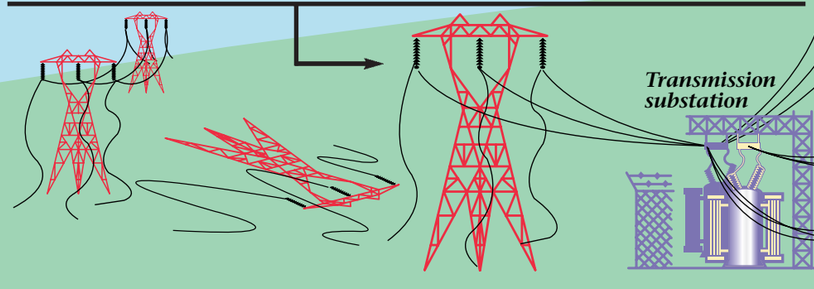
After the storm:

The steps to restoring power

Step 1. Transmission towers and lines supply power to one or more transmission substations. These lines seldom fail, but they can be damaged by a hurricane, tornado or ice. Tens of thousands of people could be served by one high-voltage transmission line, so if there is damage here it gets attention first.



Step 2. A municipal electric system may have several local distribution substations, each serving thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, the local distribution substations are checked first. A problem here could be caused by failure in the transmission system supplying the substation. If the problem can be corrected at the substation level, power may be restored to a large number of people.

Step 3. Main distribution supply lines are checked next if the problem cannot be isolated at the substation. These supply lines carry electricity away from the substation to a group of consumers, such as a town or housing development. When power is restored at this stage, all consumers served by this supply line could see the lights come on, as long as there is no problem farther down the line.

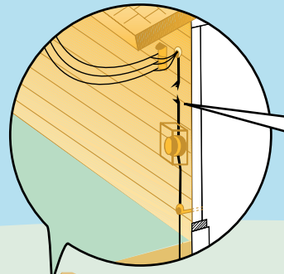
Hurricanes and ice storms. Tornadoes and blizzards. Customers of public power systems have have seen them all in the past 10 years. And with such severe weather comes power outages. Restoring power after a major outage is a big job that involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line.

The main goal is to restore power safely to the greatest number of customers in the shortest time possible.

The major cause of outages is damage caused by fallen trees. That's why your municipal electric system has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program.

This illustration explains how power typically is restored after a major disaster, like a hurricane or ice storm. While power restoration priorities may differ from utility to utility, electric system repairs generally follow a plan similar to the one illustrated here.

Step 5. Sometimes, damage will occur on the service line between your house and the transformer on the nearby pole. This can explain why you have no power when your neighbor does. Your utility needs to know you have an outage here, so a service crew can repair it.



Area enlarged: Customers are responsible for damage to the service installation on the building. Your municipal electric system can't fix this. Call a licensed electrician.

Tap Line

Transmission substation

Local substation

Local substation

Local substation

Step 4. The final supply lines, called tap lines, carry power to the utility poles or underground transformers outside houses or other buildings. Line crews fix the remaining outages based on restoring service to the greatest number of consumers.

Tap Line

DANGER! Stay clear of fallen lines

Report your outage to the utility office. Employees or response services use every available phone line to receive your outage reports. Remember that a major outage can affect thousands of other members. Your municipal electric system appreciates your patience.

Municipal Electric Department

Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depends on life support, call your utility before an emergency arises. When a significant outage occurs, your municipal electric system will fix your problem as quickly as possible.