



GM'S REPORT

# HIGH-YIELD SAFETY

Reaping the benefits of a safe and successful harvest

Farming is one of the most labor-intensive professions around. The work is strenuous, and the hours are long. It's also considered one of the most dangerous occupations. In an effort to beat the weather, meet deadlines, and save time, farmers often find themselves in a rush. This can be extremely dangerous, even deadly — especially when farming near electrical lines.

Every year, tractors and other farm equipment collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries, equipment damage, and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and being aware of your surroundings when operating farm machinery.

For safety's sake, please keep the following tips in mind this harvest season:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance in all directions around utility equipment.
- Use a spotter and flags to keep a safe distance from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- When operating combines, choppers, sprayers, grain carts, and other tall farm equipment, be mindful of overhead power lines and the potential for coming into contact with them.
- Grain augers should always be lowered before being moved.
- Use care when extending augers on grain carts or combines, or when raising the bed of grain trucks near power lines.
- Remember that lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes, ladders, and even bulk materials can conduct electricity.
- NEVER attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

- If your equipment does come into contact with a power line, call 911 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the line is de-energized by the utility company.

The only reason to exit equipment is in the case of fire, which is rare. If this does happen, jump off the equipment with your feet together, being careful not to touch the ground and machinery at the same time. Then, keeping your feet together, hop or shuffle to safety while also avoiding contact with the ground by any other part of your body.

- Use a qualified electrician for work on drying equipment and other agricultural systems.
- Be aware of underground power lines. If you plan to do any projects on your property that require digging, make sure to call 811 first to have utility lines marked.

While September 19–25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week, farm safety should be practiced year-round. We hope these tips will prevent you from finding yourself in a potentially dangerous situation where farm equipment makes contact with power lines or poles. For additional farm safety information, visit the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety at [www.necasag.org/nationalfarmsafetyandhealthweek](http://www.necasag.org/nationalfarmsafetyandhealthweek).



Dan McNaul  
GENERAL MANAGER



## OPERATION ROUND UP

# ONE PENNY AT A TIME

The members of Firelands Electric Cooperative make a big impact in our community. In fact, by donating just pennies each month, they have given back over \$1.2 million!

Operation Round Up is a charitable program funded by Firelands Electric Cooperative members who volunteer to have their monthly electric bill rounded up to the next dollar. Each participating member contributes an average of 50 cents a month. The money is pooled together to award grants to local charitable and civic organizations, as well as individuals with extenuating circumstances. The recipients are chosen through an application process conducted every other month by the People Fund Board,

a group of co-op members specifically appointed by Firelands Electric's trustees to oversee the distribution of funds collected through the program.

In 2020, Firelands awarded grants totaling \$43,680. Recipients included first responders, schools, medical facilities, and many more. A list of the 2020 grant recipients, along with additional information and applications, are available at [www.firelandsec.com/operation-round](http://www.firelandsec.com/operation-round).



## SAFE FARMS TRAINING FACILITY

Firelands Electric Co-op's Operation Round Up is a proud contributor to the recently opened — and long-awaited — Safe Farms Facility at the Wayne County Regional Training Facility (WCRTF) in Apple Creek.

A collaborative effort between several county Farm Bureaus (Wayne, Ashland, Medina, and Holmes), WCRTF, and a multitude of community partners, the grain and bin safety training prop is available to private groups, agricultural businesses, and first responders.

The Safe Farms project began in 2018, but fundraising efforts and COVID-19 restrictions slowed its progress. The final phases of the project were recently completed, and an open house was held on June 24.

Included at the facility are a 26-foot bin with a live floor and a 60-foot grain leg with augers. A 15-foot bin with an open roof and balcony, surrounded by a steel-framed building, allows for grain entrapment rescue training in all weather conditions.

For additional information or to inquire about utilizing the facility, please send an email to [wcrtf@hotmail.com](mailto:wcrtf@hotmail.com).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OHIO FARM BUREAU



## SAFETY

# GENERATE SAFELY

Portable and standby generators have their advantages when a power outage occurs. But if used improperly, a generator can create a deadly situation for you, your family, or even Firelands Electric's linemen.

### The all-important transfer switch

A permanently installed standby generator requires a double-throw transfer switch to isolate it from the power grid. This prevents electricity created by the generator from backfeeding onto the co-op's power lines, which can damage property and endanger lives.

Typically located between the meter and the electrical devices you need to provide power to, a transfer switch

is required by law (National Electrical Code NEC Article 702-6) and should only be installed by a qualified electrician. Remember — the main breaker on an electric panel does not qualify as a transfer switch — it is not intended to, nor capable of, stopping power from flowing back onto the co-op's distribution lines.

### The dangers of carbon monoxide

One of the most common mistakes homeowners make is running a generator in an enclosed space. Although it's important to keep a generator dry and locate it on a flat, stable surface, it's imperative that it be used in a well-ventilated, outside space, away from your home or business. Never use a generator inside an attached garage or porch. The carbon monoxide given off by a generator is extremely toxic and causes illnesses and deaths each year. In fact, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported nearly 700 generator-related deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning between 2008 and 2018.

