



GM'S REPORT

# THE joy OF GIVING BACK

This time of year always makes me pause and reflect on the people I'm grateful to have in my life. Not surprisingly, my family and friends sit at the top of this list. My co-op family and my community also rank right up there.

Employees and community have a very powerful connection at Firelands Electric. The cooperative fosters this relationship through the core value of "commitment to community," but more importantly, the connection is there because our employees are members of the very communities that they serve. Firelands' team members are your neighbors, friends, coaches, school and fair board members, first responders, and much more. These men and women don't just serve the community through the cooperative — they *are* the community.

Some of this involvement can be quite obvious. Our linemen work tirelessly contending with weather, trees, wildlife, and equipment to keep electricity flowing to our homes and businesses. Dispatch personnel make sure that outage calls are processed efficiently and accurately so that power restoration can be completed as quickly as possible. The communications team keeps everyone informed of important news and events affecting both the cooperative and the community.

Looking beyond the surface, though, there's much more to be found. Firelands Electric Cooperative employees spend a lot of time, both on and off the job, making our communities stronger. Our employees —

your neighbors — are committed to making their community a better place to live and work.

Sometimes this deep connection to community focuses on safety. Line crews provide training for firefighters, police, and other first responders. Additional employees participate in demonstrations for school groups or take part in safety day programs put on by area organizations for children and adults.

Supporting local youth also holds a special place with Firelands Electric's employees. Every year, the cooperative supports countless academic programs, Junior Fairs, and other school clubs and organizations. Employees volunteer to judge 4-H and FFA projects, help at camps, and participate in parades. The co-op has a number of team members who support local schools outside of work hours, by coaching sports teams, serving on committees, and volunteering at events.



Dan McNaull  
GENERAL MANAGER

*Continued on page 20*





## FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

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The Firelands Electric family's concern for community also extends to charitable organizations. Employees donate to local philanthropic groups year-round through their jeans program. Nearly \$3,000 is raised annually from employee donations made in exchange for wearing jeans to work on designated days.

On the state and national levels, employees help spearhead donations each holiday season for the USO of Ohio Step Up for Soldiers campaign.

Working in conjunction with WLKR and K96-FM, the cooperative collects snacks, hygiene products, and other items for military personnel. Contributions are collected from employees and their families, local organizations, businesses, schools, and the community at large.



Firelands Electric's employees are deeply invested in the communities the co-op serves. Public safety programs, like the ones shown on this page, are just one of many ways they give back.

Being a part of this organization and working alongside its remarkable employees gives me a true sense of joy, not only during the Christmas season, but throughout the entire year. Firelands Electric Cooperative's employees are more than just the individuals who keep the lights on. They are a passionate and active presence in the co-op's communities and enjoy giving back. And our communities are all the more powerful because of it.



Since 2007, Firelands Electric Cooperative has supported U.S. military personnel during the holiday season — and we are proud to continue this tradition in 2021.

Firelands Electric is once again joining forces with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to support USO Ohio's Step Up for Soldiers annual drive.

Through Friday, Dec. 10, members of Firelands Electric and the community can bring care package items to the co-op office, located at 103 Industrial Drive in New London. Donations may be dropped off in the collection boxes located right inside the front entryway during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Care packages are currently tailored toward service members who have been activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. USO Ohio requests snacks and hygiene essentials for this year's packages. Suggested donation items include razors, cotton swabs, tissues, deodorant, toothpaste, eye drops, ear plugs, playing cards, chewing gum, hard candy, beef jerky, trail mix, and snack packs.

Additional information and a list of recommended donation items is available on our website at [www.firelandsec.com/uso-northern-ohio](http://www.firelandsec.com/uso-northern-ohio) as well as on our Facebook page.

If you would prefer to make a tax-deductible monetary donation, the USO accepts these year-round. Please visit <https://ohio.uso.org> for details.



## CO-OP NEWS

# 2021 CHRISTMAS LIGHTING CONTEST

Show us your holiday spirit!

Firelands Electric Cooperative invites members to submit a photo of their indoor or outdoor Christmas lighting display for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit.

Members are encouraged to email a digital photo of their display to [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com) through Dec. 26 (maximum of 10 MB). Be sure to put "Christmas Lighting Contest" in the subject line and include your name, address, and phone number. Photos may also be mailed to: Christmas Lighting Contest, Firelands Electric Co-op, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851.

