



# HARDENING PUBLIC POWER: CUTTING WILDLIFE-DRIVEN OUTAGES BY 84.5%



## Customer Profile

Mount Horeb Utilities is a locally governed public power utility serving approximately **a population of roughly 8,000**. Operating **three substations and 163 miles of electric line**, the system is evenly split between overhead and underground infrastructure. As a not-for-profit municipal provider, Mount Horeb Utilities operates with a lean team and a ratepayer-funded budget, where every operational decision directly impacts the community it serves.

In Mount Horeb, reliability is personal. Every outage affects neighbors, local businesses, and essential public services. The utility's service territory supports not only daily life, **but also a vibrant local economy shaped by tourism, small businesses, and specialty producers.**

## Impact:

**6,904**

Meters Affected  
(2024) down to  
1,069 (2025)

**84.5%**

Reduction in  
Wildlife-Related  
Outage Impact

**163**

Miles of Line  
and 3 Substations  
Protected

Weekly wildlife-related outage costs reduced by thousands

## Country

United States

## Industry

Public Power

## Challenges

- 6,900 meters of exposed grid assets leading to potential outages
- \$3,000 per set of overhead fuses
- \$6,000 per week during outage periods

## Where Reliability Meets Real Life

Mount Horeb is a vibrant community **where Scandinavian heritage meets everyday Midwest charm**. The town's identity is rooted in craftsmanship, community pride, and a steady calendar of events, including the Mount Horeb Frolic, a growing music festival, Brew Fest, and the Mount Horeb Art Fair — all of which bring residents and visitors together throughout the year.

Beyond Main Street, Mount Horeb is also a destination for outdoor recreation. A nearby ski area attracts approximately **125,000 skiers and snowboarders and 30,000 tubers each year**, drawing families and visitors from across the region.

Unlike larger mountain resorts, **operations here rely heavily on snowmaking systems to maintain consistent conditions throughout the season**. Reliable power keeps the slopes running, supporting lifts, lighting, and the snowmaking systems that make it all possible.

When outages occur, the impact is immediate and visible:

- Families planning a day on the slopes are disrupted
- Local tourism revenue is affected
- Small businesses and seasonal operations feel the ripple effects

While winter disruptions can affect recreation and tourism, concern is often even higher during extreme summer heat, when reliable service becomes critical for comfort and safety.

In a community like Mount Horeb, reliability is more than an operational metric; it reflects a direct responsibility to the people, families, and businesses who depend on it every day.

## The Challenge

Wildlife-related outages were a persistent and costly issue. **Birds, squirrels, and raccoons** frequently accessed substation equipment, resulting in repeated outages and equipment damage. One uncovered substation experienced a major bird-related outage, while squirrel activity at the downtown substation caused ongoing reliability problems. The financial and operational impact was significant:

- Approximately **\$3,000** per set of overhead fuses
- Up to **\$6,000** per week during periods of repeated outage events
- Increased insurance scrutiny
- Growing customer dissatisfaction and negative social media attention

What began as isolated incidents had become a recurring reliability risk.

## The Solution

Mount Horeb Utilities partnered with TE Connectivity to implement a coordinated wildlife and asset protection strategy across substations and key field applications.

Rather than addressing issues reactively, the utility adopted a coordinated protection approach designed to prevent animal contact with energized components. Solutions deployed included:



**Mesh Bushing Insulating Covers**



**BISG Squirrel Guards**



**Medium Voltage Conductor Covers**



**BCAC Bushing Guards**

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**WE WERE SEEING REPEATED OUTAGES FROM WILDLIFE ACTIVITY, AND THE COSTS ADDED UP QUICKLY. IT WAS AFFECTING RELIABILITY AND CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE**

Jordan  
“Jordy” Schmitz,  
Superintendent of Mount  
Horeb Electric Utility.

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A structured assessment and consultative application review ensured the correct products were selected for each asset and configuration.

Installation was efficient and minimally disruptive, with the downtown substation covered in approximately a day and a half. Post-installation walk-downs ensured proper fit and long-term performance.



