City Light crews go for the biggest payback for the effort: One of their first priorities is to repair damage to high-voltage transmission lines, which carry the most power to the most people.

Another priority: critical services such as fire stations and hospitals.

Sometimes repair work is done but you may not have power. This could be because the line that carries power from the lateral to your home meter (the service line) is damaged.

What if a neighbor has lights and you don’t? A common cause is that a lateral line that feeds power to your home is damaged, but a different lateral line that brings power to your neighbor is not damaged.

Feeder lines bring power into neighborhoods and business districts. Power is then distributed by local lateral lines. Because there are as many laterals as there are neighborhoods, repairing laterals takes time.

During power outages, crews ensure that power lines on the ground don’t pose a hazard to themselves or others. Then crews begin power restoration, bringing electricity to the most people as quickly as possible. Speed is important but safety always comes first.

To report downed lines or an outage, please call (206) 684-3000. Never go near a downed line, even if you think it’s not active. To hear about current outages, call (206) 684-7400 (recorded message). Visit City Light’s Web site for outage-preparation information and more: www.seattle.gov/light/