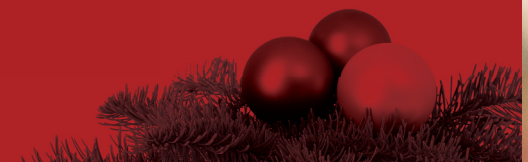
Submitted photos will be posted in an album on Firelands Electric's Facebook page, where the public can vote for their favorite. One winner will be chosen every Monday morning (Dec. 6, Dec. 13, Dec. 20, and Dec. 27). The photo receiving the most likes at the end of each new contest period will be declared the winner and will receive a \$50 credit on their next Firelands Electric Cooperative bill.

Limit of one entry/photo and one prize per member address. Visit [www.firelandsec.com/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/contests) for complete rules.

*Merry Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year!*

**The Firelands Electric  
office will be closed  
Dec. 23, 24, and 31.**

Emergency service is  
available 24/7 by calling  
**1-800-533-8658.**



## Christmas light trivia

- Electric lights were first used to decorate a Christmas tree in 1882.
- At the turn of the 20th century, a single strand of Christmas lights cost \$12 — the equivalent of around \$350 today.
- Roughly 150 million sets of lights are sold in the U.S. every year.





## OPERATIONS UPDATE

# “A” BRINGING OUR GAME CO-OP PROJECTS ENHANCE RELIABILITY

Providing members with reliable power has always been at the core of Firelands Electric Cooperative's mission. Founded during a time when other utilities failed to supply power to rural farms, homes, and businesses, the cooperative improved the quality of life in those communities. Eighty-five years later, making sure that our members, neighbors, and friends are always powered on is still fundamental to Firelands Electric's purpose — and the projects completed in 2021 reflect this continuing commitment.

One of the most involved undertakings over the past year was rebuild work on the P31 line in New Haven and Ripley townships in Huron County. The project upgraded a 2.2-mile stretch of power lines originally built in 1938. Although not a long stretch of line, the upgrade was complex and time-consuming, involving the replacement of poles, wire, and conductors. The project increased clearances, improved voltage, created options for backfeeding, and increased capacity for the members receiving power from this section of line. The work improved service not only for those members whose homes and businesses received upgraded equipment, but also for members located farther down the line.

In addition to rebuilds, the cooperative also completes certain tasks year-round to ensure reliability for our members. For instance, each year the co-op conducts an inspection of utility poles. In 2021, the cooperative contracted Wright's Inspection Services to examine around 2,800 poles for any potential issues with their condition. Poles are exposed just below the surface and examined for decay or damage. Those that show signs of weakening are then placed on a list to be replaced.

Preventing wildlife from climbing or nesting on transformers is also important for reliability and for the protection of endangered species, birds, squirrels, raccoons, and other wildlife. Animals that attempt to use transformers as a perch can easily come in contact with

the energized points of the unit. In areas where wildlife contact is common, Firelands' crews often install specially made guards to prevent harm to the animals and reduce power outages for our members. There are various types of guards to fit different pieces of equipment, but they all essentially perform the same function — to deter wildlife from making their home atop potentially deadly electrical equipment.

One of the most common threats to reliability for all power providers are trees that come down on power lines and other electrical equipment. During 2021, 29% of the co-op's outages involved trees. This is the reason that Firelands Electric places so much emphasis on tree and vegetation management in our annual work plan. In 2021, contractors trimmed along nearly 235 miles of line across seven townships, with an additional 240 miles scheduled for 2022.

Bringing power to our communities has been a priority since Firelands Electric was first established in 1936. The weather, trees, wildlife, and time aren't always conducive to our efforts. But rest assured, your electric cooperative will never stop bringing it's "A" game when it comes to reliability.







Periodic testing helps Firelands Electric identify utility poles that are weak or damaged, like the one shown above. The co-op then adds these poles to its work plan so that they can be replaced.



Transformer bushing guards, like the one at right, discourage wildlife from nesting on the cooperative's equipment, which protects the animals and birds and prevents outages. In addition, the guard is designed to still allow Firelands' crews to have access to the transformer, should the need arise.



Members benefiting from the P31 rebuild include those in the area of Townline Road 111, Plymouth East Road, and U.S. Highway 224 in New Haven and Ripley townships in Huron County. The project improved voltage, created options for backfeeding during power outages, and increased capacity for members receiving power from this section of power line.

