



GM'S REPORT

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR RELIABLE POWER

Electric providers around the country are keeping a close watch on the delicate balance between the supply and demand for power. The fast pace of progress in digital technology, electric vehicles, and other areas is creating a steady and pronounced increase in energy consumption. Efforts to take better care of our environment by lowering the carbon footprint have added to this growth, making us more dependent on electricity than ever before — and highlighting the importance of its reliability.

At first glance, this may not seem like cause for concern. However, the rapid and premature closing of traditional coal- and natural gas-powered generation facilities, combined with the growing reliance on intermittent and inconsistent renewable energy, has caused Firelands Electric Cooperative and other energy providers to raise their eyebrows.

Renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, and hydropower, are an important part of the country's

energy portfolio. While their use continues to expand, it's just not happening quickly enough to offset the loss of coal- and natural gas-powered generating plants. For instance, in Ohio, the number of active coal-fired power plants has decreased from 21 to only four over the past decade and a half. Yet, the rate at which renewable generation facilities are being added to the nation's electric grid is not nearly fast enough to replace the production capacity of the traditional sites that have been taken offline — or that are scheduled to be shut down by 2030.

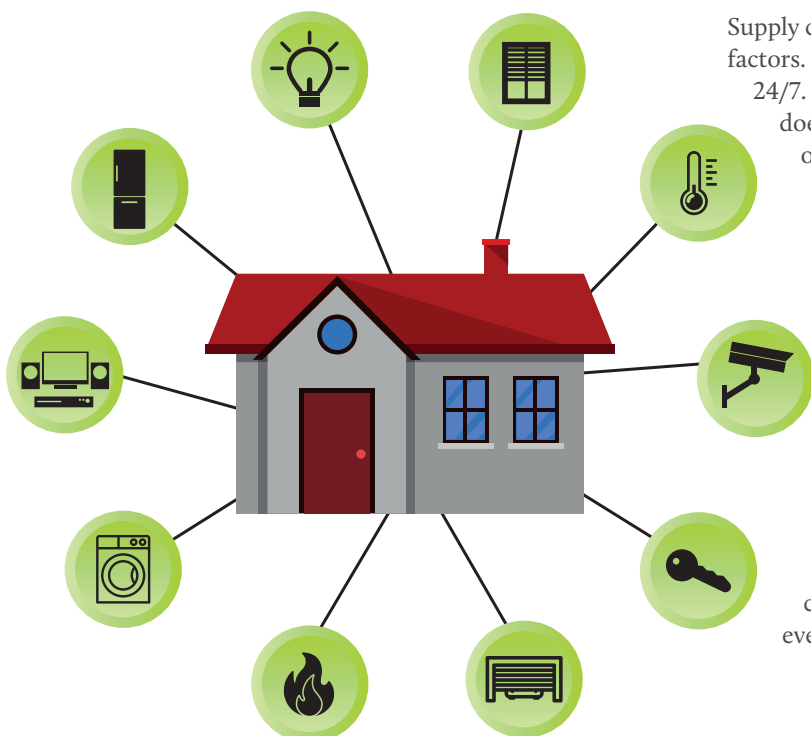
Supply concerns are intensified by two additional factors. First, solar and wind power are not available 24/7. The sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow, limiting their electricity output. Secondly, proposed EPA regulations threaten to shut down even more power plants, making the gap between supply and demand even more drastic and more concerning.

In today's ever-connected world, people need power around the clock. While we're increasingly using more electricity generated from renewable energy sources, we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power that's available to our members 24/7 — and at a cost that families and businesses can afford.

Firelands Electric, along with electric cooperatives across the nation, are doing everything they can to inform policymakers that



Dan McNaull
GENERAL MANAGER



Continued on page 18



FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

Continued from page 17

they must consider the environment AND reliability in their decision-making. Members can help these efforts by keeping up to date on the current legislative issues facing the electric industry. This could be as simple as reading the latest news at trusted sites such as www.voicesforcooperativepower.com or www.electric.coop/issues-and-policy/reliability-and-affordability.

I also ask you to consider joining America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, the grassroots political action committee that strives to educate and support policymakers by providing them with the facts on issues affecting electric cooperatives' consumer-members. For as little as \$2.08 each month, you can help the nationwide effort to reduce threats to adequate and affordable electricity. For more information or to sign up, visit www.firelandsec.com/join-pac and use the code FEC23PAC. You may also enroll by completing and returning the form below to: Firelands Electric Co-op, Attn: PAC, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851.

