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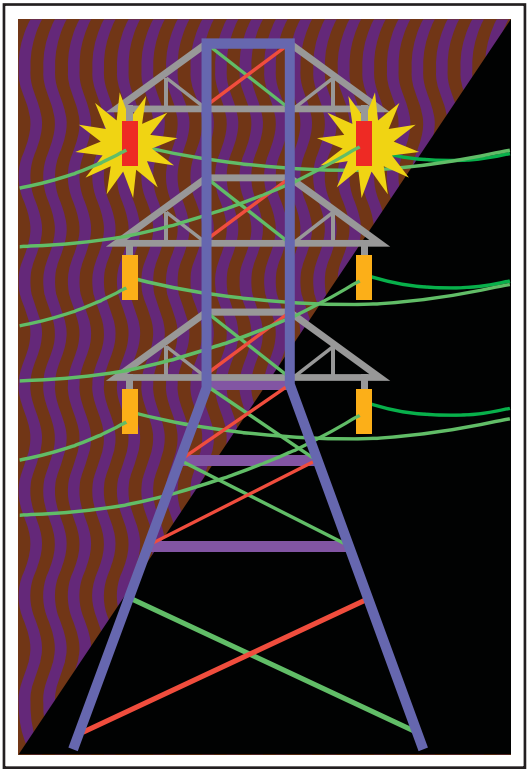
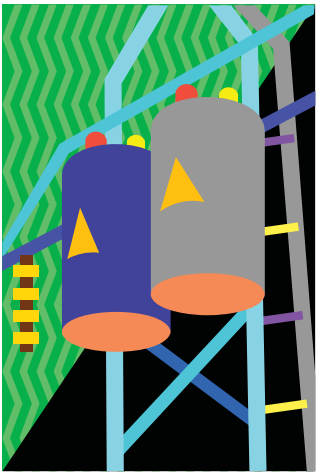


Electric Power Interruptions

Momentary Power Interruptions

Momentary power interruptions, or outages, are brief disruptions in electric service, usually lasting no longer than a few seconds. These interruptions are the result of temporary faults in electricity distribution. The most common causes of momentary interruptions are lightning strikes, fallen branches, or animals that can perch on or climb power lines. Momentary outages can also occur during normal transmission and switching operations. For example, if a utility changes power suppliers to obtain a cheaper energy source, a momentary interruption may occur as the system drops the old supplier and picks up the new one.



In the past, these brief interruptions weren't as noticeable to consumers as they are today. Now, with the use of advanced electronics, appliances can be more sensitive to the slightest variations in the power supply.

Momentary outages can be very frustrating. You know when you've had a power disturbance when your lights flicker, or you notice blinking digital displays on your appliances.

Though momentary outages are inconvenient, they serve a useful purpose. Much like a circuit breaker that "trips," interrupting the power flow and therefore preventing damage to an electrical system, momentary power interruptions prevent damage to the utility company's electrical system. Following a momentary outage, power is usually instantly restored automatically, unlike a tripped circuit breaker that must be reset manually.

Power Quality

Power quality is not as apparent as outages and is measured as "surges" and "sags" (or inconsistencies) in voltage. Strictly controlled power quality is not usually required for household appliances. Specialized commercial equipment or computers may be more sensitive to changes in voltage and may benefit from devices that monitor and regulate voltage.

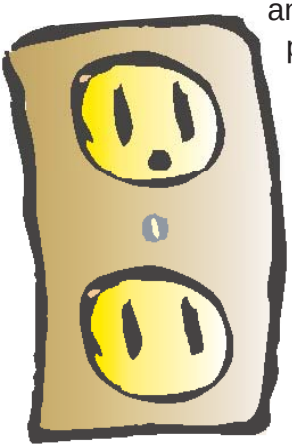
Power "surges" are brief, higher-than-normal voltage levels that are usually caused by lightning. The lightning does not have to be in the immediate vicinity to cause a surge on the distribution lines.

Power "sags" are just the opposite. Lower-than-normal voltage causes motors to run excessively and often causes overheating in a short time. While power surges may result in an immediate power outage, power sags often go undetected. Even though the power may not go out completely, power surges and sags can result in long-term damage to equipment and appliances, which may cause premature equipment failure.

Surges and sags can also cause momentary outages that may result in power quality reductions. Improper wiring, grounding, or use of appliances can also result in power quality reduction.

How Can I Minimize the Effects of Momentary Power Interruptions

When purchasing new electronics, consider items equipped with battery back-up. Some air conditioning units are available with time-delay relays. This can prevent the unit from restarting for three to five minutes after a momentary power interruption and help avoid rapid restarts and shutdowns. The use of surge protectors, lightning arrestors, and unit power suppliers can minimize damage caused by power quality problems. Surge protectors also help prevent high voltage damage to appliances and equipment. A consumer may also consider purchasing an un-interruptible power supply (UPS) unit for a home or small business computer. This device protects important data and can be found at most computer supply and hardware stores.



In addition, when using a computer, save or backup your information frequently to prevent a loss of data if a momentary interruption occurs.

Tree Planting Tips To Help Minimize Power Interruptions

- Taller trees such as maples, oaks, magnolias, pines, or palms should be planted at a minimum of 30 feet from power lines.

- Medium-sized trees such as dogwoods, Bradford pears, or cedars should be planted at least 15 feet from power lines.

- Small wax myrtles, purple leaf plums, or tree ligustrums can be planted at the front of your property or near the road. There is little danger of these trees growing into power lines.

General Electric Safety Tips

- Contact your utility company if tree limbs are touching power lines.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Watch for overhead power lines at boat ramps and while on the water.
- Remember, always call 811 before you start any digging project! You'll avoid injury, expense, embarrassment - and a very inconvenient day in the dark.
- Never try to remove anything hanging from or tangled in a power line.
- Always make sure appliances are properly grounded before use.
- Carefully read the instructions on electrical appliances before using.

24-Hour On-line Complaint Forms
www.floridapsc.com

If you have questions, you may call the
Florida Public Service Commission at
1-800-342-3552,
fax your questions to
1-800-511-0809,
or contact the PSC via the following
E-mail address:
contact@psc.state.fl.us.
See our Internet home page at
www.floridapsc.com.

Or write to the
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

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