*On the cover: Lead Lineman Rob Swiger (right) uses a remote-control console to operate the tracked digger-derrick machine's boom during the P31 rebuild earlier this year. Journeyman Lineman Rick Bowers (left) and Apprentice Lineman Matt Whiteside (center) help guide the new pole into position. (Cover photo courtesy of Journeyman Lineman Chris Rowland.)*

With roughly 990 miles of power lines, keeping trees trimmed is a full-time job. Firelands typically utilizes a four-year rotating schedule to minimize the impact of vegetation on our members' reliability.







## FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

### YOUTH PROGRAMS

# Class of 2022 SCHOLARSHIPS



- Graduating seniors who live in a home served by Firelands Electric Cooperative are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 or above on a 4.0 scale.
- Finalists in the Firelands Electric scholarship competition will be interviewed at the cooperative office on Monday, Feb. 21, 2022.
- Applicants will be judged on scholastic record, school and community activities, cooperative knowledge, and a personal interview.

Complete rules and applications are available at [www.firelandsec.com/children-members-scholarship](http://www.firelandsec.com/children-members-scholarship), by contacting Firelands Electric's member services department at 1-800-533-8658, or by visiting your high school guidance department.

Scholarships will be awarded as follows:

- First place: \$1,800
- Second place: \$1,600
- Third place: \$1,400
- Fourth place: \$1,200
- Fifth place: \$1,000
- Sixth place: \$750
- Two Honorable Mentions: \$500 each
- Two Judges' Choice awards: \$500 each
- Technical-Trade Scholarship: \$750  
*(will be awarded to a student pursuing a post-secondary program, such as a trade certification or associate degree)*

The first-place winner will also be eligible to compete at the statewide competition in Columbus on April 12, where he or she can win up to \$3,900 in additional scholarship awards from Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.

**Application deadline:  
Jan. 21, 2022**

Visit [www.firelandsec.com/children-members-scholarship](http://www.firelandsec.com/children-members-scholarship) for complete rules and applications.



# High school sophomores, juniors, and seniors\*!

Apply for a life-changing  
leadership experience  
in Washington, D.C.



## June 18–24, 2022

### What is Youth Tour?

The Ohio's Electric Cooperatives Youth Tour is an annual leadership program sponsored by Firelands Electric. A weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., Youth Tour gives outstanding high school students the opportunity to meet with their congressional leaders at the U.S. Capitol, make new friends from across the state and country, and see many of the famous Washington, D.C., sights. During this one-of-a-kind tour, participants also gain a better understanding of American history and their role as a citizen.

Electric cooperatives from 43 states send nearly 2,000 delegates each year, including approximately 40 students from co-ops throughout Ohio. Firelands Electric Cooperative will choose up to two delegates to attend the 2022 Youth Tour.

**Application deadline:  
Jan. 21, 2022**

Successful applicants:

- Must be a high school sophomore, junior, or senior.
- Reside in a home receiving power from Firelands Electric Cooperative.
- Submit a completed application, including portion completed by a school official.
- Include a letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor, principal, teacher, or community or organization advisor.

Complete rules and application materials are available at [www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience](http://www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience).

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***\*Due to the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 trips, applications for the 2022 Youth Tour have been expanded to include current sophomores, juniors, and seniors.***

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**Please note:** Youth Tour 2022 is subject to change due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Ohio's Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association are continually monitoring state and federal guidance and will adjust plans accordingly if needed. The health and safety of delegates, chaperones, and their families are our priority as this year's program is being coordinated.

**For more information and to apply, visit  
[www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience](http://www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience).**





EMPLOYEE NEWS

# MEET *your* ENERGY ADVISOR



**Bob Stokes**  
ENERGY ADVISOR

Firelands Electric Cooperative offers numerous services to our members, including several that help reduce energy consumption and save you money. Among the available services is an in-home energy consultation with our expert — which is completely free of charge for Firelands' members.

During an appointment with Firelands' energy advisor, members can learn how to make changes to reduce the electric use in their home or business.

Sometimes these changes are small, like cleaning the coils on your HVAC system or shutting off that rarely used fridge in the garage. At other times our energy advisor may be able to help you uncover larger issues, such as a malfunctioning well pump or heating and cooling system, which lead to ongoing increases in your electric bill. While you may still need to reach out to a contractor for repairs, our advisor can help get you pointed in the right direction.

