

Zach Collins
LINE SUPERINTENDENT

My name is Zach Collins and I'm one of 15 lineworkers at Firelands Electric Cooperative who work every day, in any weather conditions, to make sure our community has the power they need to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's also very rewarding. In this month's editorial, I hope to give you a better look at what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

The danger

Most people know line work is dangerous since we work on high-voltage power lines. One move the wrong way — or lose focus for just a split second — and it could be deadly. We primarily work on energized power lines, and you can't tell if they are energized just by looking at them, which adds to the risk. Our work requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment also increases the danger, because we typically need to restore power when the weather is at its worst. I often work in storms with rain, wind, lightning, and extreme heat and cold. It could be also be in the dark, high on a pole, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous but it's what we're trained to do — and it's what we live for.

You may not realize it, but we undergo years of training. An apprentice lineworker spends more than 8,000 hours and nearly four years in training before they are transitioned to journeyman lineworker status. And our education doesn't stop there. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay up to date on safety requirements and the latest equipment and procedures.

The daily tasks of a lineworker are physically demanding, but we don't complain. I know what I signed up for — loading heavy materials, climbing poles, and working anytime of day or night. In addition, we often go places that require us to travel at least part way by ATV or on foot, through woods or rough terrain that is far away from the roadway.

The sacrifices

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. I'm often first on the scene of an emergency, witnessing the results of devastating car accidents, structure fires, or damage from severe storms. We don't know what type of situation we're going to face. We get calls at all hours. I've missed a lot of baseball games, family dinners, birthdays, and holidays, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get life back to normal after a power outage.

Continued on page 18



FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

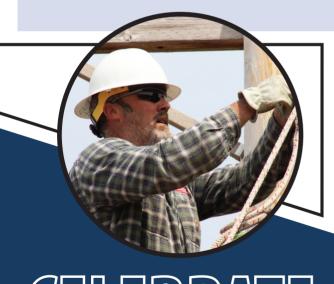
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It's worth it

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, I depend on the person beside me in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork, and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on.

I take a lot of pride in my work. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "thank you" from the window after restoring their power or seeing porch lights come on after an outage is restored. And the emails and notes of thanks from members are always greatly appreciated!

Firelands Electric and its employees are members of this community — just like you. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools and play on the same sports teams. If your lights are off, there is a good chance that ours are off, too. And you can trust that we are doing our best to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.



CELEBRA the Power Behind Your Power.

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S Lineworker Appreciation Week | April 15 – 19



IMPORTANT PAYMENT METHOD INFORMATION

Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) have changed

In order to protect consumers' sensitive information, the global financial regulation group PCI Security Standards Council has updated the requirements for taking credit and debit card payments made over the phone.

To adhere to these new regulations, Firelands Electric will be making changes to our procedures for processing phone payments by the end of April. Once in place, members who wish to make a payment by phone who do not already have a card saved to their account will be transferred to an automated

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we make the transition to meet the new mandated guidelines.

payment system.



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

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Winners of February drawing receive Amazon gift cards



Hadley Young Ashland Middle School Daughter of Brandon and Tiffany Young



Casey Cutlip Crestview Middle School Daughter of Bill and Connie Cutlip

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

How you can win

Students in grades 6 to 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, school, grade, address, phone number, parents' or guardians' name(s), and an email address on your entry.

Complete program details are also available at www.firelandsec.com/team.



Evan King Shiloh Middle School (Plymouth) Son of Brett and Jamie King

YOUTH PROGRAMS

CO-OP AWARDS

COLLEGE AND CAREER SCHOLARSHIPS



HIGH SCHOOL: SENECA EAST

COLLEGE: UNDECIDED MAJOR: NURSING

Mia Holmes FIRST PLACE - \$1,800

Evelvn Dav

SECOND PLACE - \$1,600 HIGH SCHOOL: TEMPLE CHRISTIAN **COLLEGE: CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY**



Gracelyn Lamoreaux

THIRD PLACE - \$1,400 HIGH SCHOOL: SOUTH CENTRAL **COLLEGE: BGSU FIRELANDS** MAJOR: EARLY CHILDHOOD

Firelands Electric's annual scholarship contest is open to graduating high school seniors who reside in a home served by the cooperative. This year, the co-op received applications from students attending EHOVE, Crestview, Hillsdale, Loudonville, Lucas, New London, Northwestern, Seneca East, South Central, St. Paul, and Temple Christian high schools. Scholarships were awarded to ten students planning to attend college next fall and one student pursuing a career/ vocational program following graduation. Additional information about Firelands Electric's scholarships and other youth programs is available

Firelands Electric is pleased to announce the following students as

on our website at www.firelandsec.com/community.

winners in its 2024 scholarship contest.

