

December 2025

POWERLINES



Meeting growing electricity demand requires member-focused, forward thinking *by General Manager Steve Stroshane*

As we wrap up another year, I'd like to extend our gratitude to you, our valued members. Your trust and support are the foundation of everything we do. Every decision and investment we make in our electric system, programs and services revolve around one basic question: *How will this benefit our members?*

One of the challenges facing the electric grid today is growing demand and rising costs driven by innovations such as AI data centers. Although this trend has not yet impacted northwestern Wisconsin, the U.S. Department of Energy forecasts that data centers could consume up to 12% of all electricity by 2028. Our board of directors and management team are watching this issue closely.

The problem isn't rising energy demand itself, but it highlights the need for smart and balanced energy policies that support a mix of energy resources.

Currently, most new energy projects in the U.S. are solar based. Solar energy offers many benefits, but relying solely on solar and wind is impractical due to their intermittent nature. On days when the sun doesn't shine or the wind doesn't blow, baseload power generation from coal, natural gas and nuclear remain essential for safe, reliable power.

While renewable energy is a critical part of our energy future, we also recognize the indispensable role of traditional resources. A focus on renewables doesn't have to mean the rapid retirement of coal plants or underinvestment in natural gas facilities. Without all available fuel sources, our nation's electric grid will struggle to meet future demand.

Permitting hurdles and long lead times for building new transmission and generation projects also present significant challenges. Modernizing the construction process and our energy infrastructure are critical to keeping the power flowing to your homes, farms and businesses.

In summary, our job is becoming more complex. We remain dedicated to using all generation resources wisely and controlling what we can to benefit our members.

Over the past decade, we've developed four local solar projects to help alleviate summer peaks and reduce power supply costs. Polk-Burnett's 2026 construction work plan invests \$6 million into our power distribution system. Annually, we rebuild 45 to 50 miles of power line, with 30 miles being moved underground. We've added a new Cedar Lake substation in our southwestern service area, and we are upgrading additional substations to improve reliability.

We are also enhancing our technology to offer 24/7/365 self-service for our members, improve power restoration times and communicate outage statuses more effectively. Beyond these investments, Polk-Burnett remains actively involved in the communities we serve and live in.

As we look forward to a new year, we recognize both challenges and opportunities. The energy industry is seeing significant change driven by policy, technology and the growing need for more power. Navigating this new path requires strategic thinking and member-focused solutions.

Our promise to you

As the demand for electricity grows, we promise to:

- ✳️ Remain true to our mission of providing reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.
- ✳️ Use technology to make our work more efficient, improve member service and strengthen the grid.
- ✳️ Listen to your feedback to enhance co-op programs and services.
- ✳️ Support our community and local quality of life, according to our cooperative business model.

***May your holiday season be merry and bright!
~ from all of us at Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative***



Run for a seat on your electric co-op board

Your electric co-op plays a vital role in our community, providing reliable electricity to thousands of homes and businesses.

A dedicated board is responsible for setting policies and rates and approving the annual investment in our local electric grid.

Directors serve three-year terms and attend monthly board meetings, along with co-op events and conferences.

In spring 2026, co-op members will elect board directors in districts 1, 2 and 3. If you are enthusiastic about shaping the co-op's future, contact the general manager's office to learn more about running for a seat on the board, 800-421-0283, ext. 313.

Your generosity helps food banks, libraries, seniors and schools



Thank you, co-op members for rounding up! Our Operation Round Up program awarded \$16,500 to 20 local nonprofits this month, including \$1,500 to Interfaith Caregivers of Burnett County, pictured. From heating homes to transportation assistance, accessibility ramps and Christmas for Kids, we're proud to help support all the good they do in our community.



Also pictured are volunteers from the Gift of Warm Clothing, who received a \$1,000 Operation Round Up grant in July. They've helped our community stay warm with coats, boots, snow pants, hats, mittens and gloves for 20 years!

See all fall grant recipients, including five public libraries, two food programs, two hockey associations and two senior centers, and learn how nonprofits can apply on polkburnett.com. Look for Operation Round Up under the Community menu.

Deadline for EnergySense rebates is January 1

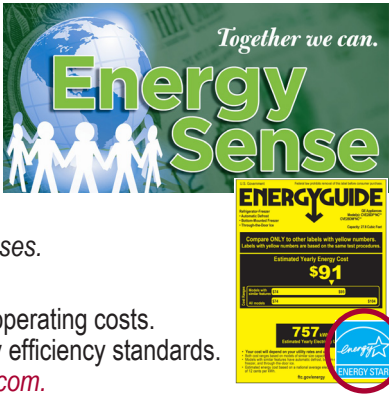
- ❄ \$350 off home performance test, then up to \$1,000 rebate on energy upgrades
- ❄ Rebates on HVAC, geothermal and air source heat pumps
- ❄ Rebates on appliances and lighting
- ❄ Rebates on renewable energy systems and EV chargers
- ❄ Special \$950 member price on Marathon water heater

The deadline to submit rebate form is January 1, 2026, for 2025 qualifying purchases.

EnergyStar certification is required for co-op appliance rebates

When shopping for energy efficient appliances, compare **EnergyGuides** for lower operating costs. Look for the **EnergyStar** certified stamp to identify products that meet high energy efficiency standards.

Give us a call or visit our website for details, 800-421-0283, ext. 318, polkburnett.com.



Deadline for co-op scholarship applications is January 1

Sons and daughters of co-op members in the Class of 2026: You could win up to \$1,500 for college!

Learn more and apply on polkburnett.com by January 1, 2026.

Co-op scholarships are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits and by members who donate Capital Credits. Thank you!



Lower winter rate, no electricity tax

Polk-Burnett lowers your electricity rate in the winter to 10.98¢ because energy demand and the cost of power are lower in the winter. Co-op rates are based on actual costs and when we see winter savings on our wholesale power bill, we pass the savings on to you!

Winter billing dates are October through May. The summer rate is 12.57¢ June through September.

No tax on electricity for Wisconsin residents all year long. The tax cut is part of the state's 2025-27 budget.

Be prepared for winter outages

Co-op crews work to strengthen the grid and prevent outages, but winter snow, ice and wind can damage power lines. If your lights go out:

- ❄ Check circuit breakers, fuses and see if neighbors have power.
 - ❄ Report outages 24/7 on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
 - ❄ See live outage map on polkburnett.com.
- Major outages are also posted on our Facebook page.
- ❄ Stay away from fallen power lines and trees on lines.
 - ❄ If we have your cell number on your electric account, we'll send you a text alert when you have an outage at your location.
 - ❄ We'll also text you the outage cause and estimated restoration time, whenever possible.
 - ❄ Keep your cell number up to date on your account through SmartHub or 800-421-0283, ext. 335.

Our goal is to restore power safely and quickly, while keeping you informed.



The holiday season is a festive time of year! Remember to keep electrical and fire safety in mind as you decorate your home.

Can you find the four hazards in the home below? Use the safety tips for clues.

Electrical Safety Tips:

- Do not overload electrical outlets with too many decorations or appliances.
- Never leave a candle burning if you're not in the room.
- Make sure your tree is watered daily.
- Extension cords used for holiday decorations should be checked for fraying/damaged or exposed wires.



Farm animals may be sensitive to electricity

Animals are more sensitive to electric currents than humans. If you notice sensitive behavior in cows and livestock on your farm, such as a tendency to shy away from objects or a hesitancy to enter stalls or milking parlors, contact your electric cooperative. You may have stray voltage issues caused by poor grounding or defective electrical equipment.

For assistance, contact Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, 800-421-0283, ext. 322.



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

