



GM'S REPORT

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

In the 1930s, only about 10% of U.S. rural households had electricity. With a lot fewer homes, farms, and businesses per square mile than in the cities, there was hardly any profit to be made by bringing electric power to these areas. Investor-owned utilities simply did not want to get involved in something that wouldn't yield them a profit.

Left without any support from the large utility companies, rural communities would eventually take matters into their own hands. By pooling their resources and utilizing the newly signed Rural Electrification Act, rural residents formed electric cooperatives — ensuring that everyone in the community had access to the benefits of electricity. Like cooperatives across the country, Firelands Electric was also established not for the benefit of a few individuals, but rather for the good of an entire community.

Owned, operated, and governed by the very people we serve, Firelands Electric has a strong bond with our members. Advancements in equipment, materials, and technology may have altered our methods for delivering power over the years, but our focus on community remains unchanged.

Local connections

Firelands Electric Cooperative provides local community support in a multitude of ways. Some are as simple as putting on safety programs or participating in the annual July Fourth parade. Others include sponsoring ads in the sports programs of area schools or donating to the junior fair programs. Providing assistance for local honor bus trips, 4-H camps, and students pursuing higher education is also part of our annual contributions.

Even grants from Firelands Electric's largest charitable program, Operation Round Up, are kept local. In 2022, \$40,210 was awarded to 12 organizations and individuals in need located in Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties. Everything from volunteer fire departments and food pantries to low-cost health services have benefited from this 28-year-old program.

Spreading the love

While our local community will always lie at the heart of the cooperative, Firelands Electric recognizes that we are also members of some much larger communities — those that encompass our state, our country, and the world. Although our focus remains local, we still make an effort to improve the quality of life in the vast world in which we live.

Since 2018, Firelands has sent 13 linemen to assist six other electric co-ops throughout Ohio and the U.S. They put in 1,016 man-hours to help restore power due to damage from ice, wind, and hurricanes. During the past six years, three linemen have also volunteered to help villages in remote areas of Guatemala in Central America build their own distribution systems, bringing electricity to hundreds for the first time.

Two additional programs that impact the larger community include the cooperative's participation in USO Ohio's Step Up for Soldiers annual drive and the collection of aluminum pull tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Ohio's Akron location. Firelands Electric has been involved with these programs for 15 and 13 years, respectively. Make sure to check out the following two pages to read more about the co-op's involvement with these outstanding charitable organizations.

Community has been a vital part of Firelands Electric's history and culture since the cooperative's founding in 1936. Whether local or global, we remain dedicated to the well-being of our community. In fact, our commitment to community is stronger than ever.

For more information on Firelands Electric's community involvement, click the Community tab at www.firelandsec.com.



Dan McNaull
GENERAL MANAGER



COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

THE HOUSE WITH A BIG

heart

Since 2009, Firelands Electric Cooperative has served as a collection site for aluminum pull tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Northeast Ohio, which has facilities in both Akron and Cleveland. Over the past 13 years, co-op members, employees, and the community have donated 1,324 pounds of aluminum. That's more than 1.6 million individual tabs!

RMHC recycles the pull tabs, which contain higher-quality aluminum than cans, and the money is added to their Family Fund. In 2021, RMHC received over 22,550 pounds of pull tabs and added \$10,000 to this fund, which is used to supply meals and toiletries to the families staying at the houses. The money also allows RMHC to purchase special-occasion items, such as birthday gifts, to give a bit of normalcy to those going through an extremely stressful and emotional time.

With more than 260 volunteers, RMHC provides a supportive home away from home for families with children receiving medical treatment at Akron Children's Hospital, Cleveland Clinic Children's, University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, and MetroHealth Medical Center.

The Akron location, where Firelands has traditionally donated its tabs, was initially built in 1985. The original 17,000-square-foot house could accommodate 20 families. In April 2018, a 48,000-square-foot expansion increased that number to 42 rooms.

Each hotel-like room sleeps four and has a private bath. The house also provides common areas, such as a living room, patio, and playground, and includes full-service laundry and daily meals to make young patients and their families more comfortable during their stay. Families are never turned away due to financial reasons because each room's \$100-per-night cost is covered by donations.

