

New cables to halt blackouts

Several thousand feet of new cable will be installed in Buildings 27 and 29 at Willowbrook Developmental Center, where failures in a 35-year-old underground electrical line have caused two major blackouts in the last three weeks.

William Zatwarnicki, plant superintendent at the center, said the cable has been ordered from a Connecticut firm by Arc Electrical Construction Co., a Manhattan contractor, and should be delivered this afternoon.

Workmen for the contracting firm will spend the better part of today making preparations for the actual splicing job. The installation of the cable and its interconnection with the main power line serving the five buildings thrown into darkness Saturday night could begin late this afternoon, according to Zatwarnicki.

Barring any "unforeseen delays," Zatwarnicki said, the work could be completed by the end of the week.

Saturday's cable failure reportedly occurred at or near the area where Arc Electrical completed a splicing job a week ago to correct a short the center experienced Feb. 19.

In its investigation of the matter yesterday morning, the Office of General Services (OGS) contacted Arc officials, according to Miss Joyce Libra, a Willowbrook spokesman, and was informed that the problem had apparently arisen in an area adjacent to the original splice and could therefore not be attributed to shoddy work on the part of the contractor.

About midnight Saturday night a cable short threw 500 Willowbrook residents in five buildings into darkness and caused a substantial loss of heat in at least one ward.

By 4 a.m. Sunday, according to Miss Libra, power had been restored to Buildings 76, 77 and 25. Building 29's power was being supplied by an emergency civil defense gen-

erator hooked up Sunday afternoon. A heating problem in a ward in Building 29 caused by a lack of power in an electrically powered hot air blower was corrected by Sunday night, Miss Libra said.

Meanwhile, residents of Building 27, another affected unit, who were scheduled to be relocated to Building 25 yesterday morning, were moved Sunday, a day early. Building 27 is currently undergoing renovations. Several weeks ago, Miss Libra said, residents of Building 25 were relocated to Building 78, a facility that has already undergone repairs.

Zatwarnicki extended his thanks to officials of the Consolidated Edison Corp., which reportedly located the site of last weekend's cable troubles Sunday afternoon. He said the utility was willing to perform the resplicing job itself, but there was not enough cable on hand at Willowbrook.

"I'd like to especially thank Con Ed. vice president Jack Cleary," said Zatwarnicki, "and Robert Decker for responding to our emergency. They provided technical knowledge, advice and equipment in an emergency situation."

Beginning tomorrow, Miss Libra said, a new high voltage switching gear will be installed at Willowbrook. The installation of this equipment, which will facilitate the distribution of power throughout the electrical lines at the center, will necessitate a series of power shutdowns at the facility in coming weeks, she said.

For a three-hour period tomorrow, she said, power throughout the entire center will be off. The power shutdowns may affect phone communications at the center.