

CALL CENTER February 2022

Highlands dodged a bullet with the recent major snow storm. We had no widespread power outages. Nevertheless, town needs to address the problem of how folks can report power outages when town hall is closed.

The town has relied on the Macon County emergency dispatch call center for years. With a continual increase of residents living here, especially in winter, that system and arrangement has become overloaded. We have urged people to use nonemergency number, 526-4131, but invariably with a major power outage in the evening or on weekends, people flood the 911 system with outage calls. When this heavy call volume occurs, dispatchers are concerned that they cannot immediately respond to life threatening calls, such as heart attacks or auto crashes.

The town staff is now researching an alternative system where utility customers will be able to access a 24/7 call center. This new system would eliminate the need for calling 911 to report a power outage. It will take several months to implement this new system.

On a related note, by having our own electric utility system, response to outages occur very fast. In bad weather conditions our electric crews are always on standby. Since the electric crews know every aspect of our town electric grid, they are able to locate problem areas very fast and restore power without delays. Delays in restoring power only occur in conditions, such as hurricane force winds, where worker safety becomes a concern.