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Power outage misses Dixie County students; *Day after blackout shows return to normal for county offices*



Dixie County Tax Collector Michelle Cannon pauses for a moment Thursday afternoon (Jan. 4) during one part of a busy afternoon of helping people with tax matters.

Story and Photo

By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 4, 2018 at 11:17 p.m.

DIXIE COUNTY -- The day after about 900 customers in the Cross City area experienced a four-hour power blackout from Duke Energy, the county offices that were closed in the county seat were open for business again on Thursday (Jan. 4).

A quick review of the power outage that lasted all morning on Wednesday showed all of the constitutional officers dealt with the issue well.

As for the students at Dixie County High School, they do not return to classes until next Monday (Jan. 8). Therefore, no one missed school on Wednesday.

Dixie County Superintendent of Schools Mike Thomas said there are 12-month employees who were present at some of the buildings during the blackout. Teachers returned to classes Thursday (Jan. 4), and so they were unaffected by the power outage the day before.

As for the workers in the Dixie County School District who were on duty in Cross City on Wednesday, Superintendent Thomas said many of them travel from areas of the county that are not near Cross City. A number of the workers did not return when power was restored in the afternoon.

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CLERK OF THE COURT

Dixie County Clerk of the Circuit Court Dana Johnson also serves as the Clerk of the Dixie County Court and the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners.

Thursday was a relatively nice day as far as the County Commission, because that first meeting of 2018 lasted about 22 minutes.

The day before though, presented challenges. Johnson said she and her staff used candles while the power was out for the first couple of hours.

Court cases had to be delayed in the morning, however, because the dark courtroom is not a safe environment for people.

Circuit Court Judge Wesley R. Douglas, who is the chief judge of the Third Judicial Circuit, informed Clerk Johnson that the Dixie County Courthouse would be closed for the remainder of the day, after electricity was not restored by 10:30 a.m.

Chief Judge Douglas is based in Lake City.

The Third Judicial Circuit includes Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor counties.

SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

Not only did the power failure close the courthouse, but it shut down operations across the street at the office of Dixie County Supervisor of Elections Starlet Cannon.

Supervisor of Elections Cannon said the power was out at 8:20 a.m. She and her staff waited until 10:30 before deciding to concede defeat to the power outage. They closed for the day, after learning the courthouse was not going to be open.

TAX COLLECTOR

Dixie County Tax Collector Michelle Cannon and her staff members were very busy Thursday afternoon.

Tax Collector Cannon said they were unable to work in the dark on Wednesday. Also, the machines require electricity to function.

And when the decision to close the courthouse was final, then she knew everyone would not be working in that office on that day.

Cannon, like all of the other constitutional officers who were available to speak with at their offices on Thursday, intimated that since the power outage caused people to be unable to work, she is paying all of the workers for the day without them having to take away from their vacation days.

The Levy County Board of County Commissioners paid for one day of hurricane evacuation time during the weeklong event this past summer, however some Levy County Commission workers either used vacation time or they lost as much as four days' pay as a result of Hurricane Irma.

PROPERTY APPRAISER

Dixie County Property Appraiser Robert A. Lee was in Tallahassee on Thursday.

He and his office staff were unable to work in the office on Wednesday. The Property Appraiser's Office, however, is in the field very often as staff members conduct appraisals of property values throughout Dixie County.

SHERIFF

Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr. and Maj. Scott Harden were at an out-of-town activity on Thursday.

While some clerical staff at the Dixie County Sheriff's Office could not work on Wednesday, law enforcement officers and correctional officers at the jail were on duty as usual.

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

County Manager Tim Alexander had addressed the issue on the afternoon of the blackout, mentioning that his staff returned to work in the afternoon when power was restored.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Dixie County Emergency Services Chief Darian Brown said the Emergency Operations Center did not lose electric service.

Even if the power went out there, the EOC has a very powerful generator that puts out enough electricity to provide lights, heat and will meet all other electric needs.

Chief Brown said there is a good supply of diesel fuel for the generator, and the emergency machinery is checked and maintained regularly to assure that the residents and visitors in Dixie County will have emergency services 24-hours-a-day, every day of the year.

