



GM'S REPORT

WEATHERING THE STORM

Storms often cause trees to fall, which is one of the most common causes of power outages. To reduce this risk, Firelands Electric Cooperative works year-round to clear trees, shrubs, and other vegetation that could potentially damage power lines, transformers, and other electrical equipment.

Despite our best efforts, Mother Nature sometimes has other plans. The heavy rains and strong winds of spring can create a powerful combination that takes down even the sturdiest trees and branches and wreaks havoc on electrical equipment.

If an outage does occur, you can rest assured that Firelands Electric's crews are prepared to restore your power as quickly as possible. And while you can't predict what a storm may bring, planning ahead will give you the tools needed to weather the storm when it does strike.

Advance warning

If a severe storm is expected, it's important to take steps ahead of time to be better prepared. Fully charge all cellphones, laptops, and electronic devices so they have maximum power. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need and always review the manufacturer's

instructions to operate it safely. Generators should *never* be connected to an electric panel unless using an approved power transfer switch.

Those with essential medical equipment, such as portable oxygen or a nebulizer, should arrange for battery backup or other alternative power supply, in case it becomes needed.

Prolonged outages

If an outage does take place, turn off appliances, TVs, computers, and other sensitive electronics. This will help prevent damage from a power surge and avoid overloading the circuits during power restoration. Do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If utilizing a small household generator, consider using a strand of white LED holiday lights to illuminate a room. They draw minimal energy yet produce considerable light. Also use battery-operated flashlights or lanterns and avoid candles, which can be extremely dangerous.

After storms, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their job, including on your property.

Power in planning

Advance planning for severe storms can reduce stress and anxiety and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Stay abreast of weather updates and install Firelands Electric Cooperative's SmartHub app to keep informed of restoration efforts. Remember — there is power in planning.



Dan McNaul
GENERAL MANAGER

BE PREPARED

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of nonperishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, and water, as well as toiletries and other essentials.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages, and other medical essentials and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener, and a portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location.



CO-OP NEWS

EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

ENSURING ELECTRICITY IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE WHEN YOU NEED IT

Since 1936, Firelands Electric has been committed to delivering safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to its consumer-members. Our high standard of exceptional reliability requires maintaining an electric infrastructure that can keep pace with customers evolving energy needs.

As businesses and homeowners use more electricity, Firelands Electric reinforces upgrades to its distribution system to create the electric infrastructure that will serve us well into the future. By increasing system capacity and enhancing reliability we can keep up with higher demand and improve service to members. The cooperative and its contractors upgrade equipment, rephase power lines, and install new utility poles. In some cases, upgrades can more than double system capacity compared with lines originally installed when the co-op was established 84 years ago.

This year, Firelands Electric will be moving forward on our four-year work plan, which consists of 38 miles of rebuilt line, in addition to other improvements. We will install new poles to add structural stability and improved access to structures, especially during storm situations. These upgrades not only improve power reliability, but also give crews the opportunity to restore service through load transfers (temporarily providing electricity from another route when there's an outage), which isn't possible without replacing lines and equipment.

More than 26,000 power poles populate the landscape of Firelands Electric's service area. The cooperative proactively inspects each and every one of those poles on a 10-year rotation. The annual inspections generally result in replacing an average of 50 poles per year. In addition, projects like line rebuilds and other improvements require new poles, and still others must be changed out

each year due to damage from vehicle accidents or severe weather conditions.

Since the cooperative has no control over weather conditions and storms, Firelands Electric's crews are continually challenged in scheduling work.

Our crews rise to this challenge every day, and they appreciate the cooperation and understanding of Firelands Electric's members as they work to provide safe and reliable power.

"With an aggressive work schedule for our crews and unpredictable weather, it's a challenge to always complete work when we've planned it," says Firelands' Director of Operations Don Englet. "Pole changeouts and planned outages are scheduled so they can be completed as safely and cost effectively as possible, while minimizing inconvenience to our members."

