix/Davis site is www.zinet.com/vlabs/y2k/test/y2k.html. The address of the list of other Internet test sites is www.zinet.com/pcmag/special/y2k/testing/html/.

Another way to check out your computer is to call your favorite computer-repair place. If they offer the service, they will be happy to check out your computer — and perhaps "repair" it so that the Y2K bug won't bite your computer.

If your computer flunks the "I-can-handle-Y2K" test, you will need to spend money. If your computer is old enough, you might be better to buy a newer and faster and more powerful computer that was built to be Y2K compliant.

If your personal computer is of more recent vintage, you may be able to buy software or hardware to make your personal computer Y2K compliant.

Now, if every Web site on the Internet is Y2K compliant, you'll be able to surf the Net with confidence. More likely, even if your computer is Y2K compliant (or cares nothing about Y2K), some other Web sites won't be there until their Webmasters have their problems fixed.

Canton Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "We've really put a lot of work and effort into this Y2K issue," said Mike Agor, Resource Development manager for Canton Township. The township has disseminated info about preparing for Y2K issues in a special edition of its Focus newsletter, and is dedicating all its cable shows in December to Y2K. Township will be staffed for the midnight hour shift, and police and fire departments will be working double shifts.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. Excluding computer replacement, which is considered a routine expense, about \$40-\$50,000, said Tony Minghine, finance director. That figure includes costs for producing and mailing the special edition newsletter for residents, miscellaneous equipment and supplies and costs for additional staffing for New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Yes, said Don Adams, Canton's emergency management coordinator. If needed, the township will contact the American Red Cross, which has a pre-arranged agreement to use public buildings such as schools for emergency shelter and to provide cots and food. The Summit on the Park community center could also be used for emergency shelter.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "It looks good," Adams said. But, "I'm not naive enough to think we won't have some small disruptions. It's not armageddon."

Farmington Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "All the department heads are going to be working," said Gary Goss, public safety director for Farmington. The city hall will be set up as an emergency command center, or a base of operations if anything goes haywire. An amateur or ham radio operator will be on hand as well.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. This question is impossible to answer accurately, according to Bill Richards, assistant city manager. The city has upgraded all software and when necessary hardware to make systems Y2K compliant. Separating the Y2K-specific expenses from the routine computer upgrading expenses wasn't possible to do.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. "Each city has an emergency operations plan in the event of a disaster," Goss said. "If needed, the city of Farmington would work with Oakland County in setting up emergency shelters, but larger cities would work on their own in setting up emergency shelters."

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "Basically we have gone through all our critical systems throughout the city and have validated that they are Y2K ready," Goss said. "The bottom line is it's a continuous process."

Garden City Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "All city employees will be working," said David Harvey, Garden City police chief, adding that full staff will be in force Dec. 30 to Jan. 3, 2000. "We will be working regardless of the holiday." He said he expected all areas under the city's control will run smoothly, but an increased number of party goers and severe weather might cause some problems. The police department will be working 12-hour shifts.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. City Clerk Alyson Betts said the city, as of early November, planned to buy several emergency generators at about \$900 each, and replace roughly 10 personal computers for Y2K compliance. Miscellaneous expenses such as flashlights and other emergency provisions are also planned.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Yes. Exact shelter sites have not yet been finalized, but likely spots could be Maplewood Community Center and possibly the Junior high and high school. Arrangements for shelters would be made through the American Red Cross if necessary.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "I think we're one of the better prepared cities anywhere," Harvey said. "All traffic lights have been tested." Detroit Edison, MichCon, the Wayne County Road Commission and Detroit Water and Sewer have all advised us that they are Y2K compliant."

Livonia Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. Since January, Livonia has held monthly meetings of department heads, elected officials, police and fire officials, utilities, hospital representatives, etc. They've held two exercises. They have a police department generator running on natural gas and 11 portable generators that will run "priority traffic signals" to keep police on the beat; they have more than 100 school buses arranged for transportation needs; police will use new portable radios and use various amateur/GB radio groups or clubs; and there's a police training room in the basement of police station set to be the command center. "We're going to man the fire stations. That's going to be our communications link for certain neighborhoods," said Aileen Sawyer, emergency and information coordinator.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. \$345,000, said Dan Putnam, information systems manager for the city of Livonia. That figure includes \$170,000 for public safety communications upgrades and about \$175,000 for computer software upgrades.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Livonia: The city is set to operate two shelters (Stevenson and Franklin high schools), courtesy of Livonia Public Schools.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. Livonia: "It feels like there has been so much done by so many people and such huge sums of money spent, I just can't feel that there will be any major interruptions to our critical systems," Sawyer said.

