

BCP Story #1 - Power Outage at 66 Slater

Rodent Wreaks Havoc in the Downtown Core!

A Busy Day Ahead - Thursday morning

It was 8:00 am, Thursday morning, and Gary was thinking about the work ahead of him as he pulled into his parking spot at 66 Slater Street. It was going to be a busy day at the office.

He had a report to prepare, a meeting to attend and a number of issues to deal with – all of which required urgent attention.

“Hmm, why is there an Ottawa Fire Services vehicle parked in front?” he thought to himself.

As he approached the main door he was greeted by the Fire Chief.

Squirreling Around - Thursday morning

“Excuse me, do you work in this building?” the Fire Chief asked. “I am sorry but you can’t go in right now. There has been a power outage and the building is closed until further notice.”

“No kidding! What happened?” Gary asked.

“Well, it seems that a squirrel climbed into the Ottawa Hydro transformer that is adjacent to the building. It shorted out the transformer so we are investigating it right now. No one is allowed in until further notice.”

Gary is concerned and annoyed. Now what was he is going to about all the things on his agenda?

“Ottawa Hydro should have the power restored in a few hours but you may as well call it a day right now and plan come back to work for tomorrow”, the Fire Chief said as he headed into the building to continue with the investigation.

Anxiety Builds - Thursday morning

A crowd of other employees of the building were starting to build around Gary as he stood there thinking about what to do. He attempted to explain the situation to an increasingly anxious crowd.

“What are supposed to do now?”

“But I have things inside that I need!”

"I have work that HAS to get done today! This is crazy."

"When will they have the power restored?"

"Does this mean that I lose a days work?"

Some of them even pushed past him to get into the building. They soon returned with a fireman escort.

20 Block Radius - Thursday morning

It turns out that the transformer that was adjacent to 66 Slater was responsible for delivering power to approximately 20 blocks that surrounded the transformer.

Local service businesses immediately felt the sting of the power loss. All the coffee shops and restaurants were dark and empty, good thing Gary grabbed one on his way out the door that morning.

Without power, people in multi story apartment buildings were faced with walking up and down many flights of stairs.

As inconvenient as it was at least the power was expected to be back on shortly.

Damage More Extensive - Thursday afternoon

Gary looked at his watch, the one his wife gave to him at Christmas. He liked his watch. It was 1:30 and the power was still not restored. He had deadlines to meet and people to call.

Gary and his colleagues pondered about how to keep the work flow going at Innovative Products and Services Inc. They really had expected the power to have returned by now. It was just a transformer, no big deal to fix right?

Important Meeting in Jeopardy - Thursday afternoon

Francois, the President of Innovative Products and Services Inc., had a presentation to the Deputy Minister of the Department of International Exports scheduled for later in the day on Friday. Without access to his computer and to the Data Centre it would be next to impossible to complete the preparations!

"How am I going to finish my presentation now?" exclaimed Francois. Stress and anxiety was building. "This can't be good for my blood pressure. It took a long time to get this meeting scheduled."

A team was quickly assembled and amidst a bit of chaos they re-located to the Head Office. Using stand alone desk top computers they worked doggedly and diligently to get the presentation done. They were determined that the presentation would happen as scheduled.

Whew! That was close.

“Okay, the best thing to do at this point is to relocate to our head office in the west end”, Gary announced.

“Frank, can you start phoning staff at the top of the fan out call lists? Melissa, you start at the bottom and work up your way up of the list, okay?”

“Tell them not to return to 66 Slater until further notice. If they have urgent business to attend they can go to the Head Office. Oh, and by the way, let them know that there is no access to the servers as the Data Centre is down!”

Hardship Continues – Friday morning

It is now Friday, and Gary wakes up to find that power has still not been restored. He contacted Ottawa Hydro immediately to get a status of the situation.

“We are currently working on the problem and we should have the power restored shortly.” Gary was told.

“Okay good”, Gary thought, “But what do we do until then?”

Two hours later, Gary contacts Ottawa Hydro again. And again he is told the same thing. With no back power source available employees could not yet return to work. He was back to notifying staff as to what they should do.

Extensive and Expensive Losses Begin to Pile Up – Friday afternoon

The local business market was suffering the most. They were experiencing great disruption and an even greater loss of revenue than most.

Restaurants in the area could not serve customers, even if they had any. Food being stored in refrigerators or freezers was spoiling and starting to unthaw.

Frustration was growing rapidly and no one seemed to know what was going on or how long it would last.

People living in the 20 block radius had to leave the affected area to get food and other supplies. Those living in multi story apartments, many of them seniors, were still faced with walking up stairs – with their groceries. Air conditioning wasn’t functioning so they couldn’t even get relief once they made it inside their apartments.

When Will the Power Come Back On? - Monday

It is now Monday morning, and Gary gets up extra early to find out if the power is back on. He contacted Ottawa Hydro immediately to get a status of the situation.

Power has still NOT been restored and they are entering into Day 5 of the power outage.

“We are currently working on the problem and should have the power restored shortly.” Gary was told.

Sound familiar?

Well, the power did finally get restored later that morning. The news was communicated via radio and TV.

It was received with huge relief, mixed with frustration, anger and strong incentive to put plans in place to ensure that this would not happen again.