



Power outages cause inconveniences throughout campus lately

Many factors have contributed to the abundance of power outages experienced on campus since the semester's start.

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Power outages have become a frequent headache for the campus over the past few weeks. According to Facilities Services, some of these were planned, but others were accidental.

According to Greg Ahrendson, school project manager, many of these outages have been the result of the high incidences of lightning strikes near campus. Ahrendson said, "We have had an unusually high number of lightning storms this year."

It has also been rumored that some of these outages are the result of a transformer blowing. A transformer's main purpose is to change the voltage of power. Usually, power lines have extremely high voltage, and a transformer is required to lower the voltage so that it is usable by homes and businesses. A blown transformer is simply

one that no longer works.

Patty Blackwell of Facilities Services said that these outages are problematic for everyone. "Phones will not work, hot water disappears, and many computers around campus must be re-programmed after the power has returned," she said.

Junior Christen Higgins also remembers problems caused by past power outages. "I was unable to get into my dorm because without electricity, the CamCard entry would not work," she said.

So far this semester, the campus has experienced three power outages. On the first day of classes, August 21, the campus lost power, possibly due to a lightning strike which may have been direct or indirect.

Ahrendson said that this was the first power outage the campus experienced since Hurricane Bonnie in 2000. In order to regain

power, CP&L had to come to campus to turn the system back on.

The second power outage occurred the following Saturday. CP&L once again came to campus and turned the power back on.

The third power outage was Tuesday, September 4. This power outage was the longest in duration.

Ahrendson said, "This is when we realized that it was a much more complicated problem."

Facilities Services decided to check every sub switch on campus for any damage which could consequently cause periodic power outages. The result of this campus-wide search was one element located in a switch box behind the Cate Center that was fused and melted, possibly due to a lightning strike. In order to repair the switch box, the power needed to remain off while a new switch was acquired and wired into the system.

In addition to these unexpected power outages, dates and times have been posted around campus to inform everyone of upcoming pre-planned outages. These will be caused by preventative maintenance on switchgears for building systems and also due to construction projects.

Switchgears are massive circuit breakers that switch the power from one circuit to another. Generally, they are fused so that if there is a voltage surge, the switch will automatically trip and turn itself off. The construction projects could be the new Science and Mathematics Building or smaller projects such as a new dryer being wired into the costume shop for the theatre department.

The most recent of these scheduled outages was last Thursday, September 12. The initial problem was with a blown breaker for Belk Dining Hall and the

boiler room. This also affected Jones, Wainwright, Johnson, Barefoot, Heilman and Noel House because these buildings run off the same system.

The breaker itself did not cause the power outage. The power was turned off so that the switch could be isolated, and disconnected and the new one rewired. Workers are unable to work on the system while the power is still running.

Unfortunately, if there is a power outage in the boiler room, there is no hot water for the campus. Senior Crystal Whitley recalled, "No one was able to shower without hot water. In addition, it made it very difficult to get work done."

"I was unable to write a paper for homework," Whitley said. She added, "Everybody has things to do. Having no power makes everyone get behind."

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