

Entergy adding third substation

Project on Cofer Road to be completed in September

BY ALI WEBB

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A substation being built by Entergy Arkansas on Cofer Road on Arkansas Highway 36 is expected to be completed in September.

According to Entergy Arkansas Customer Service Representative Flave Carpenter, the substation is "an investment in the Searcy community" and will increase the number of substations in Searcy to three.

Entergy Arkansas

What: Third substation being added in Searcy

Where: Cofer Road

Completion: Late September

Cost: Approximately \$10 million

"We have two primary substations in the Searcy area; Searcy South behind the Carmichael [Center] and Searcy Price before you get to Eastline Road, on the other side of the four lane," Carpenter said. "The load for Searcy is centered in these two substations and there is a lot there."

North East Region Customer Service Senior Manager Troy Castleberry said the substation "increases capacity that we have out here for growth and improves reliability."



Michael Lunn with Koontz Electric out of Morrilton welds jumpers to the hook switches above the main breakers at the Cofer Road substation on Monday. The station is expected to be opened in late September.

It will allow Entergy to transfer the customers on circuit 462 in Searcy South to the Cofer Road substation, according to Entergy North East Region Engineering Supervisor Mike Willems.

"In addition to us needing another substation for a growing community, the circuit in 462 is an enormous cir-

cuit," Willems said. "It covers about 50 square miles of our service territory and has about 3,700 customers. When I say a customer, that's a meter. That could be a family of five; it could be a single person; it could be a business. When

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you hear on the news 'Entergy says 3,700 customers out,' you can think more like 6,000 people are out of lights and a couple of businesses

"The customers in the urban area lose power on average of once or twice a year. When you are out, it's forever so we measure in terms of how many times per year and generally in urban areas, they are out once to twice a year but when you get out in a rural area with all this exposure these people are out three or four times a year."

Castleberry said Entergy tries to minimize how often customers lose power by having "all kinds of programs to maintain our equipment and protective devices to keep as many people on as we can, but the truth of the matter is out in the elements, it's hard to do."

Willems said the customers between Searcy South and Cofer Road "will have considerable improvement, but when you are improving over once or twice a year, you may not know."

"From a statistical standpoint it is going to be considerably better," he said. "The customers beyond Cofer Road will no longer have the exposure between them and Searcy South but they are still rural so they will still be subjected to three or four outages a year."

Willems also said the substation could be used for growth in any area of Searcy.

"This substation also has the room to expand and add another transformer to it and double its capacity," Willems said. "If there were a considerable amount of growth or the placement of a larger industrial customer perhaps anywhere in Searcy and we would be shifting load around to make room for a big customer that employs 2,000 people near Searcy Price, we can't really expand it that much more so we are going to shift load out to South South and shift Searcy South load to Cofer and then increase Cofer's capacity. That would be one of our options."

According to David



Entergy Arkansas Customer Service Representative Flave Carpenter (left) and Entergy of North East Region Engineering Supervisor Mike Willems look at equipment at the Cofer Road substation Monday. The addition of another substation will give Entergy three substations in Searcy.

Lewis, Entergy Arkansas communication specialist, the substation will give the company options during a power outage, which Williams said are counted "as a sustained outage of five minutes or more."

"If somebody is driving down Race Street and they run into a pole that takes out a transmission line, then the first thing we try to do is route power around where that damage has occurred," Lewis said.

"If you don't have any options to do that, then your lights are out until we can replace that pole and get the lines back in the air but if you have got backup options then sometimes very quickly, you can get everybody back on by shifting the load to the backup."

Entergy Area Substation Supervisor Richard Ashenberger said the addition of the substation can allow Entergy to perform repairs without disruption of service to customers.

"If we have to do a critical maintenance task, we might not be able to do it," Ashenberger said. "We might have to wait until the fall where we can move load around, so having this new station will get us to where we should be able to do it year around. We won't have to wait. We can address it right then."

Carpenter said "critical situations" usually

happen in July and August because they are the hottest times of the year "when everybody is going home and maxing out their air conditioners."

According to Carpenter, the project, which started last year, will cost approximately \$10 million.

"It's a balancing act between not spending money that we don't have good reason to spend but spending money when we can justify it," Lewis said. "We justify it by the demands of the customers. This is one more step in the ongoing building of the electrical system that we have been engaged in for 102 years."

"This is the constant process of upgrading the system to accommodate the increased demand that a growing number of customers put on the system. We always have projects like this somewhere on the horizon."

Carpenter added, "We could leave it alone and limp along and have more and more and longer and longer outages but that

would not satisfy our level of reliability demands on ourselves and it certainly would not satisfy our customers demands for reliability so that is why we make these upgrades."

Nobody will lose any power during the transition.

"The customer shouldn't notice anything but hopefully they're reliability will be a little better," Castleberry said.

Ashenberger said the facility will be "state of the art" and adhere to environmental safety regulations.

"That's another thing from an environmental perspective, its built to the standard where if we were to have some sort of environmental hazard or issue then it would contain it without the station," Ashenberger said.

The substation covers approximately 5 acres and is being constructed about a mile outside the Searcy city limits.

"It's the name of the game; 'Keeping the lights on,'" Ashenberger said.



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