

POWERLINES

January 2025



Building a strong future of reliable power for members

Reflecting on 2024 and looking ahead to 2025 by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Happy New Year from your electric co-op!

As we begin 2025, I'd like to share how the directors and employees of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative are working on strategic priorities to ensure you have access to reliable electricity and extraordinary service today and for the future.

Investing in reliable power

Do you know that co-op linemen, engineers and our operations crew work year-round to strengthen our local power grid? We maintain 3,500 miles of power lines and 33,000 poles across 2,000 square miles! Our annual work plan prioritizes manpower and financial investments.

In 2024, our work plan invested \$5.9 million to upgrade the electric system and reduce power outages for members. In 2025, we will invest \$6.1 million in the following system improvements:

- ⚡ 50 miles of construction; 21 miles are overhead rebuilds, 3 miles are new tie lines, and 26 miles are conversion from overhead-to-underground. *Watch for conversion work near these lakes and waterways: Pipe, Dahl, Cedar, Horseshoe, Clear, Grenquist, Pine, Largon, Spirit, Bashaw, Bass, Clam River, Wood River, Waterman/Sand Lake Flowage, Yellow River and St. Croix River.*
- ⚡ Upgrading substation equipment to enable quick rerouting of power during outages.
- ⚡ Installing animal guards at substations, *pictured above.*
- ⚡ Clearing trees and brush from the right-of-way to improve safety and reduce outages.
- ⚡ Inspecting poles, transformers and equipment; replacing damaged equipment before it causes an outage.

Your return on this investment is safe, reliable electricity. Our goal is to keep the average outage time to less than one hour per member for the year, excluding major events.

Introducing Cedar Lake Substation

We are also working with Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, to build a new substation north of Somerset. Cedar Lake Substation is the first new substation to serve Polk-Burnett members since 2001. It will help meet the growing need for energy and improved reliability in Somerset and Star Prairie areas, and will relieve pressure at Farmington Substation. Construction begins in 2025.

Dairyland owns all substations in our service area, and we deliver power from the substation to you, our local members.

Upgrading load management

Also in partnership with Dairyland Power Cooperative, we will begin a multi-year upgrade of our load management program in 2025. I'm excited to announce this important initiative for the co-op and participating members.

The backbone of the program is installing new receivers on load-controlled devices, such as electric water heaters, boilers, baseboard and storage heat, and other participating loads. Current load management receivers are no longer manufactured and replacement parts are hard to find.

The upgrade is not just about replacing equipment; it's about building a reliable and affordable energy future. Our load management program helps reduce energy demand and cost by temporarily pausing electricity to enrolled devices during peak demand periods, typically the hottest and coldest days of the year. This reduces the need for costly peak power generation. *When we can lower the peak, all members benefit from lower energy costs.* Additionally, members enrolled in load management may qualify for reduced rates and special water heater prices made possible by the cost savings from having electricity paused during peak periods.

I invite you to learn more about load management on our website. Members in the load management program will be notified when receivers are being upgraded in your area.

Holding electric rates down

Another strategic priority is delivering extraordinary service for your energy dollar. Our load management program is one important way we are holding down the cost of power. We also work to keep operating and interest expenses low.

We are currently reviewing a 2024 cost-of-service study to forecast revenue requirements and ensure fair rates going forward. Co-op rates are set to cover the cost of operating and maintaining the utility, not to generate profit.

In 2024, electric rates held steady. For 2025, the board is considering a small increase to help cover rising costs. We will keep you informed.

Polk-Burnett does not generate electricity. We purchase it from our energy provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative. 58% of all revenue collected from members is used to buy wholesale power and the other 42% covers expenses to deliver power to your homes and businesses.

Giving money back

In 2024, Polk-Burnett returned \$1.6 million to members. Instead of making profits for investors, the co-op allocates and returns Capital Credits to the people we serve. Annual Capital Credits are a benefit of your co-op membership.

I'm also proud to say that Polk-Burnett gives back to our community. In 2024, we hosted EV safety training for local first responders and our employees performed more than 600 hours of community service.

Through our Operation Round Up program, we awarded more than \$70,000 to 70 local nonprofits, thanks to the generosity of members who round up monthly electric bills! Polk-Burnett also awarded \$144,000 in scholarships to children of co-op members, with 96 students in Class of 2024 each receiving \$1,500 to continue their education. Scholarships are funded with unclaimed and donated Capital Credits. You can see all 2024 Operation Round Up and scholarship winners on polkburnett.com.

Expanding solar to improve reliability, offset costs

In May 2024, I was joined by friends of the co-op to dedicate Georgetown Solar east of Balsam Lake, our newest solar array to benefit local co-op members. The 2MW array was developed by OneEnergy Renewables and will generate 4.5 million kWh annually to power about 375 homes.

We are looking forward to two more projects with OneEnergy Renewables in our service area: Luck Solar and Viola Solar. Each array is 2.5MW and will power about 600 homes. Both will be energized in 2025. Our first SunTuria Solar array was dedicated in 2017 behind our Centuria office.

