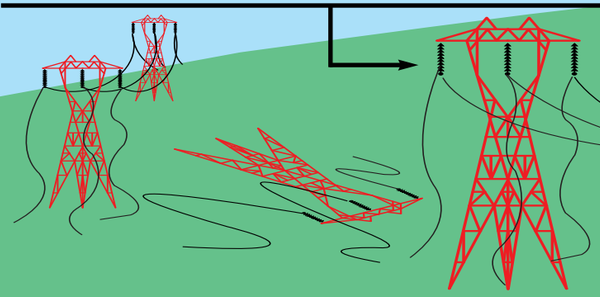
After the storm:

How your power is restored

Step 1. Transmission towers and lines supply power to one or more transmission substations. These lines seldom fail, but they can be damaged by a hurricane or tornado. Tens of thousands of people could be served by one high-voltage transmission line, so if there is damage here it gets attention first.



Step 2. A co-op may have several local distribution substations, each serving thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, the local distribution substations are checked first. A problem here could be caused by failure in the transmission system supplying the substation. If the problem can be corrected at the substation level, power may be restored to a large number of people.

Step 3. Main distribution supply lines are checked next if the problem cannot be isolated at the substation. These supply lines carry electricity away from the substation to a group of consumers, such as a town or housing development. When power is restored at this stage, all consumers served by this supply line could see the lights come on, as long as there is no problem farther down the line.

Hurricanes and ice storms. Tornadoes and blizzards. Alabama's Electric Cooperative members have seen them all in the past 10 years. And with such severe weather comes power outages. Restoring power after a major outage is a big job that involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line.

The main goal is to restore power safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible.

The major cause of outages is damage caused by fallen trees. That's why your electric cooperative has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program all year long.

The illustration on these pages explains how power typically is restored after a major disaster, like a hurricane or ice storm. While power restoration priorities may differ from co-op to co-op, electric system repairs generally follow a plan similar to the one illustrated here.

Area enlarged: Members themselves (not the co-op) are responsible for damage to the service installation on the building. Your co-op can't fix this. Call a licensed electrician.

Step 5. Sometimes, damage will occur on the service line between your house and the transformer on the nearby pole. This can explain why you have no power when your neighbor does. Your co-op needs to know you have an outage here, so a service crew can repair it.

Tap Line

Other co-ops

During a major outage, other cooperatives are prepared to help. They send line crews to assist with restoring power. These additional crews, as well as equipment and supplies, are coordinated through the Alabama Rural Electric Association of Cooperatives in Montgomery, a statewide federation of Alabama electric cooperatives.

Transmission substation

Local substation

Local substation

Local substation

Step 4. The final supply lines, called tap lines, carry power to the utility poles or underground transformers outside houses or other buildings. Line crews fix the remaining outages based on restoring service to the greatest number of members.

Report your outage to the cooperative office. Employees or response services use every available phone line to receive your outage reports. Remember that a major outage can affect thousands of other members. Your cooperative appreciates your patience.

Co-op office

Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depends on life support, call your cooperative before an emergency arises. When a significant outage occurs, your co-op will fix your problem as quickly as possible, or will call to let you know to seek shelter elsewhere.

Tap Line

DANGER!
Stay clear of fallen lines