



GM'S REPORT

# SERVICE

*with purpose*



Don Englet  
GENERAL MANAGER

## Co-op celebrates 90th anniversary

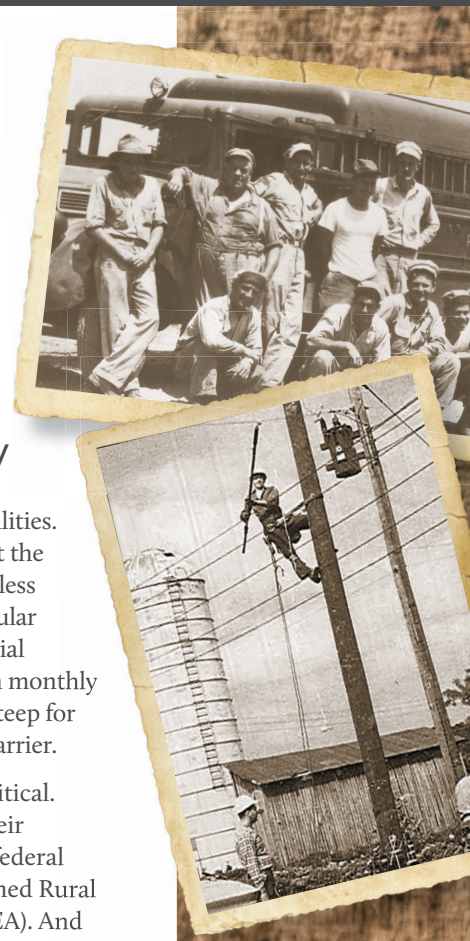
In the 1930s, only one in ten rural homes in the U.S. had access to electricity. Put plainly, it was an unreachable luxury for most, including those living in our portion of north-central Ohio. Although bringing electric power to

our area appeared to be a daunting — if not impossible — task, a small group of local farmers did not give up. On May 28, 1936, less than a dozen men would gather for the first organizational meeting of the North Eastern Farm Bureau Electric Cooperative, Inc. They collected membership dues, elected officers, and hired someone to oversee the construction of the electrical system. Most importantly, they launched the 90-year legacy of what we now know as Firelands Electric Cooperative.

investor- and municipal-owned utilities. Reassuring potential members that the co-op's lines would be heavier and less prone to breakage or fire was a regular part of their conversation. The initial enrollment fee of \$5 and minimum monthly charge of \$2.35, which were both steep for the time period, created another barrier.

Getting everyone on board was critical. Co-op members couldn't make their dream a reality without securing federal funding through the recently formed Rural Electrification Administration (REA). And REA funding was only available if the co-op averaged at least three members per mile of power line. (For comparison, Firelands currently has about nine members per mile of line, while the nation's non-cooperative utilities average 35 to 50 consumers per mile.)

*Continued on page 20*



**“We either had to pull together, or nobody would get [electricity].”**

— Paula Griffin, daughter of founding trustee W.F. Porter, in 1985

From 1936 to 1938, the co-op's founders and the trustees elected to represent its seven original districts would work tirelessly to recruit members. They went door-to-door, enrolling family, friends, and neighbors with the goal of bringing electric power to those who had long been dismissed by the for-profit utilities. They faced several challenges, including debunking safety concerns that stemmed from issues with the power lines of





# FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

*Continued from page 19*

By February 1938, the newly renamed Firelands Electric Cooperative was approved for its first REA loan in the amount of \$100,000. (It would take more than 24 years for the co-op to repay this loan!) The funds would be used to build the first 100 miles of power lines, including those that energized the first 90 co-op members in August of that same year.

Firelands' founding members slowly began to see their vision coming to life. Carl Bruce, whose dedication laid a foundation for the cooperative we have today, personally saw to it that nearly 1,000 residents of Ashland and Richland counties joined the co-op. In 1939, the first annual meeting of members was held. The New London Power and Light Company, which provided electricity to the Village of New London, was purchased in 1942. By 1985, the co-op served 6,600 members. And today that number has grown to more than 9,300. Firelands Electric Cooperative has clearly evolved over the past 90 years. However, as Bruce once stated:

## PAT (THOMPSON) NISWANDER —

Pat Niswander has lived on co-op lines in the Lucas area since 1947, but her property has been in the family since 1850. Her father purchased the Tucker Road farm when she was 12 years old and the family moved from the city of Mansfield. While the farm and house did not have electricity at the time of the move, Pat's father knew he could have the necessary equipment installed to connect to Firelands Electric's distribution system — one of the primary reasons he bought this particular property.

