

Following the Tornado: Reports from Timber Line's Road Warriors

May 22, 2008

Towering thunderheads, ominous skies, and emergency warnings on the TV and radio warned us all that the afternoon could get exciting. Within hours, the calls started from our radio telemetry customers, first from Central Weld reporting a failed computer, then from Windsor reporting loss of radio communications. Our Timber Line staff did some initial remote diagnostics to determine that both systems' computers seemed to be working.



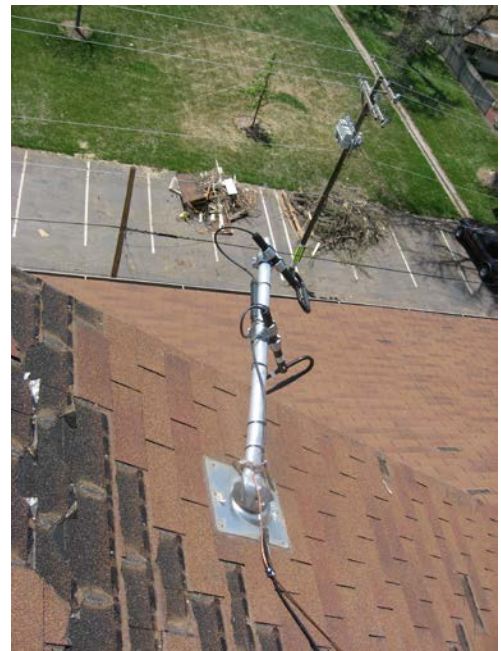
Tornado Damage

A TLECC field technician did a quick drive-by to discover a severely damaged mast at the Windsor town hall. He then drove on to the Central Weld Water district office. After a bit of on-site troubleshooting at Central Weld, everyone was relieved to discover that the root of the problem was just a dead computer monitor, possibly caused by extreme power fluctuations in the area of the tornado.

By this time, local news reported the Town of Windsor and surrounding areas had absorbed a direct hit from the tornado. TLECC prepared for the worst, and started making phone calls to our employees to see who could respond quickly to Windsor's needs. After the initial assessment of the damaged mast, the situation for Windsor was beginning to look a bit brighter! Was it possible that this was the only damage to Windsor's entire system? It would certainly account for the lack of communications to all the remote sites!



Understanding the very real prospect of damage to many of Windsor's remote sites, we dispatched Kelly Lytle, our Master Electrician, to repair the mast and check for other damage.



Damaged Mast and Scraped Off Shingles

After weaving through lots of debris, Kelly installed a new 2" GRC mast, terminated the cable and antenna connections, and started up the radio. Hallelujah! Communications with the remote sites were steady! What a relief!

As a testimony to the power of the storm, Kelly explained that the 2" cast aluminum mast, a rugged structure on its own, had additional support because it had been run up through the overhanging eave of the Town Hall building. The storm left the mast looking like a child's bendable straw! On further inspection of the Town Hall roof, **it became apparent that large flying debris had scraped the shingles off the roof and hit the antenna mast.**



Bent 2" Mast



Public Employees from Windsor and Surrounding Areas Responded in Record Time!

Fortunately for all involved, repairing the damaged antenna support seemed to restore communications for the entire system. After a brief check of other remote sites, and a short stay in the City's tornado shelter due to more storm warnings, Kelly realized that Water Valley, another of Timber Line's customers, also had radio telemetry sites very near the storm's path.

Water Valley's system was fairly new at the time, and the system demand low. Kelly thought that they might have sustained damage and not even have known it yet, 24 hours after the storm. So off Kelly went to check on the system. He was delighted to find all was well with Water Valley's antennas!

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Storm Damage in Town

Over the next few days, Windsor reported a few other minor problems with their system, mostly with set points being lost. In general, though, their radio telemetry system took a licking and kept on transmitting!



Undamaged Water Valley Antenna