



GM'S REPORT

REFLECTIONS & resolutions



Don Englet
GENERAL MANAGER

Happy New Year! As we look forward to the excitement of 2026 and plans for the coming year, I wanted to take a moment to share a special message with you about where your cooperative has been — and where we are headed.

Reflecting on 2025 projects

This past year brought with it several changes, as well as some challenges. In typical co-op fashion, Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees and employees did a tremendous job of overcoming these struggles, resulting in another great year.

The co-op wrapped up our four-year construction work plan, investing more than \$5.3 million dollars into our distribution system in 2025. We completed over 20 miles of three-phase line rebuilds, constructed more than 70 new services, and replaced several miles of single-phase line. Where it was feasible, some of our most problematic lines were converted from overhead to underground, improving reliability and reducing long-term maintenance costs.

Over the past 12 months, Firelands Electric inspected and replaced numerous poles and began construction of a replacement for the Coulter substation. Our right-of-way team worked with contractors to trim trees in seven

townships, spanning over 269 miles of our system. The co-op also worked with area internet providers to provide reliable internet service to more of our members.

The completion of these numerous projects in 2025 will allow Firelands Electric to continue delivering safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to our more than 9,200 members for years to come.

Supporting our community

In addition to system construction and upgrades, the cooperative spent a significant amount of time in our communities in 2025. We took part in county fairs, provided electrical safety demonstrations, participated in parades, attended touch-a-truck events, and were involved with local economic development organizations. Board trustees and co-op staff also visited Washington, D.C., and the Ohio Statehouse, speaking with legislators about our mission and sharing our challenges.

Firelands Electric also hosted 18 high school students on a trip to the Ohio Statehouse and two others on a weeklong tour of Washington, D.C. Several employees participated in mock interviews and career day events, while others spent time providing job shadowing opportunities for students. Over \$10,000 in scholarships were awarded to ten students and one adult continuing their post-secondary education. And last, but not least, fun contests and our annual meeting gave us a chance to meet with our members and listen to your concerns.

All in all, 2025 was a really great year!

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Welcoming 2026

In 2026 we are planning more of the same — continuing both efforts to keep your electric power safe and reliable, and our commitment to community.

At the end of last year, the board adopted a new four-year construction plan and work on it has already begun. Our Coulter substation rebuild will begin the next phase very soon, followed by a new substation project in Ashland County. We are also collaborating with investor-owned utilities for new transmission projects that will improve service to our members in the northern portions of our territory. Looking further into the future, your trustees recently reviewed a long-range plan for improvement and upgrade projects that will take place through the end of 2041.

As we continue to invest and adapt to serve you better, you may notice an additional change has taken place. At the start of 2026, some operations employees began taking cooperative trucks home

with them at the end of the day when they are on call. This change has been put in place to reduce the time it takes for crews to respond to outages and other emergencies. Rather than having to first come to our facility to get a co-op vehicle, they will be able to drive directly to the call.

This new procedure will help reduce outage times, as well as increase public safety.

It will also help crews be better prepared to respond to after-hours calls. Since this is a notable change in the way we have operated in the past, I felt it was important to make you aware of it, and the reasoning behind the decision.

As we take a peek into the next 12 months, Firelands Electric Cooperative looks forward to another year of innovation, hard work, and connecting with our co-op community.

Here's to a wonderful 2026!

Trustee candidate petitions due Jan. 16



In 2026, Firelands Electric Cooperative members will elect trustees to represent the following districts:

- **District 1** — Richmond, Norwich, and Greenfield townships
- **District 3** — Peru, Bronson, Fairfield, and Hartland townships, and Fitchville Township west of State Route 250
- **District 6** — Butler, Clear Creek, Orange, Weller, Milton, Mifflin, and Madison townships north of State Route 42

A map of the co-op's board districts is available at www.firelandsec.com/board-trustees. Information on how to become a candidate for the 2026 elections was also mailed and emailed to eligible co-op members in November.

Petitions to become a candidate are available at the Firelands Electric office. Potential candidates are required to submit an election application and collect a minimum of 20 member signatures from within their respective districts by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026.

