



GM'S REPORT

# Member-OWNED Member-LED



Dan McNaul  
GENERAL MANAGER

You've heard it time and again: Cooperatives use a unique business model. But what, exactly, makes them different from other companies?

At first glance, one might take note of Firelands Electric Cooperative's not-for-profit status or capital credits refunds. Our strong commitment to community may also come to mind. At the

very core, however, the co-op's leadership structure is its most distinctive feature. Simply put, co-ops are run by the very same people who receive their services.

## Building a board of trustees

Larger businesses and corporations are typically governed by a board of trustees or directors. Many of these board members are "company insiders," or those who have a private financial stake in the company's profits. Often consisting of major shareholders, employees, or owners of the business, their number one priority is to make money — which personally benefits them.

To complicate matters, candidates for this type of board are usually nominated by a committee made up of the very same profit-seeking investors. This style of leadership is beneficial for the company's investors, but not necessarily for its consumers.

In contrast, cooperatives like Firelands Electric put the decision-making power in the hands of those who pay the bills. The co-op's consumer-members serve on the board as well as elect the board. Both board representatives and voters come from the same pool of individuals, all of whom purchase electricity from the co-op. In other words, the co-op's consumers not only choose who will be on the board, but they also serve on the board. This type of leadership more accurately represents the best interests of the co-op — and the members.

In addition, any co-op member who is in good standing and resides in a district with an open spot on the board is invited to run for that position. Unlike utilities that are represented by distant shareholders, you and your neighbors have a strong voice in influencing significant decisions that can affect Firelands' management, rates, work plans, reliability, and rights-of-way.

## Legacy of leadership

Board members are incredibly important to the successful operation of the cooperative. Strong leaders from diverse backgrounds who understand the local community's needs are essential. While this responsibility sounds daunting, Firelands Electric's members have always stepped up to the challenge.

Neighbors banded together to create the cooperative and bring electricity to their rural communities in 1936. In the late 1930s, trustee Carl Bruce went door to door, signing up homes and farms to receive the benefits of rural electrification, which resulted in the development of large portions of Ashland and Richland counties. And effective leaders have consistently filled Firelands'

*Continued on page 18*



## FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

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board of trustees ever since. These individuals have contributed to the success of the co-op, as well as helped it navigate during some tough times. Throughout world wars, the 1970s energy crisis, and even COVID-19, these men and women have stepped up to the plate over the past 85 years.

