

The
Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

www.theBDR.net

... edited by Barry Mishkind - the Eclectic Engineer

THE WORST I'VE EVER SEEN

The Tower Leg that Just "Melted"

When this set of pictures was first posted on the Internet, it was hard to believe the tower involved had not just collapsed and caused all sorts of problems. It was, however, a poster child for so many towers where there just is no regular inspection and maintenance program.

Don Barber of L&S Enterprises in Titusville, FL was the source for these pictures. His crew was sent out to change the configuration of the double unipole antenna that was mounted on a 302-foot tower, along with some work to paint the tower and replace the wiring for the obstruction lights. But, as Don said: "*It all came to a halt quickly.*"

As Barber's workers approached the 250-foot level, they were somewhat startled at to see a situation that you could only describe as "hard to believe."



One of those truly "it is hard to believe your eyes" situations

As the climber got closer, the view was even less appetizing. It was what he thought he saw – a rather nasty gap in the leg.



This tower leg was not designed to have a window

As you can see from the condition of the tower and paint, over a long time, something “ate away” the metal. Obviously, the electro-chemical reaction, aided by the pull of the unipole supporting wires did a good imitation of a hot knife going through butter – or the Wicked Witch of the East. And, by the point where these pictures were taken, only the bracket itself was holding the tower leg in place.



Only a tiny, buckled bit of the tower remained

It was only a small gap, obviously hard to see from ground level. But it would have been more than large enough to bring the whole tower down if any stress from high winds, for example, had occurred. Barber relates that the climber stopped what he was doing and got off the tower immediately. Plans to repair the tower were carried out shortly thereafter, and at last report, the structure was stable.

AN INSTRUCTIVE EXPERIENCE

The reason to show this to you is that it is to provide a vivid, visual reason to show why it is important to schedule regular inspections of all your towers. It would not have taken much longer before this station would have been off the air for a significant period of time.

Take the time to do a good inspection. Develop a checklist. Remember it is a “tower system.” Each of the members is important, from the steel itself to the insulators, guy wires, and anchors.

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