



GM'S REPORT

MAKING HARD DECISIONS

Rate adjustment goes into effect April 23



Don Englet
GENERAL MANAGER

As a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative, Firelands Electric designs our rates to reflect our expenses and nothing more. Unlike investor-owned utilities, we have a goal not to make a profit, but to supply reliable electricity at the most affordable possible price.

Like you, the cooperative has been feeling the effects of rising costs for goods, materials, and services. Providing reliable power that is also affordable has continued to become more difficult year after year.

As members of the co-op community ourselves, Firelands Electric's board of trustees and management never take the idea of making a rate adjustment lightly — after all, it will also affect us, our families, and our neighbors. Unfortunately, we've found ourselves in a position where a change is necessary to keep ahead of these rising costs. The cooperative's board recently made the tough decision to implement a rate adjustment, which will go into effect on April 23.

The board and I frequently look at the co-op's bottom line, making sure that our incoming and outgoing revenue stay in line with one another. It can be a precarious balancing act to keep costs down for members while also maintaining enough capital to make necessary repairs and upgrades, as well as handle the occasional unforeseeable emergency (such as a lightning strike at a substation). Over the past few months, the board has spent a great deal of time poring over current expenses and future forecasts to ensure that Firelands can remain a reliable and safe source of electricity over the next decade. They've also thoroughly investigated how to do this while also having the least impact on our members' wallets. Rather than make larger increases here and there, the co-op is focusing on making more frequent, smaller adjustments as they are needed. Implementing these minor revisions now will prevent the need to make much bigger changes later.

Despite the upcoming rate adjustments, Firelands Electric's rates remain competitive with Ohio's other electric providers, including 25 co-ops and investor-owned utilities Ohio Edison/First Energy and AEP. For example, in July 2024 the average cost for a 1,500-kilowatt-hour bill among these 27 electric utilities was \$246.26. This same amount of electricity will cost Firelands Electric members \$249.24 after the new rates take effect. In fact, this amount will still be less than the investor-owned utility average of \$263.38. Residential members who use more than 500 kWh per month and most commercial accounts will see rate changes to their bills due in May.

While we wish we never had to make adjustments to our rates at all, the fact is that it's sometimes necessary to stay ahead of the curve and keep dependable power flowing to our members. The board has made every effort to keep these changes to a minimum and hope that by making smaller changes now, our members won't have to experience bigger ones later.

For a better look at how these rate adjustments will affect you, check out the chart on this page or visit www.firelandsec.com/rate-schedules.

BILL COMPARISON: CURRENT VS NEW RATES

Monthly electric use	Current Bill	Bill after April 23
500 kWh	\$109.75	\$109.75
1,153 kWh*	\$183.09	\$188.39
1,500 kWh	\$237.28	\$249.24
2,500 kWh	\$357.57	\$388.74

*Average monthly use of Firelands Electric members.



YOUTH PROGRAMS

**THE
FUTURE
IS**

BRIGHT



Co-op awards college and career scholarships

In February, Firelands Electric awarded ten scholarships to members of the class of 2025 who reside in homes served by the cooperative. This year, the co-op received applications from students attending Ashland, Crestview, Loudonville, Mapleton, New London, Norwalk, and South Central high schools. The co-op also awarded a new career scholarship available to a pre-June 2023 graduate who is returning to post-secondary education to pursue a certificate or degree in a vocational or tech field. Additional information about Firelands Electric's scholarships and other youth programs is available on our website at www.firelandsec.com/community.

Firelands Electric is pleased to announce the following students as winners in its 2025 scholarship contest.



