

Q&A: Here's some answers

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So why is it that when your electric power goes out, your telephone still works?

They both need electricity, don't they?

They do, said Detroit Edison representatives Thursday night - but the telephone lines happen to be a few notches below the power lines on the pole.

So if a branch falls, it likely will knock out the lights, but you can still call the cops, the fire department - and Detroit Edison.

The telephone question was among those which the electric utility people, headed up by Edison Media Relations Manager Jim Conley, sought to answer for frustrated area residents at Thursday night's Farmington Hills/Detroit Edison Citizens Committee meeting at the Hills' fire department headquarters.

Other answers:
■ Contrary to popular belief, everybody on the block must call Edison when the power goes out.

Some people thought that if only one of them called and said "Everybody on my block is out," that would do the trick.

But Conley explained that the more calls Edison receives from a certain location, the better it - via its computer system - can judge the extent and severity of a power outage.

When three or more calls come in from a particular area, the computer system takes over and begins prioritizing us to which need repair crews soonest, Conley said.

■ Momentary power outages - those lasting only a few seconds - are often caused by tree branches brushing power lines.

"Sometimes you or your neighbors need a tree trimmed back because the momentary contact briefly causes a disconnect in the system, said Bill Roberts, an Edison spokesman.

"But sometimes it's caused by the switching mechanism" in Edison's automated distribution system, he said.

The system, in which Edison invested "a lot of money," pre-

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vents a lot of customer outages when the main circuit goes out. It's operated either by a radio signal from a substation or manually, Roberts said.

As for the tree-trimming, sometimes - as in major power outages - Edison has no choice but to do a quick and not very pretty job of getting trees cut back from the lines, a spokesman said.

■ Why does Edison always seem to give a six-hour time-frame in which power will be restored?

"Because we're pretty sure we can restore it" in that time, Conley said.

■ Why can't people talk to a live person instead of the computer system in emergencies?

Partly because of the manpower needs, Conley said. However, the company is "staffing up the call center" in Southfield to handle more calls personally.

But the automated system has been upgraded tremendously over the last few years, going

from 2,600 calls per hour to 40,000 now and 45,000 in the near future, Conley said.

"It allows us to get more information in faster," he said.

■ Why are there power outages on sunny days?

Sometimes the transmission line sags due to overload, said Conley and the other Edison staffers. At other times, equipment which has been damaged by a storm goes out at a later date, or a tree limb damaged in one storm falls on the lines days or weeks later.

Edison will spend more than \$500 million this year in southeastern Michigan to maintain and upgrade its system, Conley said.

In general, the company tests pole equipment every five years, replaces equipment every seven years and does line service ever 3.5 years, he said.

Conley also said Edison has spent \$85 million to avoid the Year 2000 (Y2K) bug, but nevertheless will have "thousands on duty Dec. 31 just in case."

"It's not unusual to have disturbances on New Year's Eve" anyway, he noted.

Court from page A1

Harrison High School Homecoming Court.

Last year's Homecoming Queen, Dominique Jackson, introduced this year's court and crowned her successor: Senior Lisa Rosemary.

Lisa is active in Students Against Drunk Driving and the National Honor Society, is captain of the varsity volleyball team and will be a member of the track and field squad.

Rounding out her court are seniors Kimmy Cass, Stacy Sargol, Jillian Troflick, freshman Jenna Yambor, sophomore Beth Brozovich and junior Kelly Taylor.

Crowned Homecoming King at the dance, attended by about 800 students, was senior Rahul Boinpally. Nominees included seniors Kevin Woods, Brad Tucker and David Marshall.

Friday's "Field Day" featured everything from pie-eating contests to water-balloon tosses. Throughout Spirit Week, students had different ways to show their school

enthusiasm: Monday, Greaser Day; Tuesday, College Colors Day; Wednesday, Twins' Day; Thursday, Hippie Day; Friday, Class Colors Day.

Lighting up school fun at North

"Candyland" was the theme of North Farmington High School's Homecoming festivities. Principal Rick Jones said Saturday's game, parade and dance capped off a great week that actually began the previous weekend, when students decorated the school.

Three ginger-bread houses and a giant M&M were among the float offerings this year, as everybody connected with the festivities had a sweet time.

Friday night's pep rally and bonfire really stirred up the enthusiasm for the following day, Jones said.

On Saturday, seniors Katie Wolk and Brian Lafer were crowned Queen and King, respectively. The rest of the Homecoming Court included: Seniors - Jessica Bigelman, Evan Leibhan, Brian McClary,

'Candyland' was the theme of North Farmington High School's Homecoming festivities.

Krystle Richardson; freshmen - Jimmy Wolk, prince, Bryan Allen, princess; sophomores - Troy Anderson, prince, Lindsey Silbershain, princess; juniors - Andy Smith, prince, Julie Schindler, princess.

Jones said about 700-to-800 attended the Homecoming dance Saturday evening.

And, like over at Harrison, Spirit Week gave North students the chance to dress up in various outfits to match the daily theme.

Farmington High School's homecoming game and dance are scheduled for Friday, Oct. 8 and Saturday, Oct. 9, respectively.

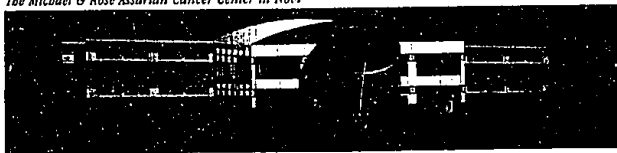
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