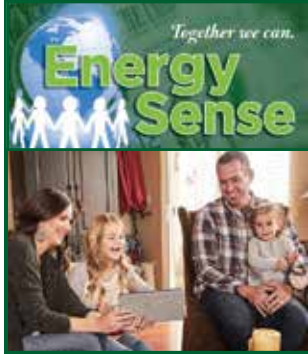
Polk-Burnett strategically invests in utility-scale solar when it provides financial and operational benefits for members. Co-op solar projects relieve high demand at substations and offset energy market costs by generating power locally.

Delivering extraordinary member service

As a co-op, we were founded by members and exist to serve our members. All of us at Polk-Burnett are dedicated to your satisfaction. That's why it means so much to receive high ratings from you on member surveys. From your feedback, we know that reliability is your number one expectation. We also know you like Capital Credit distributions, our co-op business model that puts members and community first, our convenient online and auto payment options, our SmartHub app to manage your account, and text messaging for outages and service calls.

Our promise for 2025 is to continue providing reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service. *Please call us or visit our website to learn about co-op programs, and how we can help you save energy and serve you better this New Year.*

Save energy and money in 2025 with co-op rebates



Polk-Burnett's EnergySense program offers rebates and incentives to help members improve energy efficiency and comfort in your homes, while lowering electric bills.

- Appliance and Lighting Rebates
- HVAC, Air Source and Geothermal Heat Pump Rebates
- Commercial and Ag Efficiency Rebates
- Solar Rebate
- EV Charger Rebate
- Marathon Water Heater Special Member Price
- Rebate on Home Performance Test and Subsequent Home Improvement Upgrades



Be sure to look for the Energy Star label on the Energy Guide for appliance rebates. Visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 318, for rebate forms and details.



Accepting applications for 2025 co-op board election

Polk-Burnett holds elections each spring for the co-op board of directors. This year, board positions in co-op districts 4, 5 and 6 will be on the ballot. Members in those districts have an opportunity to get involved in co-op decision making by running for a seat on the co-op board. Directors serve three-year terms and represent all co-op members at monthly meetings. If you are interested in running for a board position in district 4, 5 or 6, contact the general manager's office, 800-421-0283, ext. 313. The deadline to apply is March 7. *Learn more about Polk-Burnett's board of directors and see map of co-op districts on polkburnett.com.*



Keep your propane tank clear of ice and snow

As a courtesy to your propane driver, please maintain a path to your propane tank and keep your tank clear of snow and ice to allow propane to vaporize properly. Polk-Burnett Propane reminds you to check your tank percentage from time to time this winter, even if you're on auto fill, and contact us if your tank is at 30% or less. Call Polk-Burnett Propane if we can assist with propane deliveries to your home or business, 800-421-0283, ext. 378 or 411.

Be prepared for winter storms and power outages

Co-op crews work to strengthen the grid and prevent power outages, but winter storms are always a threat. Ice, snow and wind can damage power lines and cause outages. If your lights go out this winter:



- Check circuit breakers, fuses and the neighbors.
 - Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
 - Keep away from fallen power lines, and trees and branches near lines. Report these hazards.
 - Check outage map on polkburnett.com. Major outage updates are posted on our Facebook page.
 - If we have your cell number, we'll send you a text alert when you have an outage at your location.
- Keep your cell number up to date on your account through SmartHub or our billing office. Thank you.

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

Clip & Save

Co-op phone extension directory

Dial 800-421-0283, then enter extension number:

- Billing, Electric Accounts, 335
- Board of Directors, 313
- Capital Credits, 335
- EV Chargers, 319
- Evergreen Renewable Blocks, 595
- Heating & Cooling, 595
- Load Management, Off-Peak, 595
- Member Services, 595
- New Construction, 389
- News Media, 333
- Operations, 389
- Operation Round Up, 333
- Power Outage, 1
- Propane, 378, 411
- Rebates, 318
- Right-of-Way, 329
- Scholarships, 333
- Security Lights, 308
- SmartHub, 335
- Solar (Residential), 595
- Water Heaters, 595



May your New Year be warm and bright!

Looking to improve energy efficiency in 2025? Check out co-op rebates!

9 energy-saving resolutions for 2025

Start the New Year off right by changing your energy habits. Then compare your monthly energy bill with previous years. The money you save should be a good incentive to keep your resolutions going all year long!

1. Turn off the lights when you leave the room.
2. Use cold water when washing clothes.
3. Turn off the water when brushing your teeth.
4. Clean and replace furnace filters regularly.
5. Only open the refrigerator door for a short amount of time.
6. Run dishwasher and clothes washer only when fully loaded.
7. Air dry dishes, and dry clothes outside on the line when weather permits.
8. Power down computers and electronics when not in use.
9. When replacing old appliances and equipment, purchase products with the EnergyStar label. See example above. And don't forget rebates for co-op members! Give us a call or visit our website for more ways to save in 2025.

2025 Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day

Mark your calendars for Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day. Join us Friday, June 6, 2025, in Centuria for food, giveaways and information about co-op programs and performance.

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



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