

POWERLINES

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative | June 2021



The July 2019 storm caused widespread property damage and power outages

We're working to strengthen the grid and prevent outages

by General Manager Steve Strohane

Move your service line out of harm's way

As we enter summer storm season again, we thought we would pass along a lesson learned from the July 2019 severe storm. If a homeowner wants some protection against a storm-caused outage, converting your overhead service to underground is one step that can be taken. If your meter socket is damaged during a storm, the homeowner has to find an electrician to make the repairs to the meter socket. Polk-Burnett crews will then come and repair the overhead wires. However this can take time after a major storm, as electricians are in high demand and linemen are initially focused on restoring substations, followed by main lines that affect the greatest number of members, before repairing lines to individual members. Below is a proactive approach and one that I just did at my own cabin.

Fee-based conversion of your electric service line from overhead to underground

Polk-Burnett works hard to strengthen its system and prevent power outages, but storms are always a threat. Wind, lightning, snow and ice can damage overhead power lines and cause outages. To help you reduce this risk, co-op members may choose to convert individual electric service lines from overhead to underground. This is an option for co-op members for an additional fee. Your service line connects your home to the transformer and primary power lines.

Three benefits of underground service

1. Reduces outages, blinks, and damage to your meter socket and mast caused by tree branches and severe weather.
2. Eliminates the need for right-of-way clearing under individual service line on your property.
3. Looks better! No more power lines over your yard.

Your power may still be affected by an underground fault or outage down the line, but overall reliability improves.

Underground installation fee

Members pay for the service line upgrade to your home. Installation requires trenching or plowing, and may require a padmount transformer box or pedestal.

Contact us to get started

A co-op staking engineer will determine the best route for an underground power line on your property, and we will quote your cost for conversion. Contact our operations team to get started, 800-421-0283, ext. 308 or 365.

Tree trimming improves service for all

We all enjoy the beauty of Wisconsin and the trees that offer shade and habitat for birds and wildlife. But when trees interfere with power lines, they can cause power outages and safety hazards.

As your local electric cooperative, Polk-Burnett strives for balance in protecting our beautiful surroundings, while ensuring a reliable power supply. Our goal is to maintain the rights-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 ensures fewer blinks and outages, improved access for faster restoration times, and less risk of fire and life-threatening electrocution.

What's a right-of-way?

A right-of-way is the land we use to construct, maintain, replace and repair underground and overhead power lines. The right-of-way is a space that is clear of trees and other obstructions that could hinder or harm power line operation. Polk-Burnett is responsible for maintaining the power lines and managing the growth of trees and vegetation in the right-of-way.

Three benefits of a clear right-of-way

The goal of keeping the right-of-way clean and clear is to provide safe, reliable power to our members, while protecting the natural beauty of our community. Proactive vegetation management and tree trimming benefits co-op members in three ways:

1. Safety: First and foremost, we care about our members and put your safety and that of our lineworkers above all else. Overgrown vegetation and trees pose a risk to power lines and people. For example, if trees are touching power lines in a member's yard, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone.

2. Reliability: Proactive tree trimming diminishes the chances of fallen branches and trees during severe weather. Generally speaking, healthy trees do not fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems.

3. Affordability: As you know, Polk-Burnett is a not-for-profit cooperative, and that means we strive to keep our costs in check to hold your rates down (the last rate increase was in 2010). Controlling costs extends to our right-of-way program. If trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for expensive repairs increases. Our right-of-way program is an investment that pays back in reducing costly outages and repairs.

Celebrating Right-of-Way Professionals Week, June 7 - 11

We're grateful for our co-op employees and contractors who keep trees away from power lines to prevent forest fires and power outages, and keep everyone safe!



You can help lower energy costs and carbon

1. Do the Summer Shift

Shift electricity use away from times when demand and cost are highest. Reduce electricity 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays this summer.

2. Enroll in Beat the Peak

We'll send you a peak alert by text, email or phone asking you to reduce electricity when demand and cost are high—about nine summer alerts and three winter alerts. Enroll on polkburnett.com or 800-421-0283.

TOGETHER WE SAVE! When you reduce electricity during peak times:

- ✓ You reduce the wholesale cost of electricity, which helps hold rates steady.
- ✓ You reduce the need for power generation, which cuts carbon and is good for the environment.



Amery grad Nick Hahn chosen as Youth Tour delegate

Nick Hahn was chosen as Polk-Burnett's 2021 delegate for the electric co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. Hahn is a 2021 graduate of Amery High School and the son of co-op members Jeffrey and Heather Hahn. He is also a Polk-Burnett scholarship winner and will receive \$1,250 for college in the fall.