### Other potential hazards

Using a generator incorrectly can also lead to electric shock and fire. To prevent destructive or deadly accidents, Firelands Electric Co-op urges members to follow the additional safety guidelines in the box at left.

Firelands Electric Cooperative encourages you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages and safeguard those who

come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit.

For additional information on generator safety, contact the member services department or visit [www.firelandsec.com/generator-safety](http://www.firelandsec.com/generator-safety).

## GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

- Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring.
- Never plug a generator into a household outlet.
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure they are free of fraying or damage and have all three prongs.
- Do not overload a generator by operating more appliances and equipment than the generator can handle. The operating instructions should have an output rating for the generator.
- Individual appliances should be plugged directly into the receptacle outlet of the generator using appropriately sized extension cords to carry the electric load. Make sure the cords are rated for outdoor use, have a grounded, three-pronged plug, and are in good condition.
- Do not refuel a generator while it is running and be sure to follow manufacturers' directions for installation and operation.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- Keep children and pets away from generators.





## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# MAKE AIR FILTER MAINTENANCE A *BREEZE*

Your furnace and air conditioner keep your home comfortable all year long, and your system's air filter plays a critical role in how well they function. Over time, the filter can get clogged with dirt and debris, reducing efficiency. No need to worry, though. Learning how and when to service your air filter will put you on the path to better savings and comfort.

### Basic filter maintenance

By changing your air filter regularly, you can save energy and money — and breathe better-quality indoor air. For the best performance from your HVAC system and the most comfortable indoor environment, keep these basic tips in mind:

- Change your filter regularly. Typically, you should replace your filter at least every two to three months. If you have pets, you may need to change the filter more frequently.
- Don't wait until the filter is completely clogged. You should replace it as soon as it looks dirty. Any amount of dirt will reduce the efficiency of your HVAC system.
- Avoid buying cheap filters. A higher-quality filter will need to be changed less frequently. Over the long term, it'll probably cost the same as buying and replacing several cheaper filters.

### Size matters

The size of your HVAC system's air filter is typically listed in inches — 16" x 25" or 20" x 25" are common sizes. Correct sizing is important. A wrong-sized filter may not fit snugly or provide adequate filtration. Check your system's manual or the furnace cabinet door for the size you need.

### Consider thickness

Filters range in thickness from one to six inches. Generally, the thicker a filter is, the better filtration you'll get, since the air spends more time passing through it. Check your

system's specifications for the thickness you need. To alter your system to accommodate a thicker filter, you should contact a qualified HVAC professional.

### Permanent or disposable

Both permanent and disposable filters are available. Permanent filters are more expensive to purchase, but they last a long time — typically five to 10 years. Permanent filters must be cleaned regularly to ensure performance. Disposable filters are cheaper but must be replaced frequently.

### Get the right rating

Filter performance is measured by Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value, or MERV ratings, which range from 1 to 20. The higher the number, the finer the filtration. For a typical home, filters rated between 8 and 13 are adequate for removing most dust particles and other contaminants. If anyone in your household suffers from allergies or a respiratory condition, you'll probably want to purchase a filter with a MERV between 12 and 20.

### Choose your type

There are a variety of options when it comes to choosing an HVAC filter. Fiberglass filters are cheap and allow maximum airflow, but are less effective at eliminating tiny contaminants. While more expensive, pleated filters are more effective at cleaning the air. Electrostatic filters use self-charging fibers to attract particles out of the air. Dirt is trapped deeper into the filter, but electrostatic models are more expensive and may reduce airflow.

Dirty filters are a major cause of HVAC system failure. Cleaning or changing filters regularly is a small investment in time and money that will make your home more comfortable and efficient, and it may save you some big headaches down the road. For more energy efficiency tips, visit [www.firelandsec.com/energy-education](http://www.firelandsec.com/energy-education).

## EMPLOYEE NEWS

# STEPHANIE SCHMIDT CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF SERVICE



Stephanie Schmidt  
CONSUMER SERVICE/  
AMI COORDINATOR

This month, Consumer Service/AMI Coordinator Stephanie Schmidt marks 20 years with Firelands Electric Cooperative. Hired as a billing clerk in 2001, Stephanie became a billing representative in 2002 and consumer services representative in 2011. She was promoted to her current position in August 2018.

A significant portion of Stephanie's daily tasks involve handling budget billing, processing payments, and taking care of capital credit estates. In addition,

she also oversees the monthly billing and is responsible for the cooperative's advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system.

As someone who enjoys problem-solving, working on projects that improve the efficiency of the co-op's procedures and provide members with more enhanced

services is especially rewarding for Stephanie. "I like the variety of projects I get to be involved with every day," she says. "Whether it helps my co-workers or the co-op's members, finding solutions is very gratifying." One of Stephanie's current projects is to assist with the setup of new processes that will streamline the flow of service orders within the cooperative. "I love a good challenge," she says.