Class 2024

MAJOR: CIVIL ENGINEERING

integrity community commitment accountability innovation



Lance Tucker FOURTH PLACE - \$1,200 HIGH SCHOOL: HILLSDALE **COLLEGE:** FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY MAJOR: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



Kailyn Moneer FIFTH PLACE — \$1,000 HIGH SCHOOL: HILLSDALE COLLEGE: KENT STATE MAJOR: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



Gavin Hines SIXTH PLACE - \$750 HIGH SCHOOL: NORTHWESTERN **COLLEGE: MIAMI UNIVERSITY** MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



Kendyl Beverly HONORABLE MENTION - \$500 HIGH SCHOOL: SOUTH CENTRAL **COLLEGE: ASHLAND UNIVERSITY** MAJOR: EARLY CHILDHOOD **FDUCATION**



Brendon Hess HONORABLE MENTION - \$500 HIGH SCHOOL: LOUDONVILLE **COLLEGE:** UNDECIDED MAJOR: BIOLOGY



Brianna Dobias CAREER SCHOLARSHIP - \$750 HIGH SCHOOL: SOUTH CENTRAL/EHOVE PROGRAM: FIRELANDS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER SCHOOL OF NURSING



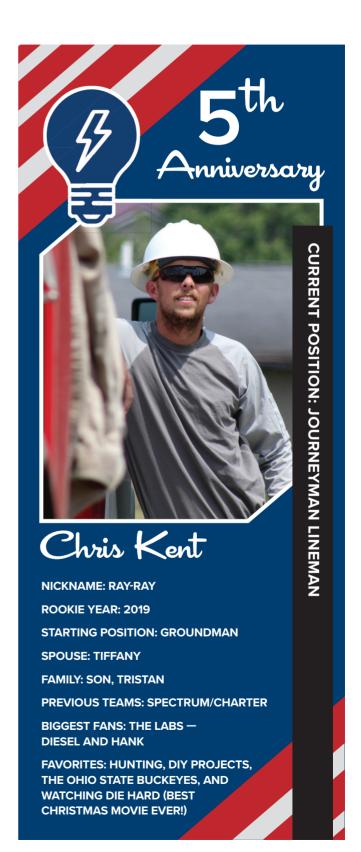
Kaydn Nickle JUDGES' CHOICE - \$500 HIGH SCHOOL: ST. PAUL **COLLEGE:** OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



Braden Philpott JUDGES' CHOICE - \$500 HIGH SCHOOL: CRESTVIEW **COLLEGE: UNDECIDED** MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

CO-OP NEWS





Power Pole Clutter

Flyers, satellite dishes, posters, basketball hoops, decorative lights, even hunting stands. You name it, someone

has tried to staple, nail, or tie it to a power pole. Here's a quick look at the dangers and pitfalls associated with unauthorized pole attachments.

Illegal

Many state and local laws and the National Electrical Safety Code prohibit any unauthorized items on poles. Utilities can face fines if these attachments aren't removed.



Pole Damage

Even small holes can allow moisture and insects past the pole sealant, which can shorten the life of the pole or weaken it and cause it to fall in a storm.



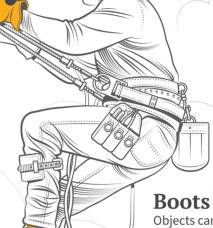
Hinders Repairs

Posters and flyers can hide identifying markers on poles and slow repair work.



Gloves

Staples, tacks and nails can puncture a lineworker's insulated rubber gloves and expose them to electric shock.



Objects can cause a worker to fall if they snag their boots.

Climbing Hooks

Nails and tacks can impede climbing hooks from sinking into the wood



Dangerous

A person who gets too close to energized lines while attaching an object can be electrocuted.