Farmington Hills Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "We will have key staff members on site and available," said Michael Lasley, central services director for Farmington Hills. A call-in plan will be implemented if necessary, bringing in additional staff, Lasley added. The 911 system has been fully upgraded, and the telephone system has been replaced with Y2K compliant equipment. "We've retired a number of systems," he said.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. About \$100,000, said Lasley. That includes software upgrades and \$4,000 to replace the phone system.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. School buildings would be used if needed. The American Red Cross would be responsible for setting up emergency provisions in shelters if needed, Lasley said.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "We've been working on this project close to two years now," Lasley said. "We feel very confident and comfortable with where we stand. I would say we're very ready."

Plymouth Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. The city has evaluated its information systems and made necessary replacement or upgrades, according to Tom Alexandris, information systems manager for the city of Plymouth. Hard copies have been made of all vital files just in case. "We're going to have a couple of people on staff, but not necessarily in city hall," Alexandris said of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Extra police officers will be on patrol to handle usual New Year's problems, such as drunken driving. Other staff members will be on call if needed.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. An estimated \$50,000, which includes \$23,000 for new personal computers, \$15,000 for a new phone system and other miscellaneous expenses, Alexandris said.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Yes. Plymouth would work with Wayne County Emergency Management Division and with the Plymouth Community Fire Department in setting up emergency shelters within the community. "There would be buildings available," he said. "Which ones will be determined on a case-by-case basis."

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "I would say that regarding the systems and equipment that the city has direct control over, the city has done a good job in identifying, analyzing and making sure it is Y2K ready," he said. "For the systems that the city does not have direct control over, we've got assurances from those companies that we'll have service."

Plymouth Twp. Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "Our intent is to have our emergency operations center up and running by 9 a.m. Dec. 31 to 3 a.m. Jan. 1, 2000," said Chuck VanVleck, Plymouth Township's emergency management coordinator. Key people are expected to be on hand at the center, located in the police station. A "rumor control" committee will also be working the phones. Residents with non-emergency questions about Y2K are being asked to call that number at (734) 453-3869, not 911. VanVleck said.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. Not available.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Yes, if necessary, the township would use Salvation Army facilities or schools, VanVleck said.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "The township is prepared to help our citizens if needed," VanVleck said. "Our attitude is it's just another emergency in the winter."

Redford Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. Township Supervisor Kevin Kelley has met with all his department heads," said Leo Snaga, director of Redford Township's Department of Public Services. In addition to regular meetings, the township has also purchased emergency supplies, such as generators and stop signs. Township hall will be staffed at midnight, Jan. 1 to ensure any problems are handled quickly. "All the key personnel will be on hand," Snaga said.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. Roughly \$100,000, according to Finance Director John Cubba. That includes \$24,000 for software upgrades, \$65,000 for hardware, \$2,500 for new fingerprinting equipment, and \$3,000 for Dictaphone equipment.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. "Any municipal building could be used," Snaga said. In addition, school gymnasiums also could be used.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "For knowing the uncertainty and not knowing what's going to happen, the township has done a good job" preparing, Snaga said. "The nice thing about living in the United States is we'll have a six-hour lead time," he said, referring to the time zone difference between the U.S. and New Zealand, the first country to experience Y2K.

Westland Y2K Q & A

Q. What specific plans have been made for Dec. 31/Jan. 1, or the potential Y2K situation in your town?

A. "All directors and extra staff will be on hand at city hall," said Charles Nalbandian, Westland information management director. In addition, outdated personal computers and some police communications equipment have been replaced. "The computers have all been checked out" for Y2K compliance, he said.

Q. How much has the city spent on its preparations?

A. "We don't really have one account that we could say is a Y2K account," said Nalbandian, who was unable to provide a figure for the Observer. Many of the expenses, such as computer replacement, were routine and not directly Y2K related.

Q. Are there shelters ready to set up in the city?

A. Bailey Recreation Center, the Friendship Center and other city buildings could be used. "There's no way for us to accommodate 85,000 people," he said.

Q. Give us a quote on how prepared the city is:

A. "I think we're prepared," he said. "I think in terms of city functions there shouldn't be any problems. The only thing that really is for people to prepare as much as they can. Something can happen at any time during the year."