



GM'S REPORT

# SCAMMERS THREATEN TO TURN OFF YOUR ELECTRICITY

In the past few months, utilities across the U.S. have received calls from consumers reporting scams.

The scam is always the same story. A consumer receives a phone call from someone who says their payment has been denied, or was never received, and the caller demands immediate payment or the consumer's power will be shut off. There are three main utility scams:

**Scam #1: Green Dot Card** — Scammers insist consumers must pay their bill immediately or they will be disconnected. They tell consumers to purchase Green Dot money cards and call them with the verification codes.

**Scam #2: Phishing** — Scammers insist consumers must pay their bill immediately or they will be disconnected. They ask for verification of the credit card or bank account the consumers use to pay their bill.

**Scam #3: Google Scam** — A Google Calendar invitation pops up in the consumer's e-mail inbox with the subject line, "Your electric bill is available."

If a Firelands Electric employee contacts you by phone, they will never DEMAND confidential, personal, or financial information — like a credit card number or your checking/savings routing or account numbers. Only give your financial information to the co-op if you have contacted the co-op directly to make a payment.

Because Firelands Electric does sometimes contact members by phone, it can be difficult to tell a scammer from a member representative. Here are some tips:

- If a caller specifically asks you to pay using a prepaid debit card, this is a red flag.
- If you feel pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up the phone and call the cooperative's phone number, 1-800-533-8658, which is located on your bill. This will ensure you are speaking to a genuine representative of the co-op.

- Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring or appliances unless you have scheduled an appointment or reported a problem. Also, ask employees for proper identification.

All utility industries have been on alert, and as long as the scammers continue to make money, it will unfortunately continue to be an issue.

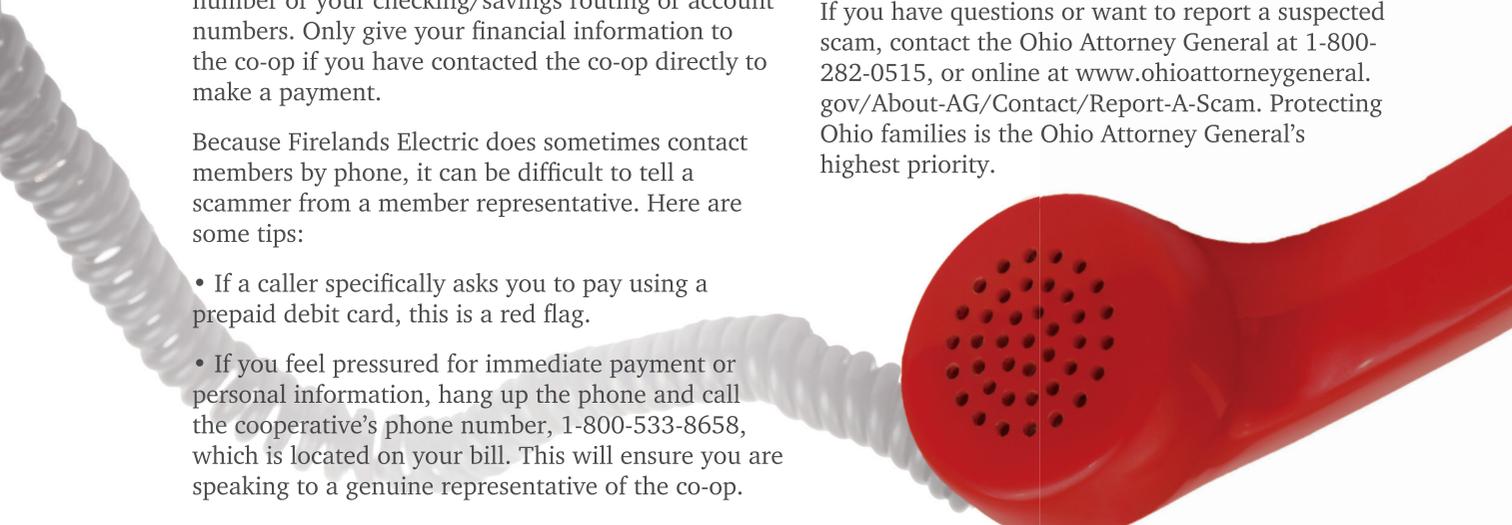
Firelands Electric Co-op wants to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy.

