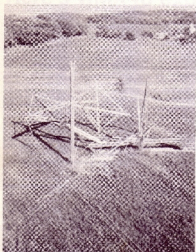


Storm leaves thousands without power



(Photo by AP/Wide World)

Hurricane-force winds destroyed 63 double pole wooden structures in a 10-mile section of the main 345-wolt transmission line serving western Wisconsin. Other photos on these pages show the extensive damage in the Eau Claire area.



*Those dark nights
when I had no lights,
I knew I need not fret;
this problem you would correct.
Having friends speak of their wondrous delight,
I knew you were serving with all your might.
Nary enough, while by my candle I sat,
I heard a click and hum — what was that?
I ran to my kitchen and what did I see?
My light was lit; oh, glory be!*

This poem, written by an Eau Claire area customer, was delivered to NSP following the July 15 storm which left about 50,000 Wisconsin customers and about 100,000 Twin Cities area customers without power.

The storm hit Minnesota first, with winds clocked at 85 miles per hour. It hit Wisconsin harder, however. The storm's wind picked up speed as it swept across the border and reached hurricane force — 115 miles per hour.

Called the worst natural disaster in Wisconsin's history, the storm destroyed 28,000 trees and more than a dozen homes, killed at least two people, injured many others and ruined barns and crops. City crews worked for more than 24 hours to get the streets cleared and opened.

Wisconsin Gov. Lee Drayfus declared a state of emergency in Eau Claire, Dunn, Chippewa and Pierce counties. Eau Claire city officials imposed a 9:30 p.m. to dawn curfew and a National Guard unit was called in to protect against looting.