

## Storm blows out Village power

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**Update, 2 p.m. Wednesday:** Cell service in the Teton Village area has been reported as spotty or nonexistent.

"It's not that the towers are down, it's that they don't have power," Teton County Public Information Specialist Cindy Harger said. "That is on the top of Lower Valley Energy's list as they start to phase things back in."

**Update, 1:35 p.m. Wednesday:** Power is expected to remain out for five to seven days in Teton Village, Lower Valley Energy spokesman Brian Tanabe said. All Lower Valley crews are pressed into service as well as staff and equipment from five neighboring utilities in the region to help raise the 17 transmission poles that snapped Tuesday night.

"We are hoping we can at least get intermittent power this afternoon to Solitude and Jackson Hole Airport," Tanabe said.

Lower Valley's plan today is to clear snow to each of the downed steel poles and begin erecting temporary wooden poles to hold the power lines.

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort will be closed through the weekend, spokeswoman Anna Cole said.

Highway 390 to Teton Village is open, but officials are asking people to avoid the area.

"The Village is turning into a ghost town right now," said Sgt. Matt Carr with Teton County Sheriff's Office.

At Jackson Hole Airport, the windstorm that swept over the valley canceled and delayed flights. The sleet and colder nighttime temperatures coupled to create 1 inch of ice buildup on the runway, which hampered operations significantly.

But by midday Wednesday, airport director Jim Elwood said, it was close to business at usual at the Grand Teton National Park travel hub.

"We were not open immediately at 7 o'clock [as scheduled], but we are open now and flights are coming and going," Elwood said at 1 p.m. "We've got about 10 airplanes inbound that should be on the ground within the next 40 minutes or so."

WYDOT has issued a "no unnecessary travel" order on highway roads in Teton County. Teton Pass is still closed with an estimated opening after 4 p.m. today. But avalanche activity and the next round of storms bringing warm moisture could cause another extended closure, WYDOT reports.

Tanabe said the reason for the extended outage is because the power line that went down was the major source for power north of Jackson.

"Most of the power lines you see in our service territory are smaller distribution lines," Tanabe wrote in a release. "When distribution lines go down we can more easily re-route power to energize the affected areas. Transmission lines feed large amounts of power to our substations, which are then distributed out to our customers. When the transmission system fails for whatever reason, the line needs to be entirely repaired versus re-routing power."

To help fix the transmission lines, staff and equipment are on the way from these five entities:

High Plains Power, Idaho Falls Power, Fall River Rural Electric, Bonneville Power and Wasatch Energy, along with crews from Jackson Hole Mountain Resort.

**Update, 10:10 a.m. Wednesday:** Jackson Hole Mountain Resort will not be operating "until further notice," Communications Manager Anna Cole said in a release. "All events scheduled for this week and weekend will be cancelled, specifically Skijoring and Special Olympics," Cole said.

Special Olympics will continue at 1 p.m. today at Teton Pines with snowshoe and cross-country ski events, but snowboarding and downhill skiing competitions have been cancelled, according to Special Olympics of Wyoming.

Power could be out for up to a week, officials said.

Resort officials ask that only specific operational staff head for Teton Village today, with "no unnecessary travel to Teton Village" is in effect until further notice.

**Update, 9:55 a.m. Wednesday:** Despite 14 inches of new snow at the summit, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is closed this morning as crews continue to clear the aftermath of last night's storm. Power is still out.

Downed power lines on Apres Vous Road have cut off parking at the Ranch lot, leaving limiting parking available in Teton Village, according to a press release from Teton Village Association Executive Director Melissa Turley.

Employees and visitors are asked to hop on a START bus to get out to the Village today. But if you must drive, all paid parking operations are being suspended due to the current power outage.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation has been "chasing this all night," WYDOT Avalanche Technician Jamie Yount said this morning. Highway 22 over Teton Pass is still closed after several natural avalanches overnight prevented crews from opening the route. It may reopen after noon today, according to WyoRoad.info.