Take action today — and raise your voice in favor of reliable electric power!

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 photos 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 for details.



America's Electric Cooperatives | PAC



I want to help keep the voice of rural electric cooperatives heard in the political process by participating in America's Electric Cooperatives PAC.

Monthly Bill Addition

- ☐ REGULAR: \$2.08 PER MONTH (\$25/YEAR)
- ☐ AMBASSADOR CLUB: \$4.16 PER MONTH (\$50/YEAR)
- ☐ CENTURY CLUB: \$8.33 PER MONTH (\$100/YEAR)
- ☐ VICE PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$20.83 PER MONTH (\$250/YEAR)*
- ☐ PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$41.66 PER MONTH (\$500/YEAR)*
- ☐ OTHER \$ _____

One-Time Contribution

- ☐ REGULAR: \$25
- ☐ AMBASSADOR CLUB: \$50
- ☐ CENTURY CLUB: \$100
- ☐ VICE PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$250*
- ☐ PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$500*
- ☐ OTHER \$ _____

(Authorized bill additions will continue until terminated by the member)

I affirm that my contribution has been made with non-corporate funds: (Please make checks out to Firelands Electric Cooperative)

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ COOPERATIVE: _____

EMAIL: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

*Federal Election Law requires the following information for contributions exceeding \$200:

EMPLOYER: _____ OCCUPATION: _____

Contributions to the NRECA America's Electric Cooperatives PAC are not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. Contributions to America's Electric Cooperatives PAC are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. You have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Any contribution guidelines presented are merely suggestions. You are free to contribute more or less than the suggested amounts, or not at all. NRECA will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount contributed or a decision not to contribute.

TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

WILL YOU ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?

Petitions to become a candidate for board trustee now available

In 2024, Firelands Electric Cooperative members will elect board trustees to represent districts 2, 7, and 9. Any member of the co-op who is in good standing and resides in a district with an open spot on the board is eligible to run for that position.

Nomination petitions to become a candidate for the 2024 elections are now available at the Firelands Electric office. Potential candidates are required to submit election applications and collect a minimum of 20 member signatures from within their districts by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 5. A map of the board districts is available at www.firelandsec.com/board-trustees.

Elections will take place by mail and online ballot from Friday, March 1, through Sunday, March 31. Results will be announced at the cooperative's annual meeting, which will be held on Saturday, April 6, at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center.

What is expected of a Firelands Electric trustee?

The Firelands Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees meets monthly to review the financial and operational data of your electric cooperative. Board members hear and discuss reports from the cooperative's general manager and department supervisors, as well as provide guidance for management decisions.

The duties of a Firelands Electric trustee include:

- Attend all regular meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month and the cooperative's annual meeting, as well as other state, regional, and national meetings and training sessions.
- Determine the cooperative's rate schedules and fees.
- Approve major work plans for ongoing maintenance and improvement of the cooperative's distribution system.
- Approve contracts for financing, services, and power supply.
- Monitor the financial condition of the cooperative and make decisions on budgets and capital credits.

Representing your fellow members on Firelands Electric's board is an important role.

Trustees must be dedicated and committed to the cooperative and its principles. They must strive to do what is best for the cooperative and all its members, which may conflict with the objectives of individual members or special-interest groups.

If you're up to the challenge, contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658 to get your trustee candidate petition started.

- **District 2:** New Haven, Ripley, Greenwich, Ruggles, Cass, and Blooming Grove townships
- **District 7:** Vermilion, Mohican, Montgomery, and Perry townships
- **District 9:** South of CSX rail in New London municipality and New London Township

Additional information on the role of a Firelands Electric trustee and how you can become a candidate has been mailed out to members of districts 2, 7, and 9. Please contact our office if you have any questions.



YOUTH PROGRAMS

Are you a high school senior planning to learn a trade or attend college after graduation? Don't miss out on your chance to apply for one of Firelands Electric's scholarships!

THE CRITERIA:

- Applicants must be graduating seniors who live in a home served by Firelands Electric Cooperative.
- The Career Scholarship requires a cumulative grade-point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale.
- All other scholarships must have a grade-point average of 3.5 or above.
- Selected finalists will be interviewed at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office on Monday, Feb. 19, 2024.
- Applicants will be judged on scholastic record, school and community activities, cooperative knowledge, and a personal interview.

Complete program guidelines and applications will be available by Dec. 1 at 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.

Application deadline: Jan. 19, 2024

Visit www.firelandsec.com/children-members-scholarship for details.

