

April 2024

Powerlines



Thank you lineworkers, we can always count on you!

by General Manager Steve Strohane, with co-op lineworkers Dennis Vollrath, Tom Horn, Tom Reda & Joel Craker

Polk-Burnett and co-ops around the country are taking the opportunity this month to honor the professionals who keep our lights on day and night, in all kinds of weather and conditions. Polk-Burnett employs 19 highly skilled lineworkers, plus two superintendents, who work across 2,000 square miles of our service territory. It's a big area; we have one crew up north and one crew down south. They are specially trained to work on power lines at more than 7,200 volts of electricity. Anyone who has had power restored after an outage knows and appreciates the critical service provided by lineworkers. We thank them all for their dedication and for putting safety first for each other and our members.

In honor of Lineworker Appreciation Day April 8, I'd like to share some points of view written by four of our co-op lineworkers: Tom Horn, Tom Reda and Joel Craker have 33 years of service at Polk-Burnett and Dennis Vollrath has 53 years.



Dennis Vollrath, Polk-Burnett lineworker for 53 years

As Polk-Burnett lineworkers, we power every moment of your day. Some of you may not know it, but we work year-round to build and maintain the electric system. We don't get laid off in the winter; we work in all seasons, when the ground is frozen, when the heat is oppressive, and when our workspace is swarming with mosquitos and ticks. With 3,500 miles of power line, 34,500 power poles and 16,200 overhead and padmount transformers, there is always something that needs to be repaired or replaced. About half of our work is overhead construction and half is underground.

We work in dangerous conditions, at extreme heights near high-voltage electricity. We often work on energized lines. We call this hot work and there is no room for mistakes. We are dedicated to safety at all times. Before we start a job, we make a plan. And during each job, we have each other's backs. We are part of a brotherhood. Our older journeymen lineworkers are paired with younger apprentices to pass important knowledge and skills on to a new generation.



Tom Horn, Polk-Burnett lineworker for 33 years

When you see one person up on the pole and another on the ground, know that the lineworker on the ground is just as important. He is our eyes on the ground, watching the line, our equipment, tools and traffic. We have to know what's around us at all times when working with live electricity.

We also work in extreme weather conditions. When you need power the most is usually when the weather is the worst—low visibility, cold, rain, wind and snow. It's a physically demanding job, but you won't hear us complain. We'd rather be climbing poles, in and out of buckets and hiking through the woods than working inside!

After our workday is done, we take turns working on-call in case of an after-hours outage. If your lights go out, we go out, too, in the dark, in the cold, often leaving in the middle of family dinners or when our kids are sick, celebrating a birthday or playing in school sports. We are called out in the middle of the night and weekends, responding 24-7-365 to fix your power.



Joel Craker, Polk-Burnett lineworker for 33 years

Once you're a lineworker, you never take your eyes off the line. Whenever we drive down a road, on or off the clock, we're always patrolling the line, watching out for any damage.

Beyond our work for the co-op, we also serve in our communities. We volunteer and do power line safety training for students at local schools. This is our hometown too, and we're always happy to help our neighbors.

It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. And it's always nice to hear a member say, "thank you" when the lights come back on.

~ from co-op lineworkers Dennis Vollrath, Tom Horn, Tom Reda and Joel Craker

You can see it takes a special person to be a lineworker. They are courageous, committed and dedicated. You can always count on them to deliver reliable electricity to our homes, farms and businesses. From all of us, thank you lineworkers!

PLEASE MOVE OVER FOR EMERGENCY AND UTILITY CREWS

If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible.

Together, we can keep our crews safe.

DON'T POST ON POWER POLES

Tacks, staples and nails can tear protective gear and can cause injuries.

REBATES FOR CO-OP MEMBERS ON ENERGY EFFICIENT HEAT PUMPS

Today's electric heat pumps—air source and geothermal—provide high efficiency heating and cooling in an all-in-one system that can help lower your energy bills and improve comfort in your home.



EnergySense rebates can help co-op members make the switch to an energy efficient heat pump, just in time for A/C season! Tax credits may also be available.

Give us a call to compare heating and cooling options.
800-421-0283, x318 | polkburnett.com



Happy Arbor Day, April 26

Trees are wonderful in the right places. They beautify our yards, communities and countryside, and benefit the environment. They also help lower electricity bills. Plant leafy deciduous trees on the east, west and south sides of your home to provide shade during summer and sunlight during winter. This helps reduce heating and cooling costs. Plant evergreens on the northwest side of your home to be a barrier from cold winter winds.

Be safe: Always call 811 before you dig so underground utilities can be marked, and make sure trees won't grow up to touch overhead power lines. Questions about efficient and safe tree planting? Call 800-421-0283, ext. 329.



A clear right-of-way is a priority for safe, reliable power

"Polk-Burnett is responsible for maintaining the right-of-way under power lines to keep power flowing safely to your home. Right-of-way maintenance is intended to keep tree branches and brush away from high-voltage power lines. This reduces blinks and outages, improves access for quicker outage repairs, and reduces risk of fire and life-threatening electrocution. We notify members with a postcard prior to work on your property. Thank you for your cooperation." ~ Rick Kosloski, rights-of-way manager



Annual herbicide notice for members

Polk-Burnett's mission is to provide members with safe, reliable power as efficiently as possible. An important part of this mission is our right-of-way program, which includes herbicide application to control growth of woody stemmed vegetation under power lines.

In 2024, Polk-Burnett will continue its herbicide program to control vegetation in the electric right-of-way. Trained, licensed contractors will walk the rights-of-way with a backpack container and use a hand wand to apply a low-volume herbicide; only the leaves of woody stemmed vegetation are targeted. The application is scheduled to begin in June and will conclude in October.

If you choose to decline the use of herbicide, please complete and return form below by May 17 to:

Polk-Burnett, Rights-of-Way Department, 1001 State Road 35, Centuria, WI 54824.

If form is not received by May 17, 2024, herbicide application may occur on properties not currently in our database.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THIS FORM OR CONTACT US IF:

- 1) You are served by underground power lines. Polk-Burnett does not apply herbicide to areas with underground lines.
- 2) You have already sent this form or contacted Polk-Burnett in the past to decline the use of herbicide.

Visit polkburnett.com/herbicide-faqs to see if your property is already on the No Herbicide list.

Please do not apply herbicide on my property(s). I understand that if I have multiple properties where I do not want herbicide application, I must notify Polk-Burnett of all locations, so they can be properly identified. I understand that I must place signs (provided by Polk-Burnett on request) beneath the power lines to identify my property boundaries and that future right-of-way maintenance will be performed by mowing.

Save paper and postage: Properties can be added to the No Herbicide list on polkburnett.com/herbicide-faqs

Name: _____

Location Number or Account Number: _____

Parcel ID Number from County Tax Record: _____

Property Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address (Optional): _____

Signature: _____

If you do not know how the right-of-way on your property is maintained or if you have questions about herbicide application, call us at 800-421-0283, ext. 329. We're happy to help. To learn more about herbicide application, and view product labels and material safety data sheets, visit polkburnett.com/right-way.

IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SURVEY, WE APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK TO HELP US IMPROVE.

All members who submit a survey will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 bill credit.

Polk-Burnett is your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.

Follow us on Facebook. Sign up for our SmartHub app.

800-421-0283 • polkburnett.com



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