You can avoid receiving unwanted telemarketing calls by placing your phone number on the National Do Not Call Registry at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov), or by calling 1-888-382-1222. If you are on the registry, telemarketers may only call you if you have done business with them in the past 18 months.

If you have questions or want to report a suspected scam, contact the Ohio Attorney General at 1-800-282-0515, or online at [www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/About-AG/Contact/Report-A-Scam](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/About-AG/Contact/Report-A-Scam). Protecting Ohio families is the Ohio Attorney General's highest priority.



Dan McNaull  
General Manager





CO-OP NEWS

## FIRELANDS ELECTRIC

# WELCOMES

## NEW LEADERSHIP

### *Rob Turk brings diverse skills and experience to the board*



Rob Turk  
District 7 Trustee

As announced in January, former trustee Dan McNaull resigned from Firelands Electric's board of trustees to be the cooperative's new general manager. Following the process of selecting a new trustee, the board filled the position in January by appointing Rob Turk to represent the members of district 7.

Turk brings a vast amount of business experience to Firelands Electric's board. He retired from The Coca-Cola Company in Georgia

after 31 years, where he was a national account operations manager. Other leadership positions throughout his career include being the Trumbull County manager for Production Credit Association (known today as Farm Credit Services); a past board member of the Mohican Area Community Fund; and is the eucharistic minister and past member of the financial committee at St. Peter Church in Loudonville. He remains active in various civic organizations, including the Masonic Lodge in Ashland.

Following retirement and relocating back to Ohio, Turk and his wife, Kathy, moved to a small farm outside of Perrysville about eight years ago, where they began their post-retirement adventure of owning their own small business, Gaelic Glen Alpacas.

After extensive research and investigation, the Turks started out with just five alpacas on their farm,

which are raised for their ultra-soft fleece. Due to the growing demand, Gaelic Glen has evolved and the herd has grown to include 18 alpacas. The Turks' alpacas have visited craft shows, petting zoos, fairs, community events, and nursing homes. They've also participated in numerous parades, including Cleveland's St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Turk says his past employment skills combined with his small business owner knowledge and insights enable him to make sound financial decisions, while providing oversight and direction for Firelands Electric to achieve its intermediate and long-term goals.

He believes the increased cost of producing and maintaining the electrical system, along with necessary upgrades in a changing environment, are major issues facing electric cooperatives today. In his mind, continuing to deliver reliable electric power that is cost-effective, while meeting the future needs of Firelands Electric's membership, is the highest priority. He looks forward to working with the other eight trustees on the Firelands Electric board, and is ready to serve the co-op's members.

Firelands Electric Cooperative serves 9,130 members throughout rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties. The co-op's service territory is composed of nine districts, each represented by a member — a trustee — who is elected to serve a three-year term on the board of trustees that governs the operations of the co-op. The board of trustees meets monthly to review, discuss, and approve issues. They determine the strategic direction for Firelands Electric, test the cooperative's business strategy, approve key investment decisions, and set the rates to ensure the co-op meets its financial responsibilities and remains focused on its member-driven mission.



IN THE COMMUNITY

# STITCHING FOR A CAUSE



BY TRACY GIBB

For more than a decade, quilters from New London and neighboring communities have gathered every month to sew, socialize, and share.

An informal group of fellow enthusiasts from New London United Methodist Church officially organized the New London Quilt Guild in 2006. “They started to hold frequent sewing get-togethers and held the first organizational meeting on Feb. 15 of that same year,” says Chris Porter, current co-chair for the club.



The group quickly expanded to include members from throughout the Village of New London and the surrounding area. By 2007, the guild boasted 25 members and held its first public quilt show, showcasing 87 pieces at New London Grange Hall.

The guild now meets regularly at New London Alliance Church to sew and

socialize. Business meetings take place on the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m., while quilting workshops are held the fourth Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Members share ideas, inspiration, tips, and friendship. “We have members skilled in a number of techniques, including

machine quilting, hand-stitching, appliqué, and more,” says founding member and current co-chair Yvonne Westover.

In addition to monthly workshops, the group organizes special classes for both sewing and quilting. These sessions are open to the public and are geared toward crafters of all skill levels.

Perhaps the most significant way these quilters share their talents, though, is through community service projects. The group has created and donated quilts to Huron County foster families, the New London Area Historical Society, and Teen Challenge (a faith-based organization helping women with drug and alcohol addictions). They have made walker bags for nursing home residents and helped Girl Scout troops make aprons and pillowcases.