Although planned outages are generally shorter in duration and affect fewer consumers than unplanned outages, Firelands Electric recognizes that any outage is inconvenient. "Our objective is to minimize the impact that outages have on our members," Englet says. "One of the ways the cooperative does this is by making every attempt to provide consumer-members with some type of notification."

For information regarding planned outages and rebuild projects, visit www.firelandsec.com or the cooperative's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FirelandsElectric.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

THREE DIY PROJECTS TO TACKLE THIS SPRING

Making your home more efficient reduces energy use and puts more money in your pocket. There are several DIY home improvement projects that almost anyone can tackle to accomplish this goal — and they won't break the bank!

Replace HVAC filter

Level of difficulty: easy. Supplies needed: fiberglass or pleated filter to fit your system. Estimated cost: \$10 to \$30.

A dirty or clogged filter makes your heating or cooling system run less efficiently, increasing its energy use by up to 15%. HVAC professionals recommend changing the filter at least every three months. If you have pets, you may need to change it more frequently. Check manufacturer's specs to determine the size and type of filter you should purchase. Turn off the furnace and remove the old filter, which is typically located near the return air vent. Slide the new filter in, making sure that the correct side faces the HVAC system, and close the cover. Note the date on your calendar so you can remember when the filter will need to be replaced again. More detailed instructions can be found on the Consumer Reports website: <https://bit.ly/36PdRzC>.

Seal air leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weatherstripping, gloves, putty knife, paper towels. Estimated cost: \$25 to \$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10% to 20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring, and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also weatherstrip exterior doors to keep out drafts. Types of caulking and weatherstripping

materials vary, but ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need. For more information, the Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weatherstripping: <https://bit.ly/2Kesu6W>.

Insulate attic opening

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed (if you build the box yourself): rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, plywood. Estimated cost: \$50 to \$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs or the opening to their attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stair opening, but luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a prebuilt box or kit from a local home improvement store like Home Depot or Lowe's for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out these step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy: <https://bit.ly/36YNCYQ>. Note that if your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

Saving energy doesn't have to be hard.

With a little time and effort, you can maximize energy savings and increase the comfort of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, contact Firelands Electric Cooperative's Energy Advisor at 1-800-533-8658.





YOUTH PROGRAMS



ELECTRICAL SAFETY *Contest*

Firelands Electric Cooperative invites children in kindergarten through fifth grade to enter the 2020 Electrical Safety Contest. Children who live in a home receiving power from the co-op are eligible to enter.

Take the quiz

To enter, students simply need to show off their knowledge of electrical safety by taking the quiz provided on the next page. A parent or guardian must also complete and sign the section at the bottom.

Submit the completed and signed quiz by mail to: Electrical Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851. Entries may also be scanned and emailed to members@firelandsec.com (maximum file size of 10 MB).

Entries must be received by
Firelands Electric Cooperative
before 4 p.m. on Monday, March 23.

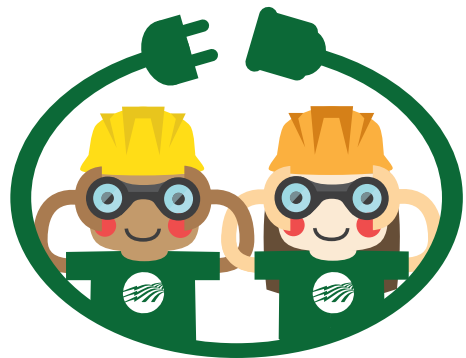
Win a prize

Students who correctly answer a minimum of six questions will have their name entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three restaurant gift cards.

In May, as part of National Electrical Safety Month, winners will be featured in the local pages of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine, as well as on Firelands

Electric Cooperative's website and social media outlets. The correct answers to the quiz will also be published.

Official contest rules and the quiz are also available at www.firelandsec.com/content/contests. If you have questions, please contact the member services department at 1-800-533-8658.



