



Why Your Power May Go Out

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From quick flickers of light consumers might experience in their homes to widespread outages that can leave entire cities in the dark, there are many reasons why the power goes out. To understand outages, it's important to know the different components needed to produce and transport power.

There are three main components to producing electricity:

Generation – The production of electricity at a power plant.

Transmission – The high-voltage lines that transport the electricity from the power plant to the utility company's distribution system.

Distribution – The power lines that carry electricity into consumers' homes.

If any one of these areas experiences a problem or interruption, it could result in a power outage.

Here are some examples of problems that could cause power outages:

At the power plant

- ▶ Mechanical problems – a boiler or a turbine used to create electricity could break.
- ▶ Safety shutdowns – problems with the cooling system could cause a plant to be shut down.
- ▶ Fuel availability – problems with transporting or delivering fuel. Problems could be as simple as a frozen pile of coal.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts. The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues and resolves complaints from individuals. To receive utility information, brochures, schedule a presentation or file a utility complaint, residential consumers may call 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free in Ohio or visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

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On the transmission lines

- ▶ Weather-related disruptions – caused by storms, ice, and wind.
- ▶ Line damage – tree branches, kites, animals and other obstacles can get in the way of power flowing into your community.
- ▶ Overloading – if a transmission line is unable to handle the excess amount of power an overload can occur.

On the distribution lines

- ▶ Weather conditions are an important factor since many parts of the distribution system are right in consumers' backyards and are more susceptible to damage from falling tree branches.
- ▶ Electricity that is flowing through underground lines also can be interrupted due to moisture or damage caused by deep digging.

Safeguards are built into each part of the electric system to limit the number and duration of power outages. For example, most cities and neighborhoods are able to receive electricity from more than one power line. If the primary line goes down, a secondary line can act as a substitute.

When consumers do experience a power outage, it is important to report it to the local electric utility. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) can help consumers report an outage if they are unable to reach their electric utility. Consumers can call the OCC toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622).