



Madison Anticipates Sun Outages during March

Each Spring and Fall, cable companies experience a technical phenomenon called “sun outages.” For a period of about two weeks, the sun causes “solar interference” to all geostationary satellite signals. As the sun’s path across the sky gets lower each day, there are times when it is in a direct line behind a communications satellite that is sending signals to a receiving satellite dish here on earth. When the dish antenna is looking into the sun, the interference from the sun overrides the signals from the satellite. This is when a sun outage occurs.

For those who use satellite for receiving television signals, this causes “sparkles” to show up in analog pictures at first, and as the days progress, the audio will be affected, too. At the height of the 12 to 14 days of visible impairment, the satellite signals may be – for a brief time – completely overpowered, making the desired transmissions unusable. Digital satellite signals are not immune from impairment. You will notice the picture start to tile and eventually freeze and/or drop out completely until the sun passes by.

This Spring, sun outages are expected to occur February 28th through March 10th, with the worst interference occurring around 1:30 p.m. daily. Sun outages typically occur during February and March, and again in the Fall during September and October. It can last as long as 15 minutes a day and take place over a period of 15 days. The effects of a sun outage vary in degree from minimal to total outage throughout the 15-day period. Once it reaches its peak, the interference will gradually decrease, becoming less noticeable each day after.

There is technically nothing Madison Communications or any other cable provider can do to prevent sun outages from occurring. Each satellite service which sends a signal to a cable provider experiences this interference at predictable times. When Madison’s signal is interrupted by the sun’s energy, customer set-top boxes may display “One Moment Please” on the affected channel(s). This condition will be present for several minutes each day during the sun outage period. Madison apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause their customers.

For questions or concerns regarding sun outages, contact Madison’s customer service center at 1-800-422-4848 or visit their Staunton facility located at 21668 Double Arch Road, Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.