

News

Independence Day outage darkens Edison customers

By JACK STOREY/*The Evening News*

SAULT STE. MARIE - About 2,500 Edison Sault customers spent part of Independence Day without electric power after the company's Magazine Street substation failed early Tuesday morning.

Edison official Charlie Litzner said Edison crews summoned to repair the damage discovered that a bird landed on the station's grounding tower, causing a chain reaction that darkened several sections of the city.

Litzner said the grounding tower tripped a breaker that broke connection between the downtown substation and the Corps of Engineers, triggering the widespread outage. He said it affected customers from the "island" area of downtown Sault Ste. Marie to the "hill" district around Lake Superior State University and War Memorial Hospital. The outage also darkened the city industrial park and the Algonquin area of the city.

The hospital's power was restored by a switch in supply circuits after about one hour in the dark, Litzner said.

In addition, a number of customers on the city's southside lost power for three hours or so during the incident, but Litzner could not immediately account for those scattered outages. He explained that all or most of the southside district has been placed on power supplied by the company's Portage Avenue substation, which did not fail in Tuesday's outage.

He said the Magazine Street substation, source of many power troubles over the years, resulted in a "multitude of problems" around the substation and the area it serves.

Combined repair crews from Edison's Sault area and another dispatched from St. Ignace managed to get most power restored by shortly after 10 a.m. Litzner said a number of scattered customers may have been off-line slightly longer on Tuesday.

Strong northwesterly winds strengthened during the day on Tuesday, bringing down a number of tree limbs through the afternoon hours. It was not clear if downed tree limbs caused any additional power losses. Tuesday's outage was apparently confined to Sault Ste. Marie.

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