

By JESSICA CRAWFORD

Daily Leader

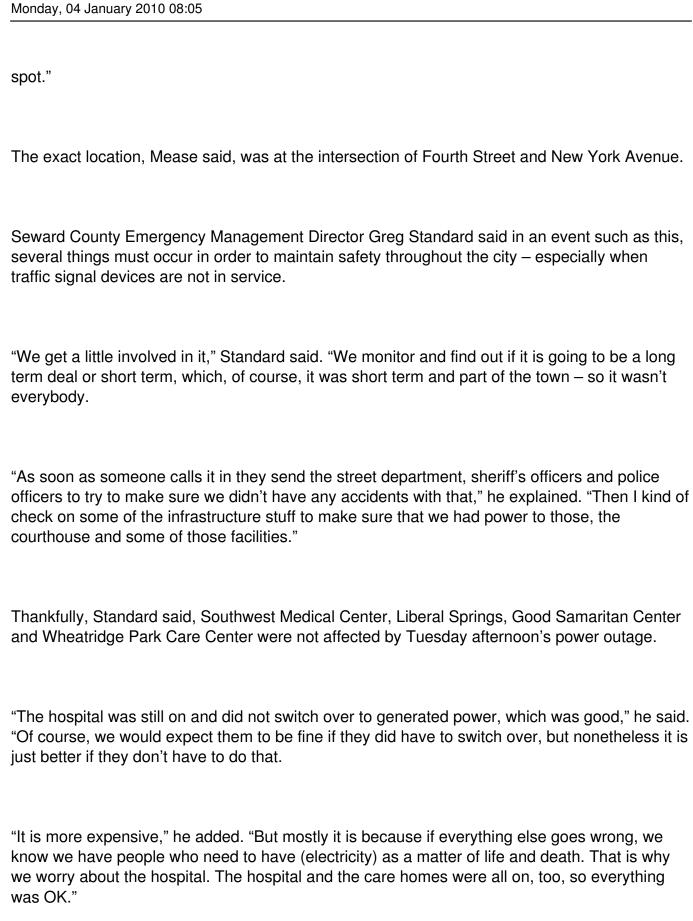
It was lights out for much of Liberal Tuesday afternoon as a result of a weakened wire that ultimately burned, according to Southern Pioneer Electric Manager of Operations Chad Mease. The exact cause of the incident was unclear. However, Mease said, he has his suspicions.

When asked if a cause had been determined Mease replied, "Honestly, no."

Mease did suggest the possibility of a vehicle striking the pole to be the cause of the event that left 1,455 Southern Pioneer Electric consumers without power for approximately two hours and 20 minutes.

"The only thing that we could find that might be a contributing factor, but we don't know for sure, there is a mark on the pole that looks as if somebody ran into it with a car," he said. "But, there were witnesses across the street when it burned down and nobody saw a car. So, it may have been from this weekend or a couple of weeks ago.

"It finally just gave, we don't know. The wires burned right on top of the cross arm, which is really odd," he explained. "That is why I can't give a good reason why it happened. The wire for some reason got weak and it physically burned, and it arcs and sparks like an arc welder. It burned in two because it was getting weak and it was trying to conduct a load, but part of it was gone. So, it gets thin and it gets hot and then it gets thinner until eventually it just blows apart. Then it fell down into the wires down below that and burned it down — it happened in a bad



Liberal Police Department Capt. Pat McClurg said the outage, although inconvenient for the

community, was relatively uneventful with no accidents due to the lack of traffic signals.

"Actually, things went pretty smooth," McClurg said. "We had some traffic lights that were out downtown, but we didn't have any accidents or anything as a result of it. Everything worked out pretty well."

Although all was back to normal nearly two and a half hours following the initial detection of the outage, Southern Pioneer Electric employees were on sight this morning to ensure no further problems were to be expected.

"The crews went back this morning just to do some more visual checking," Mease said. "All consumers were back on yesterday afternoon, and everything is back to normal."

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