This concern for community and sharing is obvious in every project created by this gifted group — right down to the individual stitches.

The guild’s next public quilt show is scheduled for April 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at New London Alliance Church, located at 4625 State Route 162. Those interested in joining can contact the guild on Facebook, at [www.nlqg.blogspot.com](http://www.nlqg.blogspot.com), or stop by a meeting. Questions may also be directed to Chris Porter at 419-681-2295.

*Places & Faces is a monthly feature showcasing people, businesses, and organizations located throughout the Firelands Electric Cooperative service territory.*

Places  
& Faces  
of Firelands Electric



Members of the New London Quilt Guild create colorful quilts like these during their monthly workshops.





## Our trustees make a difference

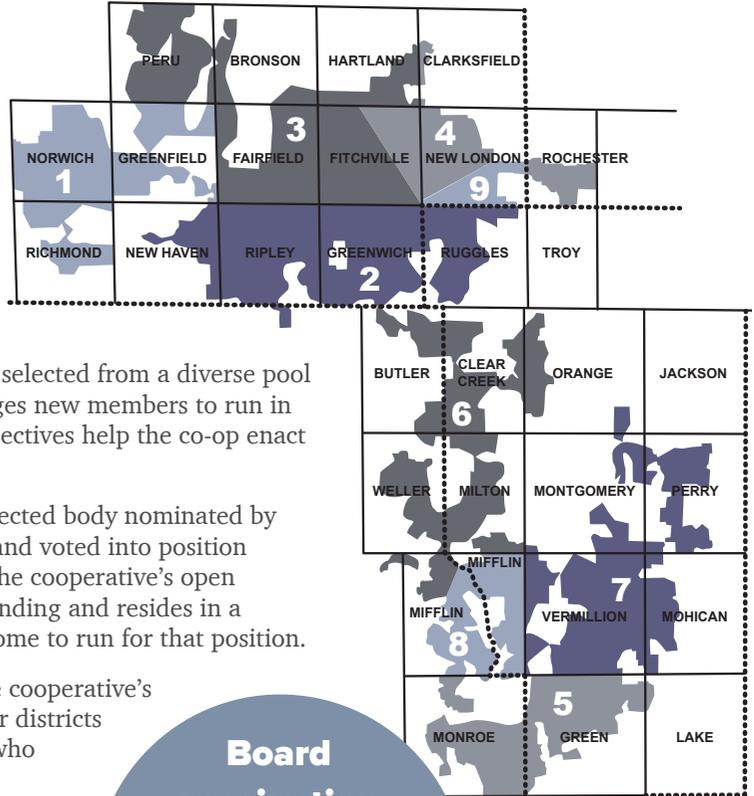
Firelands Electric Co-op is guided by an elected board of trustees who represent its members' best interest when making important decisions. Being a member of the co-op's board is an incredibly important position in our community. A trustee's decisions will impact issues such as service rates, rights-of-way, and work plans.

A trustee holds great responsibility and requires men and women who understand their community's needs. It is important to elect strong leaders to the cooperative's board, selected from a diverse pool of candidates, which is why the co-op encourages new members to run in our board elections. Fresh ideas and new perspectives help the co-op enact policies that keep our community competitive.

Firelands Electric's board is a democratically elected body nominated by members of the cooperative's service territory and voted into position by any member who chooses to participate in the cooperative's open election. Any co-op member who is in good standing and resides in a district with an open spot on the board is welcome to run for that position.

Firelands Electric will hold elections during the cooperative's annual meeting on June 23; board members for districts 2, 7, and 9 will be decided by those members who vote. Any candidate who applies is required to receive 20 member signatures from within his or her district, and submit an election application by Wednesday, April 18. Petitions are available at the Firelands Electric office beginning March 1.

Trustees matter and can make a difference. Call 1-800-533-8658 or visit [www.FirelandsEC.com](http://www.FirelandsEC.com) for more information on how to run for our board of trustees and to find out more about the election process.



**Board nomination petitions are available March 1 for districts 2, 7, and 9.**

Firelands Electric's office will be closed March 30 in observance of Good Friday.

Happy Easter from your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative!



**Don Englet**  
Director of Electric  
Operations

Firelands Electric congratulates Don Englet on his recent promotion as the cooperative's new director of electric operations. Englet is filling the position following the retirement of his predecessor, Denny Marugg.

