



# DECEMBER DELIVERS MORE STORMS



## High winds, slippery conditions create challenges

**A**fter the January issue of this magazine was written, we had additional storms in December that wreaked a bit of havoc. High winds not only prevented the Ferry Line from running just prior to Christmas, but they also caused us to spend about 10 hours out restoring power due to various outages.

These outages were handled, but due to the wind and slippery conditions, were no fun (what outage is?). At one point, yours truly had a bit of an undergarment-soiling experience involving the bucket truck sliding backwards and sideways down a hill towards a very steep drop-off that, had it not been for an intervening stump that stopped progress, likely would have resulted in

the bucket truck being on its side.

It might be difficult to see in this photo, but the left rear duals are not touching the ground and the rear bumper is supported by a stump that stopped a disaster. Thanks to Tom and Brien Jordan and their rubber-tired loader, the truck was carefully lifted back onto stable footing and we were able to continue with our power restoration efforts.

One thing about having a big 4x4...you can get yourself into bigger trouble than with a small 4x4 because you think you can go places that you simply should not. I never should have attempted to go where I went!

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## December Storms

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Most of the outages causes were small in nature, and considering the sustained winds are in the 50 MPH range, we were lucky.

One outage was caused when a large pine was blown across all three phases on Range Line Road. Of interest, the lines were not broken (very strained) and the power was out because we shut it off in order to clear the tree.

Unfortunately, we did not take the time to take a photo of the tree on the lines, but the photo below was taken after the fact, with Don in the photo for a bit of perspective.

We feel like we lucked out during this storm because they had a much busier day down the county and we did not lose power from the mainland. Cooperatives in the western part of the state were very busy.



Overview: the large pine that is now under the lines was once across all three phases. Above: While not caused by this current round of storms, this pole was leaning severely and required straightening prior to fiber being attached. Trees going across the lines had actually pulled the guy anchor out and the lines were sagging.





## DECEMBER EVENTS LEAD TO MISO EMERGENCY

I know I sound like a broken record when I discuss the transition from reliable stable power sources to natural gas and renewables, but you are going to have to continue to hear me. On Christmas Eve, cold temperatures (not really that cold) and a disruption in natural gas supply at the pipeline level, led to the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which manages the grid in our region, to declare an emergency.

Some of you reading this in the southern part of the state will remember that you were asked to lower thermostats and conserve electricity. Alliant was notifying its interruptible customers of imminent disconnect and there was serious concern that rolling blackouts would be required.

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) was on a call with the group from Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and I suspect that WEM was having a moment much like the moment I had when my truck was sliding backwards towards the edge of the drop-off.

I was on the phone with WPS System Operating and they were very on edge and had their list of interruptible customers out (as you know, we are an interruptible customer). When I jokingly told them to fire up one of the coal plants, there was a bit of nervous laughter since many of these plants are gone. This is not a very funny situation we are in and I am afraid that it is likely to only deteriorate further.

Interestingly, we had no day ahead hours of interruption (another broken record conversation), which indicates how precarious things actually are and how an unplanned pipeline issue can put us over the proverbial ledge.

## SUPPLY-CHAIN ISSUES STILL A CONCERN

Supply-chain interruptions and costs continue to be an issue for us, but we actually received a shipment of transformers nearly two months earlier than predicted. Unfortunately, due to escalations in material costs, they are running nearly 30% more expensive than the last batch.

Of course, arriving this time of year presents another challenge with the ferry running on a reservation basis and with two (sometimes three) trips per day. We sent our equipment trailer over so the truck could be unloaded at Northport and Joel and Jeff did a fine job at getting the truck

driver on his way and the transformers back to the Island. We should be in pretty good shape from a transformer standpoint for a while now.

Conductor still remains an issue and our cable-in-conduit orders are running very long, with an order from August not slated to arrive until April.

Even simple items like machine bolts and other small hardware are in a serious delay situation.

We are trying to stay on top of things and are very concerned regarding the next round of fiber material orders (that necessarily must wait for grant decisions or they will not be reimbursable).

### Fiber Update:

## WINTER PUTS A PAUSE IN WORK, BUT PROJECT IS ON TRACK

We believe we are fast approaching the expected winter weather-related hiatus in our project, but we are taking advantage of every good day (and even some bad ones). Even once we have called off the work until winter subsides a bit, we will still work to make progress where we reasonably can. Splicing equipment does not work as well when it is cold out and neither do people, especially if we have to fight snowdrifts to get somewhere. Yes, we have the splicing trailer, but the splices at the NIDs at your home or business have to be made outside in the elements. While we are still working at the time of this writing, I expect by the time you read this, we will have stopped for a period.

We do feel fairly confident that we will be able to make our goal of completing all those areas (plus some) outlined in our grant by the end of next summer. In the January issue, we described the current round of grants that we are working on and will hopefully know more by the end of April (or who knows when) regarding our status.

In the meantime, be patient! We will get to you!

We are also having discussions with Nsight and doing initial planning for additional small cell installations in various locations to help improve cellular coverage in some of the dead spots. As you already know, a small cell will be installed at Schoolhouse Beach (hopefully in the spring) as part of the current project. More are needed though in order to handle dead areas like the balance of Washington Harbor, most of the Jackson Harbor area, and large portions of Lobdell Point Road. Without fiber, even considering these small cell installations would not be possible. We will keep you informed of where this stands as well!

Neighbors helping neighbors: WIEC loaned the bucket truck to Karcz Utility Services for use on Liberty Grove's fiber pilot project.



## ONE PROJECT LEADS TO ANOTHER

### Liberty Grove community benefitting from Island fiber project

As you are probably already aware, our fiber project has sparked a wave of other projects and investigation into projects countywide. Of particular note are Liberty Grove and Bailey's Harbor, which are both jumping in with two feet.

As we have discussed in the past, the route chosen for the feeder fiber on the mainland went around Kenosha and North Port Des Morts on their

way to the ferry dock rather than simply going straight on Highway 42. This was done in order to make our grant application look better since we passed more homes; however, it was also done so that those homes could eventually be served at some future time.

Our project here on the Island is enabling an adjacent community to benefit as well. This has now become

reality rather than simple future conjecture as Liberty Grove now has a pilot project on this route with a number of customers lit up.

Washington Island has not only played a role in enabling this project, but we also loaned our bucket truck to Karcz so they could run drops to homes along this route. (And don't worry, this did not take away or slow down our own efforts at progress).

#### Robert Cornell, Manager

1157 Main Road, Washington Island, WI 54246

920-847-2541

info@wiecoop.com

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

