

Tractor-Trailer Hits Pole, Causing Power Outage In North Wilkesboro



Most of downtown North Wilkesboro lost electricity for several hours Friday afternoon when a tractor-trailer from Greensboro hit and snapped a Duke Energy power pole apart at the intersection of Fifth and Main streets.

Capt. Brad Mathis of the North Wilkesboro Police Department said the rig was making a right turn from Fifth Street onto Main Street when the trailer hit the pole on the southwest corner of the intersection. The driver stopped the rig along Main Street a short distance beyond the intersection of Fifth and Main.

The Duke Energy outage map showed nearly 200 customers in North Wilkesboro were still without electricity at 4 p.m. Friday. Duke Energy reported that electricity should be completely restored by 5:15 p.m.

According to Mathis, a Duke Energy spokesman said electricity would be restored in downtown North Wilkesboro in time for the annual Lightup Downtown event - from 6-9 p.m. Friday.

Authorities on the scene said the pole broken Friday had recently been installed to replace a power pole broken in half two to three months ago in a similar incident.

A Duke Energy spokesman said the pole was already scheduled to be moved farther toward the center of the

sidewalk and away from the street curb. The new location was marked with an "x," as was the pole itself. Duke Energy personnel hadn't gotten to this job yet due to work created by the Oct. 23 tornado and straight-line winds. The Duke spokesman said another power pole farther east on Main Street is scheduled to be moved farther up on the sidewalk and away from the curb.

A pole at the old location at the intersection of Fifth and Main was snapped in half when it was hit by a trash truck's protruding arm in May 2015

On the day of the Brushy Mountain Apple Festival in October 2013, a festival food vendor vehicle hit and snapped the pole at that location. The eastbound driver didn't stop.

Vehicles have hit power poles elsewhere in and near downtown North Wilkesboro in recent years. Wednesday morning in North Wilkesboro, poles were broken and power lines downed on N.C. 268 when the boom on a crane hit the lines because it wasn't lowered enough.

Local officials say they have asked Duke Energy to move certain poles farther away from the travel lanes. Friday afternoon, a Duke Energy crew was preparing a site for a replacement pole farther away from Main Street by making a hole in the sidewalk with concrete cutter.

Local officials have noted that portions of the outer sides of several downtown streets slope downward, which they said can cause vehicles to move to the outsides of lanes. Many downtown power poles lean inward, partly due to the weight of stoplights.

Downtown North Wilkesboro poles are used by other utility companies, in addition to Duke Energy.