Englet started at Firelands in March 2000. After completing his apprentice lineman coursework, he was appointed as the cooperative's engineering services representative, where he handled new

services and upgrades, until being promoted to line supervisor in 2005.

His recent job duties included scheduling projects for Firelands Electric's line crews, which consists of four lead linemen, four journeymen, and one apprentice lineman. Purchasing and maintenance of trucks, tools, and equipment have also been part of his responsibilities. Englet has worked with local government and zoning departments on various projects throughout the years, and serves as safety coordinator for the co-op, making him a perfect fit.

Firelands Electric Cooperative continues to be an active participant in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP), sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, which evaluates if the cooperative is meeting safety standards set forth by the government agency Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Participation in RESAP allows Firelands to

maintain a strong safety foundation for employees and for the general public — reaffirming the importance of safety. Englet will continue to be involved in the RESAP process.

Some of Englet's new duties include managing ongoing and future rebuild projects to modernize the cooperative's facilities, which is necessary to accommodate increasing power loads seen over the years, and relocating lines closer to roads to allow efficient maintenance and repairs in the future.

Englet said he enjoys working for the cooperative and is fortunate to work with an excellent group of people. Over the past 18 years, he has been involved in numerous projects, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-funded rebuild project completed about eight years ago following a major ice storm that affected the area in 2005.

What has changed the most in the electric utility industry in Englet's 18 years at Firelands Electric? According to Englet, the biggest difference has been "an increased amount of state and local regulation, especially when it comes to safety, and also the role technology plays in the industry."

In addition to adjusting to his new role, Englet has been taking classes through Mount Vernon Nazarene University, where he is pursuing his Bachelor of Science in business.

Englet lives in Greenwich Township and is a member of the South Central Local Schools Board of Education. He and his wife, Sara, have two sons, Clayton and Jackson. Englet likes spending time with his family and being involved in their activities. He also enjoys camping, fishing, and occasional hunting in his spare time.



## EMPLOYEE NEWS

# RICK BOWERS CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF SERVICE



Rick Bowers  
Journeyman Lineman

Journeyman Lineman Rick Bowers marks his 10th anniversary with the cooperative this month. Bowers was hired in 2008 as an apprentice lineman and was promoted to journeyman lineman in June 2012 after receiving his power lineman certification from Marion Technical College.

As a journeyman lineman, Bowers handles all types of electric power line problems: overhead and underground distribution lines, transformers,

reclosers, and substations. His duties include line construction and maintenance tasks like changing out poles, transformers, and wires. Bowers also handles all advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) equipment located in the cooperative's substations and metering points.

Bowers said he enjoys his job and being part of the cooperative's effort to provide quality power to all of Firelands Electric's members. "Every day is different with new challenges, and as a lineman, you're ready for the next challenge," Bowers said. Linemen respond to trouble calls related to power outages, accidents, fires, and weather conditions. "I enjoy my job, even when the weather turns bad, because I work with a great group of guys," Bowers added.

Working for Firelands Electric over the past decade enabled Bowers to assist others in need. Last year, in the wake of Hurricane Harvey's massive flooding and devastation followed by Hurricane Irma's deadly storm surges, Bowers was one of the 5,000 electric co-op workers to provide a helping hand in rebuilding the ravaged electrical distribution systems. He was part of the massive effort to restore power to an estimated 1.3 million co-op members left in the dark following Hurricane Irma's destruction.