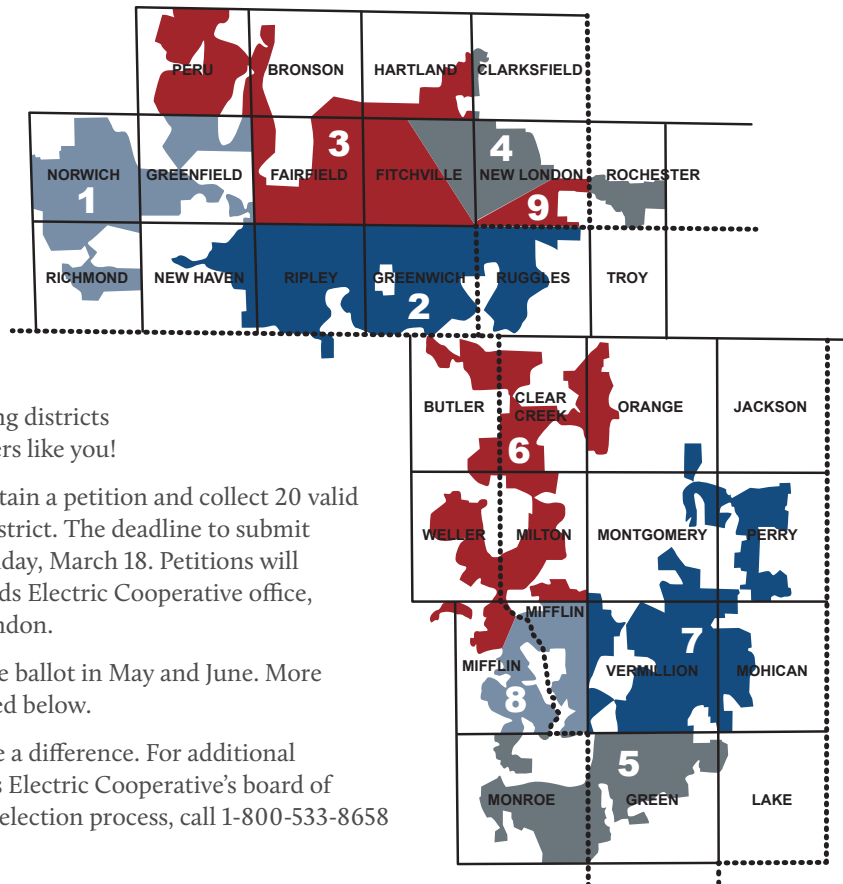
### Make your mark

In 2022, Firelands Electric will hold elections for board members representing districts 4, 5, and 8 — and we're looking for leaders like you!

Interested candidates are required to obtain a petition and collect 20 valid member signatures from within their district. The deadline to submit the completed election application is Friday, March 18. Petitions will be available starting Feb. 1 at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

Voting will take place via mail and online ballot in May and June. More details regarding this process are outlined below.

Dedicated and committed trustees make a difference. For additional information on how to run for Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees and to find out more about the election process, call 1-800-533-8658 or visit [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com).



## Voting procedures

Trustee elections will take place this spring via mail and online ballot

Per the Code of Regulations, Firelands Electric Cooperative's election of trustees will be conducted by mail and online ballot this year. A third-party, independent service provider will manage the election, overseeing the online voting portal, the printing and mailing of ballots, and receiving and tallying all votes.

Members will receive candidate biographies and a paper ballot in the mail near the end of April. Votes can be cast online via a secure link available at [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com) or by returning the completed paper ballot in the envelope provided. The account number on record, which is found on your printed or emailed monthly billing statement, will be required to cast your vote online.

Only original ballots will be accepted; no photocopies are permitted. If more than one ballot is submitted or more than

one voting method is used, the first ballot received by the independent service provider will be considered final.

Voting will open on Sunday, May 1, and will close Sunday, June 12, at 11:59 p.m. Paper ballots must be mailed to the independent service provider and cannot be accepted at the co-op office. Any ballots received by the independent service provider after the close of voting will not be counted, so please allow ample time for delivery if sending by mail.

Winners of the election will be announced at Firelands Electric Cooperative's annual meeting on Saturday, June 18, at the Firelands Electric Co-op facility in New London. Results will also be posted on the co-op's website and published in *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.

# HOW YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WORKS



1. Member-owners elect board trustees.

2. Board defines expectations for the co-op's general manager (GM) and provides guidance for policies and strategic goals.



3. GM interprets the board's expectations to create a plan.



8. Board reflects on policies and updates them as needed.



Member-owners provide input and feedback to board, GM, and staff.



4. GM delegates responsibilities to staff who help carry out the plan.



7. GM shares results with the board.



6. GM collects data from staff about their efforts.



5. Staff develop and oversee programs to accomplish their tasks.



## RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

# MAKING RELIABILITY A PRIORITY

One of Firelands Electric Cooperative's most important ongoing projects is right-of-way clearing, or vegetation management. 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

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

A right-of-way is the strip of land underneath or around power lines and transformers that Firelands Electric Cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. We must keep trees and other vegetation a proper distance from equipment in order to prevent harm to people or disruptions in electric service. Specifications vary, but a general rule of thumb for maintaining a safe right-of-way is 20 feet of clearance on either side of primary lines. The area above poles and wires should be kept completely clear of all vegetation. Shrubs and other plants should be kept a minimum of 10 feet away from pad-mounted, or ground, transformers.

### Why is it important?

Trees and small animals cause a substantial number of power outages every year. While the co-op has little control over the animals, our crews can take steps to reduce the impact of downed trees. Clearing the right-of-way is vital to keeping our members' power on. Branches and limbs that come into contact with power lines can cause voltage fluctuations, blinking lights, or even an outage for cooperative members.