Stephanie lives in rural New London with her husband, Derek, and their three daughters. She serves as head deaconess at the New London Alliance Church and enjoys spending time with her family and friends, hiking, and going to the theater.

The Firelands Electric Cooperative  
office will be closed on

**Monday, Sept. 6**

in observance of Labor Day.  
Emergency service is available 24/7  
by calling 1-800-533-8658.



Access your account and  
usage around the clock

<https://firelandsec.smarthub.coop>





## REBATE PROGRAMS

# SAVE ENERGY SAVE MONEY

Firelands Electric's rebate programs can help cooperative members be more energy efficient — and save money, too!

### Appliances

Firelands Electric Cooperative members can qualify for rebates from \$50 to \$100 when they replace their existing refrigerator, stand-alone freezer, clothes washer, or dishwasher with a new ENERGY STAR-certified appliance. A \$25 rebate is also available for those who purchase a new 70-pint or larger ENERGY STAR-certified dehumidifier. All appliance rebates are issued in the form of a bill credit on the member's electric account.

### Electric water heaters

Co-op members who purchase and install a new electric water heater that meets all rebate requirements are eligible to receive a bill credit.

- \$150 REPLACEMENT of existing electric water heater bill credit — 50-gallon or larger electric water heater with an EF of 0.91 or higher. Heat pump or communicating water heaters that are incompatible with the co-op's load management device also qualify if all other requirements are met.
- \$50 load management device bill credit — applies to the installation of a load management device on an electric water heater that DOES NOT meet Firelands' Energy Factor or size requirements. (Members with a water heater load management device already installed DO NOT qualify.)

### Heat pump and geothermal systems

Programs apply to members of Firelands Electric who purchase and install a new or replacement geothermal or air-source heat pump system that is ENERGY STAR-qualified and meets or exceeds the co-op's energy efficiency standards.

- \$800 all-electric geothermal system rebate — an all-electric geothermal system with a Cool Returns load management device installed that meets or exceeds an EER of 17.1 (closed loop) or 21.1 (open loop). Communicating geothermal systems that are incompatible with the co-op's load management device are eligible for a \$700 rebate.

- \$500 all-electric heat pump system rebate — an all-electric air-source heat pump system with a Cool Returns load management device installed that meets or exceeds a SEER of 15.0. The backup heating source must be electric resistance. Communicating heat pump systems that are incompatible with the co-op's load management device are eligible for a \$400 rebate.
- \$300 dual-fuel geothermal or heat pump system rebate — dual-fuel heat pump unit added to any fossil fuel (gas/propane/oil) furnace with a Cool Returns load management device installed that meets or exceeds Firelands' energy efficiency standard (see above). Communicating systems that are incompatible with the co-op's load management device are eligible for a \$200 rebate.
- \$300 all-electric ductless or mini-split heat pump system rebate — an all-electric ductless or mini-split heat pump system that meets or exceeds a SEER of 15.0.

*Current rebate program year is effective July 1, 2021–June 15, 2022. A complete listing of all Firelands Electric Cooperative rebate programs and incentives, as well as their specific eligibility requirements, is available at [www.firelandsec.com/member-programs](http://www.firelandsec.com/member-programs).*

*Some rebates and incentives require members to have a load management device installed on the applicable electric appliance. Firelands' technicians reserve the right to refuse older or marginal HVAC systems into member programs.*



## 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 July drawing receive Amazon gift cards



**Aiden Hoffman**  
Hillsdale Middle School  
Son of Mark and Abbey Hoffman



**Colt McCoy**  
Hillsdale Middle School  
Son of Mike and Linda McCoy

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



**Isabella Kimberlin**  
South Central Middle School  
Daughter of Benny and  
Jennifer Kimberlin



## COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

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

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 86 membership applications for approval by the board.
- The board held officer elections for the upcoming year. Dan Schloemer was reelected as president, Bruce Leimbach as vice president, and Carl Ayers as secretary/treasurer.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed reports for safety and training meetings held May 6 and May 20, as well as a job site observation conducted on June 15.
- McNaul reviewed the monthly tree trimming and outage reports.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the May financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- McNaul provided a recap of the co-op's virtual annual meeting and statistics from this year's trustee elections.
- McNaul advised that the OEC Summer Conference is set for Aug. 9-10 in Columbus.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed the co-op's 2021-2024 construction work plan and recent projects in the operations department.
- McNaul reviewed Firelands' 10-year financial forecast and the 2021 power requirement study prepared by Buckeye Power.
- Director of Communications and Information Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reviewed a report on recent activities involving the member services and IT department.
- McNaul and Trustee Kevin Reidy reviewed statewide meetings they had attended.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 28. If you would like to attend the next scheduled meeting, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

### FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

#### OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

#### OFFICE

103 Industrial Drive  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
419-929-1571

#### OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.  
[www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com)



#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer  
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach  
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers  
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

W.E. Anderson  
District 8

Tom Lucha  
District 3

Gene Lamoreaux  
District 2

John Martin  
District 9

Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

#### GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaul

#### HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

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

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