

NEWS



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For Immediate Release:

Firelands Electric Cooperative addresses reliability and rates during their 87th annual meeting event at Ashland University

NEW LONDON, April 2, 2025 at 3:45PM — A tradition extending over 87 years continued Saturday, March 29, when Firelands Electric Cooperative hosted its annual meeting at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center. Roughly 300 co-op members and guests enjoyed the breakfast meeting, which included gifts and prize drawings.

Firelands Electric Board of Trustees President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative's 2024 operating margins were strong, ending the year around \$1.2 million. As a not-for-profit electric utility, margins are an important source of funding for the significant yearly investments required for Firelands Electric's poles, lines, substations, and equipment. These margins are also the source for capital credits that get paid back to the co-op's member-consumers. In 2024, Firelands Electric spent \$4.3 million on capital improvements and, for the third year in row, returned \$1 million to its member-consumers during the cooperative's general capital credits retirement.

Schloemer reminded the group that electric rates would need to be increased slightly over the next several years to support these ongoing system improvements to replace worn out equipment and improve reliability by hardening the distribution system to the effects of extreme weather events. "To keep up with rising costs, the board voted to increase rates overall at a 4 percent rate beginning April 23, 2025," Schloemer advised. "Some Firelands members will see small to moderate increases and those that use the fewest kilowatt-hours will see no increase." Members can see examples of how this rate adjustment will impact their electric bills in the cooperative's magazine, as well as on Firelands' website and social media outlets.

In his address, Schloemer also recognized Firelands Electric's Operation Round Up for celebrating its 30-year anniversary. The program receives its funding from Firelands Electric members who volunteer to have their utility bills rounded up to the next whole dollar amount each month. Since 1995, Firelands' Operation Round Up has distributed over \$1.3 million to local organizations and individuals to help meet special needs.

President Schloemer also recognized trustees Bruce Leimbaugh and Elaine Oswald, who are stepping down from the board. "We will certainly miss their experience in budgeting and goal setting, and their ability to think strategically," Schloemer stated. "Because they chose to serve, Firelands is a better cooperative."

General Manager Don Englet spoke to those in attendance about his new management role at Firelands Electric following nearly 25 years serving in the cooperative's operations department. Englet explained how Firelands Electric utilizes 4-year construction work plans to maintain and improve system reliability. The current work plan covers major projects aimed at improving the co-op's capacity, voltage, and reliability. The plan that will be completed this year has tackled some of the most difficult, problematic, and expensive areas of the cooperative's distribution system.

Englet explained that several large projects completed in 2024 throughout southern Ashland County and western Richland County consisted of replaced poles and wire. In some cases, the wire conductor capacity of these lines was doubled in size, even tripled, in some areas. Firelands worked with members, landowners, townships, counties, and state agencies to locate these new lines in areas that are more readily accessible, such as along roads and driveways, with the intention to make future maintenance and upkeep easier and faster to complete.

Another key investment in Firelands Electric's distribution system includes nearly \$12 million in new distribution lines, replacing equipment, line improvements, and the replacement of the cooperative's Coulter substation. Englet advised that Firelands has employed new methods, materials, and technology aimed at delivering reliable and cost-effective electricity. "We are currently preparing the next work plan, where we will again look to make some drastic improvements for reliability and capacity, making sure that Firelands is well prepared to serve our members well into the future," Englet said.

During the meeting, it was announced that Lon Burton of New London, Carl Ayers of Perrysville, and Adrian Finlay of Ashland were elected to represent districts 4, 5, and 8, respectively, on the cooperative's board of trustees. As District 4 representative, Burton will serve Clarksfield and Rochester townships, Fitchville Township east of State Route 250, and north of CSX rail in New London municipality, and New London Township in Huron County. Ayers will continue to serve Firelands' District 5 members, located in Monroe Township in Richland County, and Green and Lake townships in Ashland County. As District 8 representative, Finlay will serve members located in Mifflin Township south of State Route 42 in Ashland and Richland counties.

Cooperative members who joined Firelands Electric as it celebrated its 87th annual meeting were entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of seven bill credits worth a total of \$300. Randomly selected winners included: Thomas Forbes of Perrysville, John Martin of New London, Dan McNaull of Ashland, and Joyce Ritchie of Ashland, who each received a \$25 bill credit; Tom Kaufman and John Retherford, both of Jeromesville, who each received a \$50 bill credit; and Tim Parks of Ashland, who won a \$100 bill credit.

Firelands Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility serving more than 9,200 homes and businesses in rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties and ranks among the highest energy utilities in the country for customer satisfaction. Visit the cooperative's website at www.firelandsec.com, [Facebook page](#), or [Twitter feed](#) to learn more about reliable and affordable power. Photos of Firelands Electric's 2025 annual meeting event can be viewed on the cooperative's Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:



6N5A8654 – Firelands Electric Co-op's 2025 annual meeting prize drawing winners are (shown L-R): Tim Parks, Tom Kaufman, Thomas Forbes, Dan McNaull, John Retherford, John Martin, and Joyce Ritchie.

6N5A8628 – Firelands Electric Co-op General Manager Don Englet addressed the crowd regarding reliability during the cooperative's annual meeting.

