

The Fairfax Station Homeowners Association
P.O. Box 162
Fairfax, VA 22039

September 2, 2011

Mr. Feuerberg and Delegate Hugo,

The Fairfax Station Homeowners Association would like to provide our observations and concerns regarding the events of Hurricane Irene. Let me begin by saying that we recognize many people in the state are currently still without power and were forced to deal with more severe power interruptions during the storm. I also realize and commend NOVEC's superior reliability numbers during the storm. However, we remain concerned that our neighborhood was apparently one of the few NOVEC customers to lose power (both grids) while only being exposed to mild tropical storm winds and rain. We feel this again highlights our service grids' continued vulnerability to major weather events.

We experienced our first "blink" around 4 PM when we were only experiencing rain and mild winds. The power remained steady until it blinked off at 2:11 AM, which was the height of the storm (estimating winds of 40 to 50 mph with driving rain). Mike McKinney, the Chair of the Special Committee on Utilities, immediately reported the outage and drove around the subdivision to ensure that all of NOVEC's power was off. He also verified that the DVP side of the community still had power (including the newly added Youngs Branch section). He waited until 2:45 AM for the remote changeover protocol to be initiated in switching our subdivision to the other feed. When he saw no activity, blinks, etc., Mr. McKinney spent a substantial amount of time attempting to reach NOVEC supervisors via phone before finally connecting to operations. We would request direct line access going forward to avoid delays in reaching your command center.

Mr. McKinney talked with the senior control room supervisor on duty (Mr. Lewis, I believe) and asked if he was familiar with the Fairfax Station subdivision protocols. He said he was. He informed me the Pope's Head feed was showing faults in the system and they were attempting to clear them. Mr. McKinney asked if the 10-minute remote changeover protocol had been attempted, as previously communicated to us as a new operating procedure, and he seemed confused. He asked if any of the senior management or engineers were in the office so he could discuss the issue with them, and the supervisor said they could only be contacted via phone. He was surprised by his response since we had known the forecasted arrival of the major brunt of the storm for several days in advance. In our opinion, their presence at this point could have prevented our prolonged outage.

Mr. McKinney explained the procedure that had been described to us to address this type of emergency. The supervisor then said there appeared to be a fault with our underground system at the remote switching unit. Mr. McKinney asked him follow protocol

and switch us over to the Moore grid, to check if it would provide residents power or clear the fault. The supervisor then stated the Moore substation was showing a fault, so Mr. McKinney asked him if he was saying both grids were down and he said "yes". The supervisor agreed that when either grid came back up he would attempt to put us on that good grid. We got our power back sometime after 5 AM, and we do not know if we were ever switched to an operative grid.

We believe Irene provided a good litmus test for NOVEC's upgraded program effectiveness. Therefore, the Association feels that it is very important and necessary to understand both the positive and negative aspects of this outage. We are requesting a detailed debrief by your office to include the following:

- What and where were the faults that brought the grids down?
- Did the remote changeover work properly and was the switching protocol followed?
- How did the current upgrades help to prevent or reduce the outage?
- Will the soon-to-be-implemented final upgrades have affected or improved the outcome of this storm's outage or a comparable same magnitude heavy wet snow-laden Nor'easter?

Since recent NOAA weather models are starting to predict the possibility of another La Nina driven winter (wetter and cooler than normal), your report will help us to educate and prepare our members during our upcoming annual HOA meeting. Your response to this letter would be appreciated prior to September 20, 2011.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Vinnie Burruano
Association President and Director