Elections will take place by mail and online ballot from Monday, March 2, through Sunday, April 12. Results will be announced at the cooperative's virtual annual meeting, which will take place at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28.

If you are interested in serving on the cooperative's board of trustees or have questions about the election process, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Saving energy during peak times benefits all

Conserving electricity during peak energy use times not only lowers your monthly bill — it can benefit our entire community.

A “peak” refers to periods of the day when the demand for electricity is highest. For example, early mornings when people are getting ready for work or school and evenings when families return home, cook dinner, and unwind with electronics. When everyone uses energy at once, it adds pressure on the electric grid.

Firelands Electric works around the clock to ensure that electricity flows to your home whenever you need it. Behind the scenes, an enormous and intricate system is at work — one of the most complex machines in the world: the U.S. power grid. The grid is made up of three major transmission interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to keep the lights on and our economy running smoothly.

Electricity comes from a diverse mix of sources — hydropower, natural gas, coal, solar, wind, and more. Some power plants can respond quickly to spikes in demand, while others are less flexible. Once energy is generated, it travels through high-voltage transmission lines to local utilities, like Firelands, which then deliver it to your home or business through distribution power lines.

When electricity demand surges during peak times, it's more expensive to generate or purchase. If supply can't keep up, the risk of outages increases. That's why using less energy during peak hours is more important than ever. It not only eases strain on the grid but also helps you save money.

So how can you “beat the peak”? Start by adjusting your thermostat a few degrees during peak hours. Smart thermostats can automate this for you. Delay using energy-hungry appliances like ovens, clothes washers, and dishwashers until later in the evening. Charging your electric vehicle overnight instead of right after you get home can also help.

Small actions taken by many households can lead to big results. When we all work together to reduce energy use during peak times, we protect our power grid, help control costs, and ensure reliable electricity for our communities.

For additional ways that you can help reduce demand during peak times, and for information on the cooperative's load management program, visit www.firelandsec.com/load-management.



At left: This gray box is a load management device. Firelands Electric members who are voluntarily enrolled in the cooperative's Cool Returns or PeakBusters programs have one of these devices installed near their service panel, HVAC system, central air-conditioner, and/or water heater. The box has a green light displayed during normal operation, indicating that electricity is flowing to your system. If a red or amber light is displayed (as shown in the enlarged circle), a peak alert has been issued. This indicates that load management is taking place and that your system is temporarily not receiving any electric power.



FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
LOCAL PAGES

MAKE YOUR MARK!

June 14-20, 2026



A week of building memories, skills, leadership,
and friendships that will last a lifetime!

Deadline to apply is Jan. 23, 2026

Experience the trip of a lifetime with Youth Tour!

- Explore Washington, D.C., through historic monuments, world-class museums, and visits with elected officials.
- Build leadership skills and discover how you can make your mark on the future.
- Connect with students from across the country and form friendships that last a lifetime.

Learn more about applying at
www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience





Class of 2026 SCHOLARSHIPS

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

- FIRST PLACE: \$1,800
- THIRD PLACE: \$1,400
- FOUR JUDGES' CHOICE AWARDS OF \$1,000 EACH
- SECOND PLACE: \$1,600
- FOURTH PLACE: \$1,200

CAREER SCHOLARSHIPS

TWO \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS will be awarded to those planning to enroll in a career-based education program. One award will go to a graduating high school senior and the other to a co-op member who graduated prior to June 2024. Qualifying career paths include, but are not limited to, dental hygienist, phlebotomy, nurse, vet tech, electrician, HVAC, plumbing, auto mechanic, or welder.

**Apply by:
Jan. 23, 2026**

**Firelands
Electric**
COOPERATIVE
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Selected finalists for all Firelands scholarships will be interviewed at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office on Monday, Feb. 16, 2026.

The first-place college scholarship winner will also be eligible to compete for up to \$4,600 in additional scholarships at the Ohio's Electric Cooperatives competition on April 7.

