



Make the most of SmartHub, sign up for notifications and track your energy use

by General Manager Steve Stroshane and Member Services Manager Todd Schulte



More than 12,000 members are enrolled in SmartHub, and the number one reason is secure, convenient bill pay. But we want to let you in on a little secret: there's so much more to SmartHub.

Sign up for notifications, "We're on the way!"

Would you like to receive a text or email when a Polk-Burnett service technician is on the way to your home? We now have the ability to notify you about service calls on water heaters, heaters, off-peak and meter work. If you're on SmartHub, make sure you sign up to receive our notifications:

- 1) Go to **Settings** and set your preferred **Contact Methods**: phone, email or both.
- 2) Go to **Manage Notifications** and select your preferences.
 - >Under **Service**, you can choose to receive a text or email when a service technician is on the way.
 - >Under **Billing**, you can choose to receive a text or email when your bill is ready.
 - >Under **Usage**, you can choose to receive a text or email if your energy use exceeds a threshold you set.

Track your energy use

With SmartHub, you can see your monthly, daily and even hourly energy use, *daily example above*. It's especially helpful for finding and fixing problems. For example, you'll see your energy use go up if your well pump runs constantly or when you have house guests for the weekend; you'll see your energy use go down if your electric heat kicks off. Check these charts at your convenience or sign up to receive a notification if your energy use exceeds a threshold you've set.

Make an electric payment

You can choose how to pay your bill on SmartHub. We recommend auto bank pay (no paper, stamps or expired credit cards). Members can also choose to add and store a credit card, so it's always handy when you want to make a payment. Under **Security**, you can change your password any time or add a security phrase or hint question to protect your information. You can also submit a question (called **Inquiry**), report an outage and link to the Powerlines newsletter or the co-op's website

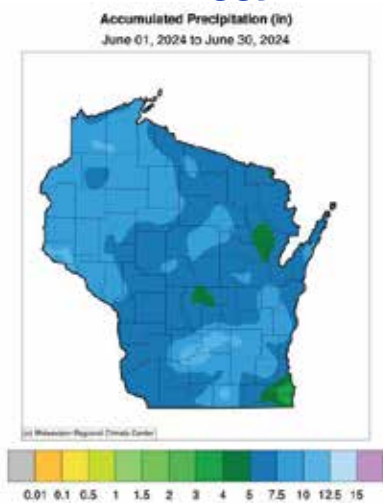
Switch to paperless billing for a one-time \$5 bill credit

Members who switch to paperless billing and enroll in SmartHub will receive a one-time \$5 bill credit. You'll receive a monthly email when your statement is available, and you can access your account anytime on your computer or mobile device on SmartHub. To join more than 8,000 members who've switched to paperless billing, call us at 800-421-0283, ext. 335.

We hope we've inspired you to try SmartHub and all of its features. It's an important part of our mission to provide you with extraordinary member service. *Please let us know if we can assist you with your SmartHub enrollment or its features.*

SmartHub improves the way you do business with the co-op from your computer or mobile device. It's free, convenient and secure. Download SmartHub from your app store.

How the soggy summer of 2024 left some members in the dark



No doubt about it, the summer of 2024 was wetter than normal. The Wisconsin State Climatology Office at the University of Wisconsin Madison reported on its website that "Rain fell frequently and intensely during June. Across most of the state, measurable rainfall (at least 0.01 inch) occurred on more than half the days. A very wet June in Wisconsin completely extinguished the last remnants of drought across the entire state. June precipitation picked right up from a waterlogged May. Virtually the entire state experienced wetter-than-normal conditions, in some places by large amounts. In fact, the month goes in the books as Wisconsin's sixth wettest June on record (since 1895). Most locations got at least half a foot of rainfall, leading to a statewide average of 6.97 inches, which is a hearty 48 percent (2.27 inches) more than normal, *left*."

We know the soggy summer impacted our wetlands, gardens and farm fields, but did you know that wet conditions also impact reliability for co-op members?

Operations engineer Jarod Boerst explained that heavy rains cause trees to split and uproot. "When a tree has its limbs and roots saturated, it just needs a wind gust from the right direction to break or uproot."

This picture was taken near Osceola in June by General Manager Steve Stroshane. Saturated soil and strong winds uprooted this tree and it fell onto power lines. The tree took longer than average to clear because of its size, resulting in a longer outage. That same night, crews responded to three similar outages. Wet soil and wind make even healthy trees vulnerable.