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 downed

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. Be mindful when around trees that are close to power lines and make sure children know that climbing trees near power lines or playing near pad-mounted transformers is extremely dangerous.

### Our responsibility

Firelands Electric maintains 995 miles of line that bring power to over 9,100 homes and businesses. This gives Firelands Electric's right-of-way maintenance crews a big job to do. Each year, we make a plan for tree 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 occasionally use chemical control methods to stop low-growing plant species that can climb poles and trees, interfering with power lines.

If you have existing trees on your property that are in danger of making contact with the cooperative's power lines, we encourage you to notify us. For more information on the cooperative's vegetation management program, questions about tree trimming, or assistance in selecting the right tree to 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.



James Miller  
SYSTEM RIGHT-OF-WAY  
COORDINATOR

## 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
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

### MEDIUM TREES

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

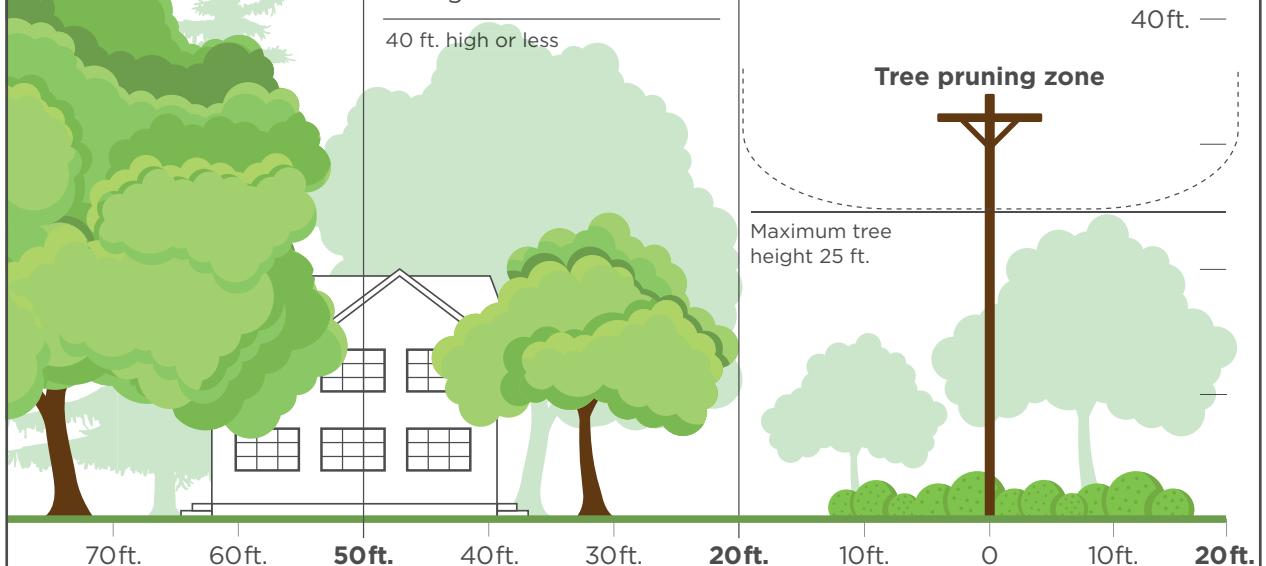
- Washington hawthorn
- Golden rain tree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

### 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.



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

## 2022 RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Vegetation management and right-of-way tree maintenance is tentatively scheduled in 2022 for the following areas and will include brush hogging, cutting, trimming, and any necessary tree removals:

- Ashland County — Green and Perry townships
- Huron County — Clarksfield and Hartland townships
- Richland County — Madison, Mifflin, and Monroe townships





## 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 6–8 are invited to participate and be recognized for their hard work and dedication to education.

# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Winners of December drawing receive Amazon gift cards



**Haley McNaul**  
*Ashland Middle School*  
*Daughter of Greg and Julie McNaul*



**Alexandra Cutlip**  
*Crestview Middle School*  
*Daughter of Bill and Connie Cutlip*

**Send us your grade card and win!**  
**The next drawing will be held on Feb. 10.**

### How you can win

Students in grades 6–8 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, P.O. Box 32, 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, age, school, grade, address, phone number, parents' name(s), and email address on your entry.