Everett Smith

FIRST PLACE — \$1,800

HIGH SCHOOL: CRESTVIEW

COLLEGE: UNDECIDED

**MAJOR: BUSINESS MARKETING/
MANAGEMENT**





Scarlett Wilhelm

SECOND PLACE — \$1,600
 HIGH SCHOOL: ASHLAND
 COLLEGE: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
 MAJOR: DATA ANALYTICS



Mia Humrichouser

THIRD PLACE — \$1,400
 HIGH SCHOOL: CRESTVIEW
 COLLEGE: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
 MAJOR: MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING



Jeremy Leber

FOURTH PLACE — \$1,200
 HIGH SCHOOL: CRESTVIEW
 COLLEGE: UNDECIDED
 MAJOR: MECHANICAL/AEROSPACE ENGINEERING



Ellie Hageman

FIFTH PLACE — \$1,000
 HIGH SCHOOL: MAPLETON
 COLLEGE: NORTH CENTRAL STATE
 MAJOR: PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT

Class of
2025



Zuri Immel

SIXTH PLACE — \$750
 HIGH SCHOOL: NORWALK
 COLLEGE: UNDECIDED
 MAJOR: EXERCISE SCIENCE/
 PHYSICAL THERAPY



Lily Cline

HONORABLE MENTION — \$500
 HIGH SCHOOL: CRESTVIEW
 COLLEGE: KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
 MAJOR: SPEECH LANGUAGE
 PATHOLOGY



Sydney Strouse

HONORABLE MENTION — \$500
 HIGH SCHOOL: LOUDONVILLE
 COLLEGE: BOWLING GREEN
 MAJOR: EXERCISE SCIENCE/
 PHYSICAL THERAPY



Ashlyn Mitterling

JUDGES' CHOICE — \$500
 HIGH SCHOOL: NEW LONDON
 COLLEGE: ASHLAND UNIVERSITY
 MAJOR: BIOLOGY/PRE-DENTISTRY



Hayley Putt

JUDGES' CHOICE — \$500
 HIGH SCHOOL: SOUTH CENTRAL
 COLLEGE: BOWLING GREEN
 MAJOR: ARCHITECTURE
 AND BIOLOGY



Laura Kiesel

CAREER SCHOLARSHIP —
 PRE-JUNE 2023 GRAD
 INSTITUTION: EHOVE
 PROGRAM: SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY



EMPLOYEE NEWS

the ladies

BEHIND OUR LINEMEN



Every April, Firelands Electric sets aside an entire week to show appreciation for the cooperative's linemen. Whether completing routine maintenance or restoring an outage during a storm, this group of men dedicate themselves every day to providing our co-op members with reliable power, often in the worst weather conditions. Firelands Electric's Lineman Appreciation Week is April 14–18 this year, and in addition to celebrating their commitment to the work they do, the co-op wants to also recognize the ladies behind our linemen. Behind the scenes, these women serve as their linemen's cheerleaders, allies, and advocates — and they worry every time there is a late-night outage call.

Being the wife or significant other of an electric lineman isn't easy. First, there are the long, irregular hours. "You have to learn to embrace the unpredictable," says Amanda Collins, wife of Line Superintendent Zach Collins. Even after 22 years as a linewife, Amanda still finds the inconsistent schedule a challenge. The women all agree that getting that outage call during the middle of their children's sporting event, recital, or music concert is especially difficult for their families. "I would be lying if I said the girls aren't bummed when their dad misses a game or other event," says Courtney Shepherd, wife of Lead Lineman Robert Shepherd.

For those with younger children, like Apprentice Lineman Zach Hart and his wife, Robin, explaining that their dad "fixes lights" fulfills their curiosity.

During Lineman Appreciation Week 2025, Firelands Electric is also celebrating our linemen's wives and significant others. Pictured at right (l-r) are Working Foreman Phil Pickering and his significant other, Stephanie Rogers; Apprentice Lineman Zach Hart and wife, Robin; Journeyman Lineman Jared Galloway and wife, Caitlin; and Courtney Shepherd and her husband, Lead Lineman Robert Shepherd.

The older children, on the other hand, often ask a lot more questions, yet they also have a strong sense of pride in what their dads do for a living. The families try to focus on the linemen's selfless commitment to others to restore power outages as quickly as possible — and get members' lives back to normal. "In the end, they understand their dad is out there helping others," says Courtney.

Perhaps the hardest part of being a lineman's significant other is worrying about their safety. Because they perform one of the top ten most dangerous jobs in the U.S, lineworkers face a multitude of hazards. While many families may sit together in the dark waiting for the power to come back on, these ladies are also praying that their linemen make it home safely. "My husband has been doing linework for about 14 years and when an outage call comes in, it still makes my heart sink," says Caitlin, wife of Firelands Electric Journeyman Lineman Jared Galloway.

