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Repeat power outages hit UMass campus

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On consecutive weekends, the University of Massachusetts campus was left in the dark in what officials called the second "major" power outage, in addition to several other isolated outages, this semester.

"We have received some calls with people concerned over the number of outages compared to past years," said Larry Snyder, associate director of the UMass Physical Plant.

According to University spokesman Daniel Fitzgibbons, director of Physical Plant, Patrick Daly, said that there have been about four power outages on campus since the start of the semester, which Snyder said is more frequent than in years past.

The latest outage turned the lights out across about half of the campus, Snyder said.

Power went out at around 9 p.m. on last Saturday, and was caused by a weather-related service interruption from the Western Massachusetts Electric Company, Daly said.

Without power from off-campus, said Daly, the Central Heating Plant tripped off-line and it took about an hour to get the systems running again after power was restored.

Another major outage on Oct. 18, during homecoming weekend activities, was caused by a "malfunction of the electric load shed program at the Central Heating Plant," Snyder said.

He said work is being done to troubleshoot the program at the campus' new heating plant, though he was not sure when the malfunctions will be corrected.

"Once we have that [program] fixed, these type of incidents should not occur," said Snyder.

The heating plant is in its start-up phase and operational issues are still being worked out, Daly said.

Homecoming weekend's outage lasted from around noon until 1 p.m. Numerous on-campus buildings lost power, including the Campus Center, the Student Union, and the west side of the Mullins Center, lost power, including the Campus Center, Student Union and the west side where the Mullins Center is located, according to University spokesman Patrick J. Callahan.

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POLL

This month, UMass Chaplain Kent Higgins was reprimanded by the University for offering credits to students for their participation in the Obama campaign. Should a state university offer credits to students for partisan campaigning?

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