Complete program details are also available at [www.firelandsec.com/team](http://www.firelandsec.com/team).



**Abbie Bores**  
*Monroeville Middle School*  
*Daughter of Paul and Jamie Bores*

## COOPERATIVE CONTESTS



Do you have a favorite local restaurant, market, or garden center? Perhaps you know a unique gift shop or top-notch pizza place in our area? If so, nominate them for our first-ever Firelands' Finest award!

From now through March 11, Firelands Electric Cooperative members can nominate their favorite local businesses in each of seven categories:

- Pizza
- Restaurant or diner
- Market or specialty food
- Boutique or gift shop
- Attraction/entertainment
- Green thumb (landscaping, gardening, florist)
- Wildcard (any business that doesn't fit into one of the other categories)

Businesses *do not* have to be cooperative members but must be located in one of the four counties served by Firelands Electric. The business with the most nominations in each category will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine and on Firelands' social media.

### FIRELANDS' FINEST NOMINATIONS

Member name

Member account number or address

Businesses nominated (include name, city, and category):

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Visit [www.firelandsec.com/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/contests) to nominate your favorite local business by March 11.

#### The rules:

1. You must be a Firelands Electric Cooperative member to nominate a business.
2. A business does not have to be a co-op member to be nominated, but must be located in Ashland, Huron, Lorain, or Richland counties.
3. Nominate small, locally owned businesses only. No national or regional chains, please.
4. Only one nomination per member, per category.
5. Nominations are open until 4 p.m. on Friday, March 11.

Members who submit a nomination will be entered into a drawing for a gift card from one of the winning local businesses.

*Unable to make a nomination online? Complete the form at left and return to Attn: Firelands' Finest, Firelands Electric Co-op, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851. (Feel free to list your nominations on a separate sheet of paper if needed.)*



## EMPLOYEE NEWS



Ken Keener  
METER TECHNICIAN

# KEN KEENER CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ken Keener celebrates 15 years with Firelands Electric this month. As the cooperative's meter technician, he works with both the metering system and underground line location.

Ken's role has evolved considerably since he first joined Firelands in 2007. Initially, he was responsible for the manual adjustment and testing of meters. In 2014, however, the co-op upgraded to advanced metering with a two-way automatic communications system. This resulted in some significant changes in Ken's metering duties. Today his job involves performing meter exchanges and programming meters, as well as helping troubleshoot the occasional communication

issue with the co-op's software. "Each day brings something different," says Ken. "There are always new challenges to sort out."

In addition to his metering duties, Ken also takes care of locating and marking underground power lines. When members of the co-op or community contact the Ohio Utilities Protection Services (OUPS), Firelands is sent information and coordinates. Using a device similar to a metal detector, known as an SPX RD7000+ PL, Ken finds the flow of electrical current below the surface. He then marks the power line with flags and/or spray paint so that projects can be completed safely.

Ken and his wife, Beth, live in the Ashland area. When not on the job, Ken enjoys working on his farm and spending time with the couple's three grown sons and seven grandchildren.

**JOIN TODAY**



**Voices for  
Cooperative  
Power**

*United for Stronger  
Communities*

**LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND FOR YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE?**

**THEN JOIN VCP!**

**VCP is a network of electric co-op members working together to influence  
public policy decisions that impact our co-ops and our way of life.**

*As a member of Firelands Electric Cooperative, your voice matters! Voices for Cooperative Power will help ensure that Ohio state representatives clearly understand your position on pending legislation that affects rural electric cooperative members.*



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## IN THE COMMUNITY

# CO-OP COMMUNITY STEPS UP

Since 2007, Firelands Electric Cooperative has supported U.S. military personnel during the holiday season by serving as a collection point for USO Ohio's annual drive.

