

Durenberger, Mark

From: Wichman, Larry [CBS/HUB/LWICHMAN]
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2000 7:01 PM
To: Durenberger, Mark
Cc: Berenson, Bruce J; Sietsema, Rick L
Subject: KNX Tower

Mark

Rick asked that I respond to your request for info on the sabotage of the KNX tower

Wednesday, September 15, 1965 at 10:41:45pm the KNX tower went South, as a result of vandals cutting the upper guywire at the North anchor. The tower base was in a court on the North side of the building. It let go with such force that the tower actually jumped out of the court, and flew over the building, and landed in a pile from 50 to 100 feet in front of the South side of the building. The tower was 494' hi, 4 foot on the triangular face, guyed at approximately the 1/3 and 2/3 points, the top 1/3 freestanding. Tension on the upper guys was set at 10,000 lbs., the lowers at 7,000 lbs.

The first KNX engineer was on site within 30 mins, police and fire were already on the scene. KNX programming was carried on KNX-FM from Mt Wilson. Oggie Prestholdt got on the first plane for the west coast. SC Edison provides two 115' poles set 120' apart, from which a center fed long wire was constructed. By 5:00pm on Thursday measurements were being made and a tuning box between the transmitter and new long wire was being constructed. By 9:00pm power was being fed to the new antenna and tune-up was taking place.

On Thursday, September 16, at 10:00:15pm, normal KNX programming was resumed. The Michael Jackson show was on the air when KNX went dark and I'm told that when his show resumed some 23 hours and 20 minutes later he said in his distinctive British accent, "As I was saying, before being interrupted..."

That night KNX had only 10,000 watts instead of 50,000. Late Friday night, higher rated components were installed, allowing an increase to 20,000 watts. I'm thinking they made 50KW, after much trial, tribulation, and reconstruction. The transmitter is about 8 miles inland from the pacific. The night air is often wet and somewhat salty. This caused arching across the insulators that Edison provided. Larger insulators, rain shields and still larger components were used in getting the power back up to normal.

I'm not completely sure of the timing but I think it was 6 to 9 months before we got back on the air with a normal tower. A local station had a 365' tower disassembled, on the ground and for sale. This was bought and installed some 350' Northeast of the original, and we resumed transmitting with the short tower. At the same time a new 494' tower was ordered, and built in the same place as the fallen tower. This was the beginning of an idea to take KNX directional and pump the 50KW up and down the coast. Theory was better than actuality, and KNX went back non directional several years later. This is why KNX has a standby tower.

The vandals were never apprehended. I've heard several theories, none are official. One has it that some local rednecks took exception to a KNX editorial position. The second most popular would have an ex radio tech, who was then currently working on the TV side, getting stoned and dropping the tower just to prove he could.

Mark, I hope this helps with your project. If its possible, I would like a copy of the final product. If I can be of any further help, let me know.

Larry A Wichman
KNX Tech