

TVA delivers power 99.999% of the time

Aided with new detection technologies and faster fiber-optic communication and switching equipment, TVA has managed to deliver its power 99.999 percent of the time for each of the past 10 years. Last year, TVA's power outages averaged only 7.8 minutes for the entire year across all customers in its entire seven-state region. That placed TVA among the top 10 percent of utilities for reliability in the nation.

"I don't know many businesses that can claim that kind of quality," TVA President Tom Kilgore recently told the Rotary Club of Chattanooga. "Even Ivory Snow was only 99 and 44/100ths pure." Officials say the performance record can be attributed, in part, to TVA's \$1.1 billion investment in its transmission system since 2000.

"We developed a plan to replace equipment, from poles and wires to entire stations, and followed that with a strategy to maintain the system that continues today," said Bob Dalrymple, vice president of transmission and reliability at TVA. The utility no longer waits for problems to develop along its 16,000 miles of transmission lines, using helicopters to visually inspect all of its major transmission lines every three years and a host of self-testing equipment to spot potential equipment problems.

Even with better technology, the agency must battle everything from lightning strikes to buzzard feces. "It only takes one bolt of lightning to affect the system," Flippo said. When problems do develop, TVA dispatches maintenance crews from 18 field offices spread across the Tennessee Valley.

"We have to respond to emergencies at all times of the day and night, often in the worst kinds of weather," Mr. Flippo said. "We'll never be perfect, but we work to get better all the time with our personnel, our training, our processes and our equipment."

TVA Reliability By the Numbers

- 99.999 – Percentage of time TVA has delivered power to its 156 distributors and 58 direct-served customers for each of the past 10 years.
- 7.8 – Number of minutes the average TVA connection was interrupted in 2009
- 547 – Number of TVA substations
- 16,000 – Miles of transmission lines by TVA to service its seven state-region.
- 18 – Number of field offices maintained by TVA's transmission division to serve its 80,000 square miles