

Rapid DeSoto growth prompts electricity upgrade

By William C. Bayne

[Contact](#)

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Unanticipated growth along the Church Road corridor from U.S. 51 to Getwell has forced Entergy to construct three major electrical circuits.

"It wasn't in our 5-year plan, but the announcements of different projects pushed us to move forward with the new circuits so that we can readily serve our customers when they need us," said Pat Nelson, regional customer service manager for Entergy in DeSoto County.

He said Entergy officials had hoped that the new circuits, which also will serve oncoming developments on Getwell and U.S. 51, would be ready by June 1.

"We're not going to make that, but we'll be ready before the worst heat of the summer," he said. "We expect to complete the circuits before the end of July."

Nelson said the major spur for the new circuits was the growth on the west side of Interstate 55.

"There's a major addition at Northwest Mississippi Community College and talk of expansion of the DeSoto Civic Center, where a hotel might be added. They have also talked about another ice rink. If that comes on line, that's a huge user of electricity."

The county Convention and Visitors Bureau board approved the Civic Center expansion last month. Chuck Roberts, chairman of the Bureau board, said the price tag to upgrade the 61/2 -year-old facility could be about \$40 million.

But the Civic Center expansion isn't the only growth Entergy is trying to accommodate.

"In addition, we have the Civic Center Apartments and the Turman Farms developments -- both of which were much larger than our long-range plans had indicated," he said.

He said the growth west of I-55 had been somewhat mirrored by growth along Getwell near Church.

"That area is also growing at a much more rapid pace than we had anticipated," he said.

The new circuits are being constructed from Entergy's Plum Point substation near Church and Elmore roads.

"These are entirely new lines -- new circuits," he said. "The construction did not cause any power disruptions and should not through completion."

He said Entergy engineers wanted to have the new circuits ready before heat caused large electrical usage for air-conditioning.

"They said it was important to get the new lines in this summer, but it was critical to have the circuits fully operational before next summer," he said.

Each circuit will handle the equivalent of 1,500 residential users.

Entergy is DeSoto County's largest electrical utility. The company serves more than 50,000 customers in the county, including the cities of Southaven, Horn Lake, Hernando and Walls.

-- William C. Bayne: (662) 996-1408



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