Pat explains that coal lamps, an outhouse, and heating bath water on the wood-fired cookstove in the summer kitchen were the norm during her family's early days in the home. Once the wiring was installed, some of the family's first purchases included electric lighting and the installation of indoor bathroom fixtures. She also remembers that while they still did not have a radio or television, the addition of electric fencing on the farm created a lot of excitement.

Pat and her husband, Jerry, bought the farm from her father in 1977 and the 91-year-old still calls it home.

**“Our goals will remain the same as they have been — to render the best service at the lowest possible cost.”**

*— former District 6 Trustee Carl Bruce, in 1985*

**We hope you join us this month as we celebrate the co-op's tradition of “service with purpose” and recognize those who got us here. Please see the following pages for additional reflections on our past, information on participating in our 2026 Virtual Annual Meeting, and an invitation to a special member event on May 21.**

**And thank you for being a member and such a big part of Firelands Electric's legacy.**



## PAULA GRIFFIN —

“I remember mother called me at three o'clock in the afternoon [on the day our home got electricity] to tell me about it, and my boss gave me the rest of the day off. We had lights and a radio that I'd brought from work that first night.”

**MEMBER**  
*memories*

2026



# VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

Video stream premieres on  
**TUESDAY, MAY 5 AT 5:00 P.M.**

1. Visit [www.firelandsec.com/annual-meeting-members](http://www.firelandsec.com/annual-meeting-members) from May 5 through June 1 for the link to view the meeting.
2. Members without internet access may watch a recording of the meeting during the May 21 Member Appreciation Event at the cooperative's facility.
3. Submit the code revealed at the end of the online meeting before 4 p.m. on June 1 to receive a \$20 meeting attendance energy credit (one credit per member).
4. Code may be submitted on the website or by completing and returning the form below.

**Account number and virtual annual meeting code are required to receive \$20 bill credit.  
For questions or assistance, please contact the co-op's office at 1-800-533-8658.**

**Watch the meeting, then submit the form below (or online)  
before 4 p.m. on June 1 to receive a \$20 bill credit:**

**Firelands Electric Co-op  
103 Industrial Drive | New London, OH 44851**

First and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account number (required): \_\_\_\_\_  
*(located in the top right corner of your bill)*

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Virtual annual meeting code (required): \_\_\_\_\_

90  
YEARS



# MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

**MAY 21, 2026**  
**2–7 P.M.**

103 Industrial Drive, New London



*Join us as we celebrate 90 years of service with purpose!*

- Catered by West Clarksfield Smokers
- Chance to win one of ten \$90 bill credits
- Replay of virtual annual meeting video to earn a \$20 bill credit
- Live power line and safety presentations
- Pole climbing demonstrations
- Energy efficiency displays
- Free member gift
- Touch-a-truck
- Bounce houses

service with purpose

**90**  
YEARS



**Visit [www.firelandsec.com/member-appreciation](http://www.firelandsec.com/member-appreciation)  
before 4 p.m., Friday, May 15, to RSVP.**

# LET'S CELEBRATE!

## SAFETY

# Shining a light on electrical safety

May is electrical safety month

Firelands Electric provides extensive safety training to our employees but we also work to help keep our members, first responders, and wider community safe through information, education, and demonstrations. Because May is National Electrical Safety Month, it's an especially good time to share tips for staying safe around electricity.

### Vehicles vs. utility poles

Would you know what to do if a car hits a utility pole that resulted in a downed power line? Hopefully you never find yourself in this situation, but if you do, knowing what — and what not — to do could save your life.