One of the first things Bob looks at during an energy consultation is the HVAC filter and the condition of any outdoor coils. Dirty filters reduce airflow over the coils or electric resistance heating elements, causing the unit to run longer to reach the temperature set by your thermostat. Clogged coils on the outdoor unit of a heat pump or air-conditioning condenser can result in a similar issue. Clogged filters and coils are by far the most common cause for increased energy use — and electric bills — for homeowners.



Fireland Electric's energy advisor, Bob Stokes, joined the cooperative this past June. Bob, who lives in the Willard area, has over 25 years of energy management and building commissioning experience, including 10 years with Toyota. During his time with the car manufacturer, Bob implemented energy efficiency projects in the company's nearly 6 million square feet of facilities. These efforts reduced Toyota's energy use by nearly 30 percent and provided cumulative savings of over five million dollars.

In addition to being a Certified Energy Manager, Bob is also licensed by the Association of Energy Engineers in both new and existing building commissioning. Besides his work with the cooperative, Bob continues to serve as a building consultant through his business, RMS Building Services.

Whether you're looking to update your heating system and would like some advice, have had an unexpected change in your electric use, or just want to learn ways to conserve energy, Bob is here to assist cooperative members. To schedule a FREE appointment, simply contact Firelands Electric at 1-800-533-8658.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# HOW YOUR THERMOSTAT AFFECTS YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

One of the biggest influences on your home's energy use — and your electric bill — is the weather. How much it affects your bill depends on several factors, including your home's efficiency, insulation, and air leaks. Personal comfort also plays a role, as does the difference between the thermostat setting inside and the temperature outside. During especially cold or hot days, your heating and cooling system has to run more often and work harder because of the temperature gap between the exterior and interior of your home.

Let's say you keep your thermostat set to 70 degrees year-round. If outside temperatures reach 85 degrees in the summer, there would be a 15-degree gap between the temperature inside your home and the temperature outside. This gap becomes smaller when temperatures go down during the night, so your air conditioning doesn't have to work as hard to overcome the difference.

Winter is a very different story, however. The same thermostat setting of 70 degrees would have a daytime gap of 40 degrees if the outside temperature is in the 30s. When the sun sets, temperatures drop and the gap increases. If temperatures dip to below zero degrees, your heating system must work against a 70-degree difference!

Receiving a bill that is higher than expected can be shocking and stressful. Learning how to monitor and manage your electric use can help you take charge of your electric bills. While you can't control the weather, you can use electricity wisely by following these tips to help save energy and money this winter.

**Set your thermostat to 68 degrees.** Maximize your energy savings by lowering the temperature to 65 degrees at night and when you are away from home for more than a few hours.

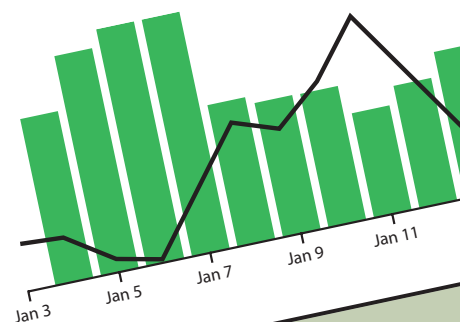
**Don't use space heaters.** Using space heaters may cost a lot more than you think. Despite some advertising claims, portable electric heaters all have the same efficiency, and most use 1,500 watts. This equates to using roughly 20 cents of electricity per hour. Doing the math, that means that using a single space heater for eight hours a day costs almost \$50 per month! Find out how much space heaters add to your electric bill by using the energy calculators on Firelands' website at [www.firelandsec.com/energy-education](http://www.firelandsec.com/energy-education).

**Fix air leaks.** Inexpensive caulking and weatherstripping can go a long way toward increasing your home's comfort and efficiency. Less warm inside air will escape to the outdoors, reducing your energy use and your bills.

**Use SmartHub to analyze how you're using electricity.** SmartHub can be used for much more than paying your bill and reporting power outages. The app provides insights into your electric use and allows you to compare energy consumption over time and monitor how changes in weather impact your electric use. To learn more about SmartHub and download the free app, visit [www.firelandsec.com/smarthub-101](http://www.firelandsec.com/smarthub-101).

## DID YOU KNOW?

SmartHub shows you how the temperature might have affected your bill. **The free SmartHub app can be downloaded from Google Play or Apple App Store.**







## SOLAR CONSIDERATIONS

### **Choose the right**

**contractor** — A good contractor will take time to understand your goals and make sure that your home or business is a good fit for solar, without using high-pressure tactics.