Distraction

Some materials posted on poles, like mirrors or holiday decorations, can be a distraction to drivers.

COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING highlights

Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met *Jan. 23 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 32 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaull reviewed the finalized 2024 capital budget.
- The board reviewed a report from the recent safety and training meeting on Dec. 7.
- McNaull advised that the 2023 tree trimming plan had been completed and summarized the 2024 plan.
- The board reviewed the outage report for the past month.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the December financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- The board was advised that the window to submit petitions to become a candidate for the 2024 trustee elections had closed. One petition was received for District 2, while districts 7 and 9 each received two petitions.

- McNaull reviewed the cooperative's Comparative Safety Performance Report and Year End Form 7.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reported on activities in the operations department, including the recently created load reduction plan, which could be implemented in the event that PJM (the co-op's regional electric grid operator) issues a load-shedding order.
- McNaull reviewed information regarding the upcoming OEC Winter Conference and recent meetings of the Audit Committee and employee team-building events.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23. 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











District 8

John Martin District 9

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 District 3

Kevin Reidy District 6

Rob Turk District 7

Elaine Oswald

GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to: members@firelandsec.com



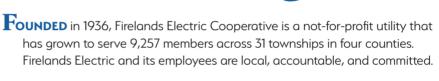
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Firelands
Electric
COOPERATIVE
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative





DAN SCHLOEMER District 1 Trustee Board President



Management

Firelands Electric's primary goals are reliability — keeping the lights on for our members — and keeping the cost of electricity affordable. For us, this includes finding the right balance of investment in ongoing maintenance and making sure we are adequately planning and preparing for the future.



DAN MCNAULL General Manager

Enhancing reliability continues to be a priority for the cooperative. Over the past five years, Firelands Electric has invested nearly \$16.5 million in capital improvements in our distribution system to provide reliable service to our members.

The board of trustees and management also prioritizes our past when it comes to capital credits. In 2023, our cooperative retired \$1 million in general retirements, returning it to our members. These capital credits were previously invested in our distributions system, supplying funds for important upgrades necessary for the delivery of reliable power. Since 1948, Firelands Electric has returned nearly \$20 million in capital credits to its membership — just one of the many benefits enjoyed by members of a notfor-profit electric cooperative.

Significant increases in the cost of doing business over the past four years have been a challenge, especially with the rate of inflation and rising material costs. This inflation, along with significant investments in the distribution system, resulted in the need for a rate adjustment, which was reflected on members' February 2024 bills. Rest assured, Firelands Electric will continue working diligently to find the right balance between reliability and affordability.

Board of Trustees

THE board of trustees, elected by the membership, oversees the general manager, sets company policy, and monitors the finances of the cooperative. They receive education and training to help better serve the membership.



GENE LAMOREAUX
District 2 Trustee



TOM LUCHA District 3 Trustee



BRUCE LEIMBACH
District 4 Trustee
Board Vice President



CARL AYERS
District 5 Trustee
Board Secretary/Treasurer



KEVIN REIDY District 6 Trustee



ROB TURK
District 7 Trustee



ELAINE OSWALD District 8 Trustee



JOHN MARTIN
District 9 Trustee

THE 7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members' Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training, and Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

MISSION STATEMENT

Improving the quality of life of our members by delivering reliable electric service at competitive prices, following the Seven Cooperative Principles, while supporting the communities where our members live and work.

Focused on Reliability

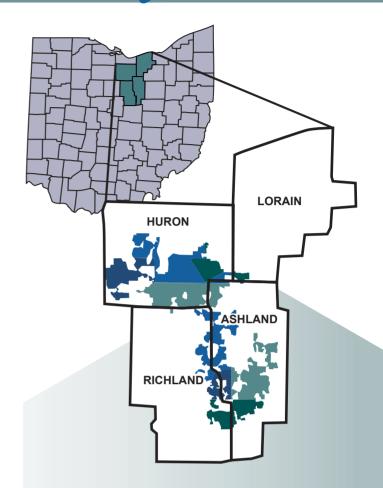
KEEPING the lights on 100% of the time is the ultimate, and sometimes elusive, goal here at Firelands Electric Cooperative. Although completely avoiding outages is often impossible due to uncontrollable factors such as weather, trees, transmission networks, and various climbing and flying critters, we are constantly working to improve our distribution system and give you, the members, better service to improve your quality of life

In order to provide reliable electric service, we must maintain our existing infrastructure, replace dated equipment, have necessary equipment and human resources, and plan for a future with increased demands for electricity and possible regulatory issues.

