

## September storms batter the Chugach system

September was a punishing month for Chugach customers and the electric system that serves them. Repeated windstorms were followed by massive amounts of rain, resulting in outages and flooding. Three separate storms with winds over 100 miles per hour hit the Anchorage Bowl, and rainfall amounts for Anchorage through Sept. 25 were 5.42 inches above normal for the month.

The first – and most damaging – of the windstorms hit on the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 4, slamming into the Anchorage Bowl with widespread strong winds that caught full leaf deciduous trees standing in rain-softened soil. While some official measuring stations were knocked offline early, winds were estimated at well over 100 mph – with one report of a gust that hit 131 mph. Thousands of trees came down across the area, many falling into or through power lines. Cottonwood trees caused the most problems for Chugach. Chugach estimated that more than 80 percent of its damage and outages were caused by falling cottonwoods – many tipped over and uprooted.

Tens of thousands of metered locations served by three different electric utilities in the Anchorage area lost power from the storm. Chugach had 31,000 customers out at the peak of the storm, Municipal Light & Power lost nearly all of its 30,000 customers for a time and

Matanuska Electric Association had thousands of customers out in its service territory from Eagle River northward. Internet, phone and cable TV service were also disrupted.

While 85 percent of the outages were restored in the first 24 hours, as the assessment of the damage became clear additional resources were put in the field. Customers and the media were told it would take days to clear trees and restore service. Chugach used its own crews as well as those from contractors in Anchorage and Fairbanks plus a pair of crews from Homer Electric Association, tripling the number of line crews and re-energizing the last customers on the night of Sept. 9.

The respite was brief, but productive. Chugach added website and Facebook updates and a static map of outage and crew locations in the days after the first storm. By the time the second storm hit, Chugach greatly enhanced its website to include outage status reports, a web-based outage reporting tool for customers, a dynamic map showing outages, preparedness tips and useful links.

On the weekend of Sept. 15-16 a second storm blew through the Chugach service area. Winds again exceeded 100 mph, but the resulting outages were not as widespread or prolonged. The largest outages

affected customers in East Anchorage, the Hillside, communities between the Anchorage Bowl and Cooper Landing, and Tyonek. About 5,000 Chugach customers were out at one time or another, but for most, outage time was measured in hours not days. Facebook updates and the new online outage information, map and reporting tool proved popular with customers.

The next storm came quickly, blowing in on the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 18 and continuing well into Wednesday. Strong winds, again gusting more than 100 mph, disrupted electric service, air travel and more. Around 3,000 Chugach customers lost power during the

*See Storms, page 2*



*Trees falling into cleared easements caused most of the outages in September storms.*

### Danger trees can be cut

The September windstorms illustrated how trees from outside the easements and rights of way can fall or be blown into power lines. These "danger trees" can be cut.

Chugach's typical distribution easement or right of way is 20 feet wide. Within this area the cooperative has the legal right to install and maintain its facilities – including cutting and clearing. Chugach revisits and re-clears these areas every 3 years.

A danger tree is one that is outside the easement or right of way which poses a risk to the power

line. Not every tree near a power line is a threat, but could be if they are diseased, broken or leaning. Chugach's certified arborist will visit the property to assess the situation, and if determined to be a true danger tree, the cooperative will seek the permission of the property owner to cut it down at Chugach expense. Once downed, the tree is no longer a threat to the line and disposition of the timber is the responsibility of the property owner.

On average, Chugach's Danger Tree Program cuts 8,000-10,000 trees a year. To report a suspected danger tree, call 762-7227.

## Distribution system split between overhead and underground lines

At the end of 2011, Chugach had 2,227 miles of energized line. Of the total, 539 miles was transmission and 1,688 miles was distribution. On the distribution system, about 54 percent is overhead and 46 percent underground. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

Historically developers and utilities installed a lot of overhead lines. Anchorage has long had an underground ordinance that in recent decades has caused most new lines to be installed underground. In 2005 the ordinance was amended to allow for a 2 percent charge on utility bills to accelerate the conver-

sion of existing overhead electric, telephone and cable TV lines to underground facilities. For Chugach, this program raises about \$3 million per year. Chugach provides the MOA Planning Director a 5-year plan for intended conversion projects (updated every year) and an annual summary of what was done.

The 5-year plan can be found on the Chugach website at <http://www.chugachelectric.com/inside-chugach/projects>. Select the "Distribution Facilities Undergrounding Plan 2012-2016" for details.

## Storms (cont'd from page 1)

storm, in areas from East Anchorage to Indian. The mid- and lower-Hillside saw the largest outages. The last windstorm-related outages were over by early Thursday morning. Wind-blown trees in the lines again caused most of the problems.

But wind wasn't the only source of weather-related trouble. The latter September storms brought considerable rain to the area. Only hours after the last wind-related outages were resolved, on Thursday, Sept. 20, Chugach customers in Tyonek and at Granite Point lost power after a cottonwood tree along the rain-swollen Chuitna River fell into a distribution line. A Chugach crew was able to clear the line and restore service by Friday evening.

