Mystery Dust Blamed For Power Outage  
March 6, 2006

A white powdery substance has local people asking what it is and where did it come from.

Last Friday, the rain and snow came down with a powdery yucky substance.

We received a number of emails asking what the mystery dust was in the air.

The dust is being blamed for a power outage in Idaho Falls on Monday evening. The power was out in the area of Sunnyside and Woodruff.

Power workers say the dirt created an arc across the insulators. It acts like a groundwire and shorted out the power. The power crews rerouted the power, but Tuesday morning, they'll have to fix the insulators.

What is the mystery dirt? Utah Power officials say it's salt from the Great Salt Lake. It blew in with the storm. Salt is a conductor.

Video from earlier Monday, shows the the white film is still splattered all over the windows and cars.

It kind of looks like a dirty truck, but this is the same white film that many of you called and wrote to us about.

We called the Department of Environmental Quality, the Health Department, various Police and Sheriff dispatch offices in surrounding counties, the Weather Service, even State Offices in Boise, everybody knows what we're talking about, but nobody knows what it is.

DEQ says it's most likely a natural occurrence, perhaps dust in the air that came down with the rain.
We did find one private lab in Idaho Falls that is willing to test anyone's samples if you're worried about it. But that test will cost you $250 and we were told it probably wouldn't show anything conclusive.

So if anybody has any better answer for all of this, we're just as curious about it as you are. So send us an email at newsdesk@localnews8.com.

It's worth pointing out, while the white ash remains a mystery, nobody we talked to seems to think it's anything dangerous.

If you'd like to pursue this further on your own, Energy Labs in Idaho Falls says they will test any sample you might have. You can reach them at 522-4498. Again, it could run you several hundred dollars.