

# POWERLINES

Polk-Burnett  
Electric Cooperative

December 2021



## Reflecting on our 2021 performance

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Season's greetings from your electric co-op. At Polk-Burnett, we are driven by a sense of mission and purpose. We are fortunate to live in the same place where we work, which makes our ties to this community strong. It has been a strong year for new construction. Polk-Burnett is on pace to install the most new services and service upgrades since 2007. While new construction and development in our service territory are positive for economic growth, this has brought challenges through increased supply chain difficulties and material costs. In this month's column, I'd like to review our 2021 performance and share a preview of what's ahead for 2022.

### RELIABLE POWER

In 2021, we continued our efforts to reduce the frequency and duration of power outages for our members. Our work plan **once again invested \$5 million in the electric system**. Co-op linemen and contractors:

- Replaced 20 miles of aging underground cable
- Constructed 13 miles of new overhead power line
- Converted 22 miles of overhead to underground line
- Replaced 78 poles that didn't pass inspection
- Cleared trees and brush from 300 miles of power line right-of-way
- Began a multi-year plan to upgrade substation equipment to improve grid redundancies

### ELECTRIC GRID & METER UPGRADE

In addition to the work plan, we are **investing \$5 million in an electric grid and meter upgrade**. More than 26,000 meters across the system will be replaced with new technology in 2021-22. The upgrade improves outage restoration and notification, and provides you with more information about your electricity use. The northern half of our service territory was completed in 2021. Next, we'll make our way south, and we expect to finish on schedule in 2022.

### \$1.5 MILLION RETURNED IN CAPITAL CREDITS

Polk-Burnett returned \$1,504,349 in Capital Credits in September. This is a 3.7% increase over last year. Capital Credits were returned to 16,775 active members and 7,952 former members who purchased electricity in 1995-97, 2000-01 and/or 2018. As a member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-op, we operate at cost. Any money left after expenses is returned to members, according to our co-op principles. Capital Credits are distributed each year and are a direct benefit of your co-op membership.

### \$139,747 IN COMMUNITY GIVING

We demonstrated our cooperative commitment to community in 2021 by awarding \$72,247 in Operation Round Up grants to 68 local nonprofits, and \$67,500 in scholarships to the Class of 2021; 54 students each received \$1,250! Scholarships are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits, and we thank our members for supporting our round-up program. Your generosity makes a difference! In addition, co-op employees performed more than 600 hours of community service in 2021.

### CHARGE ELECTRIC VEHICLE PROGRAM

Polk-Burnett joined CHARGE™, a regional EV charging network that helps reduce range anxiety and encourages EV adoption in rural communities. CHARGE™ is bringing EV chargers to rural highways across the Midwest, as well as to co-op member garages. Contact us before you install an EV charger. We have a rebate and can help members charge in the most cost-effective way.

### RELIABLE AND DIVERSE POWER SUPPLY

Polk-Burnett is an electric distribution co-op. We don't generate electricity, own or operate power plants. We purchase electricity from Dairyland Power Cooperative. Dairyland closed its Genoa coal power plant and purchased the renewable-enabling RockGen natural gas generating facility to lower its carbon footprint. Dairyland's Sustainable Generation Plan focuses on reliability and diversification. Renewable energy is increasing, and Dairyland plans for natural gas to support the transition to a low-carbon future. For 2021-22, we support a balanced mix of generation as the key to a safe, reliable and resilient power grid that keeps power flowing to your homes, farms and businesses.

### 2022 PREVIEW: MEMBER-FOCUSED VALUE

For 2022, we will continue to deliver value and extraordinary service for our members. Projects will include: Completion of our meter upgrade, finish replacement of deteriorating underground cable, increase investment in grid redundancies and planning for a new substation to serve increased electricity demand in our area. We also plan to work on development of a second solar array. This will not only bring more renewable energy to the system, but it will also help offset market power costs and relieve overloading on substation equipment. In all our efforts, we listen to our members, focus on your needs and will keep you informed.

## HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!

Co-op offices will be closed Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

PLEASE REPORT OUTAGES ON SMARTHUB OR 800-421-0283. HELP IS AVAILABLE 24/7.

