



## Power with purpose means being ready to respond and plan ahead by General Manager Steve Stroshane

**Happy Co-op Month!** October is the perfect time to thank you and reaffirm the purpose that guides everything we do. As a cooperative, we exist to serve you, our members, neighbors and communities. Being a co-op means we are member-owned and locally controlled. Decisions are not made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away; they are made here at home, by members like you. As general manager of Polk-Burnett, I see purpose in action every single day. This month, I'd like to share updates on four key strategies where we are focusing on what matters most: delivering reliable power and providing real value to the people we serve.



### Ready to respond: Apple River Substation outage

Just before dawn on Tuesday, August 26, a truck and trailer accident on Highway 8 between Amery and Turtle Lake caused significant damage to the Apple River Substation, *left*. The resulting outage left 1,500 co-op members in the dark for about two hours, from 6 to 8:15 a.m.

Crews from Polk-Burnett and Dairyland Power Cooperative responded immediately. Once the scene was safe, they assessed the damage and quickly realized it would take days to fully repair. Knowing that you rely on electricity and extended outages are unacceptable, our team re-routed electricity from other substations to restore power to co-op members quickly and safely. Then, workers got busy repairing the damaged substation, *above*.

By August 29, just three days after the accident, the Apple River Substation was re-energized and power was re-routed back through it, just in time for the busy Labor Day weekend.

We appreciate your positive comments and concern for our lineworkers and all involved. What a wonderful community!

### Understanding substations and your power

The electricity you use travels a great distance, across hundreds of miles and thousands of power poles, undergoing several steps to reach your home. It begins at the power plant. Dairyland Power Cooperative, our generation and transmission (G&T) power provider, owns and operates power plants that produce high-voltage electricity. Large transformers step up the voltage even higher so it can travel long distances across transmission lines. As electricity approaches its final destination, it goes through a substation, where it is stepped down by another large transformer to 7,200 volts. It can then be safely delivered across Polk-Burnett distribution power lines to the pole outside your home. The final overhead transformer or underground green transformer box converts the voltage down to 120/240 volts that operate the devices that power your life.



### Planning ahead: New substation under construction

Construction of the new Cedar Lake Substation in the Town of Star Prairie has begun – it's the first new substation on co-op lines since 2001! We strategically planned for this substation as demand for electricity and your expectations for reliability continue to grow. Not only is new substation work necessary, but additional work is required to reconfigure nearby power lines. Pictured are two co-op linemen, working high above their trucks on the line reconfiguration. The highest-voltage wires are 69,000 volts, and the wires they are working on are 12,500 volts.

We expect Cedar Lake Substation to be energized by December. *Dairyland owns all substations in our service area, and we deliver power from the substation to you, our local members.*

### Planning ahead: New local solar under construction

Construction has started on Luck and Viola Solar; the two arrays will generate local power to benefit co-op members. Local solar not only adds clean energy to the grid, but it also improves reliability and offsets power market costs, making it an operational and financial advantage for the co-op and our members.



- Luck Solar will be connected to the Luck Substation between Luck and Frederic.
- Viola Solar will be connected to the Hertel Substation between Siren and Hertel.
- The 2.5MW arrays will power about 600 homes each.
- The developer is OneEnergy Renewables; Polk-Burnett will purchase the power.
- The arrays have small 13-acre footprints, with native plants to improve soil health.
- We anticipate both Luck and Viola solar will be energized by December.



### Planning ahead: Moving overhead power lines underground

Polk-Burnett maintains 3,500 miles of power line, about 1,500 are overhead and 2,000 are underground. Our annual work plan includes converting overhead lines to underground cable where it makes sense to strengthen the grid. Pictured are Siren crew members working on Shuttleworth Road west of Siren late summer.

*Members: You can convert your service line from overhead to underground. Contact us for a routing plan and a cost quote, 800-421-0283, ext. 389.*





## Wisconsin residents: No tax on electricity bills

**Beginning in October**, Wisconsin residents will no longer pay sales tax on their home electricity and natural gas bills. The tax cut was passed as part of the state's 2025-27 budget.

Previously, Wisconsin law exempted residential energy use from sales tax during the coldest part of the year when heat was necessary, November through April. Now, there is **no tax on electricity all year long**, including during the summer when AC increases your energy use.

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative adjusted our billing system to stop collecting the 5.5% state and county sales tax on residential accounts beginning with the October 2025 billing cycles. This change applies to all permanent, residential accounts.

*The Wisconsin Tax Code states that this tax exemption is for permanent residences only, and does not include commercial properties, seasonal homes, cabins, vacation rentals or RVs. For our Polk-Burnett Propane customers, there is no tax on propane for permanent Wisconsin residents.*

## Wisconsin Energy Assistance

Your household may be eligible for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP), based on income and size. For help paying your electric bill, contact West CAP, 715-598-4750 or [westcap.org](http://westcap.org).

## Save energy and money with rebates from your electric co-op



Polk-Burnett offers the following rebates to help co-op members save energy and money, while improving comfort in your home.

- \$350 off home performance test, then up to \$1,000 rebate on home energy upgrades
- Rebates on geothermal and air source heat pumps
- Rebates on renewable energy systems
- Rebates on appliances and lighting
- Special member price on Marathon water heater

*Let us know if we can assist, 800-421-0283, ext. 318 or [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).*



## Find and unplug energy vampires in your home

Energy vampires are electronics and appliances that use energy even when they are turned off or not in use. These devices may not use a lot of power when they are switched off, but even small losses add up. Energy vampires are responsible for about 10% of the electricity you use every month. The only way to stop that energy drain is to pull the plug.

One way to identify energy vampires is to start with devices that have remote controls—TVs, DVRs and audio equipment. And don't forget gaming consoles and computers, monitors and printers. Another thing to check is chargers for cell phones, tablets and laptops, which use energy even when they're not charging. If the device has an indicator light or clock that stays on, it's drawing power even when turned off!

One easy solution is to plug your computer system, home entertainment system and other devices into a power strip. Then, with a single flip of a switch, you can turn off everything plugged into the strip. Don't forget to unplug any appliances—such as coffee makers and toaster ovens—when you aren't using them. **HAPPY HALLOWEEN!**

*Find more tips to save energy and lower your electric bill; visit [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) or call 800-421-0283, ext. 318.*

**CLASS OF 2026**

**CO-OP COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP & YOUTH TOUR AWARDS**

Show your co-op spirit and win a Polk-Burnett scholarship!

up to **\$1,500** each

will be awarded to high school seniors whose parents are members of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative.

**Good for technical school, college or university**

Plus, win a trip to Washington, D.C.

Visit [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) for eligibility, official rules and online application. APPLY ONLINE. DEADLINE TO APPLY: JANUARY 1, 2026.



## October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Be skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.

Do not provide immediate payment or personal information by phone or email.

Do not click on suspicious links or open unexpected attachments.

Hang up on scammers and delete fraud email.

Call Polk-Burnett (or other service providers) directly using phone number on your bill.

Better yet, use SmartHub!

It's a safe, convenient way to pay your electric bill, track energy use and report outages.



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](http://polkburnett.com)



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

