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News

Lightning zaps turbine: Storm's bolt damages blade at Shoreway (**video**)

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By SCOT ALLYN
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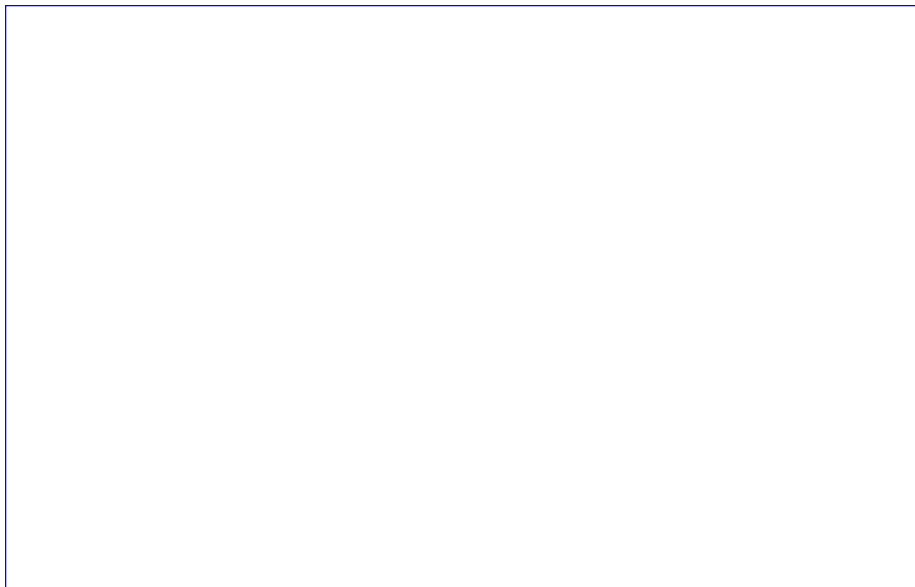


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SHEFFIELD LAKE — A wind turbine installed at Shoreway Shopping Center last month did fine until it was pitted against an untamed energy source — lightning.

One blade of the 100-kilowatt turbine, atop a 120-foot tower in the Shoreway Shopping Center parking lot, was hit by lightning during a thunderstorm Wednesday night, according to Ted Rose, a spokesman for NexGen Energy Partners LLC.

NexGen, based in Boulder, Colo., erected the wind turbine in July and owns it, Rose said.



The 100-kilowatt turbine, which cost between \$600,000 and \$750,000 to install, generates electricity that is sold to Sheffield Lake, which owns Shoreway Shopping Center, for use at the Apples supermarket.

The turbine, one of about a dozen owned by NexGen in Ohio, was performing as expected before the lightning strike, Rose said.

The damaged blade, one of three that spin in a 67-foot circle, sustained a split more than a foot long at its tip. Safety systems inside the turbine indicated a large external surge of energy, according to Northern Power Systems, the Barre, Vt.-based company that made the turbine.

“In this case, (the surge was) lightning,” said John Ciempa, a spokesman for Northern Power Systems.

The blades are made of fiberglass with an embedded copper cable to provide a safe path to dissipate such surges to the ground, Ciempa said.

A repair crew used a crane to take down the three original blades yesterday in order to install three new blades. Costs for parts and labor to fix the turbine will be in “the low five digits,” according to Rose.

“If the city had purchased the turbine, they’d be paying for this repair,” he said.

Sheffield Lake Mayor John Piskura said such considerations were part of the city’s decision to have NexGen own and maintain the turbine.

“Everybody’s even more confident we made the right decision,” he said.

Apples supermarket gets electricity from the conventional power grid when the turbine is not

working, Piskura said.

"Their monthly statement will show how much power came from the grid and how much is from the turbine," he said.

The repair was expected to be finished last night, Rose said.

Comments

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" Mayor John Piskura has vision for the future of Sheffield Lake and I personally like the improvements I have seen since he has been in office. "

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Telco.Phil wrote on Aug 3, 2010 2:14 PM:

" I can see this turbine from the 9th floor in downtown Lorain on a clear day. Low power binoculars help too.
Last week I looked out at it and it wasn't even moving, so in light winds I guess it doesn't do much power generating. "

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