

Edison: New line to lessen outages

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A massive underground system of electrical cable should help Farmington Hills residents avoid power outages.

Detroit Edison is finishing installation of feeds from the 120KV (kilovolt) line that runs under 11 Mile from Inkster to Middlebelt and under 12 Mile west of Middlebelt across the city. The line connects with the Southfield station.

"It's operating without difficulty," said John Thomas, the project manager for Edison. "This will reduce outages by 43 percent."

Thomas said the new cable breaks up circuits into smaller areas so that a power outage in one neighborhood would be limited to a few houses rather than a larger area. In addition, the new line would have older circuits as a backup, which would make it possible to restore service in a shorter time.

In addition, the buried cable will extend service to new areas that are now being developed.

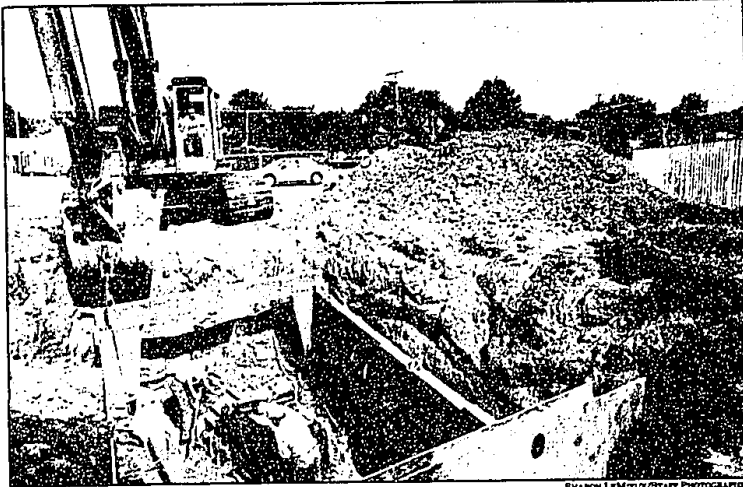
Tom Blasek, Farmington Hills director of public services, said Edison had not told the city it would do as much underground work as it did. The cleanup after the work was slow at first.

"We wanted them to clean up at each stage," he said. "We've rectified that situation and they are now doing a better job."

A special auger was used to dig the hole for the pipe holding the line, but work crews had trouble going under Skye Drive and Arden Park.

"They tried to go under, but it was causing too many problems, so we let them cut through (those streets at 11 Mile)," he said.

Ray Okonaki, a resident of Skye Drive, said he was impressed with the job the construction crew did.



SHAWN LEMMON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Connecting cables: The Detroit Edison work at 11 Mile and Middlebelt is being contracted out to general contractor Peter Baisle of Livonia.

Outages from page 1A

Farmington's Public Safety Department received 29 calls for help, including the man on the ladder.

A tree limb crashed through the windshield of a car being driven at Freedom and Tree Hill. No one was injured, said Farmington Public Safety Deputy Director Mike Wiggins.

"We're going to be working well into the weekend," said Edison's Bean.

About 100 Edison linemen from Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania are helping area crews. And Edison office staff members are in the field guarding downed lines.

"Our first priority with down lines is to cut and clear," said Edison spokesman Scott Simons.

Fire station down
Edison had told city officials that hospitals, nursing homes and public services, such as the fire

department, would receive top priority, Garr said.

"Station 2 has been down and is still down," Garr said Friday morning. "They said they'd have a crew out by noon. So, we'll see."

If Garr's comments reflect a certain skepticism born of experience, Hills City Manager Bill Costick was a little more blunt.

"We've gotten a lot of calls from people who are frustrated," Costick said. "And I'm frustrated."

Costick said he understands that the storm did a lot of damage. "What troubles me is that they've had this problem, and they still haven't gotten enough crews to respond," he said. "And another problem we keep hearing about are people who've had their power out several times."

Costick said despite the 120KV line running along 12 Mile to the substation at Inkster and 11 Mile,

power outages are a regular occurrence. As of Friday morning, five major intersections — 12 Mile and Farmington, 12 Mile and Middlebelt, 13 Mile and Farmington, Drake and 13 Mile, and Grand River and Orchard Lake — were still without power.

"I'm always getting calls from people who lived in Cincinnati and other cities who didn't have power outages until they came here," Costick said.

Costick's losing power. One of those frustrated residents said he's lost power seven times since January.

"I know this storm did some damage," said Doug Burley, a Birchwood Street resident (north of Eight Mile and east of Farmington). "But I've never had this anywhere else. We've also had brown outs (voltage drops)."

Burley said he is fed up. "I'm ready to get tough with

Edison," he said. "We lost our power just from some wind. We hadn't even had lightning."

Matt Wiegand, a Hills resident who lives on Briarwood, was out of power — and out of patience with Edison.

"Everything in our freezer is melting," she said Friday. "I've called Edison, called and called, but I just get the recorded message."

Simons said Edison will complete repairs before making any judgments about what, if any, changes the company would make in how it responds to such massive outages.

Farmington residents weren't spared having the plug pulled. Power outages were reported in Farmington Oaks and Farmington Meadows subdivisions Friday.

Editor Tom Baer contributed to this report.

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