

August 2025



87th Annual Meeting report; thank you for attending

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Employees and directors of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative welcomed 700 members and guests to our Centuria office Friday, June 6, for Member Appreciation Day and the 87th Annual Meeting of the cooperative.

We thank all who attended.

We enjoy meeting our members and talking with you about co-op performance, especially reliability and our member and community focus.

87th Annual Meeting

Following the member appreciation lunch, Board President Ed Gullickson called the Annual Meeting to order with a salute to Veterans and board introductions. The one-hour meeting included reports on co-op financials, reliability, member satisfaction, community involvement and 2025 board election results. The meeting concluded with a member Q&A forum.



Strategic investments to keep the lights on

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative employs 50 local people who provide you with extraordinary service. We deliver power to more than 22,000 electric accounts. Lineworkers maintain 3,500 miles of power line; 2,000 miles are underground cable and 1,500 miles are overhead wire.

In 2024, co-op members experienced an average of 50 minutes without power, when major events are factored out. When storms and major events are included, members experienced an average of an hour-and-a-half without power. 42% of outage hours were caused by trees on power lines. That's why our work to keep the right-of-way clear is important; it improves safety and reduces outages.

When I started at Polk-Burnett in 1996, members averaged four hours without power! Our investment in the electric grid is strategically planned to keep your lights on.

The co-op invested \$5.9 million in 2024 and another \$6.1 in 2025 to upgrade the electric system and reduce the number and length of outages. New technology enables the co-op to re-route power from one substation to another and restore power more quickly. We are using this switching technology in Webster and it's coming to Balsam Lake, St. Croix Falls and Hertel areas in 2026.

The new Cedar Lake Substation is a \$2 million investment to meet the growing need for energy in Somerset and Star Prairie areas. It's the first new substation to serve Polk-Burnett members since 2001. Construction has started and it's expected to be operational later this year.

We are proud of the level of satisfaction we provide

Polk-Burnett members gave the co-op a score of 87 out of 100 on the 2024 American Customer Satisfaction Index. For comparison, investor-owned utilities earned an ACSI score of 74 and municipals a 75.

In response to member feedback, if your lights go out, we keep you informed through outage text alerts, updates on Facebook, as well as a live outage map on our website. New this year, we are providing texts and emails to notify members when service technicians are on the way and when electric devices are controlled through the co-op's load management program.



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POWERLINES



Financial report

Heather Gerber, finance and accounting manager, reported that the co-op had \$112 million in electric assets in 2024, with electric operating revenue of \$36 million and electric operating margins of \$2 million. The co-op installed 273 new services and sold 237 million kWhs of electricity in 2024.

"Polk-Burnett does not own power plants; 56% of our revenue (more than \$20 million) goes to purchase power from Dairyland Power Cooperative," explained Gerber. "The balance is what we have to work with to build and maintain local power lines and keep your lights on."

Gerber said that inflation has increased the cost of materials, especially trucks, transformers and wire, as well as contracted services. She reported that the price for utility construction materials has risen 51% since 2020. Because of this, the cooperative will implement a 3% electric rate increase in July; large commercial members will see an average increase of 4.7%.

Gerber provided a refresher about co-op rates, noting the difference between the kWh energy charge and the daily availability charge, which covers the cost of wires, poles, transformers and other materials to build and maintain the electric grid and ensure power is available at member locations. Gerber explained that the daily availability charge is higher in rural areas because there are fewer members to share these costs. Polk-Burnett has an average of just six members per mile of line.

Gerber reminded members about co-op programs to help with electric bills, including SmartHub to track energy use, EnergySense rebates, prepay and budget billing. "Your electric bill is affected by the rate, but also by the energy you use. Please give us a call if we can help you find ways to save energy and money," she said.

In 2024, Polk-Burnett provided more than \$200,000 in rebates to help co-op members improve energy efficiency. The upgrades saved 435,000 kWh of electricity.

Gullickson added that Polk-Burnett returned \$1.65 million in Capital Credits to members in fall 2024. "One of the greatest advantages of co-op membership is Capital Credits," he said. "As a co-op, any money we collect above and beyond expenses is returned to members."

Improving our local quality of life

In 2024, Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up donated \$70,694 to 70 local nonprofits, thanks to the generosity of members who round up their electric bill.

The board approved \$151,500 in scholarships to 101 children of co-op members in the Class of 2025, our largest class ever! Scholarships are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that otherwise would be forfeited to the state, and by the generosity of members who donate Capital Credits.

Local solar to benefit local members

Co-op leaders also shared an update on local solar projects, including SunTuria Solar in Centuria (2017), Georgetown Solar (2023), and two new projects in 2025 near Luck Substation and Hertel Substation. Generating some of our own power locally improves reliability, offsets power costs and helps meet high summer demand. These projects were coordinated with others across Wisconsin to get a better price and return on investment for our members. All are small 10- to 13-acre footprints, with restored native habitat.