During the months of November and December, Firelands joined forces with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to collect health and wellness items, hygiene essentials, and snacks for U.S. military servicemen and women. This year, care packages were tailored toward service members who have been activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Co-op members, employees, trustees, and the community once again stepped up to make this year's drive a huge success. A special thank you to the South Central Local Schools community and Teen Leadership Corps, as well as Pepperidge Farm of Willard, for their generous contributions. With their help, the co-op collected more donations than would fit in the radio station's van!

For more information about USO Ohio or to make a tax-deductible monetary donation, please visit <https://ohio.uso.org>.



At bottom left, Nate Dugger, WLKR/K96 account executive, picks up the final batch of USO donations from Firelands Electric Cooperative's annual collection drive.

Below, Gracelyn Lamoreaux from South Central's Teen Leadership Corps (left) and Aimee Lloyd, central office clerk (right) drop off five large boxes of donations from the school district's staff, students, and community.





ENERGY EFFICIENCY

## ENERGY ECONOMICS: ARE PORTABLE SPACE HEATERS



Small space heaters are meant to do exactly what their name implies: heat a small space. Unfortunately, some people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home — which can really take a toll on your electric bills. The financial impact of using space heaters depends on your home's efficiency and your specific energy needs and goals.

### To use or not to use

If you're using a space heater to compensate for issues in your home, such as inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Adding insulation can also be a great option. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Plus, Firelands offers rebates on qualifying insulation and air-sealing projects. (Visit [www.firelandsec.com/member-programs](http://www.firelandsec.com/member-programs) for details.) Taking proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

But what if your home is already energy efficient? Maybe you're just cold-natured or want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater

may work for your needs. For best efficiency, only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and shut them off when you leave the room. If you decide to use a space heater, make sure it is properly sized for the space.

On a final note, when it comes to efficiency, space heaters are all created equal — despite advertising claims to the contrary. Any portable heater that plugs into a wall outlet is 100% efficient, whether it's electric resistance, infrared, ceramic, or oil filled. It's the wattage of the unit that determines how much electricity a space heater uses. The vast

### Tips to ditch the space heater

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.
- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.



# AN EFFICIENT OPTION?

majority are 1,500 watts, meaning that a single heater consumes 1.5 kilowatts for every hour it's used. The bottom line: Running a single space heater for eight hours per day will add around \$50 to your monthly electric bill.

## A word about safety

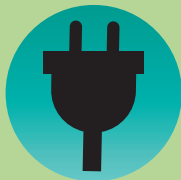
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm, like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember that in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills. If you need help finding alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact the energy experts at Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658. We're here to help!



## HELP KEEP OUR LINEMEN SAFE



Never plug a generator into an indoor or outdoor wall outlet. This can cause electricity to backfeed onto the powerlines, putting our linemen in danger.



Don't post signs or attach other unauthorized equipment to utility poles. Nails, staples, and screws can puncture protective gear, making it less effective at keeping our linemen safe.



Nobody likes it when the power goes out, but please be patient while our crews work to get everyone restored. Rest assured that they are working as quickly — and as safely — as possible.



Slow down and move over in work zones. Following the instructions of flaggers and other traffic control devices can prevent accidents.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Nov. 23 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 55 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed reports for a safety and training meeting held Oct. 26.
- The board nominated and approved People Fund/Operation Round Up board members Donald Hite, District 4; Evan Hahn, District 5; and Kenneth Schuck, District 8.
- McNaul reviewed the monthly tree trimming and outage reports.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the October financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Following review and discussion, the board approved the 2022 budget.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department.
- McNaul reported on several national and statewide meetings he recently attended in person and virtually. Topics included electric vehicles, broadband, and legislation affecting the electric utility industry.
- The board approved utilizing the services of Co-op Ballot for the 2022 trustee election process.
- The board recapped their tour of the southern portion of the cooperative's territory held on Nov. 18.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reviewed recent activities involving the member services and IT department.
- Schloemer reported on a governance seminar he attended and Trustee Kevin Reidy reviewed topics discussed at a recent statewide education committee meeting.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 22. 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**

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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)



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**GENERAL MANAGER**

Dan McNaul

**HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?**

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