Energy Explorers

2020 Electrical Safety Contest quiz

Test your electrical safety knowledge by taking the quiz below

Circle the correct answer to each question or statement.

1. The charging cord for your tablet is damaged or frayed. What should you do?

- A. Wrap it with tape
- B. Replace it immediately
- C. Do nothing and keep using it

2. Any amount of electrical current can be dangerous and cause serious injury.

- A. True
- B. False

3. If a toy or pet gets stuck on an electric pole or power lines, what should you do?

- A. Have an adult call the electric company
- B. Ask an adult to get it down for you
- C. Climb the pole yourself to get it

4. It's okay to touch electric tools, appliances, or toys if you are wet.

- A. True
- B. False

5. Which of the following is safe to use near the bathtub?

- A. A blow dryer
- B. A phone charger
- C. A towel

6. It's perfectly safe to climb a tree near a power line.

- A. True
- B. False

7. You want to plant a tree. What should you do first?

- A. Start digging a hole
- B. Use a small shovel to avoid underground power lines
- C. Call 811 so that the electric company can show you where power lines are located

8. When you finish vacuuming, it's okay to pull the plug out of the wall by the cord.

- A. True
- B. False



Please complete the information below and mail your entry to: Attn: Electrical Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851.

Child's Name _____ Grade _____

Address _____

Parents'/Guardians' Names _____

Phone _____

Email _____ Parent/Guardian Signature _____



TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

Want to serve your co-op community?

Become a candidate for the board of trustees

Firelands Electric is guided by a board of trustees who are also members of the cooperative. They are your friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow community members.

The board has a responsibility to represent co-op members' best interests when making decisions affecting your electric service. Trustees must be strong leaders who understand the needs of the local area and can help keep the cooperative — and the community — flourishing. Firelands Electric needs members like you to fill these incredibly important positions.

Members will elect board members to represent districts 1, 3, and 6 in 2020. Any co-op member in good standing who resides in one of these districts is welcome to become a candidate for a position on the board. Those interested are required to submit an election application with 20 signatures from co-op members within their district.

Applications to become a candidate for board districts 1, 3, and 6 are due by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 20.

Petitions are available at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London. Call 1-800-533-8658 or visit www.firelandsec.com for additional information on Firelands Electric Co-op's board of trustees and the election process.

Make a difference. Become a candidate for your cooperative's board of trustees.

BOARD DISTRICTS FOR 2020 ELECTION

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, and Mifflin and Madison townships north of State Route 42

OPERATION ROUND UP

POWER IN NUMBERS

Operation Round Up makes big impact with small change

Fifty cents doesn't go very far in today's economy. You can't buy a cup of coffee, or even a donut, for that price. There is one noteworthy exception, however. Co-op members who voluntarily participate in Firelands Electric's Operation Round Up have a big impact in their community for just pennies a month.

Established in 1995, Operation Round Up is a charitable program funded by Firelands Electric Cooperative

members who allow their monthly electric bill to be rounded up to the next dollar. Each member contributes an average of 50 cents a month. The money is pooled together to award as grants to local organizations and individuals with extenuating circumstances. The recipients are chosen through an application process conducted every two months 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.

But, how can a single member donating a few coins do so much good? As of December 2019, 83% of Firelands Electric's members chose to take part in Operation Round Up. That comes out to nearly \$3,800 in contributions per month, and over \$45,000 per year. Over the past 25 years, Firelands members have given back more than \$1.1 million in grants to our community. That's a lot of spare change!

If you are affiliated with a local charitable organization or know of an area family that has a special need, contact Firelands' Operation Round Up at 1-800-533-8658. Applications and information are also available at www.firelandsec.com/content/operation-round-0.



BARN PHOTO BY JOAN STAUFFER



In 2019, Firelands Electric Co-op's Operation Round Up awarded grants to the Ashland County Fairgrounds for trusses on a new rabbit barn (top) and New London's Community Child Care Center for the purchase of new playground equipment (bottom).