CLASS OF 2024 SCHOLARSHIPS

THE AWARDS:

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

First place:	\$1,800	Fifth place:	\$1,000
Second place:	\$1,600	Sixth place:	\$750
Third place:	\$1,400	Two Honorable Mentions:	\$500 each
Fourth place:	\$1,200	Two Judges' Choice awards:	\$500 each

The first-place college scholarship winner will also be eligible to compete at the statewide competition in Columbus on April 16, where he or she could win up to \$4,300 in additional scholarships from Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.

CAREER SCHOLARSHIP

This \$750 scholarship is for students planning to enroll in a career-based education program following graduation. Examples include, but are not limited to, dental hygienist, phlebotomy, nurse, vet tech, electrician, HVAC, plumbing, auto mechanic, welder, or other trade.

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

integrity
accountability
community commitment
innovation

APPLY FOR THE

TRIP OF A LIFETIME



JUNE 15 – 21, 2024

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

- An unforgettable experience in Washington, D.C., sponsored by Firelands Electric and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.
- A weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip giving outstanding high school students the opportunity to meet with congressional leaders, make lifelong friends from across the country, and visit many of the historic sites in and around our nation's capital.
- Firelands Electric Cooperative will choose up to two delegates to attend the 2024 Youth Tour.

HOW TO APPLY

- Be a current high school sophomore or junior.
- Reside in a home receiving power from Firelands Electric Cooperative.
- Submit a completed application, including the portion completed by a school official.
- Include a letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor, principal, teacher, or community or organization advisor.
- **Apply by Jan. 19, 2024.**
- Be eager to join this one-of-a-kind program and experience a trip to Washington, D.C., like no other!

LEARN MORE AT
www.firelandsec.com/youth-tour-experience

EMPOWER

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



INDUSTRY NEWS

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ELECTRICITY PRICES

Just as inflation has affected everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the fuels and equipment required to produce and deliver electricity have also risen.

There are a few key elements that have a significant influence on electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Firelands Electric Cooperative can manage, some can be changed by your energy efficiency habits, and others are beyond either the co-op's or our members' control.

There are three primary parts to your monthly electric bill: a distribution charge, a kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge, and a Wholesale Power Adjustment (WPA). To better understand your total energy costs and what affects your monthly bill, let's delve into these one at a time.



Distribution costs

The distribution charge is a fixed monthly charge that covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes the equipment, materials, labor, and operating costs necessary to maintain our lines and substations that serve each meter in Firelands Electric's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. Like the upkeep of a car, power lines, substations, and other equipment must be properly maintained to ensure the reliable "transportation" of electricity from Firelands' substations to your home. This charge is the same for all residential members and costs associated with it are shared equally across the membership.

Like many other businesses, Firelands has experienced supply chain issues and steep price increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for a distribution transformer (like those found on the utility pole near your home) went from \$847 in 2021 to \$1,518 this year, and wait times to receive some equipment

can range from 20 to 52 weeks. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, these expenses must be passed on to our members.

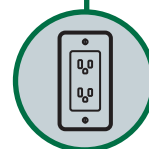


Weather

Another component of your monthly bill is the kWh charge, which covers the energy your home uses. It is based on the set per kWh cost outlined in Firelands' rate schedule. You've likely noticed the amount of energy you use

can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by periods of unusual temperatures. When temperatures soar or dip, your heating and cooling equipment runs longer, which increases your home's energy use.

Energy consumption is an area that you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by actively reducing energy use. For example, your thermostat is a great place to start. Making small changes, like lowering the temperature setting at night or when you are away from home, can reduce your energy use by up to 10%. Better yet, upgrade to a programmable or smart thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature for you. For additional energy efficiency tips, visit www.firelandsec.com/energy-education or contact the cooperative office at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule a FREE consultation with Firelands' expert energy advisor.



Energy consumption

The final component of your bill is the WPA, which is a small, variable per kWh charge that covers monthly changes in the price of electric power. These changes are caused by fluctuations in the price of coal, fuel, maintenance, and other factors that can affect the cost of generating and transmitting electric power. Having the WPA in place offsets these cost changes without having to continually restructure electricity rates.

Firelands bases its WPA on a 6-month rolling average. While the WPA price per kWh is small (between \$0.0034 and \$0.0099 on the April through September bills), it can still impact your overall electric costs. For example, with a WPA of \$0.0034/kWh, a home that uses 1,100 kWh during the month would have a \$3.74 WPA charge on their bill. However, the same 1,100 kWh would cost \$10.89 if the WPA was at \$0.0099/kWh. Increases in fuel prices over the past several months mean the WPA has been higher, making electric power more expensive.