"This is why our work to clear trees and branches from the right-of-way is so important," said Stroshane. "We can't prevent every threat, but we're confident our right-of-way program improves safety and reduces outages for members."

Other common causes of power outages include lightning strikes, animal contact with power lines (often squirrels and birds), car accidents that damage poles and wires, and excavation work that damages underground cable. Power supply outages can be caused by problems impacting substations or transmission lines.

Be prepared! If your power goes out:

1. Check circuit breakers, fuses and the neighbors.
2. Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
3. Keep away and report fallen power lines, and trees and branches on lines.
4. Visit our Outage Center on polkburnett.com for live outage map and FAQs. Watch Facebook for major outages.
5. If we have your cell number, we'll send an outage text alert. *Please give us a call to add your number to your account.*





Get to know Board Director Tom Swenson

Tom Swenson, Webster, has served on Polk-Burnett's board of directors for 18 years since 2006. "It's rewarding to be a board director for such a well-run organization as Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative. Our management team is smart and forward thinking, and our employees are very responsible to the members. When a member calls or comes in the door, they get answers," he said.

Tom is optimistic about the future of the energy industry, and believes Polk-Burnett is well prepared to meet the challenges with talented people and innovative technologies.

"I believe we'll see creative new rate structures and load management programs that reward members for shifting energy use away from times of peak demand on the electric grid," he said. "And I look forward to the new solar array coming to Burnett County in 2025."

General Manager Steve Stroshane introduced the new solar project to members at the 86th Annual Meeting in June. The array will help offset high summer demand in our area and provides a stable cost of power for the next 25 years.

Tom and his wife Linnea have three daughters and two grandsons. Linnea is a retired Webster teacher and continues to be active in community programs that support early childhood education and literacy. Tom retired in 2018 from a 42-year career in land surveying in Burnett County. He enjoys gardening, raising chickens and working in his orchard.

Tom was re-elected to the co-op board in 2024. Learn more about your co-op board of directors on polkburnett.com.



Class of 2025: Win a \$1,500 scholarship

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative will award up to 95 scholarships for \$1,500 each to high school seniors whose parents are members of the co-op. A total of \$142,500 will go to students in the Class of 2025

Scholarship candidates are also invited to apply for our co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. Apply on polkburnett.com by Jan. 1, 2025.

"Since 1987, we've awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships," said Polk-Burnett General Manager Steve Stroshane. "Giving back to our community and youth is part of our mission as a cooperative."

Polk-Burnett's scholarship program does not affect electric rates; it is funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that would be forfeited to the state if not used for education, and by the generosity of co-op members who donate Capital Credits to the scholarship fund. If you would like to donate your Capital Credits, please call us or visit our website.

Notice: Wisconsin Energy Assistance

Your household may be eligible for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, based on income and size.

For help paying your electric bill, contact West CAP, 715-598-4750 or westcap.org.

Operation Round Up helps start Cycling Without Age in Amery



Operation Round Up donated \$1,000 to Cycling Without Age in Amery earlier this spring. The program received its first two electric-assist trishaw bikes July 10 and began training volunteer pilots.

Cycling Without Age is a global movement that started in Denmark. It engages older adults and anyone unable to cycle with safe, free, trishaw rides. This improves the health and emotional well-being of passengers and volunteer pilots. When you see a trishaw in the community, be sure to smile and wave! You can learn more at cwaamery.org.

Thank you, co-op members for rounding up; your generosity makes a difference! Operation Round Up awarded \$20,250 to 22 local nonprofits in July. See grants recipients and learn how your nonprofit can apply, polkburnett.com.



\$350 OFF HOME PERFORMANCE TEST
UP TO \$1,000 REBATE ON UPGRADES

Test your home to identify heat loss and the best ways to lower energy costs and improve comfort. Contact us for a list of qualified energy raters and rebate information for co-op members.

800-421-0283, ext. 318
polkburnett.com/rebates



Have a safe harvest: Stay clear of power lines

Always use a spotter, especially when raising augers and truck beds. If contact is made with a power line, stay inside equipment and call 911.



Be safe: Call 811 before you dig

Are you planting this fall? Installing a fence? Or building a deck? Before you dig into a home improvement project, have utility lines marked. One call helps protect you from injury and expense. Thank you!



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

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