Ultimately, these women learn to trust their lineman's training and skills, as well as have faith in their fellow linemen to have their back. They also find comfort in knowing that Firelands Electric Co-op prioritizes safety, ensuring that the linemen provide the best service AND come home safely.

When asked what one thing they would like co-op members to know about linework, the answer was unanimous — be patient. "I know it is inconvenient, but you have to understand that these men are doing everything they can to get your power back on," says Amanda. Plus, they're trying to remain safe under some brutal conditions so they can safely return home to their families at the end of their shift.

According to these women, their men love their work, and despite the dangers and odd hours, they are always there to support their linemen. And they all agree that they couldn't be prouder.

If you see one of Firelands Electric's linemen, or their wives, significant others, or even moms, during the cooperative's Lineman Appreciation Week April 14-18, be sure to thank them for their commitment to keeping the lights on.



Firelands Electric's Lineman Appreciation Week is April 14-18. (Pictured above are Apprentice Lineman Jake White (top) and Journeyman Lineman Chris Kent (bottom).



LINEMAN APPRECIATION WEEK

April 14-18, 2025



SAFETY

ENERGY SCAMS

UNMASKED



Scammers have become more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology, adapting their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Firelands Electric wants to help you avoid energy scams that can result in financial loss or a leak of your personal information. Below, we review some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you protect yourself from even the craftiest scammers.

Recent utility scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves — either physically or digitally — as employees or representatives of a utility. A common trick is to claim that your bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if you don't make immediate payment. Scammers may approach consumers through phone calls, text messages, emails, and even in-person visits. However, digital attacks are increasingly more common.

New capabilities to disguise the number where a call originates from (also known as “spoofing”) can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be a trusted source. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that look identical to a utility payment webpage, and even worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment to a scammer.

Phone calls, text messages, or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a refund are also common. This too-good-to-be-true offer is likely a scam aimed to steal your personal and financial information.

Spotting a scam

Several red flags can help alert you to an energy scam. Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Scammers also may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency.

Many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors, and odd email addresses. When you see these suspicious forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

What your co-op will (and won't) do

Firelands Electric will never demand payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

Firelands will also never call you to ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email. This information is already in our system, so unless you call us and we need to verify your identity, never give your private information to a caller. We also offer several secure payment options, including in-person, Auto Pay, night drop, and our SmartHub app.

Avoiding scams

Whether in-person, over the phone, or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be a Firelands Electric employee requesting banking or other personal information.

If you're ever in doubt about an encounter potentially being an energy scam, just give us a quick call at 1-800-533-8658 to confirm it is legitimate. Firelands wants to help protect you and our community against utility fraud, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.



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



Elyse Swords
New London Middle School
Daughter of Michael Swords
and Amanda Swords



Morgan Turk
Hillsdale Middle School
Daughter of Kevin and Melinda Turk

Send us your grade card and win!
Next drawing is April 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.

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.



Daisy Jackson
New London Middle School
Daughter of Justin Jackson
and Jessica Jackson



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Jan. 28 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, and outage reports.
- Englet and Director of Operations Rick Bowers reviewed the 2024 SAIDI score, which compares the co-op's total annual minutes of power outages to the total number of members. The board was advised that Firelands' score was significantly lower in 2024 than the previous few years, reflecting the co-op's distribution system upgrade projects and right-of-way maintenance efforts to improve reliability.
- Bowers reported on activities in the operations department, including updates on the AEP and First Energy project in New London and the Coulter substation rebuild project expenditures.
- Director of Communications and IT Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.
- Englet reviewed plans for the upcoming annual meeting, data from previous meetings, and information about events held by other electric cooperatives in Ohio.
- The board reviewed controllable expenses and joint use billing from last year.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the December financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 22. If you would like to attend the next scheduled meeting, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

Happy Easter

As a reminder, the Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be closed April 18 in observance of Good Friday.

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

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GENERAL MANAGER

Don Englet

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

Firelands Electric
COOPERATIVE
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative