



GM'S REPORT

# INVESTING IN RELIABILITY



Don Englet  
GENERAL MANAGER

Firelands Electric Cooperative's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every light switch, home-cooked meal, and warm home is a complex distribution system that needs constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't just happen. It requires ongoing investment in our local infrastructure through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades, and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

A vast majority of the electrical system that we rely on today was built decades ago. In fact, the average age of the components in America's grid is 40 years old. While Firelands Electric's system continues to

serve us well, the age of some elements means that they must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards, maintain reliability, and fulfill our members' power needs. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur, and create a stronger backbone for our community.

The demand on the electric grid is also evolving. Today's homes and businesses use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue. Electric vehicles, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances, and new residential and commercial facilities add load to our local distribution system. As these technologies take hold, Firelands Electric must adapt to support increased demand — and still maintain the reliability our members expect. Strategic upgrades such as the current Coulter substation rebuild and the other projects shown on the next page are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

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## FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

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While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality, and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on every day is available whenever you flip a switch.

The co-op's commitment to reliability reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve.

Every upgrade, every repair, and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life — from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools. We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in Firelands Electric's local distribution system today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.



# Working for *You*



- Annual inspections to locate and replace damaged or deteriorating poles
- Substation rebuilds to accommodate growing power supply needs
- Relocation and upgrade of poles and wiring in areas prone to tree-related outages
- Tree and vegetation management

## YOUTH PROGRAMS



Education helps shape the leaders of tomorrow. That's why Firelands Electric includes it as one of our seven core principles. The A Team is a cooperative program designed to encourage students in their pursuit of academic excellence. Students in grades 6 to 8 are invited to participate and be recognized for their hard work and dedication to education.

# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Winners of December drawing receive \$15 gift cards



**Macey King**  
Plymouth Middle School  
Daughter of Brett and Jamie King



**Ruby Young**  
Ashland Middle School  
Daughter of Seth and Teresa Young

**Send us your grade card and win!**  
**Next drawing is Feb. 10.**

### **How you can win**

Students in grades 6 to 8 who have a minimum of three A's on their most recent report card and whose parents or guardians are members of Firelands Electric Cooperative are eligible to apply. A copy of the report card should be submitted by mail to Attn: The A Team, Firelands Electric Cooperative, 103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851. Report cards may also be emailed to [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com).

Be sure to include the student's name, school, grade, address, phone number, parents' or guardians' name(s), and an email address on your entry. Complete program details are also available at [www.firelandsec.com/team](http://www.firelandsec.com/team).



**Corbin Sweet**  
Mapleton Middle School  
Son of Jason and Jessica Sweet



### RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

# A CUT ABOVE

## Right-of-way program helps keep the lights on

Right-of-way maintenance is an important part of Firelands Electric Cooperative's annual work plan. Also referred to as tree-trimming or vegetation management, this task is vital for delivering safe, reliable power to our members.

### What is a right-of-way?

A right-of-way is the strip of land underneath and around power lines and equipment, which Firelands Electric has the authority and obligation to access, maintain, and clear to prevent disruptions in electric service or harm to line crews or the public. Specifications vary, but a general rule of thumb for a safe right-of-way is maintaining 20 feet of clearance on either side of primary power lines. The area above poles and wires should be kept clear of all vegetation. There should be a minimum of 10 feet between shrubs and other plants and pad-mounted, or ground, transformers.

### Why is this important?

Downed trees cause a substantial number of power outages, and each year our crews take steps to reduce their impact. Clearing the right-of-way is crucial for keeping our members' power on. Branches that come into contact with power lines can cause voltage fluctuations, blinking lights, or even outages.

Right-of-way clearing also keeps your family safer by ensuring that tree branches and vegetation do not become energized due to close contact with a power line or other electrical equipment. With the ability to carry up to 34,500 volts, a power line touching a tree branch can be incredibly dangerous — even deadly — so always be mindful around trees that are close to power lines.

### Our responsibility

Firelands Electric maintains 997 miles of line, which brings power to more than 9,300 homes and businesses, making right-of-way maintenance a big job. Each year, we schedule contractors to work in specific areas of the cooperative's service territory to try to keep ahead of any potential issues.

If a tree invades the right-of-way, the cooperative's vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using a combination of large and small equipment. We also occasionally use chemical control methods to stop low-growing plant species that can climb poles and trees and interfere with power lines.



James Miller  
SYSTEM RIGHT-OF-WAY  
COORDINATOR

### Keeping power lines clear of tree limbs and brush helps the co-op:

- Reduce power interruptions
- Improve service reliability
- Restore outages more quickly
- Avoid unexpected and costly repairs
- Create a safer environment for crews and the community

plant, visit our website at [www.firelandsec.com/right-way-clearance](http://www.firelandsec.com/right-way-clearance) or contact Firelands Electric's System Right-of-Way Coordinator James Miller at 1-800-533-8658.

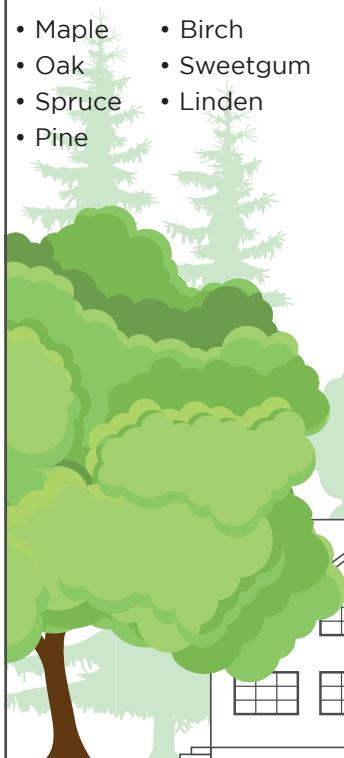
## Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard ... especially to power lines.

