A Safety Note from Your Cooperative – August 2021

Some Lessons (the hard way)

Working with all the electric cooperatives across Minnesota, I hear stories. Some stories have a good lesson and must be shared so no one else finds themselves in this predicament. And, some stories are often hard to believe they are true . . . let's see . . .

True Story #1 – Our staking engineer found this situation when following up on a new service constructed. The electrical service was built and the contractor and masonary crew took over. They excavated around the primary cable (7200 V), poured the footings, elevated the cable, notched the cinder block to allow the cable to cross through the building. When the staking engineer explained the voltage and seriousness of avoiding contact with the cable, one of the block layers had to sit down. They had been told it was secondary low voltage. A crew was dispatched and the line was taken out of service.

True Story #2 – The crew found this dish that was installed within 11 inches of the 14.4 KV energized cut out. Crew removed dish and talked to the home owner about the dangers of having it installed on the pole. No items should be attached the pole by a member of the public; it can be dangerous space when you are not wearing proper personal protective equipment and have no experience in line work.

True Story #3 – Over the weekend a member was shooting down into a hole with a shotgun, not knowing that our 3-phase URD feeder was there. In doing so, he shot holes into our energized 3-phase causing a 1 1/2 hour outage for 61 members. He realized something wasn't right due to the sound of the faulting cable and soon found out of the outage. When cable was repaired, the crew discovered animals were also chewing on the cables and did significant damage that would likely result in an outage at a later date. All three phases were damaged and needed to be repaired.

Believeable? These people were lucky, and luck doesn't keep you safe. Know the power of electricity and that it is safe when we respect it. If you have any questions when it comes to the distribution system, simply call your cooperative to learn more about overhead and underground lines.

Prepared by Minnesota Rural Electric Association; author Lidia Dilley Jacobson