A major component of Firelands' commitment to reliability is the cooperative's right-of-way maintenance program. In 2023, the co-op completed over 279 miles of brush-hogging, trimming, and necessary tree removals at a cost of more than \$678,120. Much of this work was completed throughout portions of Bronson, Greenfield, New London, and Norwich townships in Huron County, as well as Ruggles and Clear Creek townships in Ashland County.

Over the past year, Firelands Electric replaced and retired more than 150 poles that failed to meet our standards. This is part of the cooperative's ongoing efforts to make our system more resistant to storms and extreme weather events. We are now in year three of our 2022-2025 Construction Work Plan, which includes the rebuilding of over 45 miles of our 997 miles of lines. Multiple line-rebuilding projects have been completed using heavier-grade aluminum conductor with a steel reinforced wire core. These projects will help maintain and improve reliability, add more backfeeding capability between substations, and increase load capacity for members' future electricity needs.

Wherever possible, power lines and poles that are located away from the roadway or in other hard-to-reach areas are being relocated closer to the road for easier access in the event of an outage. New poles are also taller to improve ground clearance for farm equipment and provide space for the attachment of future telecommunications lines.



In one location near Lucas, a new section of line will be built this year, using extra-durable "tree cable" that will be mounted on ductile iron poles, making it more resistant to damage from falling trees. Later in the year, Firelands Electric will be breaking ground on a new Coulter substation, near Perrysville. The new substation's transformer capacity will be increased nearly 2.5 times to meet the area's growing demand for electricity.

Firelands Electric is actively taking many steps to make sure the cooperative is fully prepared to ensure that our member-owners will always have a reliable and affordable supply of power for their homes and businesses.

Serving Our Community the Cooperative Way

REBATES & INCENTIVES

186 appliance rebates were awarded for a total of

\$24,501

PAID TO MEMBERS IN 2023.*

*Cost is shared with Buckeye Power.

11,960 MEMBER CONTACTS
WITH CO-OP
REPRESENTATIVES

7,104 PAYMENT ASSISTANCE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN 2023

OPERATION ROUND UP

Members supporting
Operation Round Up contributed more than

\$40,373

TO THE PEOPLE FUND IN 2023. SINCE 1995, THE PEOPLE FUND HAS AWARDED

OVER \$1.3 MILLION

TO INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS
WITHIN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES
TO HELP WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
IN ASHLAND, HURON, LORAIN,
AND RICHLAND COUNTIES.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