Scan QR code to see financials, handouts and more from the 87th Annual Meeting. See prize winners on back page.

Director election returns three incumbents to board

Results of the 2025 board election were announced at the Annual Meeting in June. Members re-elected incumbent directors Joe Metro of Balsam Lake, John Ukura of Luck and Wilfred Owens of Frederic.

Thank you for your vote: The election was conducted by an independent election contractor, with all members in districts 4, 5 and 6 receiving a ballot and voting instructions earlier this spring. Voter participation was 15%, with 680 paper ballots and 202 online ballots received from 5,846 eligible voters.



Board directors serve three-year terms and meet monthly to make policy and budget decisions. As a co-op, we are owned and governed by the members we serve. Local board governance is one of the greatest advantages of our co-op business model.

L-R: Polk-Burnett Board Director Wilfred Owens, Wisconsin Assembly Representative Duke Tucker, Polk-Burnett Board Director John Ukura, Polk-Burnett General Manager Steve Stroshane and Polk-Burnett Board Director Joe Metro at the 87th Annual Meeting June 6, 2025.

How extreme summer temps impact reliability

When outdoor temperatures soar, our electricity use increases. Higher summer demand on the grid occurs because air conditioners are running longer and more often to keep homes and businesses comfortable. The grid is stressed even more because most of us tend to use electricity and draw power at the same time.

We work with Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier, to ensure you have power when you need it, but the electric grid is much larger than Polk-Burnett and Dairyland.

In the summer, when more electricity is used simultaneously across the country, it's possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially during a prolonged heat wave. When this happens, our regional grid operator (MISO), may call on members to voluntarily reduce energy. Polk-Burnett also controls devices in our load management program to relieve pressure on the grid. We keep members informed with Beat the Peak Alerts and Load Control Alerts.

As we shared in our June Powerlines, we proactively maintain and update the grid to ensure reliability. Our solar arrays also help by generating power locally to meet high summer demand.

You can help, too! Below are tips to beat the peak and the summer heat. You'll save money on your electric bill and help with grid resilience. Thank you!

1. Move your thermostat up a few degrees; a fan can help you feel cooler.
2. Close curtains during the hottest part of the day to block heat from the sun.
3. Run dehumidifiers in the early morning or after 6 p.m.
4. Seal air leaks around windows and doors to keep cool air in and hot air out.
5. Wash clothes and dishes during off-peak hours when energy demand is lower.
6. Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics.
7. Charge EVs overnight.
8. Use small appliances, like slow cookers and air fryers, for cooking with less heat and energy. Better yet, grill outside!

Scan to enroll or call 800-421-0283, x335. ▶



ENROLL TO RECEIVE PEAK ALERTS

We'll send you a text, email and/or phone message asking you to **REDUCE ELECTRICITY** when demand and price are high.

Together We Save Money, Energy and our Environment.

BEAT THE PEAK ALERT

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 bill 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 the heating season! Tax credits may also be available. Give us a call to compare heating and cooling options, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

Stay in your car if power lines are down

- Following an accident or storm that drops power lines around your vehicle:
- ✓ Stay inside car until power is shut off; the ground outside may be energized.
 - ✓ Do not drive over wires; they may be live with high-voltage electricity.
 - ✓ Call 911 and keep others away until help arrives.

If you must exit the vehicle, jump clear so no part of your body touches the car when you land. Keep both feet together and shuffle or hop at least 40 feet away. Keeping feet together and on the ground minimizes the risk of electrocution.

Always assume the ground and power lines are energized and dangerous.



Member Appreciation Drawing, \$50 Electric Bill Credit				Annual Meeting Drawing, \$50 Electric Bill Credit			
1. Lawrence Schmidt, Stillwater	6. Edward Freitag, Comstock	1. JoAnn Sellent, Cumberland	6. Doug Fall, Star Prairie				
2. Donald Weisbrod, Lindstrom	7. Roger Buske, Amery	2. Bruce Caudy, Clear Lake	7. Wayne Gustafson, Frederic				
3. Francis Klatt, Emerald	8. Richard Anderson, Frederic	3. Jim Sherbert, Inver Grove Hts	8. Regis Hammer, Turtle Lake				
4. Donald Hendrickson, Balsam Lk	9. Eugene Hallberg, Milltown	4. Jane & Doug Green, Balsam Lk	9. Mark Wettig, Star Prairie				
5. Roger Shaide, Luck	10. Lowell Paulson, SCF	5. Darrell Sandeen, Siren	10. Richard Baillargeon, Somerset				

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.

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