We hope this sheds light on some of the factors that impact electricity prices. While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuels and materials, please know that Firelands Electric Cooperative is doing everything possible to keep internal costs down.

And remember, we're here to help you. Contact our office if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to reduce energy use in your home.

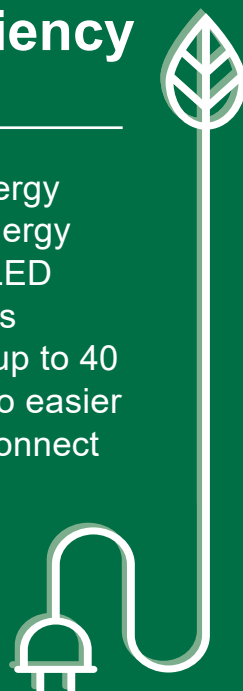


Fuel costs

Energy efficiency Tip of the month

Trim your holiday energy costs by choosing energy efficient LED lights! LED holiday lights use less energy and can last up to 40 seasons. They're also easier to install – you can connect up to 25 LED strings without overloading a wall socket!

Source: *energy.gov*



2023 STEP UP FOR SOLDIERS DRIVE

SUGGESTED DONATION ITEMS INCLUDE:

- razors
- sunscreen
- beef jerky
- cotton swabs
- ear plugs
- trail mix
- tissues
- playing cards
- snack packs
- deodorant
- chewing gum
- toothpaste
- hard candy

Visit www.firelandsec.com/uso-ohio or our Facebook page for additional information and a complete list of suggested donation items.

Since 2007, Firelands Electric Cooperative has proudly supported U.S. military personnel during the holiday season by serving as a collection location for donated care package items. Once again, the co-op has joined forces with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to support USO Ohio's 2023 Step Up for Soldiers annual drive.

Through Friday, Dec. 15, members of Firelands Electric and the surrounding communities can deliver donated care package items to the co-op's office, located at 103 Industrial Drive in New London. Items 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.

The USO of Ohio serves military families throughout Ohio and northern Kentucky. From collecting and distributing donations for care packages to helping those preparing for deployment and connecting families for mutual support, the USO touches the lives of tens of thousands of active duty, guard, and reserve members every day.

To learn other ways that you can help or to make a tax-deductible monetary donation, visit <https://ohio.uso.org>.



SAFETY

ELECTRICITY ON THE GROUND



Source: Fred Whitford, Purdue Pesticide Programs, Purdue University, PPP-151

Do you know what to do if you find yourself in an accident or other situation where you are near a downed power line?

Voltage reduces as it flows away from where live wires touch the ground — but that voltage can still cause an injury, or even death. To prevent this, stay at least 35 feet from any point where wires make contact.

If you have to move from within the danger zone, always keep your feet touching, and shuffle or hop to safety, keeping the voltage levels consistent throughout your body. Never separate your feet — that can cause a deadly voltage difference in your body. Following these guidelines can minimize the dangers.

For more electrical safety information, visit Firelands' website at www.firelandsec.com/safety-line-clearance.

Weather READY



Be prepared for a winter storm

Winter storms can result in heavy snow, ice buildup, and extreme cold. They can cause closed roads, as well as power outages. **Take steps now to protect your home and family.**



GETTING READY

Sign up for your local emergency warning system.

Prepare an emergency kit with water bottles, packaged foods, medical supplies, and blankets.

Have snow removal equipment on hand, as well as rock salt to melt ice and snow to improve traction.

Winterize by sealing gaps in windows and doors.

Take steps to keep pipes from freezing. Learn the location of water supply valves and how to shut them off in case a pipe bursts.

Have an emergency plan in place, so if you lose power you have somewhere to go. Consider investing in a generator if necessary.

STAYING SAFE



If a winter storm warning is issued, **postpone travel or any outdoor activities.**

Stay indoors and dry, if possible, and wear warm clothes. Change wet clothes to avoid the loss of body heat.

Eat regularly and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Avoid caffeine and alcohol.

Drive only when necessary. If you must drive, travel on main roads only during daylight hours.

Follow weather updates and be prepared if venturing outside.



THE COLD FACTS

Wind chill can be a serious threat in cold conditions. Wind chill isn't the actual temperature, but the effect of cold and wind on exposed skin. As wind speed increases, heat is carried away from the body at a faster rate, reducing body temperature.