2019 Operation Round Up Report

Assist with funding for medical equipment — Ashland County	\$	1,605
Assist with purchase of fire-fighting equipment — Ashland County	\$	4,475
Assist with charitable organizations — Huron County	\$	12,000
Assist with funding of youth programs — Huron County	\$	5,332
Assist with charitable organizations — Richland County	\$	725
Assist with purchase of educational equipment — Huron County	\$	2,500
Assist with funding for fair building — Ashland County	\$	4,210
Assist with funding for conservation project — Ashland County	\$	1,534
Assist with retreat center upgrades — Ashland County	\$	1,000
Assist with funding for outdoor recreation area — Huron County	\$	6,000
Assist with funding for playground equipment — Huron County	\$	3,100
Assist with purchase of fire-fighting equipment — Lorain County	\$	5,395
Total (January 2019—December 2019):	\$	47,876
Total since Operation Round Up started in 1995:	\$	1,143,974



CO-OP CONTESTS

And the winners are ...

During November and December, members of Firelands Electric Cooperative showed off their holiday spirit by submitting photos of their indoor or outdoor Christmas lighting displays.

Firelands Electric shared the photos on our Facebook page, where the public voted for their favorite by clicking the “Like” button beneath the photo. The entry receiving the most likes at the end of each week received a \$25 credit on their December bill. The contest ran for four weeks, with a winner announced each week.

Thank you to all who entered and congratulations to the winners: Eric Amburgy of Greenwich, Patience Columbus of New London, Jeff and Dee Luttrell of Mansfield, and Mark and Sharon Adams of Plymouth.

To view all of the photos submitted, visit www.facebook.com/FirelandsElectric and open the photo album “2019 Christmas Lighting Contest Entries.”



Patience Columbus
NEW LONDON



Eric Amburgy
GREENWICH



Mark and Sharon Adams
PLYMOUTH



Jeff and Dee Luttrell
MANSFIELD

More than 800 votes were cast in the co-op’s recent Christmas Lighting Contest. The four winners, selected by popular vote, each received a \$25 credit on their December electric bill.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

DON ENGLET CELEBRATES 20-YEAR MILESTONE



Don Englet
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Firelands Electric congratulates Director of Operations Don Englet, who marks his 20th anniversary with the cooperative this month. Don started at Firelands in 2000 as an apprentice lineman in the energy services subsidiary. He was promoted in 2005 to line superintendent and to his current position in 2018.

As director of operations, Don is responsible for

making sure that Firelands' electrical system works in a safe, reliable, efficient manner and that the needs of the co-op's members are met. His duties include overseeing the design and construction of the co-op's distribution system, as well as working with the linemen, right-of-way workers, and engineering staff to coordinate the maintenance of Firelands Electric's power lines and other equipment.

Don values the unique business model of the cooperative. "If we do what's in the best interests of the co-op's members, we are doing our jobs well," Don says. "The employees of Firelands Electric understand the mission of the cooperative, and they work very diligently as a team to accomplish that mission. I work with an outstanding group of people, and I'm extremely proud and grateful to be a part of this organization."

"Don is an exceptionally talented and key leader within our organization," says Firelands' General Manager Dan McNaul. "I appreciate his strong leadership, work ethic, and commitment to the members and his job. Don starts his workdays early, often works late, and comes in on weekends to make sure that he and his staff are prepared

for whatever situation may arise. I thoroughly enjoy working and problem-solving with him and am very thankful that he is part of our Firelands team."

During his time at Firelands Electric, Don has continued his education. He recently received his bachelor's degree in business management from Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

Don and his wife, Sara, reside in the Greenwich area and have been married for 21 years. The couple have two sons. Clayton graduated in 2019 and is employed by the Village of New London. Jackson is a student at EHOVE. In his spare time, Don enjoys spending time with his family camping, fishing, hunting, and traveling.

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC NEWS

First Lights

Do you or someone you know remember the early days of Firelands Electric Cooperative? Do you recall the first time the lights came on? Your family's first electric appliance? Or maybe the installation of the first poles?