264

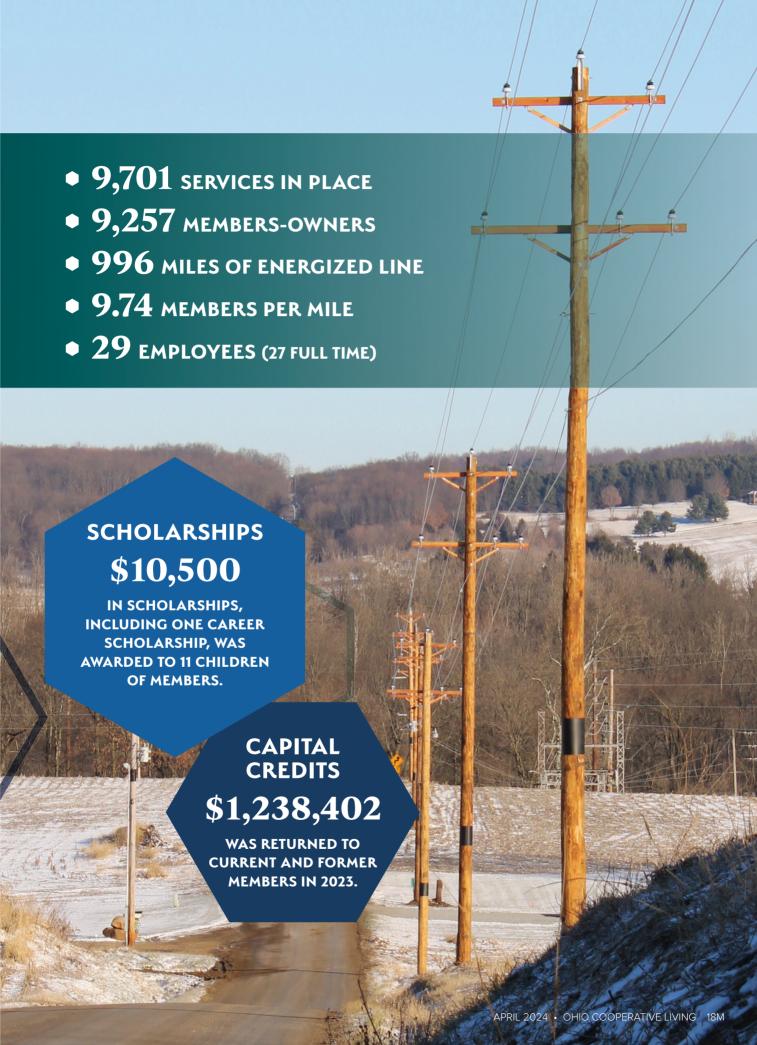
SOLAR PANELS HAVE BEEN
SOLD TO RESIDENTIAL MEMBERS
PARTICIPATING IN FIRELANDS'
COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT,
OURSOLAR, WHICH WAS
FURTHER EXPANDED TWO
YEARS AGO.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Concern for community is another way the electric cooperative distinguishes itself from other utilities.

\$2,610

HAS BEEN DONATED BY FIRELANDS' EMPLOYEE FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE TO MORE THAN A DOZEN CHARITIES AND LOCAL FAMILIES IN 2023, WHICH HAS BEEN TRADITION OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS.



Advocating for our members & **DEMONSTRATING SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

MANAGEMENT



DON ENGLET Director of Operations

TABI SHEPHERD Director of Finance & Accounting





ZACH COLLINS Line Superintendent



ANDREA GRAVENHORST Director of Communications & IT



Director of Human Resources

Your 86th Annual Meeting

FIRELANDS Electric's management and staff encourage members to attend the cooperative's 86th annual meeting event to be held on Saturday, April 6, at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center.

Members who did not already RSVP for the breakfast buffet are still welcome and encouraged to attend the business meeting at 9:15 a.m. Attendees must bring their invitation postcard to receive a complimentary membership gift bag and to be entered in special prize drawings. Winners must be present to win.

Shuttle service will be provided from Ashland University parking areas that are accessed from Broad and Jefferson streets. To view a parking map, visit www.firelandsec.com/annual-meeting-members.

At the annual meeting, Firelands Electric will also be collecting pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House of Akron. Please bring a container or resealable plastic bag filled with pop tabs and help make a difference.

86th Annual **Meeting of Members**

SATURDAY, APRIL 6

Ashland University Myers Convocatiown Čenter

638 Jefferson St, Ashland, OH 44805

DOORS OPEN: 8:30 A.M. BREAKFAST SERVED: 8:30 - 9:15 A.M. **BUSINESS MEETING: 9:15 – 10:15 A.M.** MEMBER PRIZE DRAWINGS: 10:15 - 10:30 A.M.

EMPLOYEES



Julie Amato Billing Representative



Rick Bowers Lead Lineman



Evan Clemons Lead Lineman



Tracy Gibb Communications & Member Relations **Specialist**



Zach Hart Apprentice Lineman



April Hicks Operations 5 Assistant



Chris Kent Journeyman Lineman



Josh Kirk **Operations** . Technician



James Miller System Right-of-Way Coordinator



Lead Lineman

Phil Pickering



Stephanie Schmidt Consumer Services & **AMI** Coordinator



Jessica Schwanger **Part-Time Consumer Services** Representative



Robert Shepherd Journeyman Lineman



Bob Stokes Contracted Energy Advisor



Dave Sumpter Lead Lineman



Rob Swiger Engineering Operations Coordinator



Cindy Thompson Accountant



Jake White **Apprentice** Lineman



Matt Whiteside Journeyman Lineman



Jake Willbond **Apprentice** Lineman



Melissa Wilson Engineering & **Operations Data** Coordinator



Melissa Zacharias **Accounting Clerk**

AMERICAN CONSUMER **SATISFACTION INDEX SCORE**

*This is 16% higher than the average of other utilities nationwide.