A storm the following day blew a large spruce tree into the 115-kilovolt transmission line north of Indian, cutting power for about 2 hours to 2,150 customers between the Anchorage Bowl and Cooper Landing.



*Flooding on the Chuitna River dropped a cottonwood tree into a distribution line, cutting service to Tyonek and Granite Point.*

**Take Note!** In June, Chugach Members received billing statements with a new member account number. Your member account number com-

bination is needed when using our 24/7 payment line, phone number 762-7803 or for payments via the website at [www.chugachelectric.com](http://www.chugachelectric.com). Additionally, if you use a bill payment service, please inform

## Emergency preparedness is important

The September storms and resulting outages are a reminder that electric service can be disrupted for extended periods of time. Customers should be prepared for outages, and consider in advance what they should do if power is out for an extended period of time. Chugach's outage information page contains tips and suggestions for dealing with outages, and links to organizations that can provide guidance on dealing with emergencies.

Some things to consider in advance:

### Stay or go?

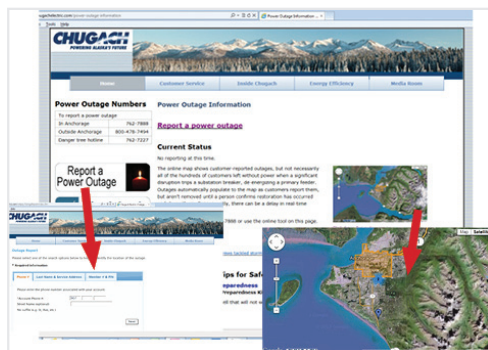
If your home becomes uncomfortable during an extended outage, where might you go to wait out restoration?

### Food storage

Refrigerators and freezers will retain cool temperatures for some time during an outage, especially if you don't keep opening the door to check on things. Cold temperatures can be sustained by adding ice or dry ice. At some point it might be best to move items to portable coolers, the appliances of a friend or relative, or into commercial cold storage.

### Generators

Home generators can be hard-wired into a home's electric system or connected to specific appliances and other items. Hard-wired generators need a transfer switch to separate the home from the electric system, and all generators need proper ventilation.



*Chugach has a power outage page at its website with an outage reporting tool, outage map and more.*

## October is National Cooperative Month

Each year in October co-ops across the nation celebrate their accomplishments and contributions. Chugach is a cooperative and exists to provide power to its members. When you signed up for electrical service, completed an application and paid a \$5 membership fee, you became a co-op member. As a member, you are a part-owner

of Chugach, you can vote for the board of directors and you receive a share of margins when the board approves a capital credits retirement.



## October is Energy Awareness Month

October is Energy Awareness Month. Across the country, people are taking part in events promoting awareness, conservation and energy efficiency. Visit [www.akeenergyefficiency.org](http://www.akeenergyefficiency.org) to find out about events in Alaska. {1209447}

## Contact us

Hours	Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Main number	563-7494
Toll free	(800) 478-7494
Member Services	563-7366
Member Services fax	762-4678
24-hour payment line	762-7803
Credit	563-5060
Power theft hotline	762-4731
Danger tree hotline	762-7227
Street light hotline	762-7676
Underground locates	278-3121
Regulatory Commission of AK	(800) 390-2782
or	276-6222
To report a power outage	
In Anchorage	762-7888
Outside Anchorage	(800) 478-7494

**Corporate mission:** Through superior service, safely provide reliable and competitively priced energy.

**Corporate vision:** Powering Alaska's future

**Personnel policy:** It is a policy of Chugach Electric Association, Inc., to recruit, hire, train, compensate and promote persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, disability, veterans status, age or any other classification protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. Chugach is also an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Current openings are posted on the employment page at <http://chugachelectricapplications.com>. Chugach only accepts applications for open vacancies.

## The Chugach Outlet

A Publication of Chugach Electric Association, Inc.  
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### Monthly residential service costs (based on 650 kwh)

Customer charge/month	\$ 8.00
Energy charge \$0.07054 x kwh =	\$45.85
Fuel \$0.04919 x kwh =	\$31.97
Purchased power \$0.00759 x kwh =	\$ 4.93
FIW renewable energy adj. \$0.00174 x kwh =	<u>\$1.13</u>
(Fuel, Purchased power and FIW renewable energy adj. subject to final RCA approval)	
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 91.88</b>
2% MOA Undergrounding Charge =	\$ 1.84
RCC \$0.000568 x kwh =	<u>\$ 0.37</u>
<b>Total bill</b>	<b>\$94.09</b>

### Member number hide-n-seek

Find your member number (in brackets) in the Outlet and get a \$100 credit on your electric bill. Call Chugach's service center at 563-7366 to claim your prize.



## Volunteers needed

Chugach is looking for members to serve on its annual meeting committees. A successful meeting depends upon volunteers who staff the Nominating, Bylaws and Election committees. For more information call 762-4177, or visit Chugach's website at [www.chugachelectric.com](http://www.chugachelectric.com). Applications are due Nov. 27.

## Rates update

Beginning this month Chugach is recovering the cost of power from the Fire Island wind project. The rates box at left includes this new charge, noted as "FIW renewable energy adj."