

Ice Storm Brings Out Trouble Shooters



It wasn't a fit night out for man nor beast when Camp Claiborne and the surrounding area last Thursday had the vicinity's worst ice storm in 45 years. This picture shows trouble-shooters Sgt. William Long and Pfc Wilbur Bivin of the Signal Corps fixing ice-damaged wires on the camp range. (Signal Corps Photo)

Record Breaking Freeze-up Puts 'Lights Out' All Over Camp

This vicinity's worst ice storm in 45 years severely crippled Camp Claiborne last Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The Post Engineer department handled its biggest repair job and didn't bring electric power lines under control until Monday night.

Restoration of secondary power lines will not be completed for another week. There were more than 400 breaks in power lines throughout camp. On nearly every street in West Claiborne there was a break in the lines. There was one mile of broken lines on West Claiborne street, and 20 strands on F street. Climax came with a break in the main power line between Claiborne and Bunkie.

Electric power was off in camp Thursday between 8:30 and 9 p. m.; Friday from 3 to 4:16 a. m. and 8:30 a. m. to 7:30 p. m., and from 10 p. m. Friday until 11 a. m. Saturday. Extra crews began repairing lines Thursday at 10 p. m., worked until 7 p. m. Monday with only two hours of sleep a night for each man.

Soldiers Pitch In

In addition to the Post Engineers regular crew of 23 men, 16 trouble shooters from the Louisiana Power and Light company and 76 enlisted men who had had civilian experience with power lines, worked in camp. Besides restoring lines in camp, the crews had to repair breaks outside camp to get electricity into Claiborne. They also worked between Claiborne and Camp Polk to give the latter camp electric power which was interrupted by the storm.

The fire department served meals each night at midnight to the hard working trouble shooters. Station Complement Military Police furnished a meal one night and provided a radio car to assist in the job. Patrolling spots where broken wires presented danger

was an important part of the MP's job.

Before the weather let up, seven primary power lines in the main camp broke. More than 150 breaks were reported in the Engineer Unit Training Center. And the Post Engineers repaired more than 400 breaks before everything was under control.

No Fans, No Heat

Lack of electricity kept the heating systems of camp administration buildings from functioning. Fans blow hot air into the buildings and without electric power, the fans won't work. So civilians and Army personnel shivered as they pursued their administrative duties Friday and until noon Saturday.

Although telephone service in camp was not interrupted, no calls could be placed beyond Alexandria. Western Union lines also were out.

About 8:30 a. m. Saturday, Claiborne ran out of water. Electricity is used to operate pumps and there was no electricity. However, about 11:30 a. m. the pumps again would work and water was supplied on a limited basis. Water facilities in West Claiborne were not normal until Sunday morning. Restrictions were finally lifted at 6 a. m.

Sunday and the water situation was pronounced under control.

'And So to Bed'

Lack of electricity prevented any of the camp theaters from opening Friday night. A break in some power lines cancelled the second show in many theaters Thursday night.

"Rhythm Revue," Claiborne's weekly half-hour radio show over Shreveport's KWKH, had to be cancelled Friday night.

With no lights in the butments, either, soldiers just went to bed when it became dark. A few salvaged candles from here and there and they managed to write letters or hold phil sessions for awhile. With Post Exchanges, Service Clubs and other places of amusement closed, there was nothing else for them to do.

The Provost Marshal's office had no report of traffic accidents in camp. Streets apparently were not icy and drivers were exceptionally careful.

As a result of everyone's cooperation, and particularly the efforts of the Post Engineers and their emergency crews, Claiborne returned to normal in record time.

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