



Thanks to the generosity of co-op members who round up, Burnett County teens are getting hands-on training in the aviation industry by building a kit airplane with volunteer mentors — what an amazing opportunity! The Teen Aircraft Factory of Wisconsin, along with the Salvation Army food program for children and the Unity Lions bed build program for children, are three of 18 nonprofits to receive Operation Round Up funding this summer. See all summer grant winners and learn how your nonprofit can apply on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).



## Shaving peak demand and holding down costs with four decades of load management

by General Manager Steve Stroshane, left, and Member Services Manager Todd Schulte, right



As more load is added to the electric grid faster than new generation sources, the price of power at specific times of the year can spike. Polk-Burnett's load management program is one of the ways that has successfully helped us hold down the cost of power since the 1980s. Today, load management is more important than ever as a strategy to control costs and balance supply and demand on the electric grid. Our load management program temporarily controls power to participating devices in member homes; we do this to reduce energy demand during peak energy periods. ***If we can reduce the amount of electricity we buy during peak times, we can manage our wholesale power cost.***

***When members ask what the co-op is doing to hold down expenses,***

***our load management program stands out as one of our most effective strategies, because it manages our cost for wholesale power.***

We call this shaving the peak, and it's a big deal, because the co-op's cost to purchase wholesale power consumes 56% of our revenue, about \$22 million annually. Our load management goal is to lower wholesale power costs and improve grid stability.

### How does load management work?

Polk-Burnett's load management program lowers energy demand by temporarily interrupting power to participating devices during periods of high electricity demand.

> Large water heaters are designed to store hot water for when it's needed. They are controlled every day, during daytime hours when prices are higher and recharge overnight when prices are lower.

> AC units are cycled off and on every 15 minutes during peak days in the summer.

> Electric heating systems, EV chargers, irrigation systems, grain drying and dairy water heaters are shut down during control periods, usually four to six hours.

Peak times are periods of the day when demand for energy is highest across the regional grid. In winter, it typically occurs in the morning, when people are getting ready for work and school, and businesses are ramping up. In summer, it's in the afternoon and early evening, when people are coming home from work and school, turning on appliances and AC, cooking meals and doing laundry.

Control periods usually last about four to six hours. Even though they occur on the coldest and hottest days of the year when demand for energy peaks, ***our load management program is designed so most members notice little to no impact on comfort while helping to reduce system demand.***

### Why do members want to participate?

Participating members agree to let us control devices throughout the year, some in exchange for a reduced rate, some receive rebates on EV chargers, and some receive discounts on water heaters and electric thermal storage (ETS) units.

***We'd like to thank our members who participate in load management. You help shave the peak, which benefits all of us with lower wholesale power costs and improved grid stability.***

### Updating load management receivers

Currently, we have more than 7,000 devices across our system that can be used to shave peak load. In 2025, we began a modernization program to install new receivers for all load management devices.

This is a multi-year upgrade that will improve control strategies, communication and transparency for enrolled devices when energy demand and prices are high.

To date, co-op technicians have installed about 1,000 new receivers and we are on target to complete about 100 every month. We are making good progress and anticipate a 2030 completion date, about five to six years systemwide.

The new receivers use cell phone technology to communicate, not a radio signal. Connecting via cell service has pros and cons. In some areas with poor cell service, the new receivers may not get a strong control signal. Our modernization program uses three different cell carriers, T-Mobile/US Cellular, AT&T/FirstNet and Verizon, and we are working to improve the connectivity.

Before installing a new receiver, our technicians always test cell signal strength. With this information, they can determine the best way to upgrade the receiver and whether to install it inside near the electrical panel or outside near the meter.

*Some members will receive a new receiver, black box shown at right.*

*Some will receive a new board in their existing box, center and left.*



The old receivers relied on radio towers operated by Dairyland Power Cooperative. Now, the control signal comes from cell phone towers.