Applicants will be judged on a combination of scholastic record, school and community activities, cooperative knowledge, and a personal interview.

Complete program guidelines and applications are available on the co-op's website at www.firelandsec.com/scholarship-opportunities.



**Visit www.firelandsec.com/scholarship-opportunities
for complete rules and applications.**



YOUTH PROGRAMS

LEGISLATIVE LESSONS



Supporting the cooperative community's students and their education has always been one of Firelands Electric's utmost priorities. One way we fulfill our commitment to our youth is by providing opportunities to help them grow into effective leaders.

Cooperative Youth Day at the Ohio Statehouse is a perfect example of Firelands Electric's dedication to those who will guide our future world. The program, which is in its third year at Firelands, received more than 30 applications from students scattered throughout the four counties we serve (Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland). Eighteen students from Ashland, Crestview, Loudonville, Lucas, Monroeville, Shelby, St. Paul, Wellington, and Willard high schools were selected to participate in the Oct. 23 trip.

Upon arrival in Columbus, Firelands Electric's participants joined additional students from Ohio electric cooperatives Lorain-Medina Rural Electric and North Central Electric for an in-depth look at the legislative process on the state level. Students toured the Ohio Statehouse, spent time visiting the House Floor, and met with Rep. Sharon A. Ray, Rep. Kellie Deeter, and Rep. Gary Click. Staff from the office of Sen. Theresa Gavarone and the legislative team at Ohio's Electric Cooperatives also spoke briefly with the students. Participants had the opportunity to ask elected officials questions regarding Ohio's legislative process, current issues on the state and national level, and pursuing political careers. A stop at the Ohio History Center wrapped up the day.

**COOPERATIVE
YOUTH DAY**

Additional photos from Firelands Electric Co-op's Youth Day can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums. Information regarding this youth program and others is available on our website at www.firelandsec.com/community.





TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Beware of “winter bill relief” energy scams. Scammers often exploit high winter bills by offering fake discount or relief programs. They may ask for upfront payments or personal details to lower your rate. Legitimate utilities never demand gift cards, wire transfers, or payment through apps like PayPal or Venmo. Always verify offers directly by calling your utility’s phone number located on your monthly bill — do not call any phone numbers provided in a suspicious email or text.

Remember to take time to confirm before you pay; real savings programs won’t pressure you for immediate action.



CO-OP MONTH CONTEST *winners*

Congratulations! The following members were randomly selected to receive a prepaid Mastercard as part of our October Co-op Month Contest:

Leisa Strong of Jeromesville – \$150
Wesley Popa of New London – \$100
Dean Slavik of Willard – \$50
Matthew Hale of Greenwich – \$50
Lisa Gleisner of Willard – \$25
Cynthia Bulechek of Greenwich – \$25
Ray Raphael of New London – \$25
Terry Shaver of New London – \$25



Robert and Sandy Walton of Monroeville –
\$50 Bonus Photo Winner



CO-OP CONTESTS

Let the games begin

FAMILY BOARD GAME GIVEAWAY

It's once again the season for wintry weather — complete with cold temperatures, snow, and even ice. This time of year can also bring unplanned school closures. While we enjoy being outdoors on a snow day, we also like spending an afternoon with a hot mug of cocoa and a good book or movie. But what we love even more is an old-fashioned family board game!

To add some fun to your snow days this winter, Firelands Electric Cooperative is sponsoring a family board game giveaway. Co-op members with children living in the home may enter to win one of three family board game packages. Each prize package contains five games suitable for ages seven and up, including Power Haus, which teaches about energy consumption and efficiency (www.adventerragamesusa.com/powerhaus). Each prize package also includes the classic games Yahtzee, Sorry, Uno, and Trouble.

To enter, simply complete and return the form below or submit your entry online at www.firelandsec.com/contests before 4 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 30. Entries are limited to one per household. The winning families' names and photos will be published in a future issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.

Good luck — and let the games begin!