Financial Health

COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET

FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022

UTILITY PLANT

Electric plant in service Construction work in progress

Less: Accumulated provision for depreciation and amortization **Net Utility Plant**

NON-CURRENT ASSETS

_ _ _ _

Investments in associated organizations Deferred charges

Total Non-Current Assets

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents Accounts receivable, consumers and other, less allowance for doubtful accounts of \$255,763 (\$249,145 in 2022) Materials and supplies Accrued utility revenues Other current and accrued assets **Total Current Assets**

Total Assets

Memberships Patronage capital Other equities

NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES

Long-term debt

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Current portion of long-term debt Accounts payable Consumer deposits Accrued taxes Other current and accrued liabilities **Total Current Liabilities**

Total Members' Equities & Liabilities

	2023
\$	57,101,442
_	2,435,508
	59,536,950
	(20.7/2.252)

(20,762,252) 38,774,698

10,235,774 35,235 10,271,009

899,343

1,911,656 821,139 483,237 155,367 4,270,742

\$ 53,316,449

2022

54,943,851 1,897,399 56,841,250

(19,568,612) 37,272,638

> 10,025,275 87,266 10,112,541

> > 1,258,570

1,763,052 581,211 473,201 37,435 4,113,469 \$ 51,498,648

MEMBERS' EQUITIES

Total Members' Equities

23,886,836 2,190,996 26,102,560

24,728

23,055,614

1,099,648 1,414,099 339,666 862,321 442,541 4,158,275

53,316,449

\$ 25,768
22,982,156
 2,059,378
25,067,302

22,373,829

1,074,603 1,434,398 329,836 824,303 394,377 4,057,517

51,498,648

STATEMENTS OF REVENUE & EXPENSES

FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022

OPERATING REVENUE

OPERATING EXPENSES

Cost of power

Distribution expense - operations

Distribution expense - maintenance

Consumer accounts

Administrative and general

Depreciation and amortization

Taxes

Total Operating Expenses

Operating margins before fixed charges

Interest on long-term debt

Operating margins after fixed charges

Patronage capital assigned by associated organizations

Net Operating Margins

NON-OPERATING MARGINS

Interest income

Gain on sale of assets

Other income (expense)

Total Non-Operating Margins

Net Margins for Period

PATRONAGE CAPITAL & OTHER EQUITY

Net Margins

Beginning of Year

Subtotal

Retirement of Capital Credits and Other Adjustments (Net)

Patronage Capital & Other Equities End of Year

2023 22,709,297

> 12,376,048 1,428,400 2,424,531 808,808

1,365,019 1,786,852 509,893

2.009.746 780,242

20,699,551

1,229,504 771,383 2,000,887

77,004 8,841 (25,599)60,246

2,061,133

2022

22,116,905

12,825,852 1,256,117 2,236,491 858,153 1,339,726 1,709,636 531,889 20,757,864

> 1,359,041 782,478

576,563 676,816 1,253,379

36,118 (18,151)17,967

1,271,346

2,061,133 22,982,156 25,043,289 (1,156,453)23,886,836

1,271,346 22,846,405 24,117,751 (1,135,595)

22,982,156

2023 FINANCIALS DISCLAIMER: Due to a two-month lead time requirement for information printed in the magazine, the financial numbers printed are only preliminary until they are reviewed by the cooperative's board during their regularly scheduled meeting with the auditing firm.

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Power cost - 53¢

Operations/maintenance - 16¢

Depreciation - 8¢

Administrative - 6¢

Margins - 9¢

Consumer, accounting, and sales - 3¢

Interest - 3¢

Taxes - 2¢

2023 ENERGY DOLLAR - HOW EACH \$ WAS SPENT

APRIL 2024 • OHIO COOPERATIVE LIVING 19



FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. 103 Industrial Drive, P.O. Box 32 New London, OH 44851

1-800-533-8658 | www.firelandsec.com

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