**Payback** — Work with Firelands Electric to find out how long it will take for the solar savings to pay for your upfront investment. Talk to your co-op for a calculation that takes your specific situation and electric rates into account and has your best interests at heart.

**Read the contract fully** — Read the fine print to avoid confusion about financing, ownership,

and maintenance before you sign. Be leary of unrealistically high production predictions.

**Collaboration** — Contact Firelands early in your solar power journey to learn about our requirements for getting interconnected to the electric grid and how we can help you make the most out of this major investment.

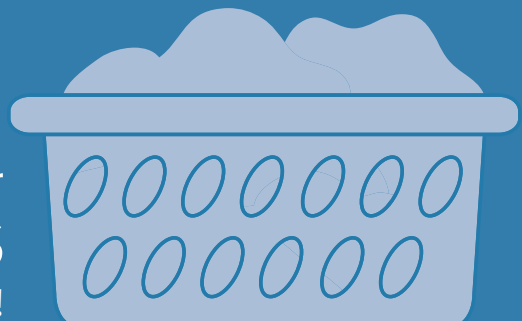
**Firelands Electric Co-op** is always here to help members reach their energy goals. Contact us at 1-800-533-8658 at the start of your journey for help every step of the way.

## The value of electricity



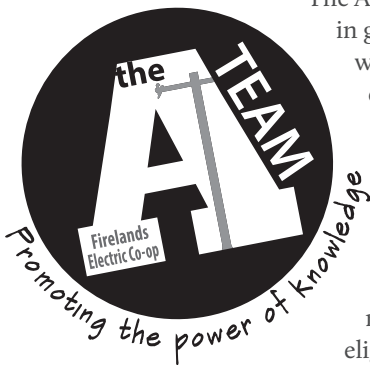
The average family of four pays  
**\$200 PER MONTH**  
on a cellphone plan.

That's equal to doing over  
**330 LOADS**  
of laundry in the same month!



## CO-OP NEWS

# Academic excellence



The A Team recognizes students in grades 6–8 for their hard work and dedication in the classroom. Students who live in a home receiving its power from Firelands Electric Cooperative and who have a minimum of three A's on their most recent report card are eligible to enter.

A drawing will take place at the end of each grading period, and three students will be chosen to receive an Amazon gift card. Winners will also have their photo published in an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine and be featured on the co-op's website and social media outlets.

The next drawing is Dec. 10.  
Visit [www.firelandsec.com/team](http://www.firelandsec.com/team)  
for complete details.

## Stealing electricity and meter tampering are crimes!

Stealing electricity or tampering with a meter is serious business — and it's against the law! This includes anyone other than the co-op removing the electric meter tampering tag or pulling the meter. Theft of utility electricity is a first-degree misdemeanor if the value of the stolen electricity plus any utility equipment repairs is less than \$150. It's a fourth-degree felony if more than \$150.

Tampering crimes carry similar penalties. Tampering is defined as "to interfere with, damage, or bypass a utility meter, conduit, or attachment with intent to impede the correct registration of a meter or the proper function of a conduit or attachment." Conviction of tampering can mean from six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine to up to five years and a \$2,500 fine.

Meter tampering costs all of us. And it's downright dangerous. If you witness someone tampering with an electric meter, please contact Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658.



## STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Firelands Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; by fax to 202-690-7442; or email to [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).





## COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Sept. 28 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 59 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaull reviewed the monthly tree trimming and outage reports.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the August financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Brian Stavish from the Cooperative Finance Corporation reviewed Firelands' key ratio trend analysis for the year. He advised the board that the report reflected stabilized power costs and low interest.
- Trustee Kevin Reidy reviewed a recent OREC meeting that he attended.
- McNaull reminded the board that nominations for People Fund board members for districts 4, 5, and 8 would be taking place at the October meeting.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department.
- McNaull reviewed dashboard indicators for the first six months of 2021.
- It was announced that the board would have the opportunity to participate in a tour of the southern portion of Firelands' service territory on Nov. 18.
- McNaull recapped the ACRE Co-op Owners breakfast held on Sept. 17. The board decided to make this an annual event.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reviewed recent activities involving the member services and IT department. She also reported on the recent Farm Science Review and advised that October is National Co-op Month.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 28. 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  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
419-929-1571

#### 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

Bruce Leimbach  
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers  
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

W.E. Anderson  
District 8

Tom Lucha  
District 3

Gene Lamoreaux  
District 2

John Martin  
District 9

Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

### GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

#### HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

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

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