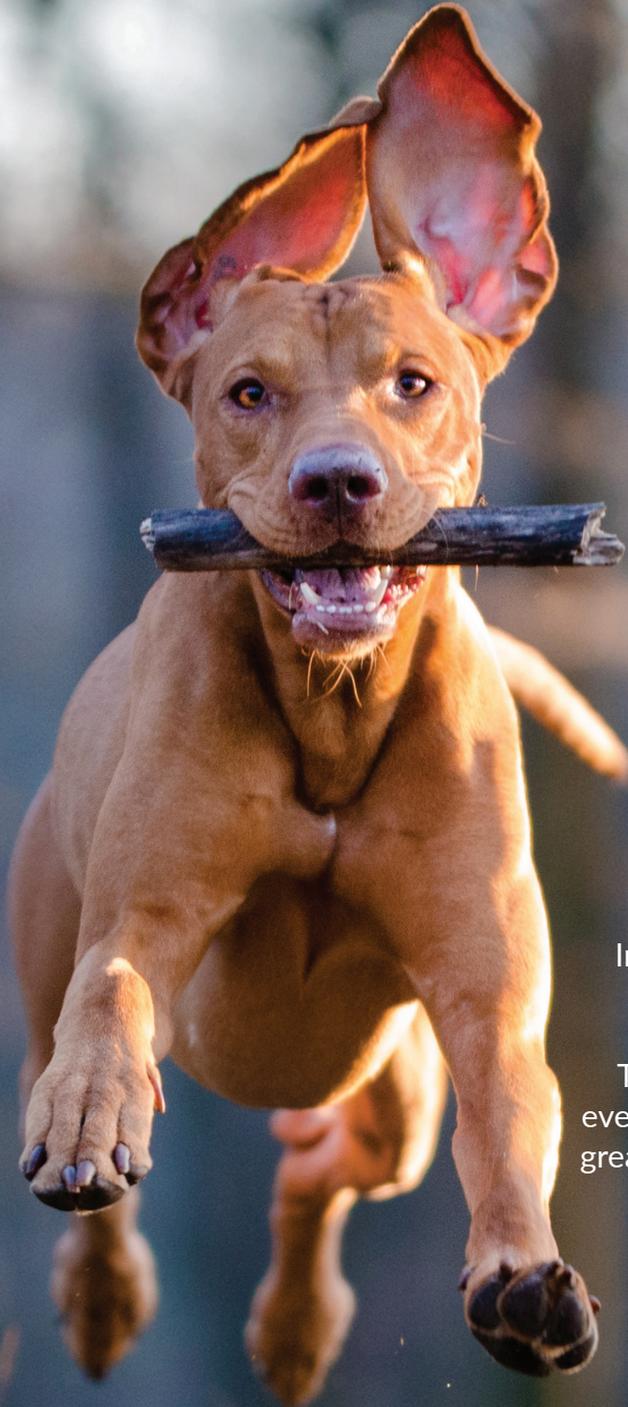
"When we heard that co-op friends in Georgia needed our help, I was honored to be able to answer the call and assist with power restoration efforts," Bowers said. Phil Pickering and Bowers were among the roughly 72 workers sent from Ohio's electric cooperatives. The two Firelands Electric linemen were sent to Jackson EMC, a large electric cooperative serving more than 220,000 members, where they worked for five days to repair damage, replace broken poles, and get power restored in the Peach State.

In 2016, Bowers was given the opportunity to participate in NRECA International, which has brought safe, reliable, and affordable electric power to more than 110 million people in 42 countries over the past 56 years. Bowers traveled with volunteers from several of Ohio's electric cooperatives to La Soledad, Guatemala, as part of a two-week rural electrification project — bringing electricity to the isolated mountaintop village for the first time.

"The Guatemala trip was very important to me," Bowers said. "It was an opportunity to give back to the Central American country where my adopted son, Sam, was born twelve years ago. NRECA International is a terrific program and I am forever thankful for the opportunity.

Originally a native of Greenwich, Bowers resides in the New London area with his wife, Natalie. They have a son, Sam, and a grown daughter, Alex. The Bowers are also proud grandparents and recently celebrated their grandson's first birthday.

The Bowers family has enjoyed hosting multiple exchange students over the years and appreciate the opportunity to provide "American" experiences to teenagers from various parts of the world. In addition to spending quality time with family, Bowers enjoys coaching youth and high school softball, as well as occasional fishing and hunting adventures. He's also an avid Buckeyes fan.



We want to  
**HEAR  
FROM  
YOU!**

Your thoughts and opinions about Firelands Electric Co-op help us to serve you better.

In April, Firelands Electric Cooperative will be working with NRECA Market Research Services to complete a member satisfaction survey.

The surveys will be both by phone and e-mail, 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 the survey, you will help us make decisions that benefit you, your family, and your neighbors.

Thank you!

*All information is confidential.*

**Firelands  
Electric**  
COOPERATIVE  
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



## BILL PAY

# PAYMENT OPTIONS

Your cooperative is committed to making it easy to do business with us. That's why Firelands Electric Co-op offers numerous ways to pay your monthly electric bill.

### Phone Payments

In addition to the traditional methods of paying your bill by mail or in the office, the co-op's member services representatives can also take your payment over the phone. This option is free of charge, and, with Firelands' convenient after-hours answering service, payments can be made 24 hours a day, 7

days a week by calling 1-800-533-8658.