In 2021, 620 families spent over 12,000 nights at RMHC's Akron and Cleveland houses. Combined with the organization's other programs, including family rooms within the hospitals, a mobile unit, and

the online resource site RedTreehouse.org, RMHC served nearly 22,500 families. Financial support for these programs is funded in large part by donations. In fact, contributions from individuals and businesses like Firelands Electric account for 42% of RMHC's annual budget, while grants and other charitable donations make up another 26%. While McDonald's restaurants were instrumental in the initial building of the houses, they currently provide for just 15% of RMHC's operating expenses.

Aluminum pull tabs may be dropped off at Firelands Electric Cooperative's office, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London, during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In addition to collecting aluminum pull tabs, those who would like to help RMHC can donate items from the facility's wish list, sponsor a room for the night, or contribute to the meal program. Additional information on these programs and several others can be found online at www.rmhcneo.org/ways-to-give.



Firelands Electric delivered approximately 239,375 aluminum pull tabs, weighing 191.5 pounds, to RMHC's Akron location in late October. Pictured (l-r) are Firelands' director of communications and information technology, Andrea Gravenhorst, and RMHC Akron's family services manager, RaNita Mitchell.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

SUPPORTING THE **RED, WHITE,** and **BLUE**

For the 15th straight year, Firelands Electric Cooperative partnered with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to collect donations for USO Ohio's Step Up for Soldiers annual drive.

From Veterans Day through mid-December, members of Firelands Electric and the community dropped off care package items at the co-op's office in New London. Donated items included razors, deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, playing cards, chewing gum, hard candy, beef jerky, trail mix, and other snacks and hygiene essentials. Collected items were then sorted and packaged by USO Ohio and sent to our state's military personnel and their families, serving both domestically and overseas.

The cooperative community's generosity in 2022 made it possible for Firelands to put together one of its largest donations to date.

South Central Local Schools delivered more than 10 boxes of donated items to Firelands' office. For the past five years, the school has collected care package items from the students, staff, and families of the district. Their efforts are led by Central Office Clerk Aimee Lloyd and her husband, Mike. The couple became involved with the Step Up for Soldiers program after their son, Collin, received support from the USO during a flight delay while serving with the Ohio National Guard in 2018.

Firelands also received many donated items from co-op employees and the community at large. In addition, office employees purchased \$245 worth of items. The money was raised as part of a long-standing tradition where employees are permitted to wear jeans on designated workdays in exchange for a \$20 per month charitable donation.

The USO supports military families through more than 250 locations nationwide. The organization serves Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve members in all branches of the military. USO Ohio is a nonprofit organization that relies solely on the kindness of the citizens, organizations, and corporations throughout the state and receives no government funding. Visit the USO Ohio website at <https://ohio.uso.org> to learn more or to make a tax-deductible monetary donation.



South Central Schools' Central Office Clerk Aimee Lloyd (left), her son Collin (back), and Firelands' Communications and Member Relations Specialist Tracy Gibb (right) stand among some of the numerous donations made to the 2022 USO Ohio Step Up for Soldiers drive.



WLKR/K96-FM Station Manager Bill Forthofer (left) and Account Executive Lexi Sarrica (right) load the radio station's van with care package items donated by the co-op's employees, members, and the community.



COOPERATIVE CONTESTS

Terrific TEACHERS CONTEST

Firelands Electric places a tremendous value on education — it's actually one of our Seven Cooperative Principles.

Each year, we award \$10,500 in scholarships, sponsor delegates on the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., recognize the academic achievements of middle school students through the A Team, provide numerous electrical safety demonstrations, and much more.

The cooperative also recognizes that quality education requires passionate and devoted teachers. That's why we're holding our first-ever Terrific Teachers contest this month!

From Feb. 1 through March 9, Firelands Electric is asking families to nominate their school's most dedicated teachers. Those teachers with the most nominations in each of two grade categories will win a plaque and a prize package for their classroom. The package will be age-appropriate for their class and will include energy-themed books, games, and activities valued at approximately \$100. Runners-up in each grade category will receive a package worth \$50.

Winners will be announced in mid-March and be featured in an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* and on Firelands' social media outlets.