Complete the form below and mail to:

Attn: Family Board Games Contest
Firelands Electric Cooperative
103 Industrial Drive
New London, OH 44851-9112

Entries may also be completed online at www.firelandsec.com/contests. Deadline to enter is 4 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 30.

Member's name

Service address

City/State/ZIP

Phone

Email

Names and ages of children in the home

Your family's favorite game, movie, or other winter activity

RENEWABLE ENERGY

OURSOLAR

CO-OP COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM

Did you know that Firelands Electric Cooperative members have access to a cost-effective option for renewable energy? OurSolar is a community solar program developed specifically for those who may not have the resources to invest in a solar array located on their own property.

Residential solar is not a good solution for every co-op member. For those who would like to support renewable energy initiatives without the hassle and expense of residential rooftop solar, the OurSolar program allows members to purchase the electricity produced by Firelands' solar array for a small per-kilowatt-hour premium. By grouping solar panels together, costs are shared and power output is maximized. With community solar, there is no equipment for members to install, and all maintenance costs are included in the subscription rate.

With the help of Buckeye Power, the generation and transmission cooperative that serves Ohio's 24 electric distribution cooperatives, nearly 12,000 solar panels went online between 2017 and 2022. There are 38 panels out of the 292 panels assigned to Firelands Electric that are currently available to co-op members. Those interested can subscribe to the output of a set number of panels — from one to all 38 on a first come, first served basis. Each panel has recently been generating an average of 34 kWh per month, or 400 kWh per year, depending upon sunlight conditions.

Although advances in technology and reductions in manufacturing costs continue to make it less costly to generate electricity via solar, it is still slightly more costly to produce electricity from solar compared to traditional coal or natural gas. Currently, those participating in OurSolar pay a small premium of one cent per kWh above the standard residential rate. This means that signing for community renewable solar power can cost you less than \$1 per panel per month.

Additional information on how to subscribe to purchase energy from the OurSolar program, as well as answers to some of the most commonly asked questions, are available on the cooperative's website at www.firelandsec.com/oursolar-community-renewable-program. Those who are interested in participating in Firelands Electric's community solar program may reach out to the co-op by emailing members@firelandsec.com or calling our office at 1-800-533-8658.

*Powering the co-op community –
one ray at a time.*



ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Scott Carbary
ENERGY ADVISOR

SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT: HEAT LAMPS

Tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor

In recent years, Firelands has noticed a growing number of members dabbling in homesteading. Whether it's chickens, dogs, goats, or other small livestock, your monthly electric bill could be affected — especially in the winter.

Colder weather often results in poultry or small herds being moved indoors to keep them warm and comfortable. It's also very common for members to add one or more heat lamps.

Clear or red in color, the bulbs in these lamps range from 150 to 250 watts each and are often screwed into a clamp-on style portable lamp equipped with a metal reflector.

Useful for warming a garage, shed, or section of a barn, these bulbs use infrared heating technology, which warms the object under it and not the surrounding air. While they can work well and are a quick and easy way to supply spot heat to livestock or a water line, it is important to note that heat lamp bulbs do have some cost and safety considerations to keep in mind.

The most common bulb I find installed in heat lamps during my energy consultations is the 250-watt version. One of these bulbs operating 24 hours a day can cost almost \$1 per day. This may not sound that alarming, but over the course of a month that adds up to almost \$30 per bulb per month. In other words, the average monthly operating cost for a three-bulb set up that runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is nearly \$100!

Besides operating costs, another factor to consider is the safety of heat lamps. These lamps are often set up to use the small, light-gauge extension cords intended for

standard, household lamps or indoor Christmas lights. Because this type of cord is rated for only 60 or 100 watts, using a high-wattage infrared heat lamp bulb with one can easily cause it to overheat and pose a fire hazard.

OSU Extension offers several additional heat lamp safety tips:

- Install fixtures securely and far enough away from animals to ensure that they will not be able to knock them loose. It's recommended to maintain at least a 20-inch distance between your livestock and the lamp.
- Since these bulbs heat surfaces and objects, do not point or mount them too close to anything flammable.
- Purchase only high-quality bulbs. Some no-name or off-brand bulbs found online are made with thinner glass, creating a shatter risk.
- Periodically shut the lamp off to make sure it is securely screwed into the base.
- If heat lamps are used in a basement or attached garage, adding an additional smoke detector in the area is highly recommended.
- Heat lamp bulbs located outdoors should be rated for outdoor use.