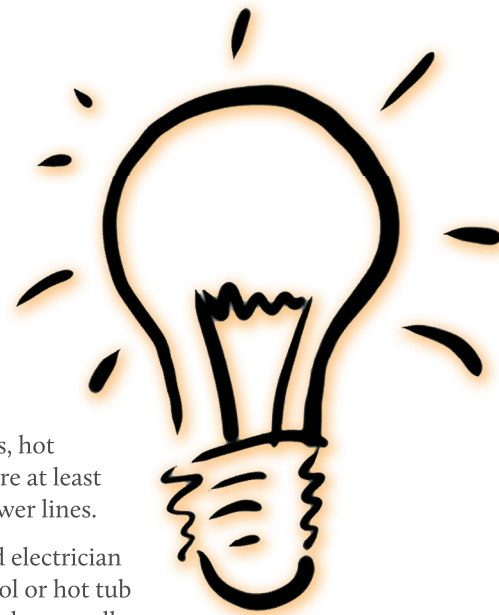
A vehicle that hits a pole may be charged with electricity. Anyone exiting the car could come in contact with thousands of volts. If you step out, you become part of the electricity's path to the ground and could be electrocuted. It's critical to stay in the vehicle until emergency crews have told you it's safe to exit. If the vehicle is on fire or you must exit for other safety reasons, jump clear of the vehicle. Do not let any part of your body or clothing touch the vehicle and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together and hop — keeping both feet together — or shuffle (in small steps with your feet together) away until you are at least 40 feet away from the vehicle.

If you encounter a downed power line of any kind, always assume the line is energized and dangerous. Keep your distance and tell others to stay away, because the ground may be energized up to 35 feet away from where the line is touching. Alert emergency officials, who will in turn coordinate with the power provider.

### Electric shock drowning

As we head into summer, many people will head out to the water. Electricity is an invisible danger that can be lurking in the water — from marinas, boats, or power sources near pools or hot tubs. Contact with electrified water can cause paralysis and lead to electric shock drowning. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) provides several tips to stay safe around water:

- Make sure pools, hot tubs, and spas are at least 25 feet from power lines.
- Have a qualified electrician inspect your pool or hot tub annually and make sure all receptacles within 20 feet of the water's edge have ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Never swim near a marina or a boat while it's running.



### DIY safety

Summer is also a prime time to tackle DIY projects. According to ESFI, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Keep the following safety tips in mind when doing your next DIY project:

- Never attempt a project beyond your skill level. For most electrical work, hiring a qualified, licensed electrician is the safest plan.
- Always turn off the power by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel when working with or near electrical circuits.
- Unplug any lamp or appliance before working on it.
- Use GFCI outlets when using power tools, and never use tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.

### Your cooperative cares

Firelands Electric Cooperative provides community education about electrical safety through school programs, live-line demonstrations, first responder training, and much more. We also provide a wide range of safety information and resources on our website at [www.firelandsec.com/electrical-safety](http://www.firelandsec.com/electrical-safety).

And make sure to check out the next page for an opportunity for children in kindergarten through fifth grade to learn about electrical safety on the job in our annual Lunch with a Lineman Contest.



CO-OP CONTESTS

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CONTEST

*Lunch* with a  
**LINEMAN**



Every May, Firelands Electric Cooperative makes a special effort to reach out to our younger community members as part of National Electrical Safety Month. This month, the co-op is once again sponsoring a contest for children in kindergarten through fifth grade to do just that.

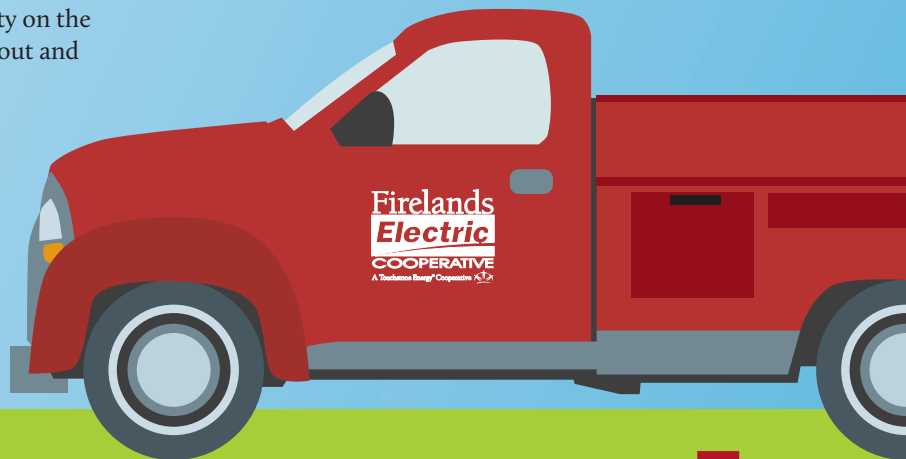
To enter, students simply need to complete and return the safety activity on the next page. Three students will then be selected to attend a special lunch with some of Firelands Electric's linemen and participate in a behind-the-scenes look at the co-op's utility equipment later this summer!