THE RULES

1. Visit www.firelandsec.com/contests and complete the online form to make a nomination. You will need to know the teacher's first and last name, school, and grade they teach. We'll also ask you to provide your name and contact information in case we have any questions.
2. Nominations may also be made by emailing the above information to members@firelandsec.com or mailing it to Attn: Terrific Teachers Contest, Firelands Electric Co-op, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851.
3. Teachers can be nominated in one of two grade categories: Kindergarten–Grade 2 and Grades 3–5.
4. Please submit only one nomination per grade category, per family.
5. Teachers must be educators at one of the nearly 20 schools that serve students living within Firelands Electric Cooperative's territory. (See website for a complete list of eligible schools.)

For questions regarding this contest, please contact our member services department at members@firelandec.com or 1-800-533-8658.

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.

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.

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.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Winners of December drawing receive Amazon gift cards



Milley Moffett
*Loudonville-Perryville Middle School
Daughter of Josh and Hannah Moffett*



Kiahana Smith
*Monroeville Middle School
Daughter of Whitney Smith*



Simara Fannin
*New London Middle School
Daughter of Tim West and
Laurissa Fannin*

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



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 outages 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 also occasionally use chemical control methods to stop low-growing plant species that can climb poles and trees and interfere 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 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

2023 RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Vegetation management and right-of-way tree maintenance is tentatively scheduled in 2023 for the following areas and will include brush hogging, cutting, trimming, and any necessary tree removals:

- Ashland County — Clear Creek and Ruggles townships
- Huron County — Bronson, Greenfield, New London, Norwich, and Peru townships and Village of New London
- Richland County — Monroe Township



TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

Become a candidate for Firelands' board

Petitions available Feb. 1

In 2023, Firelands Electric Cooperative members will elect board trustees to represent districts 1, 3, and 6. Any member of the co-op who is in good standing and resides in a district with an open spot on the board is welcome to run for that position.

Nomination petitions to become a candidate for the 2023 elections will be available at the Firelands Electric office beginning Feb. 1. Potential candidates are required to submit an election application and collect 20 member signatures from within their district by Friday, March 24. A map of all board districts is also available at www.firelandsec.com/board-trustees.

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.

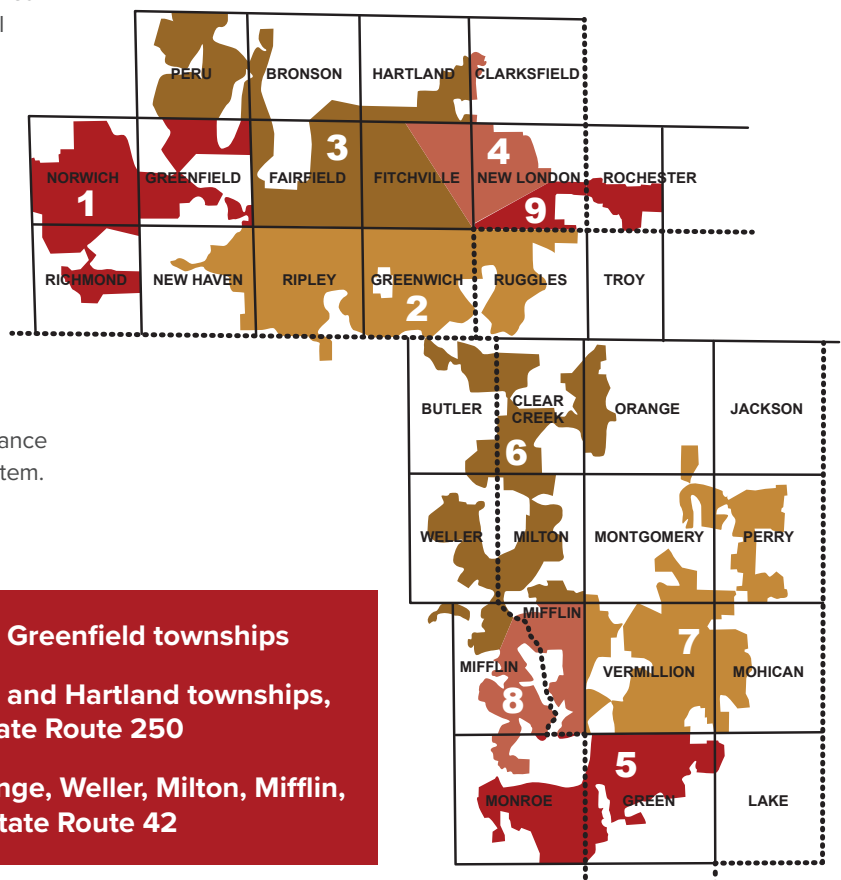
The duties of a Firelands Electric trustee include:

- Attend all regular meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month, the cooperative's annual meeting in June, 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 co-op'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 as a Firelands Electric trustee is an important job. 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 of its members, which may conflict with the desires of individual members or special-interest groups.

