

What's Current

NOVEC

The Powerful Choice

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Working to Restore Power After the Snowstorm

Since last month's snowstorm occurred on a weekend, many of our customers were able to relax and enjoy the beauty of the storm rather than having to commute to work in the bad weather. However, for 12,000 NOVEC customers it was less than enjoyable. They were inconvenienced during the course of the storm by outages.

Starting in the early evening hours of Saturday, February 11, NOVEC crews began working around the clock to restore power. Heavy, wet snow, combined with significant wind gusts, caused trees to fall across distribution lines throughout a three-day period. "There were areas on our system where we literally had to cut our way in to reach the problem and make repairs," Operations Assistant Vice President Allen Barbee commented. "NOVEC has



The storm created a some beautiful scenery that Sunday morning, but it also caused widespread power outages.

a comprehensive right-of-way maintenance program, but many of the trees that caused problems were outside our easements and were otherwise healthy."

Prince William, Stafford and Fairfax counties had the highest number of customers affected. The most customers were without power on Sunday and into Monday. By early morning on Tuesday, February 14, power was restored to all but seven customers.

"Planning and preparation are key components of our service restoration plan," explained Barbee. "We monitor

weather forecasts and our personnel were on stand-by to enable initial quick response. Advance arrangements were made with contractors to assist with tree removal and service restoration. We also had crews from Prince George and Community Electric Cooperatives helping to restore power."

"We thank customers for their patience," Barbee said. "They seemed to understand what we were up against and appreciated our efforts to get service restored safely and quickly."

Use IVR for Quicker Outage Reporting

While we realize many customers would like to hear a live voice when calling to report a power outage, using NOVEC's interactive voice response system (IVR) can actually help us restore your power more quickly. Your phone call to the automated IVR system is used to drive outage-reporting software that helps determine the cause of the outage.

Use of the IVR system helps NOVEC staff assess outage problems more quickly and accurately. Therefore, next time you call to report an outage, why not use the IVR system? Simply dial (888) 335-0500 or (703) 335-0500 and listen to the automated instructions.

IVR & Website Perform

NOVEC's **interactive voice response (IVR)** phone system proved itself worthy of a major storm. During the storm it processed 16,731 calls, enabling staff to quickly process outage reports and dispatch crews to the repair sites.

NOVEC's **online outage map** was a valuable tool for customers and particularly for news media. Rather than calling NOVEC, radio stations such as WTOP visited www.novec.com to access the publicly available outage map to view real time data from our outage management system. They could then report outage locations and how many customers were affected.



Do We Have Your Correct Phone Number?

- ▶ When you report a power outage, do you use your home or cell phone?
- ▶ What phone number does NOVEC have on record for your account?

NOVEC's interactive voice response system (IVR) recognizes only the first phone number listed on your account, which can be either a land-line or cell phone number. When you call from any other number you will be prompted to enter the phone number that is on record for your account, which takes extra time and delays the reporting of your outage.

Please take a few minutes to check your phone number on record. It's easy! Simply call (703)335-0500 or (888)335-0500, press prompt #2 and follow the directions. Please have your NOVEC account number handy when you call.

Programmable Thermostats for Heat Pumps

To maximize your energy savings without sacrificing comfort, you can install an automatic setback or programmable thermostat to work with your heat pump. These thermostats automatically adjust your home's temperature settings, allowing you to save energy while you're away or sleeping. Although thermostats can be adjusted manually, programmable thermostats help avoid any discomfort by returning temperatures to normal before you wake or return home.

When programming the thermostat with a heat pump use small setbacks. For example, program the thermostat to cut your heat back about 5 degrees when you're asleep or away from your home during the day. Typical recommended settings for optimal comfort and cost savings are 68°F in the

winter and 78°F in the summer. To program your thermostat, simply add (summer) or subtract (winter) 5 degrees for your set back temperatures.

Be sure to purchase a programmable thermostat designed for heat pump use.

Most manufacturers also offer models specifically for heat pumps with backup auxiliary heat. Most programmable thermostats retail for under \$100.

For more information about programmable thermostats, visit the ENERGY STAR web site at www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=thermostats.pr_thermostats.



When used properly, a programmable thermostat can help heat pump users save valuable energy dollars.



Operation Round Up – Small Change Changes Lives

Did you know that the spare change in your pocket can help keep a family warm during the cold winter? Well, it can! Through NOVEC's Operation Round Up program, you can help NOVEC customers who find themselves unable to pay their winter heating bills.

How Can I Help?

Operation Round Up (ORU) is a program in which your monthly electric bill is rounded up to the next whole dollar. For example, if your March electric bill was \$78.32, you would be billed for an even \$79.00 and the extra 68 cents would go to the ORU fund. It may not sound like a big contribution, but the spare change adds up!

Average Contribution

The maximum amount that can be round up from a customer's electric bill per year is \$11.88. However, the average customer contributes just \$6 per year. NOVEC absorbs all administrative expenses, so 100 percent of money donated goes directly to the fund.

Who Approves Funds Distribution?

The ORU fund is administered by a nine-member volunteer customer advisory board. These board members, from all areas of NOVEC's service territory, meet every other month to determine how the funds will be distributed.

Winter Heating Assistance

Through donations to heating assistance programs at area social service agencies, ORU helps local families in need pay their winter heating bills. During this heating season, from November 2005-February 2006, ORU distributed \$46,000 in assistance.

We Need You!

ORU is a voluntary program, but the more support we get from our customers, the more lives we can help change! If you would like to enroll in Operation Round Up or for more information, call (703) 392-1511 or (888) 335-0500, ext. 1511 or send e-mail to dsnellings@novec.com.

Additional Donations

If you are already an ORU participant, you can also make an additional contribution to the fund by writing in the extra amount on your monthly NOVEC billing statement and including this amount with your payment. You may also stop by any NOVEC office to make a donation.

Speedpay changes coming soon!
Look for more information in next month's bill insert.



Check out the Power Kids Website!

Have you seen NOVEC's "Power Kids" web pages? They feature a family of robots ready to teach kids about electricity, electrical safety and energy conservation. There are also fun interactive games for elementary age children! Check it out at www.novec.com – just click on the Power Kids logo.

We welcome any comments about these new web pages. Send e-mail to Inia Burginger at vburginger@novec.com, or call (703) 392-1540 or (888) 335-0500, extension 1540.



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