Blizzards are an extreme form of winter weather. According to the National Weather Service, a blizzard happens when snow with accompanying winds of 35 mph or more reduces visibility to less than a quarter mile for three hours or longer.





FYI

STAY IN THE KNOW



At Firelands Electric, we constantly strive to improve our operations and procedures so that we can provide the most reliable electric service possible. We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our daily operations, and providing timely communications to our members is no exception. But we need your help to collect this data. By making sure we have your current contact information, the co-op can continue to provide the high level of service that you have come to expect — and that you deserve.

The phone number and/or email listed on your Firelands account is linked to your service address in our member database and outage management systems. Having accurate contact information on file enables us to improve customer service and enhance our communications to you. This is especially true for reporting and restoring outages, both planned and unplanned.

UP-TO-DATE CONTACT INFORMATION ALLOWS THE COOPERATIVE TO ADVISE YOU OF UNSCHEDULED OR EMERGENCY OUTAGES, MAINTENANCE, EVENTS, AND OTHER IMPORTANT CO-OP NEWS.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally need to plan outages to update, repair, or replace equipment. In these instances, current contact

information is necessary for Firelands Electric's staff to notify you in advance by phone, text, or email.

But it only works if we have your current information and communication preferences on file.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us respond more accurately and promptly when there's a question about energy use or billing.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system. We may have a disconnected landline on file. These situations can impede Firelands' ability to keep you informed.

Please know that the contact information you provide to the co-op will never be sold to third parties. It is only used by the co-op to provide you with important information. Take a moment this month to confirm or update your contact information by logging into your SmartHub account and selecting Contact Methods, emailing our billing department at billing@firelandsec.com, or calling our office at 1-800-533-8658. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so that we can better serve you.

4 perks of your co-op membership



You're part of a not-for-profit, community-focused utility that has your best interests at heart. We offer advice about efficiency and strive to empower the communities we serve.



\$100s are available to you through energy efficiency rebates. Energy monitoring tools are available through our free SmartHub app and calculators on our website.



Your neighbors are our employees, so the issues that affect you affect us. Your feedback is taken seriously, and your calls to our office are answered by a warm, local voice — not a robot.



Firelands offers scholarships, leadership opportunities, and industry education. We sponsor various school and sports activities, as well as 4-H and FFA programs.

FYI

*Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year!*

**Firelands
Electric**
COOPERATIVE
A Technician Energy Cooperative

**THE FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED**

DEC. 25, 26, AND JAN. 1

**AS ALWAYS, EMERGENCY SERVICE
IS AVAILABLE 24/7 BY CALLING
1-800-533-8658.**

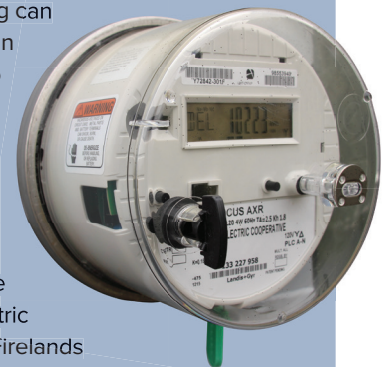
Stealing electricity and meter tampering are crimes!

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 in jail 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, 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.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Sept. 26 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 34 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed a report from the recent RESAP evaluation, which assesses the cooperative's safety measures. McNaul noted that the co-operative's investment in safety was evident, as this year's scores once again showed improvement compared to the reviews conducted in 2020 and 2017.
- The board reviewed several options for the 2024 annual meeting.
- McNaul summarized the tree-trimming and outage reports for the past month.
- The board reviewed a report from a safety and training event held on Aug. 14.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the August financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- The board discussed preliminary figures for the cooperative's 2024 budget.

- McNaul recapped the recent trip to tour the Cardinal Power Plant.
- The board approved sponsoring two veterans on Ashland County's upcoming Veterans Honor trip.
- McNaul advised the board of plans for the upcoming America's Electric Cooperatives PAC Breakfast, NRECA's Power Xchange and Legislative Conference, and OEC's 2024 conference dates.
- In Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst's absence, McNaul reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reported on activities in the operations department.
- Schloemer recapped a recent OREC meeting, which included information on the development of communications materials regarding the threat of rolling blackouts this winter.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 21. 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
1-800-533-8658

OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
www.firelandsec.com



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

Gene Lamoreaux
District 2

Tom Lucha
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Kevin Reidy
District 6

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District 7

Elaine Oswald
District 8

John Martin
District 9

GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaul

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

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