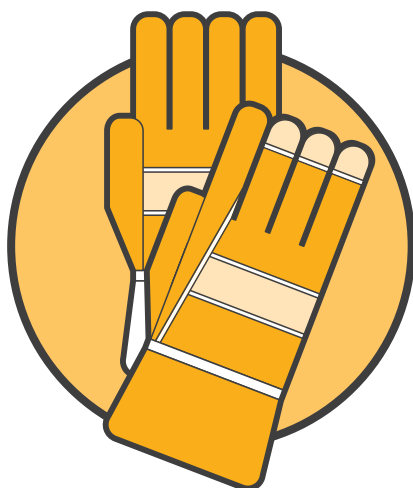
Additional information on the role of a Firelands Electric trustee and how you can become a candidate was mailed out to members of districts 1, 3, and 6 in January. If you have questions about becoming a candidate for trustee, contact our office at 1-800-533-8658.



- **District 1:** Richmond, Norwich, and Greenfield townships
- **District 3:** Peru, Bronson, Fairfield, and Hartland townships, and Fitchville Township west of State Route 250
- **District 6:** Butler, Clear Creek, Orange, Weller, Milton, Mifflin, and Madison townships north of State Route 42

Five tips for hiring an electrician

A licensed electrician can help with a variety of home projects from lighting upgrades to full renovations. Keep the following tips in mind if you're looking to hire an electrician.



1. Hire a licensed, qualified electrician for the job.

Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.

2. Make sure the electrician is insured.

Seasoned electricians know the importance of protecting themselves in case of an accident.

3. Read all the reviews.

Hire an electrician that has several positive reviews — not just one or two. Read reviews on different sites, like Nextdoor, Yelp, and HomeAdvisor, and consider asking your neighbors for recommendations.

4. Determine your budget. Get two or three quotes.

Knowing your budget upfront helps move the process along. Prices can greatly vary, so get at least two quotes.

5. Talk timeline.

Some electricians accidentally overbook projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.

OURSOLAR^{phase 2}

Interested in renewable energy, but looking for a cost-effective alternative to installing solar panels on your home? Firelands' OurSolar program could be the right solution for you!

Residential co-op members who would like to support renewable energy initiatives without the hassle and expense of installing rooftop solar can purchase electricity produced by OurSolar for a small per-kilowatt-hour (kWh) premium. Approximately 70 panels from Ohio's recently expanded community solar program are still available to Firelands Electric Cooperative members.

For complete details and answers to some of the most commonly asked questions, or if you would like to receive more information and a contract, visit www.firelandsec.com/oursolar-community-renewable-program.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

SPACE HEATERS: COST-EFFECTIVE OR EXPENSIVE?

During the cold winter months, we often seek out the comfort and warmth of home. While a good central heating system is designed to meet whole-house needs, members sometimes turn to space heaters for additional warmth. While using one can temporarily help boost the temperature and comfort level of a single room, consistent use over an extended period can increase winter heating bills significantly.



Space heater basics

Two types of space heaters are available for the residential market. Convective models circulate air within an enclosed space, while radiant heaters transfer warming energy directly to objects or people that are within close proximity to the unit.

If central heating is unavailable or inadequate, a convective heating unit can distribute heat relatively evenly throughout an enclosed space. For garages, workshops, workout rooms, or laundry areas, a convective heater used for a few hours a day or each week could be a good fit.

Radiant electric heaters typically include infrared heating elements. Nearby surfaces, including people, absorb the heat. Air in immediate proximity to the unit's enclosure or cabinetry also aids in the transfer of warmth.

While they can be effective for temporarily adding warmth to a single room, using space heaters for prolonged intervals, or on a daily basis, is usually a poor choice when it comes to energy efficiency. Central heating systems are specifically designed to handle the needs of your entire home, while space heaters are not.