**Contest rules:**

1. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade attending one of the schools in or around the co-op's service territory are eligible to enter. (See our website at [www.firelandsec.com/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/contests) for a list.)
2. Students simply need to complete the activity on the next page and have a parent or guardian fill out and sign the section at the bottom.
3. Completed entries may be mailed to: Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, 103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851. Entries may also be completed online at [www.firelandsec.com/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/contests), dropped off at the co-op office, or emailed to [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com).

4. Entries must be received by 4 p.m. on Friday, June 5.
5. All entries received will be placed into a drawing for a chance to win one of three spots for an exclusive tour of the co-op and lunch with some of Firelands' linemen. Each of the three winners will be permitted to bring one or two adult chaperones to the event, which is tentatively scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22.
6. Winners will also be featured in the local pages of a future issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine, as well as on Firelands Electric Cooperative's website and social media outlets.

*Questions regarding this contest may be directed to the member services department at 1-800-533-8658 or by emailing [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com).*



**CONTEST IS OPEN TO ANY STUDENT ATTENDING ONE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN AND AROUND FIRELANDS ELECTRIC'S SERVICE TERRITORY. THEY ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE CO-OP MEMBERS.**

# HOME ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

Ask an adult to help you check your home for possible electrical safety hazards using the checklist below. Mark if each sentence is true or false. Talk with an adult about what you should do to make your home safer.

1. Electric outlets are not overloaded.
2. Electric cords do not run under rugs or furniture legs.
3. No electric cords are worn or frayed.
4. Electric appliances are kept away from water.
5. Electric heaters are far away from flammable objects.
6. Power tools are stored in clean, dry areas.
7. All smoke detectors are properly working.
8. There are no trees near the house that interfere with power lines.

True	False



Please complete the information below and mail this page to: Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, 103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851. Entries may also be completed online at [www.firelandsec.com/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/contests). All entries must be received by the co-op before 4 p.m. on Friday, June 5.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

School and Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Parents'/Guardians' Names \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_



YOUTH PROGRAMS

# CO-OP SELECTS 2026 DELEGATE

Firelands Electric is pleased to announce that Bryce Hall will be representing the cooperative on the 2026 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

The son of Matthew and Misty Hall, Bryce is a junior at New London High School, where he is the current junior class officer and a member of the student council. Bryce is also active in the school's chapters of FFA and the Teen Leadership Corp, as well as a member of the yearbook staff. He hopes to study political science at The Ohio State University following graduation.

Sponsored by Ohio's Electric Cooperatives, Firelands Electric, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), Youth Tour is an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., which will take place June 14 to 20. Bryce will join 45 other students from Ohio's rural electric cooperatives as they tour the sights in and around our nation's capital.

The annual Youth Tour program gives more than 1,800 children of cooperative members from across the nation a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in an in-depth look at Washington, D.C.

Ohio's delegates have the chance to visit sites such as the U.S. Capitol, Gettysburg, the Smithsonian Institution, the Supreme Court building, and many others. Through educational and sightseeing activities, students gain a personal understanding of American history and their role as citizens. Delegates are also able to meet and interact with their U.S. representatives and senators during the trip.

Firelands' Youth Tour contest is offered to high school sophomores and juniors who reside in a home served by the cooperative. Candidates are evaluated on school and community activities, demonstrated leadership, and a letter of recommendation. To learn more about Firelands' youth programs, visit [www.firelandsec.com/community](http://www.firelandsec.com/community).



