

## Lightning hits 911 phones at courthouse

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**AMITE - Lightning took out some Sheriff's Office phone lines and 911 equipment at the Tangi-pahoa Parish Courthouse Sunday night as a series of intense but short-lived storms moved through the parish and the southern part of the state.**

Several hundred electricity customers were without power for short periods during the storms. Most were restored by this morning.

Around 9 p.m. Sunday, lightning struck and "fried" some major 911 equipment, said Director Dennis Darouse.

"We're operating now, but we're nowhere near 100 percent," he said this morning. "One complete station is down, and our other two stations are roughly 50 percent."

Darouse said he hopes the service will be back up to 100 percent by early afternoon. That depends, however, on how soon Bell South technicians could find parts for the antiquated equipment, he said.

Calls from Tangipahoa Parish are being answered, but 911 operators are not able to determine where the calls are coming from and which agencies service that particular area.

Also, the lightning wiped out both trunk lines serving St. Helena Parish residents, he said. Calls to 911 in St. Helena Parish will yield a busy signal until repairs are made.

"People are working on it today," Darouse said.

Cost estimates on the repairs were not available this morning.

Sheriff's Detective Mike Sticker, based at the Hammond substation, confirmed this morning that lightning also damaged sheriff phone lines in the courthouse.

"All calls coming through are on the 345-6150 main line," Sticker said. "From there, if that particular line is busy, the calls are supposed to roll over to other lines. But we're having problems with the rollovers. They are working on it."

There was no speculation this morning about when those problems would be fixed.

Phone lines and equipment were working in the district judges' chambers on the courthouse's second floor and the first floor offices of Registrar of Voters and Clerk of Court.

Residential power outages were also reported throughout the parish on Sunday. All Entergy customers had power restored by this morning.

Roughly 1,750 Entergy customers on the north end of the parish were without power for a time. Most of those were in the Kentwood area where lightning took out a main feeder line. The power was restored in just over 40 minutes.