Space heaters are simply not an ideal solution for long-term home heating. For every unit of electricity that is consumed by these devices, they produce only one unit of heat, while a whole-house heat pump system can produce two or more units of heat for each unit of electricity used. This is why adding several space heaters to supplement your central heating system drives up your energy costs.

When it comes to efficiency, there are currently no space heaters among the list of ENERGY STAR-rated products. Firelands advises members to only use portable heaters in small spaces for limited periods to avoid wasting energy and increasing their electric bills.

Safety concerns

When using a space heater to warm a chilly room, it's also important to make sure to do so safely. According to the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters are involved in four out of five home heating fire deaths each year. In addition, burn injuries associated with surface contacts send hundreds of people to emergency rooms.

Always set space heaters in locations clear of all flammable materials and out of reach of small children, pets, or anyone with impaired mobility.

Be sure to plug heaters directly into a wall outlet rather than using an extension cord or power strip. Most light-duty extension cords and surge strips are not designed to handle the amount of energy that a space heater requires and can overheat, causing a fire hazard. And never leave a heater unattended when you are not home or asleep.

Consider investing in a model that has tip-over safety features, which automatically shut off the power source in the event that the unit tilts beyond its upright position.

If you are looking to warm larger areas of your home, or a single area for a prolonged period, there may be

other alternatives. Sealing air leaks, adding insulation, or tuning up your heating system so it operates more efficiently are all more economical solutions. These options will save you more energy, and money, in the long run.

Firelands Electric Cooperative offers FREE home energy consultations to its members. If you would like help determining which energy efficiency improvements your home would benefit from, contact the cooperative's Member Services Department at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule an appointment.

Use the following steps to calculate the monthly energy cost of any appliance in your home:

- Volts x Amps = Watts* / 1000 = kilowatts (kW)
- kilowatts (kW) x hours used per day = kilowatt hours (kWh) per day
- kilowatt hours (kWh) per day x number of days per month x Firelands' average electric rate average (\$0.152) = estimated cost per month.

**Portable space heaters generally use 1,500 watts (high setting) or 900 watts (low setting).*

Space Heater Safety Tips

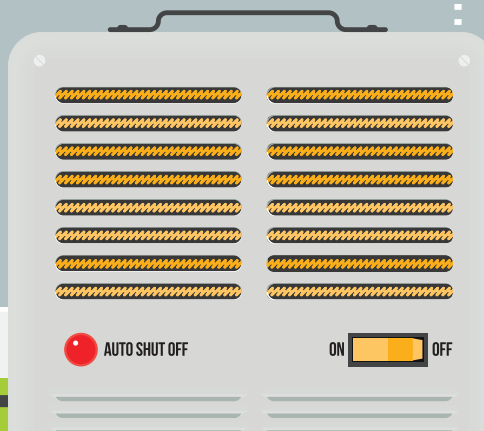
✓ **DO:** Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.

✗ **DON'T:** Use an extension cord or power strip to plug in your space heater. They can result in overheating and cause a fire.

✓ **DO:** Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets, and flammable items.

✓ **DO:** Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.

✗ **DON'T:** Leave your space heater plugged in when you leave the house or go to bed.





COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Nov. 22 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 44 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaull reviewed the reports for two recent safety and training events.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reported on recent activities and projects in the operations department, as well as progress on First Energy/AEP's 69-kV line project in New London.
- The board discussed the 2023 trustee elections.
- McNaull reviewed the timeline of the cooperative's 2022 safety culture initiative.
- The board discussed the Coulter substation project.
- McNaull reviewed North Coast Wireless's broadband project, which will bring high-speed internet to a portion of the cooperative's underserved members.
- Schloemer and McNaull reported on Buckeye and OEC meetings they recently attended.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the October financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- McNaull reviewed the monthly tree-trimming and outage reports.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reviewed recent activities involving the member services and IT departments, including the status of the annual USO drive and cybersecurity testing.

Firelands Electric Co-op is democratically controlled and governed by local people committed to policies that result in a safe and reliable electric system, fair rates, financial responsibility, and superior member service.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 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
1-800-533-8658

OFFICE HOURS

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



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GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

Firelands
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COOPERATIVE
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