Bryce Hall  
NEW LONDON HIGH SCHOOL



# MAKE YOUR MARK!

June 14-20, 2026



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# WATER HEATER WOES

Many of us tend to live in the “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” school of thought. However, emergency replacement of a water heater can range from inconvenient to downright frustrating. A failed water heater not only results in unwelcome cold showers, but it can also cause damage to your home and property. In addition, after-hours or weekend replacement or repair can lead to higher costs charged by a contractor.

While we are all for “using what you have” in this economy, there are some signs that indicate your water heater might be approaching the end of its life — signs that you shouldn’t ignore.

The typical lifespan of a traditional style water heater is 10 to 15 years, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. If your water heater is older than that, it might be wise to plan on replacing it soon. Don’t have records of when it was installed? You can find the serial number on the water heater’s sticker or metal plate and use it to look up your tank online. Calling the manufacturer with the serial number in hand can also help you determine its age.

Sediment or water on the floor or at the bottom of the water heater is an indicator that its days may be numbered. Sediment can be a sign of corrosion, which leads to a leak or failure. Seeing rusty or discolored water when you turn on your faucets can be another sign the tank is rusting inside. While the water not getting as hot as it used to could be a sign of failure, it could also mean that an electric element or gas burner is not functioning properly. In this scenario, it’s best to have your tank looked at by a professional.

Odd noises could indicate an issue with various components in the tank. If you’re hearing unusual noises from your water heater, schedule a checkup with a plumber. Properly functioning water heaters typically don’t make much noise. A professional plumber may be able to replace failing parts, but if you are having issues with the tank itself, it’s likely time for a new unit.

Knowing the signs of water heater failure can save you from home damage. If you do find yourself in the market for a new tank, be sure to explore the options available for more efficient equipment. And don’t forget to review the requirements for Firelands Electric’s water heater rebate at [www.firelandsec.com/electric-water-heater-rebates](http://www.firelandsec.com/electric-water-heater-rebates). Purchasing a qualifying energy-efficient model could earn you a rebate on your next electric bill!





ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Scott Carbery  
ENERGY ADVISOR

# SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT : **PREPARE FOR SUMMER**

Tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor

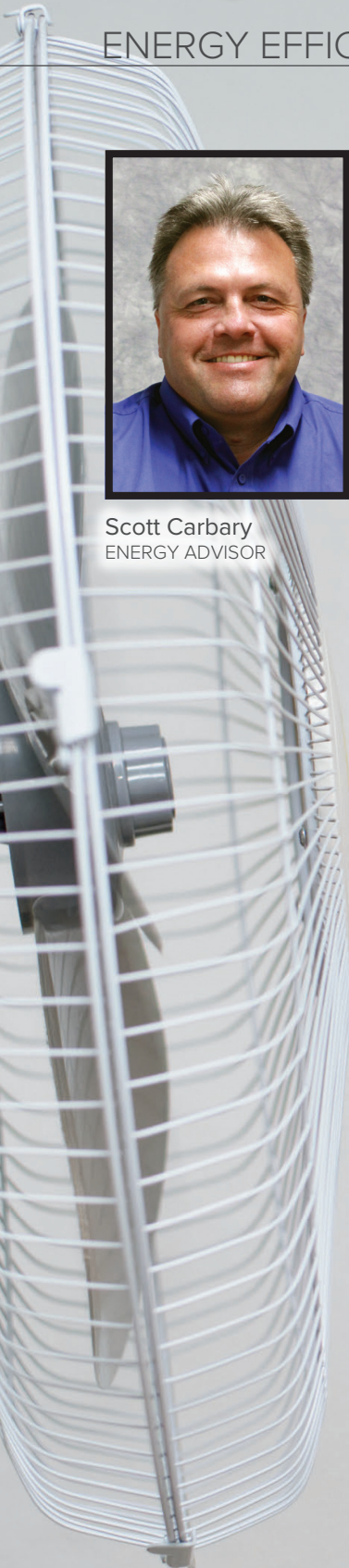
Saying that Ohio's weather is unpredictable is an understatement. As I write this (in late March), yesterday's high was nearly 80 degrees, and it felt a little humid. However, today it's in the mid-30s and the heat is on! Next week's weather is anyone's guess.

Summer will arrive eventually and, as every Ohioan knows, that means hot, muggy air that causes the majority of us to start up the air conditioner — and brings increased energy use. Keeping your cool doesn't have to break your budget, however. By taking some proactive measures now, you can minimize the impact on your energy bills later this summer.