For the most efficient service, please have your complete bank account or card number information readily available. If paying by card, have the card in front of you before you call. To use a checking or savings account, please have a check or a copy of your bank routing and account numbers in hand.

### Automatic Bank Draft

Firelands Electric also offers bank draft. This handy option automatically deducts your electric bill from your checking account or credit card each month.

Payments are made on the 14th of the month, but if this falls on a holiday or weekend, funds are deducted the next business day. Members can choose whether to receive a paper statement or an electronic version. This will let you know how much your payment will be and what day it will be drafted from your account.

With this easy-to-use option, you avoid late fees, save time and postage, and never have to worry about remembering to put your payment in the mail. Access your account through our secure SmartHub application, click on the Billing and Payments tab, and select Auto Pay Program to get set up.

### SmartHub

Firelands' SmartHub payment system allows members to pay their electric bill through our secure online portal.

Members can use a bank account or debit/credit card, and payment methods can be saved for future use, if the member chooses to do so. SmartHub also has the ability to schedule future payments, so you can set them up whenever and wherever you want.

For additional information on bill payment methods, visit [www.firelandsec.com/content/payment-options](http://www.firelandsec.com/content/payment-options) or contact Firelands Electric's billing department at 1-800-533-8658.



Thurs Jan 11, 2018  
Meter # 000000: 38.08 kWh  
Average Temperature: 56° F

Tues Jan 9, 2018  
Meter # 000000: 47.87 kWh  
Average Temperature: 30° F



## CO-OP CONTEST

# Take charge with

# smarthub

**Enroll  
before May 1  
for your chance  
to win a  
\$25 bill credit.**

Firelands Electric Co-op's SmartHub system now offers even more ways for members to take charge of their electric account.

SmartHub isn't just for paying bills or monitoring electric use. It also has the ability to send important account notifications to members via e-mail, text message, or a combination of both. Members can add multiple contact numbers and e-mail addresses, as well as choose which notifications are sent to each contact. Selections can be changed at any time, giving members total flexibility and control.

A variety of notifications are available, including:

- Payment Confirmation
- Credit Card Expiration
- Power Usage
- Planned Power Outage
- Power Outage
- Power Restored
- Peak Alert (Load Management)

Detailed descriptions of SmartHub's features, as well as step-by-step instructions for setting up your account and notifications, are available at [www.firelandsec.com/content/smarthub-101](http://www.firelandsec.com/content/smarthub-101).

### Sign up for a chance to win

Join T.E.A.M. SmartHub between now and May 1 to be entered into a drawing for the chance to win one of several \$25 bill credits.

Just follow these simple steps to enter:

1. Visit [www.firelandsec.smarthub.coop/Login.html](http://www.firelandsec.smarthub.coop/Login.html).
2. Enroll in SmartHub.
3. Sign up to receive at least one notification.

Winners will be drawn on April 1 and May 1. Winners' names will be published in an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine, as well as on Firelands' social media outlets.

Contact Firelands Electric's member services department at 1-800-533-8658 or e-mail [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com) with questions regarding SmartHub or the contest.

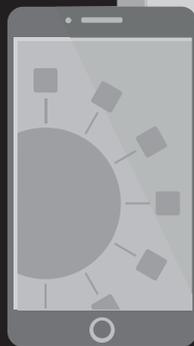
# T.E.A.M.

**T** – Take charge of your electric use!

**E** – Enroll in SmartHub.

**A** – Add your contact information.

**M** – Make your notification choices.





TREE TRIMMING

# MAINTAINING RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR RELIABILITY

There are many ways Firelands Electric Cooperative provides you with safe, reliable electric service. One of the most common — and crucial — is referred to as right-of-way clearing, or vegetation management.

A right-of-way refers to the strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative has the right, and responsibility, to maintain and clear. Trees must grow at a proper distance from wires in order to prevent harm to people or a disruption in electric service. Specifications vary, but a general guideline for maintaining a safe right-of-way is 15 feet of clearance on either side of primary lines and 20 feet of overhead clearance above the highest wire on the pole.

Clearing right-of-way is critical to keeping our members' power on. In 2017, around 32 percent of Firelands Electric's power interruptions were caused by trees and brush, compared to 21 percent caused by small animals. If a tree encroaches on the right-of-way, our vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers, and mowers. Chemical control methods are occasionally used to stop low-growing plant species that can climb and surpass the tall trees growing beneath power lines.