## What's the best way to keep warm this winter?

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said Americans should expect to pay more to heat our homes this winter. Compared to last winter, fuel prices are up and households will spend on average: 54% more for propane; 43% more for heating oil, 30% more for natural gas and 6% more for electricity (wholesale cost we pay to purchase electricity from Dairyland Power may increase). Rising prices are tied to low natural gas supplies.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative, October 2021

**If you're looking for the best way to keep warm this winter, we can help**

Compare the price, pros and cons of natural gas, propane and electric heat, including electric heat pumps, electric thermal storage (ETS) heat and off-peak electric rates. *Electric heat is safe, clean, affordable and energy efficient.*

We can also help members take advantage of co-op rebates on qualifying air source and geothermal heat pumps, as well as other energy efficiency upgrades.

*Give us a call to learn more about options to lower your costs while keeping warm this winter; 800-421-0283, ext. 595.*





## Scholarship deadline

Sons and daughters of co-op members: Win a \$1,250 scholarship to continue your education after high school. 54 scholarships will be awarded to the Class of 2022. Apply on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) by January 1.



## Rebate deadline

Co-op members: Get rebates to improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home. See rebate offers and apply by January 1 on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) for purchases in 2021. Rebate questions? We're happy to assist, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

# Thank you for completing our annual survey

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative completed its annual customer satisfaction survey, where 10,000 members were asked to participate. Member responses were sent to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), a company that measures customer satisfaction across multiple industries throughout the entire United States.



American Customer Satisfaction Index

**For 2021, Polk-Burnett received an ACSI score of 84, out of a maximum score of 100. This is the same as our 2020 score. Thank you for your continued trust.**

In addition to scoring ACSI questions, members shared more than 800 comments, 66% were positive. Our annual satisfaction survey gives members a voice and helps us learn what's working and what we can do better. Member comments provide insights to help us resolve issues and plan for the future.

The co-op conducted its annual member survey October 4 to 10 using Survey Monkey. A survey link was emailed to 10,000 members. Members returned 2,071 surveys for a 21% response rate.

### Thank you for sharing your feedback with us!

All members who submitted a survey were entered into a drawing for a \$50 bill credit; 10 names were drawn and winners are posted on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).



## Thank you for rounding up

\$72,247 awarded to 68 community programs in 2021

See all grant winners and learn how your nonprofit can apply. [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com)



## Seeking applications for 2022 board election

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative holds elections each spring for co-op board directors. This year, board positions in co-op districts 4, 5 and 6 will be on the ballot. Members residing in those districts have an opportunity to get involved in co-op decision making by running for a seat on the board. Applications for the 2022 board election are now being accepted from co-op members in districts 4, 5 and 6. The deadline to apply is March 4.

**District 4** includes the towns of Balsam Lake, Apple River, Beaver, Clayton and Almena. *The incumbent director is Joe Metro of Balsam Lake.*

**District 5** includes the towns of McKinley, Maple Plain, Georgetown, Johnstown and Crystal Lake. *The incumbent director is Jeff Traynor of Balsam Lake.*

**District 6** includes the towns of LaFollette, Dewey, West Sweden, Lorain, Roosevelt, Luck, Clam Falls and Bone Lake. *The incumbent director is Wilfred Owens of Frederic.*



***As a cooperative, Polk-Burnett is owned by its members and governed by a board of directors elected from its membership.***

Board directors serve a three-year term and attend monthly meetings to guide policy and budget decisions for Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative.

All co-op members in districts 4, 5 and 6 will have the opportunity to vote in the 2022 Polk-Burnett board election. Ballots will be mailed April 29 and members can cast their vote by mail or online. Election results will be announced at the co-op's 84th annual meeting, which will be online June 10.

Co-op members interested in running for a board position to represent district 4, 5 and 6 may contact the general manager's office, 800-421-0283, ext. 313, for an application packet. Learn more about Polk-Burnett's board of directors and see a map of co-op districts on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).

## Be aware of DOXO and third-party payment sites



Please be aware of third-party payment sites that can charge fees and result in late payments. DOXO, MoneyGram and other online payment services are not affiliated with Polk-Burnett. These services mail a check to us when you make an electric or propane payment through their websites. Payment is not immediate and may be delayed, which could result in late fees and even disconnected electric service. Be sure you make your online payments directly to Polk-Burnett through our website, [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com). Electric co-op members are encouraged to use our SmartHub app to manage your account and pay your bill. SmartHub is convenient and secure.

**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](http://polkburnett.com)**



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