WYDOT encourages residents and commuters to stay home if they can and avoid unnecessary travel.

START buses did run the commuter route to Teton Valley this morning via Alpine.

**Update, 11:11 p.m. Tuesday:** Electricity to Teton Village and the northern part of Jackson Hole could remain out for days after 10 utility poles snapped during a windy storm Tuesday evening.

Highway 390 was closed for about an hour around 6:30 p.m. because of the downed power lines, some in the roadway. At 11:11 p.m. the road was open, but officials expected an extended power outage.

“Due to 10 transmission poles buckling,” Lower Valley spokesman Brian Tanabe said, “we are experiencing a major outage in Teton County.”

About 3,500 to 4,000 customers were without power Tuesday night in the areas of Teton Village, Jackson Hole Airport and the subdivisions of John Dodge, Bar B Bar and Solitude.

“While we hope to reroute power this evening, we expect power to be out for at least several days in some areas,” Tanabe said.

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort won't be open today, spokeswoman Anna Cole said Tuesday night, and the resort's heavy equipment and personnel will likely be clocking in for public service instead of powder duty.

“There's no way we'll be operating,” Cole said. “It sounds like it's going to be all hands on deck. Our groomers will most likely be assisting Lower Valley to help move snow and clear the lines. There's trees on the lines.”

Teton County Public Information Specialist Cindy Harger said several hundred travelers were stranded because of canceled flights, but Jackson Hole Airport plans to be open today on backup power systems.

High winds could be to blame for the power poles falling, but officials didn't know for sure.

Harger said even Jackson Hole Fire/EMS personnel were impressed by the storm's punch.

“Mike Moyer said there were some of the strongest winds he's ever seen on the valley floor,” Harger said.

The storm kept Highway 22 over Teton Pass closed all day Tuesday. The highway between Moose and Moran was closed most of the day.

**Update, 10:11 p.m. Tuesday:** Jackson Hole Mountain Resort will not open Wednesday, spokeswoman Anna Cole said. Heavy equipment and personnel will likely be diverted from the resort to the utility corridor to help Lower Valley Energy dig out the downed power lines. Check Wednesday's edition of the News&Guide for more details.

**Update, 9:51 p.m. Tuesday:** It could take days for power to be fully restored to 3,500 or so people affected by this outage, Teton County Public Information Specialist Cindy Harger said.

**Update, 8:40 p.m. Tuesday:** Lower Valley Energy spokesman Brian Tanabe asked Teton Village Road area customers to “curtail your electricity usage to the best of your abilities.”

As Lower Valley employees work to reroute power to Teton Village, “your cooperation will benefit our efforts,” Tanabe said in an emailed statement.

**Update, 8:23 p.m. Tuesday:** Teton Village is still out of power and Jackson Hole Airport is out of power, county emergency officials said. Flights have been canceled and several hundred people at the airport had to be accommodated.

**Update, 7:25 p.m. Tuesday:** Deputies reopened Highway 390 from John Dodge subdivision to the south edge of Teton Village.

Lower Valley Energy officials are asking customers in the Teton Village area to curtail energy use until further notice. Reducing power strain on the grid will help utility workers more quickly reroute power around the downed poles.

**Original story, 7 p.m. Tuesday:** Eight to 10 power poles snapped Tuesday around 6:30 p.m, causing Teton Village to lose power.

Teton County Sheriff's Office deputies set up roadblocks for a 3-mile stretch on Wyoming 390 from John Dodge subdivision to Teton Village, asking all residents to avoid the area and to use extreme caution.

Some cars were reportedly struck by power lines.

Energy crews were dispatched to the scene, according to Brian Tanabe, spokesman for Lower Valley Energy.

Teton Village could be without power for "quite some time," according to radio traffic.

This story will be updated as information becomes available.

Several routes into the valley are closed, including Highway 89/189/191 between Moose and Moran, Highway 89 between Hoback Junction and Bondurant, and Highway 22 over Teton Pass, which hasn't opened all day on Tuesday.