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NEWS

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CHRONICLE OF EVENTS SURROUNDING DEC. 23, 27 EIU POWER OUTAGES

At approximately midnight on Saturday, Dec. 23, Eastern Illinois University experienced a power outage that affected the Doudna Fine Arts Center, Clinical Services and Buzzard Hall. When the power came back on, the power surge blew one phase of a three-phase power feed, and the overload tripped the Fine Arts (heat system) circulating pumps. Without power backup, the heating system could not sustain building temperatures during sub-zero conditions. Consequently, pipes in the "glass wing" (west side of the Fine Arts building, housing Eastern's Department of Art), froze. This was discovered on Monday, Dec. 25, when University police reported a small water leak in the area.

Upon further investigation, facilities personnel found significant damage to fittings and faucets on all floors of the "glass wing." Plans were made to begin repairs on Dec. 27. During the interim, an attempt was made to contact all Art faculty members to notify them of the situation and allow them to respond as needed (e.g., removal of personal/essential items, etc.)

On Dec. 27, kerosene-fired heaters were placed in order to begin thawing in the "glass wing." EIU employees remained on site around the clock in order to clean up the water as ice melted; thus, water damage to the contents of the department was kept to a minimum.

Repairs began and continued through Saturday, Dec. 30, at which time heat was restored to the area at 6:30 p.m.

At 7:45 p.m. (an hour and 15 minutes later), another power interruption occurred, again affecting the same three buildings. (As of this writing, the University does not know the cause of this outage. Calls have been made to AmerenCIPS to inquire if they had a power failure on the 27th that may have caused Eastern's problem.)

Power was restored in both the Clinical Services Building and the Doudna Fine Arts Center without any additional damage being reported. However, on Sunday, Dec. 31, it was determined that a high voltage feed to Buzzard Hall was damaged, requiring new cable to be pulled between the Fine Arts building and Buzzard Hall. Buzzard has radiated steam heat, so pipe freezing is/was not an issue. However, WEIU-TV, Channel 51, is/will be off the air until repairs can be made.

On Tuesday, Jan. 2, work crews began removing the old (failed) power cable; new cable could possibly be pulled today, weather permitting and barring unforeseen delays. University officials anticipate completion of the work, followed by testing of the new cable, on Thursday or Friday, Jan. 4 or 5.

At this point, it is anticipated that students should experience minimal or no interruption (from either outage) when they return for classes on Monday, Jan. 8.

Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.