



Above: Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up program awarded \$14,300 to 14 local nonprofits in January, including \$1,500 to St. Croix Falls High School to help with a new Veterans Honor Wall in the school lobby. The 14' x 40' display honors graduates of St. Croix Falls who served in the United States Armed Forces. Social studies teacher Marley Hoefs created the Veterans Honor Wall and is pictured with students from her WWII class, along with Josh Spoelstra, Polk-Burnett assistant line superintendent, left, and Julie Minell, Operation Round Up board director, right. The community is invited to view the Veterans Honor Wall during events at St. Croix Falls High School.

"We're proud to support this important project," said Polk-Burnett General Manager Steve Stroshane. "Operation Round Up makes a difference in our schools and communities, thanks to the generosity of co-op members. Congratulations to Ms. Hoefs, students and everyone at St. Croix Falls High School."

See all winter Operation Round Up grants and learn how your nonprofit can apply on polkburnett.com.



Understanding the benefits of blinks and planned outages

by General Manager Steve Stroshane and Operations Manager Jason Evenson

Members told us in our 2024 survey that reliability has improved over the past two decades, with fewer blinks and outages! We appreciate your feedback, because it means our investment in the system is paying off. Each year, the co-op follows a strategic work plan to reduce the number and duration of power outages. The work plan is approved by the board and executed by our operations crew.



In 2025, we will invest \$6.1 million to replace aging equipment, update and protect substations, clear vegetation from power lines, and convert overhead to underground lines in areas where it makes financial and operational sense. Thanks to this investment of manpower and money, Polk-Burnett members experience an average of less than one hour without power per year, excluding storms and major events.

We work to strengthen the grid because no one likes power outages. But do you know there are two types of outages that are actually beneficial? This month, we'd like to share how blinks and planned outages reduce extended outages and keep the system running smoothly.

Why do lights blink?

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or your small appliances beep, then immediately power back on? These brief interruptions in your electric service are power blinks. They are typically caused by a fault on a power line when tree branches or animals, like squirrels and birds, contact an energized power line.

Beyond trimming trees and installing animal guards, we also use protective devices, called reclosers, on power lines that act like high-voltage circuit breakers. When a fault occurs on a power line, instead of blowing a fuse where everyone downstream loses power, reclosers work to detect the fault using a series of blinks. If the fault clears after one or two blinks, the recloser's job is done. However, if the fault is still present after two blinks, your power will go out. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks are actually a good thing, because it means our equipment is working as it should to protect power lines from extensive damage and prevent a prolonged outage for our members.

Why does the co-op plan outages?

Another type of outage that helps us all in the long run is a *planned* outage. Have you ever received a phone call from Polk-Burnett informing you of a planned outage? You may have wondered, "Why would the co-op intentionally shut off my power?"

Over the years, the equipment that delivers power to your home will need to be repaired or replaced. Even though much of our work can be done while power lines are energized (much more today than in the past), it is sometimes necessary to de-energize high-voltage power lines to keep members, our crew and community safe while we work.

Each year, the co-op schedules about 1,000 planned outages to safely work on portions of the electric system. Planned outages impact a small number of members and can last from a couple minutes to a couple hours.

In addition to safety, planning an outage allows us to keep you informed of *when* and *how long* you will be without service, so you can be prepared.

The next time you hear about a planned outage, know it is one of the best ways we can provide you with safe, reliable service. Repairing and upgrading essential equipment via planned outages is critical for optimal performance and public safety.

Thank you for your understanding and patience.

Please keep your phone number and account information up to date, so we can contact you about planned outages and deliver the best member service. Update your account on SmartHub, polkburnett.com or 800-421-0283, ext. 335. We're happy to assist.



Your source for reliable power

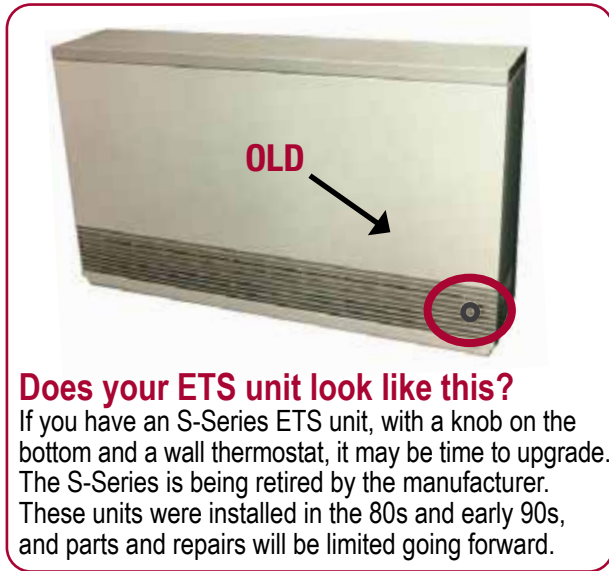
Co-op linemen work through winter to strengthen the local power grid and ensure reliable power for co-op members.