So you might be asking, if you want to avoid the use of infrared heat lamps, what can you do to keep your animals safe and warm? Weatherizing or air sealing the area where livestock is housed during the winter (as much as safely possible) is probably the most cost-effective option. Even if this doesn't completely eliminate the need for heat lamps, it may at least reduce the number required.

For additional agriculture-related safety tips from OSU, visit <https://agsafety.osu.edu>.

REBATE PROGRAMS

Ring in the new year with rebates

More than 50% of Americans make New Year's resolutions, and saving money is usually at or near the top of the list. Fortunately for Firelands Electric members, the cooperative's rebate programs are a perfect fit for any money-saving strategy.

Firelands Electric's residential rebates range from \$25 up to \$800 and include purchases both large and small. Rebates are available for HVAC systems, water heaters, certain kitchen and laundry room appliances, and even insulation. While purchasing a new geothermal or heat pump system isn't what most people would consider "saving" money, replacing these and other large appliances is sometimes a dreaded necessity. Thankfully, your cooperative can make the process a bit less difficult on your wallet.

While the complete list of available rebates, along with their guidelines, is available on our website at www.firelandsec.com/member-programs, below is a small sampling of how much you can save:

- Geothermal system: \$800
- Heat pump: \$300–\$500
- Water heater: \$150–\$300
- Refrigerator or stand-alone freezer: \$100
- Dishwasher or washing machine: \$50
- Insulation: up to \$800

As an added bonus, the purchase of new household appliances and heating and cooling systems can help you save money on your electric bill. Any time you upgrade to a newer version of an appliance, you're getting a unit that uses power more economically than what you had before. Plus, the efficiency minimums required by Firelands' rebate programs meet or exceed those of ENERGY STAR-certified models which, on average, are 30% more efficient. And when it comes to saving energy and money, every little bit adds up!

Happy New Year — and happy saving!

Starting Jan. 1, 2026, Firelands Electric will be making a minor change to our rebate program for the following appliances:

- Dehumidifier
- Dishwasher
- Washing machine
- Clothes dryer
- Refrigerator
- Stand-alone freezer

Due to the uncertain future of the ENERGY STAR program, and to make it easier for our members to qualify for money-saving rebates, the cooperative will NO LONGER REQUIRE these appliances to be ENERGY STAR-certified. All other rebate requirements will remain in effect. For details, visit www.firelandsec.com/member-programs.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Oct. 28 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 31 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Don Englet reviewed the monthly safety and training, tree-trimming, outage, and personnel reports.
- Director of Operations Rick Bowers reported on activities in the operations department, including updates on AEP and First Energy projects.
- Three vacant positions on the People Fund board were filled. Kevin Reidy appointed Allison Stimpert, Dan Schloemer appointed Tami Thornton, and Tom Lucha appointed Kayley Walcher.
- Englet provided information on plans to introduce pre-paid metering as a payment option in 2026.
- The board made the decision to record the virtual annual meeting on April 28, 2026, and make it available to members the following day.
- Englet and the board reviewed and discussed a draft of the 2026 capital budget.
- Following review and discussion, the board approved the 2026-2029 Construction Work Plan.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the September financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Schloemer recapped an OREC meeting he recently attended, which included information on the increased demand on the grid due to data centers and Buckeye Power's sale of surplus power to non-member utilities.
- Director of Communications and IT Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 27, prior to the employee-trustee Christmas party. If you would like to attend the next scheduled meeting, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

OFFICE

103 Industrial Drive
New London, OH 44851
1-800-533-8658

OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
www.firelandsec.com



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer
President, District 1

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Vice President, District 6

Carl Ayers
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District 2

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GENERAL MANAGER

Don Englet

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

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Electric
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