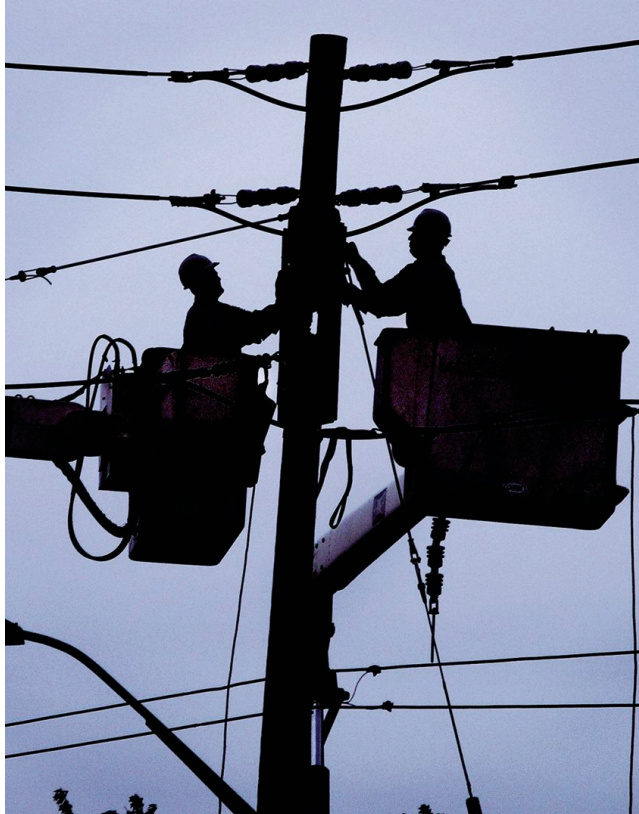


High winds spark power outage, fire danger

October 30, 2019



High winds contributed to a loss of power for almost 10,000 Del Norte residents and a red flag fire danger warning for parts of the county.

Around 9,900 Del Norte County residents lost power last night, Tuesday, Oct. 29, due to a fallen tree hitting a power line on Highway 101 and Rossini Lane in Smith River, California.

The power went out around 11:25 p.m. for customers from Smith River to Crescent City.

At around midnight, Pacific Power crews rerouted the power restoring electricity to over 8,000 customers, but the remaining 1,063 customers did not receive power until 10:09 this morning, Thursday, Oct. 30. Crews worked through the night to repair the downed power line, according to Pacific Power Spokesperson Tom Gauntt.

Gauntt said the fallen tree hitting the power lines was most likely caused by high winds, especially those through the Smith River Canyon.

High winds also contributed to portions of Del Norte County being on a red flag warning until 4 p.m. Oct. 30. These winds are not the usual coastal winds, rather they are “easterly winds” found in the mountainous regions, according to Ryan Aylward, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

The winds near Gasquet and Ship Mountain, which reached close to 40 miles per hour, and the low humidity contributed to the red flag warning, signaling fire danger.

Winds are estimated to die down this afternoon with maybe a few isolated gusts, which will lessen the fire threat, according to Aylward. Still no rain is forecasted for the next week.

While high winds like those experienced last night can pose difficulties for power companies, Pacific Power builds systems with higher tolerance in coastal communities where high winds are common, according to Gauntt. They also adjust the tightness of the lines so that there is some leeway for the wind.

“That’s why the guys who [set up the power lines] know what they’re doing. They fit it to the climate,” Gauntt said. “This is what we do, make sure it has the right strength and reliability for the area it’s in.”

Outages from wind are a “very rare occasion,” according to Gauntt, but he encourages people to be watchful and to manage their own property if they see trees or branches that need to be pruned.

Though the high winds calmed in Del Norte County, Siskiyou Mountain pass and inland near Redding still have a red flag warning. Aylward warned anyone driving inland to be careful of fire danger as the weather there is still very dry and windy.