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Glitch caused power outage

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FAIRBANKS — A glitch at a Golden Valley Electric Association power plant in North Pole was the source of a widespread power outage throughout the Interior early Monday.

An air pressure line failed at the plant at 7:12 a.m., according to GVEA spokeswoman Corinne Bradish, triggering a power failure that stretched from Delta Junction to Cantwell. Power was restored about 20 minutes later when the plant was restarted, she said.

The utility was able to maintain about 40 megawatts of electricity with a short-term backup battery system, which allowed parts of the grid to stay powered, including the downtown area in Fairbanks. About 57 megawatts of power was being pulled by the utility's roughly 100,000 customers at the time of the failure, Bradish said.

The outage punctuated a busy stretch for GVEA technicians.

High winds also caused a pair of more concentrated blackouts along stretches of the Parks Highway Sunday, when trees blew onto lines that took areas in Healy and Cantwell off line. One failure forced an outage from about 4 to 8 p.m. in Healy, while a second failure occurred from about 10:30 p.m. to nearly 2 a.m., knocking out power around Cantwell.

The Healy outage complicated a Fairbanks Concert Association fundraiser at 299 Parks Restaurant, where more than 70 people had gathered to hear the Brasil Guitar Duo perform. The event was sponsored by GVEA.

The outage didn't affect the performance, which featured acoustic music, but it did cause some last-minute scrambling to produce meals in the partially lighted restaurant.

Despite that unexpected drama, FCA executive director Anne Biberman said the dinner performance came together nicely.

"It ended up being a beautiful evening," Biberman said. "It all worked out just great — no problems."

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