Before we get into specific tips, remember that the most effective first step to energy savings is to determine if investing in a particular update will have a worthwhile payback. As your cooperative's energy advisor, I often hear about members spending large sums of money on home upgrades that take years, or even decades, to recoup the initial investment. Ultimately, the homeowner may have saved very little money. So, ask yourself: Will this update save me more money than what it costs to install?

If you need assistance with determining payback, or are considering renewable options, contact the co-op office at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule a free, in-home consultation. We are always happy to provide upgrade recommendations and payback calculations based on the energy use of a member's home. You can also find several free calculators online, including some at [www.energy.gov/energysaver](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver).

Now let's take a look at a few home improvements that will give you the most savings for the smallest investment during the summer months:



- Add insulation. Insulation upgrades can result in savings during both the heating and cooling seasons, which maximizes their payback. According to energystar.gov, homeowners can reduce the cost to operate their HVAC system by 10% to 20%, depending on the insulation levels prior to the updates. Most of Ohio is in Climate Zone 5, so the recommended insulation R-values are R-49 to R-60 in the attic, R-20 to R-24 for the walls, and R-25 to R-30 for floors.
- Air sealing. This typically involves adding caulking and/or weatherstripping and can save members up to 11% on their cooling bills. A common area for air leakage is the rim joist/sill plate area, which is located at the joint, or the area between the basement wall and the house framing. Dirty or discolored insulation in the cavity bays is an indicator of air leakage, and can often be corrected by the homeowner. See the section on insulation and air sealing on the cooperative's website at [www.firelandsec.com/energy-education](http://www.firelandsec.com/energy-education) for DIY guides.
- Tuning and cleaning your heating and cooling system. Doing so at least once or twice a year helps your system operate 10% to 20% more efficiently. According to energystar.gov, even a layer of dirt as thin as the thickness of a sheet of paper on the outside or inside air conditioner coil can increase the system's overall operating costs by 10% to 20%.
- Sealing the ductwork. Along with insulating ductwork in any areas that are not heated or cooled, sealing ductwork can save money and improve comfort. The EPA estimates the average U.S. home loses 20% to 30 % of its conditioned air through the basement or attic. The Department of Energy estimates this number to be closer to 40%. Sealing leaky ductwork is often an easy fix that can be done by a member. Once again, you can find DIY information on the Energy Education page on Firelands' website. (But remember, duct tape is not for ductwork!)
- Other no-cost or low-cost improvements that can help reduce summer energy bills include:
  1. Close blinds or drapes on the west side of the home during the hottest part of the day.
  2. Reverse ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise and push cooler air down.
  3. Clean or change HVAC system filters.
  4. Use appliances like the microwave, crockpot, or even your grill to avoid adding more heat to your living space.

With a little preparation, it is possible to keep cool and stay within your budget once the heat and humidity of a typical Ohio summer arrive. And as always, if you need additional help making your home energy efficient, contact Firelands Electric's office at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule your free consultation.

## MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBER & HONOR



The Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be closed on

**Monday, May 25**

to honor those who gave their lives for our freedom.

*As always, emergency service is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-533-8658.*



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Feb. 24 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 32 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 an update on expenses for the Coulter substation rebuild project.
- Englet advised that the replacement power transformer for the Fitchville substation is expected to arrive in January 2027 and gave an update on the plans for a new substation near Hillsdale.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the January financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Englet and Shepherd provided an update on the current wholesale power adjustment.
- Schloemer provided a recap of the recent OREC meeting. He advised that Project Ohio 2025 had finally been energized in Barejones, Guatemala, and reviewed Buckeye Power's most recent discussions concerning the power supply and data centers.
- Director of Communications and IT Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments, including recent cybersecurity testing.
- Englet provided a recap of his presentation at a recent Ashland County Commissioners meeting regarding the co-op's current demand for electricity in the county.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26. 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**

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Vice President, District 6

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Adrian Finlay  
District 8

Brian Cucco  
District 9

**GENERAL MANAGER**

Don Englet

**HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?**

Email your ideas to:  
members@firelandsec.com

