

BRIGHT IDEAS

A monthly newsletter for BELD & BELD Broadband customers, published May 2010

BELD
Braintree Electric
Light Department
and
BELD Broadband

Furry foragers a formidable foe for utilities

Squirrels scampering along power lines are a common sight in the spring as they move from line to tree and house to line with no apparent difficulty. But every once in a while there's a startling flash of light and one of them drops to the ground. It's lights out for the furry rodent—and sometimes for the neighboring electric customers as well!

Utilities across the country are working diligently to deal with this escalating problem. As the electrical grid spreads, more wires are closer to more animals whose natural habitat has been destroyed.

"Most of Braintree's electrical outages during 2009 were caused by animals and birds," says Joe Morley, BELD's Engineering & Operations Manager. "Accounting for 32% of all outages, a typical squirrel-related incident resulted in a 30-minute loss of power for 15-20 customers."

The gray squirrels who live in this area breed in mid-December or early January and again in the early summer, usually having litters of one to eight pups. **The outages caused by these squirrels occur primarily in June**, when the warmer weather has arrived and the animals are most active.

This wily little forager is an obsessive foe—if he doesn't have plenty to gnaw on, the rodent's teeth can grow 6-10 inches a year.

A navigation system on autopilot

And—as everybody knows—squirrels are very agile. They follow paths they have taken before on their way home or to an acorn stash, and they have an **internal navigation system** for following a route over and over, using remembered objects to plot a fix with singular determination. A substation on the way is no more than a minor technicality!

High-wire balancing act

But how is it that squirrels are able to maneuver power lines most of the time without a major mishap? The answer lies in the way electricity travels, always following the path of least resistance between two points.

In many cases, power lines are not insulated, and squirrels running on the lines are coming into direct contact with the electricity but not interrupting its flow. It's only when the animal bridges a gap with its body—say, if it touches the transformer with a front foot while leaving a back foot on the wire—that the electricity will follow the easier path of conduction and pass through the squirrel.

In recent years utilities have stepped up their efforts to fight the acrobatic rodents—trying everything from predator urine to baffles, pole banding, and high-intensity sound waves—and they're making some progress.

BELD has installed squirrel guards on the equipment most affected in Braintree, and, according to Joe Morley, "They've reduced animal-caused outages by approximately 80%."

Pesky problem solved? Maybe...

Sources for this article include: The Wall Street Journal and Indiana University, Bloomington.

We're pleased to announce another reduction in our Power Cost Adjustment—starting JUNE 1

Braintree Electric Light Department announces a reduction in our Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) of \$.005/KWh, as of June 1.

Moderating energy prices coupled with a successful hedging plan have positioned BELD to pass these savings on to our customers.

The decrease will reduce our electric rate by approximately 3.60%—saving our average residential customer close to \$3.25/month.

You asked...and we listened.

BELD Broadband customers are often amazed that real people read and act upon the feedback we get via Twitter (follow "BELDBroadband") or email (cservice@beld.com), or that's passed along during a call or visit. You've asked for more Video On Demand (VOD) offerings and High-Definition (HD) channels, and we're preparing to deliver!

We've done a lot of work in the headend recently, and our next upgrade will double the capacity of our existing VOD server—allowing us to add the **HD movies and free content** you're requesting. These improvements will also lead to a **newer version of the Interactive Programming Guide** with more robust search features, programming information 14 days into the future, and multi-room Digital Video Recorder functionality. In addition, careful planning and a bit of re-engineering will help us bring you **more HD channels**—FX, Speed Channel and Fox News are next on our list.

So please keep your cards and letters—and emails and tweets—coming. We really are listening and making sound decisions with your best interests (and wallets) in mind. This is the kind of response that keeps BELD at the top of many customer service lists each year—and a benefit you won't find with the larger national providers. **For more information on BELD Broadband or to order HD service, please call 348.BELD (2353).**

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Collection of grass and leaves

If you missed the collections May 8 and May 22, there will be two more Saturday curbside pickups on **June 5 and June 19**. All collections must be in brown paper bags or barrels (NO plastic bags accepted) and must be on the curb by 7 a.m. **Grass and leaves only**—branches, brush and large items must go to the Plain Street Compost Site, open Wed-Sun, 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. & 1-3 p.m.—trash sticker required. For additional information, call the Highway Department at 781.794.8950.