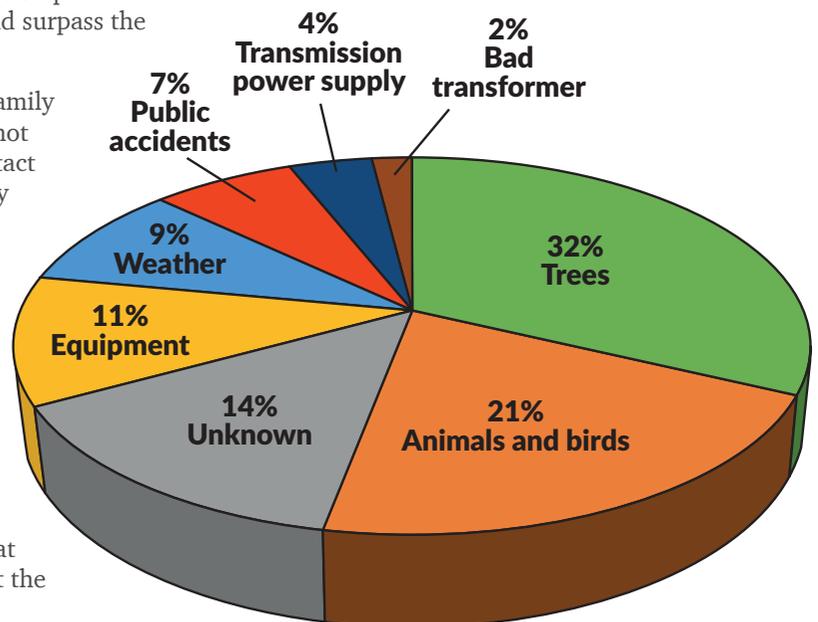
Right-of-way clearing also keeps your family safe by ensuring that tree branches do not become energized because of close contact with a downed power line. Able to carry up to 34,500 volts, a power line can energize a tree branch, which can be incredibly dangerous — even deadly. Be mindful when around trees close to power lines, and make sure children know that climbing trees near power lines is extremely dangerous.

Firelands Electric has 995 miles of power lines to maintain, which serve 9,130 members. Branches and limbs that come into contact with primary wires at the

tops of utility poles can cause voltage fluctuations, blinking lights, or even an outage for hundreds of cooperative members. This gives Firelands Electric's right-of-way maintenance crews a big job to do. Tree contractors began the cooperative's annual right-of-way maintenance program at the beginning of the year.

It is inevitable that a tree planted under power lines will have to be cut down in the future, so why not move to a better location outside the right-of-way before you plant? That way, you can enjoy your new tree for many years to come. Please notify Firelands Electric if you have existing trees on your property that are in danger of coming into contact with power lines.

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/content/right-way-clearance](http://www.firelandsec.com/content/right-way-clearance), or contact Firelands Electric's System Right-of-Way Coordinator James Miller at 1-800-533-8658.







## COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Dec. 21 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported the cooperative received 53 membership applications for approval by the board.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed November financials and reported on accounting and billing department activities.
- The board reviewed an Oct. 30 safety and training report.
- General Manager April Bordas asked the board for approval of the 2018 budget, which was approved.
- The board reviewed a report prepared by Director of Electric Operations Denny Marugg on recent projects in the operations department.
- Line Superintendent Don Englet reported on recent line crew activities and projects.
- The board reviewed a report from Director of Member Services Andrea Gravenhorst on recent communications pieces and upcoming activities involving the member services department.

- As a result of Dan McNaull's resignation as trustee in November, the board elected Dan Schloemer to serve as board president and Carl Ayers as secretary/treasurer for the remainder of the existing terms. Kevin Reidy was named the cooperative's representative to serve on the Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives Board of Directors.

- Due to the untimely passing of trustee Lowell Kreager, the board elected trustee Bruce Leimbach to serve as vice president for the remainder of the existing term to fill the vacancy on the co-op's board of trustees.

Firelands Electric 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. Tuesday, March 27, at Firelands Electric's office, located at One Energy Place, New London.

### FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

#### OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

#### OFFICE

One Energy Place  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
419-929-1571

#### OFFICE HOURS

Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. - 5 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

Steve Gray  
District 3

Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

Neil Winslow  
District 9

### GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

#### HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

E-mail your ideas to:  
[members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com)

