

“Dominion Energy is committed to providing the safest and most reliable electrical service for our customers – right now, we’re working to make keeping the lights on even easier through our innovative Strategic Underground Program. We do this, by removing the most outage prone overhead electric distribution lines and replacing them with undergrounding lines.”

Since the program’s inception, we’ve successfully converted more than 2,000 miles of the most outage-prone overhead tap lines... think about that – that’s almost as far as the Appalachian Trail! So, who qualifies for this service? The program is completely data driven so it all comes down to the numbers.

“We use a fair, data driven process - analyzing 10 years of outage data to determine which overhead distribution lines are most vulnerable to outages and regularly perform analysis so there’s potential for tap lines to either fall out of the project data or qualify for the program in future years.”

Even if a particular neighborhood is not anticipated to be part of a Strategic Underground project, the primary goal remains – reduce the number of repair locations following a major weather event, which means shorter outage times for all of our customers

“We work in each region of our service area simultaneously which builds grid resiliency system wide. Every completed project improves the overall reliability of the company’s electric distribution system.”

The distribution lines selected for the program are historically those that see the highest frequency of damages after major storms. These lines are the ones that run through neighborhoods and, in a lot of instances, through heavily treed back yards. Undergrounding them means fewer repairs to make overall – so we can focus our repair efforts on the main or feeder lines, which helps to restore power more quickly to more customers. We rely heavily on partnerships with our customers to achieve this.

“The Strategic Underground Program is completely voluntary – customers signal their support of the program by signing an easement. Once all easements are signed, the project can be scheduled for construction.”

If we’re unable to secure the necessary easements, we will look for other engineering solutions because every project is an important step in our goal to provide reliable service to our customers and reduce outage and restoration timeframes. Participation in the program doesn’t have any direct construction costs for a customer. Because the program benefits all of our customers, the costs are shared through a small rate adjustment called a Rider.

“Customers can expect consistent outreach during every phase of an SUP project because Communication Coordinators and Project Managers are assigned to all projects and directly communicate with property owners. We have a robust communication strategy that includes updates via mail, doorhanger, phone, email, and more! We also partner with contractors who help keep our customers informed every step of the way.”

And in the spirit of innovation, we proudly use Dominion Energy’s award-winning Augmented Reality application - allowing the customer to visualize where a pad mounted transformer or pedestal may go on their property as part of the project.

“From project management, design and right of way, to communications, installation and removal of equipment, Dominion Energy and our contractor partners are involved in all aspects of the program.”

Each project has a dedicated Dominion Energy point of contact. Our commitment is to treat our customers with respect and take care in restoring their property when projects are completed.

“And that completion time varies between projects. On larger projects, we could be part of a community for many months at a time as we work to install the new underground cable and equipment. On other, smaller, projects, customers may only see our crews for a couple of weeks. Property owners and neighborhood organizations will be advised of what to expect as a project is planned. “

“Projects throughout our service territory continue to move into the construction phase and we’re working to complete those successfully amid supply chain issues and unforeseen, pandemic-related roadblocks.”

During construction, we use directional drilling rather than open trenching to minimize disruption to landscaping. This kind of drilling provides a low impact way to install conduit and cables horizontally underground. We work with property owners as we determine the acceptable routing for underground lines. To ensure safety, we coordinate with VA 8-1-1 to identify any underground public utilities like water, sewer, or gas. Then it’s all about restoration. We remove debris, plant grass, and return the property to a similar condition as it was prior to condition.

“We take extra measures to ensure we mitigate impacts to customer property as much as possible and appreciate our customers’ patience as we work to improve electric service reliability.”

“Let’s face it, when we lose the ability to use our power, our lives are halted.”

We’re proud to say that our program continues to focus on undergrounding the most outage prone lines across Virginia and now, North Carolina.

Dominion Energy is proud to give more piece of mind to our customers so that when a major storm hits, they can enjoy faster restoration times and, in some cases, *no* outage at all.

Dean on Cam: *Safety*

Steve on Cam: *Ethics*

Heather on Cam: *Excellence*

Les on Cam: Embrace Change

Deon: One Dominion

Nadia on Cam: Dominion Energy – where actions speak louder.