

Powerful storms knock out power for nearly 400,000 homeowners and businesses in Michigan

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Electrical power was knocked out for approximately 400,000 homes and businesses across two dozen counties in central and southeastern Michigan on Tuesday evening as severe thunderstorms fueled by a heat wave rolled through the area.

Dozens of schools cancelled classes on Wednesday and entire school districts were closed while homeowners and businesses scrambled to deal with the lack of power during excessive summer heat. Temperatures reached the mid-80s on Wednesday and, along with the high humidity, the heat index in areas without electricity hit the low-to mid-90s.

WWJ radio reported on Wednesday afternoon that a man died on the east side of Detroit when he came into contact with a downed power line sometime in the morning. The name of the resident who was killed has not been released, only that he lived in the 4200 block of Holcomb Street in Detroit.

Hospitals in the area impacted by the power outage are using their generators and rerouting ambulance traffic to other facilities and postponing all procedures except for those that are the most urgent.

A series of powerful thunderstorms swept across Michigan on Tuesday afternoon and evening with hurricane-force winds and one-inch-diameter hail in some areas. Gusts from 63 to 76 miles per hour were recorded in the region from mid-Michigan down to the Ohio border, which caused significant damage to the electrical infrastructure.

Utility poles were snapped, trees uprooted and power lines brought down during multiple storm waves that moved rapidly through the area. Traffic signals remained out randomly across the region while another series of rainstorms hit just around rush hour on

Wednesday.

By late Tuesday night, DTE Energy and CMS Energy were reporting a combined total of nearly 400,000 customers. As of Wednesday morning, the number without power according to poweroutage.us was over 340,000. As of this writing, the number of customers without power in Michigan stood at 184,000.

DTE Energy said that it will take until the Labor Day weekend before power will be restored to all customers.

With increasing frequency, significant power outages are happening during storms almost any time of year in Michigan and the length of time for restoration for some energy customers can take a week or more.

While the cost of energy keeps rising, the reliability of service is deteriorating, and the anger of the public is growing. It is the case for a growing number of families and the elderly, who cannot afford the installation of an expensive gas-powered electric generator system, that they are losing an entire refrigerator or freezer full of food multiple times a year.

Along with the lack of electric appliances and critical air conditioning during the heat wave, those without power also lose access to the internet and do not have the ability to recharge their electronic devices unless they can do it from their cars. These solutions place the public at risk across a host of safety and security problems.

According to *USA Today*, “The slew of storms that wreaked havoc across Michigan was fueled by a blast of record-breaking heat that settled over the Plains and Midwest regions, as well as high humidity from the Southeast.”

The report continued, “The extreme heat, which

brought all-time record temperatures to parts of Texas last week, expanded into the Plains and Midwest this week. On Tuesday, the afternoon high at Chicago O'Hare International Airport hit 98 degrees, breaking the record of 97 degrees set in 1973.

“The combination of heat and moisture from the South led to thunderstorms in South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin, with damaging winds of 50 to 55 mph recorded in Minneapolis and Chicago, according to the weather service. The worst of the storms swept across Michigan on Tuesday.

“The threat of dangerous storms and intense heat has started to wane as a cold front began pushing across the Upper Plains and Midwest region on Wednesday. It will be followed by another cold front that could act as the ‘death knell’ to the summertime weather, according to Bill Deger, AccuWeather senior meteorologist.”

The escalating speed and intensity of storms are meeting up with a crumbling infrastructure as the energy monopolies refuse to invest in the modernization of the system by putting power lines underground. Companies like DTE Energy and CMS Energy, while they return dividends to their investors at regular intervals, pay their executives multi-million-dollar salaries and raise rates based on profit considerations, are insisting that their customers pay for the upgrades.



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