

**NOTICE OF URGENT MEETING ON May 18, 2011 FOR
HOMEOWNERS IN FAIRFAX STATION**

**PLEASE DO NOT DISCARD THIS NOTICE WITHOUT READING!
ALL HOUSEHOLDS ARE AFFECTED BY THIS ISSUE**

THE ISSUE: Unreliable electric service in Fairfax Station. We need to explore solutions!

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE: Homeowners in Fairfax Station, Virginia House of Delegates Representative Tim Hugo, Fairfax County Supervisor Pat Herry, Officials of NOVEC

WHERE: Fairview Elementary School

WHEN: Wednesday, May 18 from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (or possibly later). Do not hesitate to arrive later than 7:00 p.m. if necessary. It is critical that we have representation from every household.

WHY: Homeowners served by both NOVEC and Dominion Virginia Power are at risk of having their property value fall in the future. We do not receive dependable electric power from either company. This situation is contributing to a drop in the quality of life in our neighborhood. NOVEC serves approximately 270 homes, or about half of the homes in our neighborhood. At this meeting, we have asked executives from NOVEC to answer our questions about their unreliable electric service. **The answers we receive will affect future decisions about electric power for ALL homeowners, including those served by Dominion Virginia Power.**

FACTS AND BACKGROUND: NOVEC has stated in writing to our committee: **“NOVEC has been the most reliable electric utility in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area for twelve consecutive years by a wide margin. Statistical measures commonly used by all electric utilities support our claim, as do statistics from the J.D. Power surveys. In 2010, NOVEC customers rated our “power quality and reliability” first in the mid-size south region out of 27 rated utilities and third in the nation out of the 121 largest electric utilities.”**

In another e-mail to a committee member, NOVEC gives us these statistics: **“The average customer on the NOVEC system in 2010, excluding the record February snow storms, experienced only one outage with a duration of 55 minutes. The ten year average on the NOVEC system has been one outage/year with a duration of 77 minutes.”** In contrast, data requested from NOVEC about outages for homes in OUR neighborhood, specifically Havenner Road, indicate that in the past 6 years alone, we experienced 35 power outages, some lasting days, with an additional 31 blinks and spikes that have caused damage to electric appliances, computers, and heat pumps.

NOVEC officials stand on their statements of reliability and quality and have refused to address the issues specific to our neighborhood until this time. It is only through the efforts of our committee, Delegate Hugo, and Supervisor Herryty that they have agreed to come to the table at all.

This situation is not only unacceptable, it has become a quality of life issue and a public safety issue. Many neighbors have endured hardships during the winter that have compromised their health and the health and well-being of their families. We have had senior citizens suffering in unheated homes when they have lost power, unable to leave their homes because of deep snow and unplowed roads. Many homeowners have also experienced financial loss. These losses include burned out electric appliances and heat pumps, food that has to be thrown away, hotel expenses, and loss of time from work from having to fix problems caused by power surges, blinking, and brownouts. Residents feel unsafe in their homes when a storm is predicted, knowing that their electricity will undoubtedly fail.

NOVEC's only solution thus far is to state that they will make an aggressive effort to cut and trim trees and to harden lines in specific problem areas.

This solution will not work for our neighborhood. Our subdivision is unique in Fairfax County for the following reasons:

- 1) Our 539 homes are serviced by two electric companies – NOVEC and Dominion Virginia Power. Each of these companies has two feeds coming into the neighborhood. No other subdivision in the county is served with 4 feeds from two different electric companies. This arrangement was apparently set up long before our subdivision was built.
- 2) Three of these feeds have a large number of above-ground lines that are constantly compromised by falling trees and flying tree limbs. No one can dispute the fact that since 1997 Fairfax County has experienced extreme weather conditions including hurricanes, severe drought, and 3 benchmark winters. According to arborists in private companies and Fairfax County, these weather conditions have affected our mature forests that date back to the post-Civil War era. These stresses have made our indigenous trees vulnerable to disease activity and pest infestation, especially the Virginia pines. It has been stated that this situation will only worsen in the next several years. Please look at the HOA website at www.fshoa-va.com to read the arborist's reports. Click on the link for Committee Meetings, and then the link for Utilities.
- 3) A drive through the forested areas from the Clifton substation feed shows that the trees are 2-3 times higher than the power lines. "Hardening the electric lines" at certain problem areas will not prevent the diseased and dead trees from continuing to take out lines and poles. NOVEC does not have the authority by law to trim or cut any trees outside of a 30 foot easement. The individual outage reports we have obtained show that a majority of the outages were caused by downed trees. Unfortunately, because our

subdivision is at the end of the power grid, we are the first to lose electricity and the last to have it restored, especially in an adverse weather event.

4) If homeowners, out of desperation, choose to purchase generators to back up their electric power, real estate agents have told us that the home values in this subdivision will fall. If even a minority of homes need generators and this news becomes public, the value of every home in our neighborhood will decline. We will no longer own homes in one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the county. We will have a negative reputation and the ramifications will be serious for our home values. People will not want to purchase homes that require a back-up generator to provide reliable electric service.

5) NOVEC officials refuse to reimburse homeowners for any loss of appliances, food, or hotel expenses incurred during outages, stating that outages are “Acts of God.” Yet, homeowners in our neighborhood have experienced almost 70 instances of electric service interruption (outages, brownouts, and blinks) in the last 6 years while the rest of the NOVEC grid has averaged ONE outage per year for the last 10 years! NOVEC’s denial of any responsibility or liability for our losses is unconscionable.

Attendance at this meeting is crucial. It is our ONE AND ONLY chance for an open forum with NOVEC officials to ask our questions and insist on answers and solutions. Delegate Tim Hugo and Supervisor Pat Herrity are giving us their valuable time and are supporting our efforts to find a solution. It has taken considerable effort to bring all parties involved to this meeting.

Without a substantial turnout, we will not prevail and will not have a second chance to find a solution for ALL homeowners with electric problems – both NOVEC and Dominion Virginia Power customers. We will see you on May 18!! Please mark your calendars and bring all of your neighbors.

Mike McKinney and Andrea (Andy) Novotny (annovotny@msn.com)
Co-Chairs
Special Committee on Utilities