We maintain 3,500 miles of power line and 33,000 poles across 2,000 square miles.

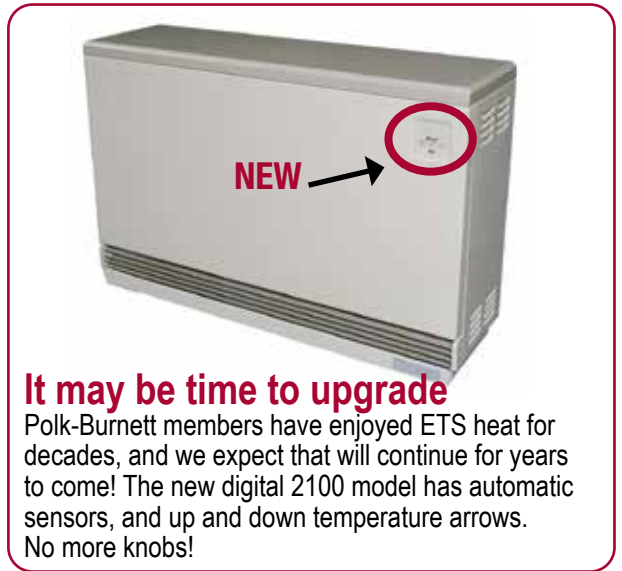
No matter what Mother Nature delivers, our work must go on!



Do you use an ETS unit for heat?



Does your ETS unit look like this?
If you have an S-Series ETS unit, with a knob on the bottom and a wall thermostat, it may be time to upgrade. The S-Series is being retired by the manufacturer. These units were installed in the 80s and early 90s, and parts and repairs will be limited going forward.



It may be time to upgrade
Polk-Burnett members have enjoyed ETS heat for decades, and we expect that will continue for years to come! The new digital 2100 model has automatic sensors, and up and down temperature arrows. No more knobs!

Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) units are an economical, safe, clean and comfortable heat source for co-op members. ETS units generate and store heat during off-peak periods, when electricity costs are lower. Then, they provide heat when you need it. *Contact us for discounts and information on a new ETS unit, 800-421-0283, x595.*

Save money and energy, while improving comfort in your home with EnergySense!

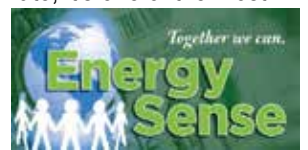


100-gallon Marathon water heater just \$850 on load control

When you install our 100-gallon Marathon® electric water heater on our off-peak rate, it's one of the most cost-effective ways to heat water for your home!

Costs no more to operate than a 50-gallon tank.
Durable and built to last with corrosion-free tank.

Learn more on polkburnett.com or call us at 800-421-0283, ext. 318.



It's dangerous to build or landscape near utility equipment

Do you have building plans this spring? Warning: Gardens, landscaping, decks, fences and buildings are a safety hazard if built too close to underground transformer boxes, power poles and other utility equipment:

- ⚡ Life-threatening contact with high-voltage equipment can occur when landscaping and structures are too close to electrical equipment.
- ⚡ Obstructions limit access for linemen who work to maintain and restore power at your home or business. Co-op crews need access to utility equipment to perform routine maintenance and emergency repairs.
- ⚡ Decks, fences, structures and landscaping built too close to utility equipment can be damaged when crews and trucks need access to work on equipment. All structures and landscaping should be a safe distance from utilities to prevent damage. For your safety, keep away from electrical equipment. Thank you!



Installing new electric service this spring or summer?

If you are building this year and need electricity installed or upgraded, we encourage you and your electrician to work closely with us. Members can find a [new service checklist and required forms on polkburnett.com](#) or 800-421-0283, ext. 389. Once we have your paperwork, an engineering technician will review your project and contact you. We look forward to assisting you with new electric service for all the things that power your life.

Be prepared for March storms and power outages

Co-op crews work to strengthen the grid and prevent power outages year-round, but March often brings heavy snow, ice and wind that can damage power lines. If your lights go out:

- ❄️ Check circuit breakers and fuses, and look to see if your neighbors have power.
- ❄️ Report outages 24/7 on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
- ❄️ Check 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. Always assume lines are live and dangerous! Report these hazards.

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



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.

- ⚡ All members with a cell number on your account are **automatically enrolled** in outage texting.
- ⚡ You will receive your first text when you have an outage at your location.
- ⚡ You can **opt out anytime** you receive an outage text by replying STOP.
- ⚡ Keep your cell number up to date on your account through SmartHub or our billing office. We're happy to assist, 800-421-0283, ext. 335. Thank you!

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