### LARGE TREES

**Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:**

- Maple
- Oak
- Spruce
- Pine
- Birch
- Sweetgum
- Linden



### MEDIUM TREES

**Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:**

- Washington hawthorn
- Golden rain tree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwood

40 ft. high or less



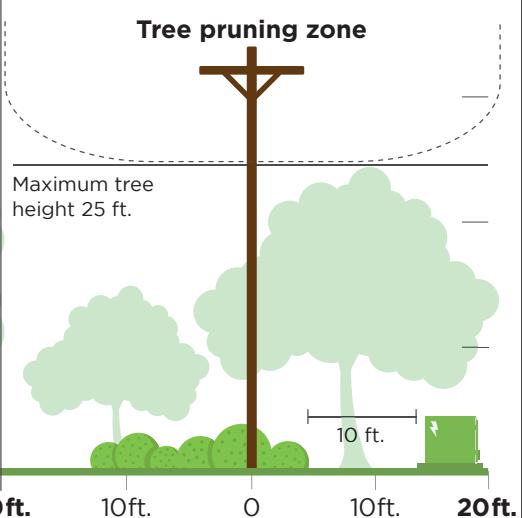
### SMALL TREES

**Height/spread of no more than 25 feet, such as:**

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.

40ft. —



Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

## 2026 RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

*Vegetation management and right-of-way tree maintenance is tentatively scheduled in 2026 for the areas listed below. Members with work planned on or near their property will be notified by postcard and email.*

- Ashland County — Perry and Ruggles townships
- Huron County — Bronson, Greenfield, Norwich, and Peru townships; Holiday Lakes; and the Village of New London
- Richland County — Monroe Township





### IN THE COMMUNITY

# OUT *and* ABOUT



1



2



3

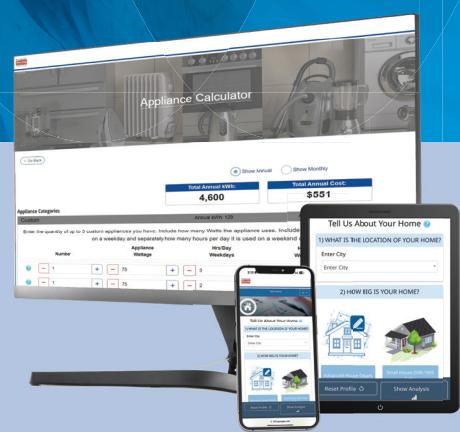
1. In November, high school students Jacob Coy (South Central) and Alec Schaffer (Monroeville) spent a day shadowing Firelands' crews to learn about careers in line work.
2. On Dec. 12, Firelands' Tracy Gibb and Melissa Wilson participated in South Central High Schools' mock interview day, helping students hone their job search skills.
3. Thank you to the co-op's members, employees, and community for once again "stepping up" to support USO Ohio! Thanks to the efforts of Aimee Lloyd (left), South Central Schools has been a major contributor to the program for the past eight years.
4. Firelands' James Miller recently won the title of Most Bodacious Beard in the No Shave Novem-Beard Challenge held by Ohio's Electric Cooperatives. The friendly competition raised over \$600 for cancer research and awareness.

4



## Your laundry doesn't care if it's washed in cold water, but your electric bill does. Save by switching to cold.

About 90% of the energy your washing machine uses goes toward heating the water. Switching to washing your laundry with cold water is an easy way to find savings on your monthly electric bill. Plus, most garment care labels recommend washing with cool or cold water to prevent fading and shrinking. Find out how little changes can add up by using Firelands' home energy calculators, which estimate your usage and can offer cost-saving recommendations.



Learn more about ways to start saving on your electric bill at [www.firelandsec.com/energy-education](http://www.firelandsec.com/energy-education).

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



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Nov. 25 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 29 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Don Englet reviewed the monthly safety and training, tree-trimming, outage, and personnel reports. He advised that the total costs for tree trimming in 2025 totaled approximately \$1.1 million.
- Director of Operations Rick Bowers reported on activities in the operations department, including updates on AEP and First Energy projects.
- Englet provided an update on the acquisition of land for a future substation that will be located near the Hillsdale Schools.
- The board reviewed, discussed, and approved the 2026 capital budget.
- Englet recapped a recent Huron county Growth Partnership meeting hosted at the cooperative.

- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the October financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Board members provided a review of training they recently attended.
- Director of Communications and IT Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments, including member communications regarding petitions for the upcoming trustee elections for districts 1, 3, and 6.

Firelands Electric Co-op is democratically controlled and governed by local people committed to policies that result in a safe and reliable electric system, fair rates, financial responsibility, and superior member service.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 24. 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](http://www.firelandsec.com)



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Dan Schloemer  
President, District 1

Kevin Reidy  
Vice President, District 6

Carl Ayers  
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

Joe Williams  
District 2

Tom Lucha  
District 3

Lon Burton  
District 4

Greg Hess  
District 7

Adrian Finlay  
District 8

Brian Cucco  
District 9

**GENERAL MANAGER**

Don Englet

**HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?**

Email your ideas to:  
[members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com)

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