

Saint Louis
COUNTY
HIGHWAYS & TRAFFIC
PUBLIC WORKS

St. Louis County Office of Electrical Inspection
Policy for Storm Related Electrical Work

When our area experiences severe weather that results in power outages and damage to the electrical equipment on buildings and structures, various misunderstandings regarding electrical permits and inspections cause delays in the restoration effort and confusion in the electrical industry which, in turn may cause customers to be misinformed.

This policy will serve to inform those who may perform storm related electrical work and those directly affected by a storm what to expect and what is required relevant to electrical repairs made necessary due to a weather related event. This policy pertains to those buildings and structures that are still able to be occupied after the storm event is over.

The type of storm damage we most often experience is downed trees due to high wind which causes damage to the electrical utility's (Ameren) infrastructure and often the customer's electrical service equipment and wiring. During such events, everyone's focus is directed at restoring power to the customer's equipment but public safety should not be compromised as a result. The following procedures will provide our best chance to ensure reasonable safety without unnecessary delays in the restoration effort.

St. Louis County has and will continue to coordinate our procedures with Ameren to ensure our goals are mutual and prevent procedural conflicts that would cause either entity concerns regarding safety or responsiveness.

There are three scenarios that will be encountered after the type of storm addressed by this policy:

1. **Damage to the utility's infrastructure causes an outage but no damage to the customer's equipment.** Under this scenario, the customer will have power restored when Ameren repairs their equipment and can safely re-energize the customer's equipment. St. Louis County is not involved in this process.
2. **Damage to the customer's equipment but the damage is minor.** Under this scenario, at Ameren's discretion they may make a temporary connection to restore power to the customer informing them further repairs by an electrical contractor are required. St. Louis County is alerted to these locations to follow up and ensure permanent repairs are completed within a specified time and in accordance with the St. Louis County Electrical Code relevant to permits and inspections.
3. **Severe damage to the customer's equipment or structure.** Generally an electrical contractor will be required to make repairs and a permit and an inspection will be required before the customer's power is restored. If the structure is damaged, it is possible that power will not be restored until structural repairs are completed and approved by the Building Official.

St. Louis County's goal is to ensure the safety of the public. This will be accomplished by the following:

All electrical work shall be performed by electrical contractors licensed by St. Louis County. The license provides accountability and control over unlicensed contractors who often search out victims of storm damage to take advantage of the situation and the victims themselves who could be more vulnerable because of their situation. The license also ensures a level of responsibility and the company will have a bond, liability insurance and workers compensation insurance which affords some consumer protection to the customer.

Electrical permits have been and will always be required for electrical work related to a storm. Permit fees may be waived on certain weather related events and this will be announced soon after the event but a permit will always be required. The permit is the component in the procedure that connects the license, bond and insurance to the electrical work performed. Electrical contractors licensed by St. Louis County may respond to a storm affected customer immediately and take actions deemed necessary prior to obtaining a permit, but it is expected that the permit will be obtained the next regular work day or the work will be considered in violation. St. Louis County has created an emergency reporting procedure whereby a contractor can leave a message outside normal work hours and proceed with emergency repairs. Permits shall be applied for the next business day. The number to report emergency electrical work outside normal work hours is 314-615-4646.

Inspections have been and will always be required for electrical work related to a storm. The inspection is the component in the procedure that ensures the electrical work performed is safe and in compliance with the Electrical Code. The inspection also generates the wiring approval that is forwarded to the utility to authorize a connection to the source of supply.

Some things to remember:

People affected by a storm and those who support the restoration effort will at some point start to feel stressed. It is expected and we should just accept that reality. I believe we can reduce some of the potential for stress that can cause conflicts and even unsafe acts by recognizing that restoration after a major event cannot move faster than the process allows. Short cuts will not lead to electrical safety for the customer or the workers.

The procedure outlined in this policy should not cause unreasonable delays for anyone. However, the electrical contractor will need to coordinate their work with permits and inspections and in some situations Ameren. This is the same as electrical contractors do in non-storm conditions. The better the electrical contractor is prepared to respond to storm related repairs and the better they plan and coordinate their work, the better the experience will be for the customer and the faster their power can be restored.

I would like to promote a consistent understanding of St. Louis County's electrical requirements for storm damage related electrical work. It is my hope to eliminate the confusion I perceive after each weather event.

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to me at my address below.

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