### How can you help?

If you participate in our load management program, we will send you an email asking you to contact us and schedule a convenient time for a co-op technician to perform the upgrade. There is no charge for this service. Watch for our email and reply when you receive it or give us a call to schedule at your convenience. Thank you!

### Beat the Peak

Even if you do not have devices enrolled in load management, you can help beat the peak by turning off unnecessary lights and electronics, adjusting your heat or AC, and waiting for off-peak hours to charge EVs and run large appliances like your oven, dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer. When we all work together to reduce energy during peak times, we protect the power grid and help control costs.

**Your household may be eligible for Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance, based on income and size. For help paying your electric bill, contact West CAP, 715-598-4750 or [westcap.org](http://westcap.org).**





## Is your water heater due for replacement? Consider an electric storage water heater

**Special member price: just \$1,050 on load control**

A 100-gallon Marathon water heater is an investment that pays for itself in energy savings. When you install it on the off-peak rate, it's one of the most cost-effective ways to heat water for your home. It operates like a large battery by charging overnight when power prices are low and stores hot water for use throughout your day!

> Durable, built to last with corrosion-free tank. > Backed by co-op service and Marathon warranty.

Contact us to order and start saving energy and money, 800-421-0283, x318 or follow QR code above to our website.

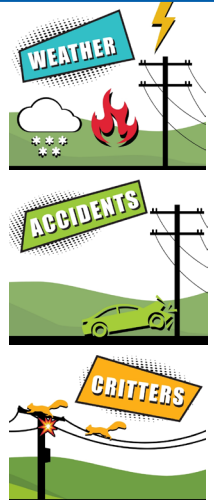


## September is National Preparedness Month Be prepared for storms and power outages

Co-op crews work to strengthen the grid and prevent power outages, but storms, animals and accidents can damage power lines and cause outages. If your lights go out this fall:

- > 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.
- > See outage map and FAQs on polkburnett.com. Major outage updates are posted on Facebook.
- > 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 Polk-Burnett electric account through SmartHub or our billing office. Thank you.

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



## Safety first

### Stay away from power lines during harvest

This harvest season (and all year long), we thank our local farmers for the food you provide and remind you to follow these important safety steps:

- > Stay 10 feet away from power lines when operating equipment.
- > Always use a spotter to safely navigate around power lines and electrical equipment, especially when raising augers and truck beds.
- > If contact is made with power lines, stay inside equipment and call 911; the wires and ground may be energized and dangerous.

## Investing in Youth Polk-Burnett scholarship application is now open

As the new school year begins, we invite students in the Class of 2027 to apply for a Polk-Burnett scholarship and the Co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. High school seniors whose parents are active co-op members are invited to apply for a chance to win up to \$2,000. Scholarships are based on community service, not grades, athletics or financial need. Recipients will be selected at our January 2027 board meeting. Scholarships are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that if not used for education would be forfeited to the state, and by the generosity of members who donate future Capital Credits.

**Donors:** Scan QR code to learn more. **Class of 2027:** Scan QR code to apply for a Polk-Burnett scholarship.



## Teaching kids about electricity

Polk-Burnett employees visit local schools and libraries to share lessons about electricity, our work at the co-op and how to be safe around electricity. We also host solar and career tours for older students.

Teachers, librarians and youth leaders, let us know if your students would like to explore electricity with us, 800-421-0283, ext. 333.

Supporting co-op families and investing in our next generation aligns with our co-op values.



## Fall planting guide

Planting a tree or shrub this fall? Make sure full-grown trees and branches won't grow into the right-of-way and touch power lines. Branches must be at least 15 feet away from power lines in yard areas and at least 20 feet away from power lines in all other areas. Maintaining a clear right-of-way under power lines reduces outages and improves safety for everyone!

Tree branches on power lines are a common cause of blinks and outages. A clear right-of-way provides access for maintenance and outage repairs, prevents fires, and is required by state and federal code. Thank you!

PS: Always contact Diggers Hotline, 811, before planting to prevent injuries and damage to underground utilities.

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

