

Storms Knock Out Power To 20,000

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Thunderstorms accompanied by 50 to 55 mile an hour winds knocked out electrical service to 20,000 Union Electric customers in St. Louis and St. Louis County last night, a company spokesman reported.

The late evening storm dampened many families' Memorial Day outings. Extensive damage or serious injuries were not reported. Lightning started a house fire and a barn fire in Franklin County. All 131 homes in Bridgeton Terrace lost power.

Union Electric customers were affected by power outages in the southwestern part of St. Louis, Eureka, St. Ann, St. John, Bridgeton, Maryland Heights and parts of Florissant, Clayton and University City.

Service was restored to about 19,500 customers by 6 a.m. today, leaving about 500 customers without power. A spokesman for Union Electric said the remaining outages were scattered over a wide area and that full service should be restored by mid-day.

A spokesman for the National Weather Service said the gale-force winds snapped power lines and felled trees throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The St. Louis Fire Department reported that it received 100 calls last night, many of them for minor fires touched off by downed power lines and fallen trees.

Area police departments were busy clearing away fallen tree limbs, rerouting traffic and handling minor accidents. Several municipalities were hampered by nonfunctioning traffic signals and street lights.

Clayton police reported that traffic signals were out on Brentwood Boulevard and Hanley Road. But no traffic accidents were reported there. Bridgeton police said that traffic signals on heavily traveled Lindbergh Boulevard also stopped working.

The Missouri Highway Patrol reported that a minor automobile accident occurred when a motorist hit a tree that had fallen across Highway 141 north of Big Bend Road in west St. Louis County.

Scattered power failures, downed utility wires and fallen trees were reported in most St. Louis County municipalities, Jefferson and Franklin Counties and in Madison and St. Clair Counties in Illinois.

In Franklin County, sheriff's deputies reported that lightning struck a barn in New Haven and a house in St. Clair, setting both on fire. A tree fell across Highway 100 near Pacific, blocking traffic for a time, the deputies reported.

Bridgeton Terrace Police Sergeant Charles W. Sparks said that most of the city's 332 residents were nonchalant about the total power blackout in the northwest St. Louis County suburb.

"It seems to happen to us quite often," Sparks said. "There's not much you can do except stay home and don't fret about it."

The National Weather Service reported that .18 inch of rain fell during the storms.

The Cedar Hill Bowling Alley in Jefferson County was extensively damaged about 5:30 p.m. yesterday. The storm destroyed about half of the roof. The bowling lanes were then exposed to the rain. The bowling alley is on old Highway 30 in downtown Cedar Hill.