Spring Rummage Sale June 6

The Temple B'nai Shalom Sisterhood will sponsor a Spring Rummage Sale **Sunday, June 6**, 1-3 p.m., 41 Storrs Avenue, Braintree. Bag Day is **Monday, June 7**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and 6-7 p.m. Call Florence Koffman at 781.843.4464 for information.

AARP June Luncheon

Braintree AARP Chapter #4042 will present the "Elvis Presley" Show at their luncheon, served by Fasano Caterers, **Tuesday, June 15**, 1 p.m., at the D.A.V. Hall on Liberty Street. Tickets are \$25, and the deadline is Friday, June 11. For more information, call Tom Charlton at 781.843.4898.

Gardeners' Guild Plant Sale

The Gardeners' Guild of Braintree will hold a plant sale on **Saturday, June 19**, 9 a.m.-1 pm, at the Sylvanus Thayer House, which will also be open for tours. Members will share their own plants, demonstrations will be held each hour, and baked goods and lemonade will be provided. All proceeds benefit the Guild's beautification efforts. For more information, call 617.851.3328 or visit www.gardenersguildofbraintree.com.

Braintree All Scout Jamboree

The first Braintree All Scout Jamboree, open to all Braintree Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts, will be held **Sunday, June 20**, 12:30-5:30 p.m., at Pond Meadow Park. (Rain date is June 27.) If you are interested in having your son/daughter's

troop participate in this event, please contact Mark Smith at occpack196@yahoo.com.

Super Saturday Golf Tournament

Braintree Super Saturday Recreational Program's Eleventh Annual Charity Golf Tournament is **Wednesday, June 23**. The program is looking for monetary donations, auction items and raffle prizes. For more information, call Frank at 617.513.7203 or 781.848.1335.

Mass. Humane Society yard sale

Join the fun and meet the animals **Saturday, June 26**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., (rain date Sunday, June 27) at 87 Wharf Street in East Weymouth. Great items for you and your pets, plus baked goods to enjoy. Weymouth Police K-9 demo at noon. Proceeds benefit the rescued animals at the shelter. Call 781.335.1300 or visit masshumane.org.

Visit our Independence Day booth

Emmanuel Parish will join Braintree's annual Independence Day Celebration on **Saturday, June 26**. Our youth group will bring you *Sundaes at Emmanuel*, our signature hot-fudge, brownie sundaes with all the best toppings. Please be sure to stop by our booth and try one for yourself! We think you will agree...it's a *Heavenly Experience!*

Farmers Market opens June 26

The 2010 Braintree Farmers Market will open **Saturday, June 26**, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Town Hall Mall, rain or shine, and run until October 30. Visit www.sustainablebraintree.org/food.

Braintree Park Department trips

Thursday, June 3: Paw Sox vs. Charlotte Knights
Fri-Sun, June 4-6: Red Sox at Baltimore Orioles
Sunday, June 13: Foxwoods Casino trip
Sunday, June 27: Maine Clambake trip
Saturday, July 3: James Taylor/Carole King
Wed-Sat, July 7-10: Red Sox at Toronto
Sunday, July 18: Block Island day trip
Please call 781.794.8901 for more information.

BELD

www.beld.com
150 Potter Road
Braintree, MA 02184
781.348.BELD (2353)

Bright Ideas Editor/Designer
Joan Marson
jmarson@beld.com

PAYMENT LOCATIONS

150 Potter Road

Our office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Customer Service is open until 7 p.m. on Thursday.

Drop boxes

Top of Potter Road
Beside Town Hall

Braintree Cooperative Bank

1010 Washington St.
372 Washington St.
505 Quincy Avenue

Direct Payment

Call BELD at 781.348.2353.

Online payments

www.beld.com

BROADBAND HELP DESK

Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
Sat-Sun: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Public meetings are usually held monthly. Call 781.348.2353 or check www.beld.com to confirm time and date.

COMMISSIONERS

Anthony Agnitti, Chair
James Regan, Vice Chair
Thomas Reynolds, Secretary

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Monday, May 31
Memorial Day



Always ask for IDENTIFICATION!

All Braintree Electric Light Department personnel carry photo identification cards. Never let anyone claiming to represent your utility company enter your home without first showing his or her I.D. If you have a question about a BELD I.D., call our office at 781.348.BELD (2353).