Due to the pandemic, his trip has been postponed until next summer. Hahn will join more than 1,500 high school students from co-ops across the country June 19-24, 2022, to learn about cooperatives, the rural electric program, U.S. history, government and democracy. They will meet congressional leaders and tour Capitol Hill, national monuments, Arlington National Cemetery and the Smithsonian Museums. The tour is hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA), with local sponsorship by Polk-Burnett Electric Co-op.

"Polk-Burnett supports youth leadership opportunities for the children of our members, according to our cooperative principles," said General Manager Steve Stroshane.

Polk-Burnett's Youth Tour program does not affect electric rates; it is funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that if not used for education, would be forfeited to the state. Members may donate their future Capital Credits to Polk-Burnett's scholarship and Youth tour fund. For information, visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283.

Call for Special Price on Propane Summer Fill, ext. 411 or 378.

Co-op supports 16 local nonprofits with \$16,470

Spring grant funds will support local schools and law enforcement, as well as programs that provide food and clothing for local families. Recipients are:

1. Siren Police Dept., \$1,000, grill guard and accessories for squad car
2. Fishbowl Sportsmen's Club, \$970, van rental for Boy Scout camping trip
3. Restorative Justice of NW Wisconsin, \$1,000, restorative justice program and education
4. Quarter Moon Acres Equine Therapy, \$1,000, indoor facility
5. Polk County Historical Society, \$1,000, shelving and storage for documents, maps, photos
6. Burnett County Sheriff's Office, \$1,000, advanced evidence photography class for law enforcers
7. Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Assoc., \$1,000, ice packs with invasive species message
8. Amery Area Food Pantry, \$2,000, food, personal care and household items for local families
9. Luck FFA, \$500, yard signs with ag facts
10. Farm Table Foundation, \$1,000, equipment and supplies to prevent spread of COVID-19
11. Luck School District, \$1,000, new, energy-efficient refrigerator for Family and Consumer Science
12. Osceola Medical Center, \$1,000, Reach Out and Read books for preschool children
13. Gift of Warm Clothing, \$1,500, coats, boots, snow pants, hats and mitten for local families
14. American Youth Soccer Organization, St. Croix Falls, \$500, field rental and new goals
15. Webster School District, FACE, \$1,000, three kitchen faucets and Silhouette cutting machine
16. Village of Siren, \$1,000, sprinkler system and water reel for Siren Ballpark and football field



Funding for Operation Round Up is donated by members of Polk-Burnett who round their monthly electric bill up to the next even dollar amount. Grant recipients are selected quarterly by a committee of co-op members, with financial donations awarded to nonprofit organizations that improve our local quality of life.

Nonprofits interested in applying for a grant or co-op members who'd like to round their bill up in support of Operation Round Up may contact 800-421-0283 or polkburnett.com. The next application deadline is June 1.

Thank you for rounding up! Your generosity makes a big difference!

A/C notice for members in load management

During a peak demand period, air conditioners/heat pumps enrolled in the co-op's load management program will be cycled every 15 minutes; typically nine demand events per summer from 2 to 6 p.m. This reduces the co-op's cost for peak demand power. Participating members may also experience economic driven control periods from 6 to 10:30 p.m. Participation in load control benefits all members. Historically, control periods are on the hottest days of the summer; they are based on electricity demand throughout the entire Midwest region and may occur when local weather conditions are not extreme. Sign up for load control notifications at polkburnett.com/load-management.



Summer rate in effect June to September

Your summer rate is 11.6¢ per kWh, for invoice dates June to September. Your winter rate is 10.1¢ per kWh, for invoice dates October to May. Rates reflect costs: Polk-Burnett pays a higher summer rate for wholesale power because members use more electricity system-wide during the hot days of summer, making demand and costs rise. For help lowering your energy costs, visit polkburnett.com or call member services, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

Convenient new option for cash payments

Safe, convenient and secure payment option lets you pay your electric bill by cash at retailers, including:

DOLLAR GENERAL

FAMILY DOLLAR

For a list of other retailers, visit <https://pay.vanilladirect.com/> \$1.50 convenience fee, paid to retailer, to use this service.



Present the barcode scan from your SmartHub account.

If you don't have a SmartHub account, we'd be happy to help you enroll or we can provide a barcode for you.

Coming in August: Solar Energy Seminar

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.

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800-421-0283 • polkburnett.com



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