If so, we want to hear from you! Firelands is collecting stories from our former and current members about the formation and early years of the co-op for an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living*.

Have a story? Contact our member services department at members@firelandsec.com or 1-800-533-8658.



FYI

STOPPING



SCAMS

Members urged
to help fight fraud

Our increasingly connected world is giving scammers more opportunities to prey on unsuspecting consumers, and local authorities, utilities, and other businesses are working overtime to keep people informed. Increased vigilance can help prevent you, your family, or your business from being victimized.

“The Federal Trade Commission has been hearing about scammers impersonating utility companies in an effort to get your money,” says Lisa Lake, a federal consumer education specialist.

Electric cooperatives are among the businesses and consumer organizations supporting Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS). The international consortium of electricity, natural gas, water and sewer providers, and trade and industry associations is sharing information on payment scams, identity theft, sales, and service schemes.

Imposter scams are the most common type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), according to UUAS officials. “Impersonators call homes and small businesses demanding payment for supposedly delinquent bills and threatening to terminate service.”

Variations on the scam are also becoming more common. Rather than making a claim that a consumer owes an outstanding balance, some scammers are now claiming an overpayment is the reason for a telephone call to a consumer. They will make contact in an attempt to get banking information so they can process a refund.

“Never give banking information over the phone unless you place the call to a number you know is legitimate,” says Lake.

There has also been an increase in door-to-door scams by people claiming to represent utility providers. Representatives knock or ring the doorbell and offer to replace or repair a meter or other device, or solicit personal information to sign a consumer up for programs that could reduce their energy bills.

They may try to charge you for the phony service, sell you unnecessary products, collect personal information for use in identity theft, or simply gain entry to steal valuables, officials say.

High-pressure demands are a common tactic in many of the schemes. Urging on-the-spot decisions or actions, like immediate payment, particularly by a specific option like a gift card, wire transfer, cellphone, or third-party computer app, should raise serious concerns.

Your first defense is personal awareness of your account status, including knowing whether balances are up to date. This is becoming more important as scammers use more automatic dialers or robocalls to phish for potential marks.

“If the caller insists you have a past-due bill, that’s a big red flag,” says Lake. “Contact the utility company directly using the number on your bill or on the company’s website. Don’t call any number the caller gave you.”

If you are contacted by a scammer, report the incident to the Ohio Attorney General at www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/About-AG/Contact/Report-A-Scam or contact them at 1-800-282-0515. You can also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov or calling 1-877-382-4357.

integrity community commitment
accountability innovation

We want to **HEAR** from you

Your thoughts and opinions about Firelands Electric Cooperative help us to serve you better.

In March, Firelands Electric Co-op will be working with NRECA Market Research Services to complete member satisfaction surveys.


The surveys will be both by phone and email, but not everyone will be contacted. If you are contacted, we would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time to share your opinions of the cooperative.

We strive to provide all members with safe, affordable, reliable, and clean electric service. By participating in this survey, you will help us make decisions that benefit you, your family, and your neighbors.

Thank you!

All information is confidential.

Firelands
Electric
COOPERATIVE

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COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Dec. 30 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 39 membership applications for approval by the board.
- The board reviewed and approved a report on safety meetings held on Nov. 19, Dec. 3, and Dec. 10.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department, including recent outages caused by high winds.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed the OEC statistical report from November.
- The trustee election process for 2020 was reviewed. Following discussion, the board approved naming David Harwood as chairman of the Elections Committee.
- McNaul reviewed the final budget for 2020.
- District 6 Trustee Kevin Reidy and District 8 Trustee W.E. "Andy" Anderson reported on a course that they had recently attended on critical communications.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the November financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments, including the co-op's cybersecurity measures.
- McNaul advised that District 6 Trustee Kevin Reidy was appointed to the ACRE Executive Committee at OEC.

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 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, at Firelands Electric's facility, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

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



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

Steve Gray
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

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