

Power restored to North Carolina county affected by shooting

Hannah Schoenbaum

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Workers work on equipment at the West End Substation, at 6910 NC Hwy 211 in West End, N.C., Monday, Dec. 5, 2022, where a serious attack on critical infrastructure has caused a power outage to many around Southern Pines, N.C. (AP Photo/Karl B DeBlaker)

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Duke Energy completed repairs Wednesday on electric substation equipment damaged in shootings over the weekend in central North Carolina.

Almost all households in Moore County had regained power as of 5 p.m. Wednesday, according to Duke Energy's outage map. A peak of more than 45,000 customers lost power over the weekend.

Authorities have said the outages began shortly after 7 p.m. Saturday night after one or more people drove up to two substations, breached the gates and opened fire on them.

In a statement on its website, Duke Energy said all of the equipment damaged in the attack has been fixed or replaced. The company said customers gradually got power back throughout the day as it finished testing and restoration.

Police have not released a motive or said what kind of gun was used in the attack. But Moore County Sheriff Ronnie Fields told reporters Monday that whoever was responsible "knew exactly what they were doing to ... cause the outage that they did."

The FBI posted a notice Wednesday seeking information related to the investigation.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper announced that the state, county and Duke Energy were offering combined rewards of up to \$75,000 total for information leading to an arrest and conviction in the attack.

"An attack on our critical infrastructure will not be tolerated," Cooper said in a statement Wednesday.

Schools are closed through Thursday. The Moore County School District said it intends to bring students back on Friday but will wait until Thursday afternoon to make that determination.

FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital, a 402-bed acute care facility in Pinehurst, regained power shortly after 9 a.m. Wednesday and gradually transitioned from emergency generators to normal power, the hospital website said.

The county's transportation services are operating only for clients who have scheduled dialysis, chemotherapy and radiation treatment, according to the Moore County website.

Meanwhile, the Moore County outage brought renewed attention to a substation that was vandalized last month in another county about 150 miles (240 kilometers) southeast. A substation near Maysville in Jones County was damaged by vandals Nov. 11, causing outages to 12,000 customers that lasted about two hours, according to the Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative.

North Carolina workers close to restoring power

Duke Energy says it expects to be able to restore power by Wednesday night to a county where electric substations were attacked by gunfire. (Dec. 7)

The vandals damaged transformers and caused them to leak coolant oil, the cooperative said in a news release. It was not immediately clear how the damage was done or if there is a link to the Moore County outages. The Jones County sheriff did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Wednesday.

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Hannah Schoenbaum is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

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