There are conditions when even the firefighters and paramedics must hunker down and wait for high winds to diminish so that they can safely respond to calls for service.

Electric outage shuts down most of Dixie County;

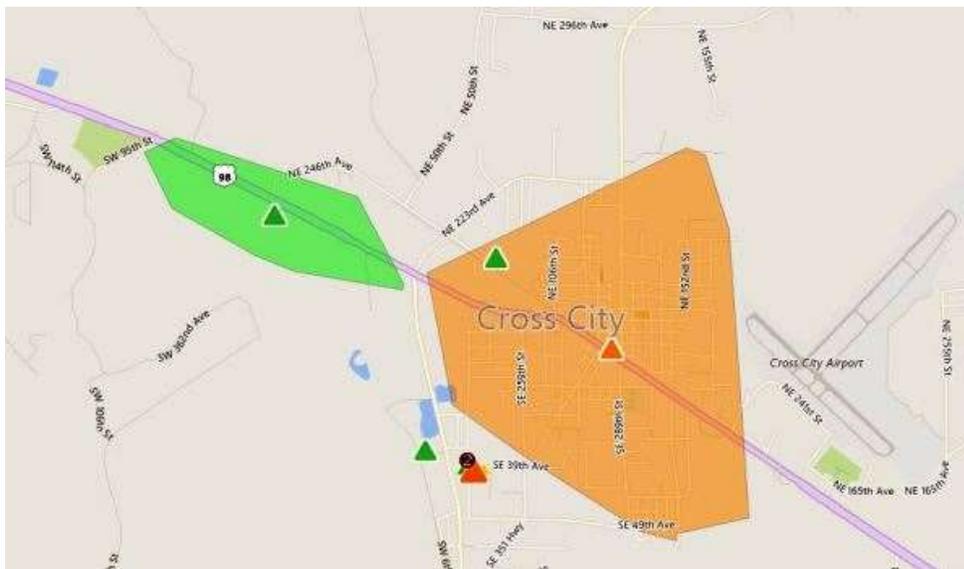
(Updated 2:47 p.m. - Jan. 3)

Courthouse closed for the day, library and others reopened

By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 3, 2018 at 11:57 a.m.

* Updated Jan. 3, 2018 at 2:47 p.m.

DIXIE COUNTY -- Telephone calls to the offices of Dixie County Emergency Management, the Dixie County Board of County Commissioners, Dixie County Extension, the Dixie County Superintendent of Schools and other offices went unanswered Wednesday morning (Jan. 3).



This part of a screen shot from Duke Energy Outage map shows part of the area of Dixie County that was without power on Wednesday morning.

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Given that Levy County is experiencing telephonic issues with its EOC and Sheriff's Office to a degree, a call to Dixie County Maj. Scott Harden started to lead to the answer as to why phones were ringing but no one was answering.

(Please see the [POLICE PAGE](#) for those stories.)

The Gilchrist County Emergency Management and other Gilchrist County offices have telephones that work in offices lit by electricity.)

Duke Energy Florida (DEF) has lost its ability to provide power to almost 900 people, according to the Duke Outage Website and DEF spokeswoman Ana Gibbs. She said there are three trucks with crews working to overcome the issues.

Rain turned to ice on branches, Gibbs said, and those branches broke -- falling on power lines.

Gibbs said the estimated time to restore service is noon, however that is just an estimate.

Maj. Harden said non-essential county workers were sent home until there is electric service restored.

The 9-1-1 line is working for Dixie County.

DO NOT USE 9-1-1 EXCEPT FOR AN ACTUAL EMERGENCY.

The Duke power outage map is visible by clicking [HERE](#).

*** Gilchrist County Manager Tim Alexander said the Dixie County Courthouse is closed for the remainder of today (Jan. 3), due to the power outage all morning. The Dixie County Public Library in Cross City is open for the rest of today for its normal hours on a Wednesday, and some other county offices, including his office, are restored to service for the residents and visitors of Dixie County.**

Duke Power had the issues repaired at about noon today (Jan. 3).