

Powerline fire cuts power to 1,400

September 16, 2019



Crescent City Fire and Rescue responded to a downed powerline at the corner of B and 9th streets at 2:20 p.m. Thursday that left more than 1,400 Crescent City residents without power, said Pacific Power.

A tree limb struck a telephone wire that caused it to spark and ignite a small fire on a patch of grass in an empty lot across the street.

The fire burned for about five minutes before the fire department responded, said Ed Ruonavaara, a resident who assisted in extinguishing the fire. Ruonavaara said he was in his house when he heard an explosion and looked out to see the fire starting across the street.

By the time Crescent City Fire and Rescue arrived, residents had put out most of the fire using garden hoses, said Del Norte County Sgt. Gene McManus, who was on the scene directing traffic.

Pacific Power arrived to shut down the electricity. Interim Fire Chief Bill Gillespie warned residents not to go near any downed power lines until Pacific Power confirmed it was safe.

A number of residents and businesses immediately lost power. Local banks closed their doors, while other businesses took to Facebook or made phone calls regarding the outage.

Courtnei Vanlandingham, owner of Enoteca, a restaurant and bar on 3rd Street, said the outage almost completely halted business there for the afternoon. With no backup generator, she said, she could not serve warm foods nor open her coolers for fear the goods inside would spoil.

“My cook was cooking a cheeseburger, which didn’t go very far, but luckily we only had two tables because we had gotten through our lunch rush,” Vanlandingham said.

“We’ll have to close the doors for (Thursday) night because as soon as it starts getting dark, we can’t do anything, which is gonna’ kinda’ be sucky, because we have trivia (games) tonight.”

Although most downtown businesses were affected, Johnston’s Gift Garden Home next to Enoteca experienced no loss of power, which generally was restored downtown about 4 p.m.

Many of the residents closer to the downed line didn’t receive power until nearly 6 p.m.

McManus said that when Fire and Rescue released him at 4:30 p.m., Pacific Power was still working on restoring power to the city.

Triplicate reporters Jessica Goddard and David Hayes contributed to this story.