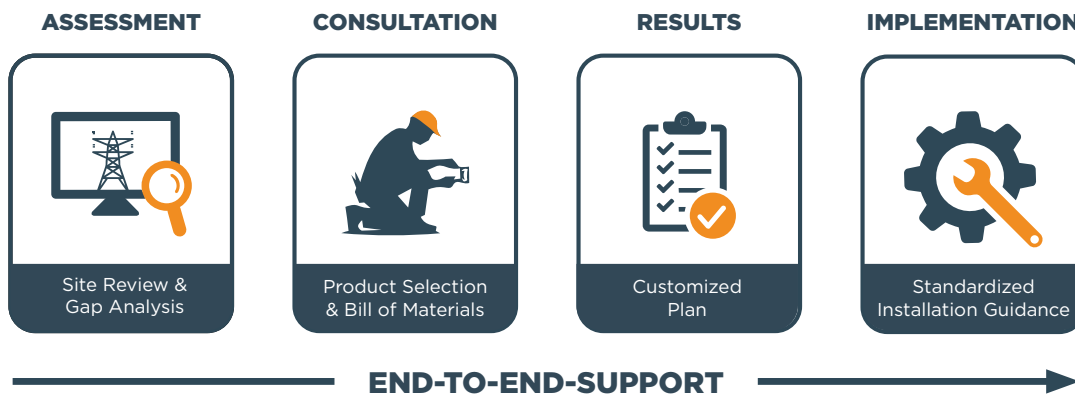
**THE CONSULTING PROCESS MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE. WE KNEW WE WERE GETTING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS FOR EACH APPLICATION.**

Jordan  
"Jordy" Schmitz,  
Superintendent of Mount Horeb Electric Utility.



## One Connectivity Partner

From Assessment to Implementation



### The Results

The impact was immediate and measurable. Meters affected by **outages dropped from 6,904 in 2024 to 1,069 in 2025**, representing an **84.5% decrease**. The remaining outage impact was largely attributable to a single major storm event rather than wildlife activity.

Wildlife presence remains part of the operating environment, but no longer results in recurring service disruptions.

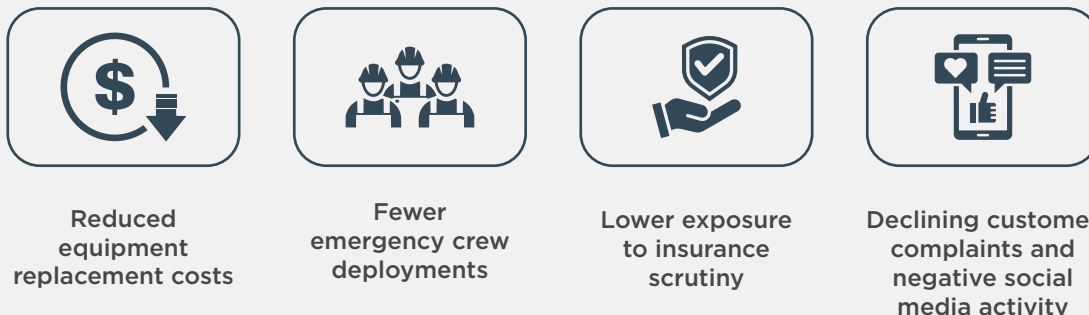


**THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. AFTER INSTALLATION, WILDLIFE-RELATED OUTAGES ESSENTIALLY STOPPED.**

Jordan  
"Jordy" Schmitz,  
Superintendent of Mount Horeb Electric Utility.



In addition to improved reliability, the utility experienced:



The shift from reactive repairs to proactive protection strengthened both operational performance and community confidence.

## Long-Term Value

Following the documented success of the initial installations, **Mount Horeb Utilities now incorporates TE Connectivity Wildlife Protection Solutions into future substation projects and ongoing overhead line maintenance planning.** The assessment and consultation review process supports efficient budgeting and phased upgrades.

## A Model for Public Power Utilities

For public power utilities operating with limited resources and high community visibility, preventing avoidable outages is critical. Mount Horeb Utilities demonstrated that a proactive wildlife mitigation strategy can deliver measurable reliability improvements within a single year.

**By protecting critical assets before failures occur, public power providers can reduce operational risk, control costs, and reinforce the trust placed in them by the communities they serve.**

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**WE PLAN TO CONTINUE USING TE PRODUCTS. THE RELIABILITY IMPROVEMENT AND SUPPORT WE RECEIVED MADE IT AN EASY DECISION.**

**Jordan**  
**“Jordy” Schmitz,**  
Superintendent of Mount Horeb Electric Utility.

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