

# POWERLINES

POLK-BURNETT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE | JANUARY 2020



## Thank you for your feedback, we're happy to hear from you

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Throughout the year, Polk-Burnett creates opportunities for you to share your opinions and feedback. We know that our members have a valuable perspective and that's why we continually seek your input. Whether you respond to a survey or social media post, send us an email, or stop by our office or annual meeting to visit in person, we are always happy to hear from you. Connecting with you helps us keep pace with the priorities and needs of our community.

*The energy industry is in the midst of significant change.*

*Technology, smart appliances and demand for clean electricity are complex issues that affect us as we plan for the co-op's future. To adapt and thrive, we depend on hearing from you. Please share your perspectives. We're listening.*

*~ General Manager Steve Stroshane*

Looking ahead to 2020, we hope you will continue to share your opinions with us. Please watch for our surveys in your email inbox, and look for me, co-op employees and your board directors at community events and let us know how we're doing. We also invite you to attend our Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day June 5.

### The electric co-op was built by the community, for the community

As a cooperative, we exist to provide safe, reliable electricity for our members. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve. We hope you will consider us as more than your energy provider, but also as a local business that listens and improves our local quality of life. *Happy New Year from all of us at Polk-Burnett!*

## This is what you told us in 2019

### Member Follow-Up Surveys

Twice a month, we send an email survey to members asking you to rate our service following recent transactions, including signing up for new electric service or transferring electric service to your name; applying for an EnergySense rebate; requesting service work at your home; installing a new meter for new construction; and reporting a power outage. We received more than 1,000 responses in 2019.



### Annual Member Satisfaction Survey

Each fall, we conduct a member satisfaction survey. This year, more than 2,500 members responded.



- Comments about overall service: 94% positive
- Comments about customer service: 90% positive
- Comments about renewable energy: 83% positive
- Comments about reliable power: 73% positive
- Comments about electric rate: 96% negative



*Surveys give members a voice to evaluate our service. Survey results tell us what's working and what's not; they allow us to resolve outstanding issues and help us improve performance. Thank you for your feedback!*

## This is how your co-op is responding

As a locally owned electric cooperative, we work to improve and adjust for the future, based on member needs and priorities. Our short-term goals and long-term vision include:



1. Controlling costs to defer a rate increase (see below).
2. Having the most knowledgeable, best trained, technologically efficient and service-oriented employees in Wisconsin.
3. Being the best technologically equipped co-op in the state, with the right employees in the right position to use technology to reduce costs, make our work more efficient and improve member service.
4. Having one of the lowest outage rates in the state. (See 2020 Reliability Work Plan on back.)
5. Having zero lost days of work.
6. Growing energy sales through economic and community development (growth helps reduce costs per member).
7. Growing renewable energy when economically favorable.

## Members like co-op, but many say rate is too high

### Here's what we're doing

- Comments about electric rate: 96% negative

Like you, Polk-Burnett has tightened its belt since the economic downturn a decade ago. Since 2010 the co-op has:

1. Reduced our workforce by 18 employees. (49 electric co-op employees, 18 are linemen)
2. Invested in technologies to improve member service and make work more efficient and cost-effective.
3. Held rates steady; **NO RATE INCREASE since 2010. NO RATE INCREASE planned for 2020!**



*We work hard to keep expenses per mile of line lower than other utilities; however, rural co-op members pay a higher availability charge because there are fewer members per mile to share the grid's fixed costs (see 2020 grid investment on back). We wish we could change that, but we can offer some suggestions below.*



### Here's what you can do

Rates have not increased for a decade, but your bill may be higher because our lifestyles have changed. Consider how much hot water you use? How many TVs, routers, gaming consoles and receivers are in your home? Do you use AC, dehumidifiers or space heaters? How about chargers for cell phones and devices? Electricity powers our lives and we rely on it more than ever.

**We encourage you to learn how much energy you are using and take control of your kWh energy charge:**

1. **SmartHub** gives you information to avoid high bill surprises and make better energy decisions.
2. **EnergySense rebates** can help you make upgrades to improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home.
3. **Polkburnett.com** and our **member services team** are helpful resources for saving energy and money. **Visit or call today!**

## 2020 work plan invests in grid reliability

Our goals for 2020 are driven by your feedback on recent member surveys and focus on improving our value to you and our community. Our number one priority continues to be the delivery of reliable electricity.

**TOP 25% OF CO-OPS NATIONWIDE FOR RELIABILITY:** During the past 20 years, we've taken many steps to reduce the amount and duration of power outages for our members. Over the past five years, Polk-Burnett members have experienced an average of two outage hours per year. In 2020, we will **invest \$4.9 million to upgrade and maintain a reliable electric system** for you. Our 2020 work plan includes:

- Replacing 20 miles of aging underground cable
- Building 14 miles of new overhead power line
- Converting 25 miles of overhead line to underground line
- Replacing 53 poles that didn't pass inspection
- Upgrading our metering system (phased in over four years)
- Clearing trees and brush from the right-of-way to improve safety and reduce outages
- Improving grid redundancies and substation equipment, so power can be re-routed during outages



### Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative maintains:

**1,717** Miles  
of underground  
cable

**1,695**  
Miles of overhead  
power line

**21,000**  
Meters

**38,000**  
Power poles  
Ave. life 55 years!

## Put money in your pocket with 2020 co-op rebates

Polk-Burnett's EnergySense rebate program has helped members conserve and save since 2008. Again this year, we're pleased to offer rebates and incentives to help you improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home, while lowering your electric bills.

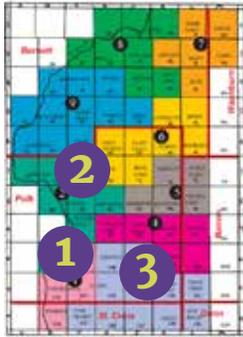
### 2020 EnergySense Rebate Program

- Home Performance Testing and Upgrade Rebate
- Appliance and Appliance Recycling Rebates
- Lighting Rebates
- HVAC Rebates, Air Source and Geothermal Heat Pump Rebates
- Renewable Energy and e-Vehicle Charger Incentives
- Commercial and Ag Efficiency Incentives
- Marathon Water Heater Incentive, Air Source Heat Pump Water Heater Rebates



For 2020 rebate forms and information, visit [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) or call 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

## Deadline to apply for 2020 board election is March 6



Polk-Burnett holds elections each spring for the co-op board of directors. This year, board positions in co-op Districts 1, 2 and 3 will be on the ballot. Members in those districts are encouraged to make their voices heard by voting.

Members also have an opportunity to get involved in co-op decision making by running for a position 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 an open board position in District 1, 2 or 3, contact the general manager's office, 800-421-0283, ext. 313. The deadline to apply is March 6, 2020.

For a district map and more details about board elections, visit [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com)

## Be prepared for winter storms and power outages

Polk-Burnett linemen work hard to maintain the system and deliver reliable power, but some outages are out of our control, like those caused by winter storms and wildlife.

### If your lights go out this winter:

1. Check circuit breakers, fuses and the neighbors.
2. Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
3. Keep away from and report fallen power lines, broken poles and trees on lines.
4. Crews respond to hazards, substations and major distribution lines first, followed by smaller tap lines and individual service lines.

**Outage communication is a priority:** See outage map on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) and visit [Facebook.com/polkburnett](https://www.facebook.com/polkburnett) for up-to-the-minute outage reports. You'll see a map of the co-op's service territory with current outages. It's very handy on smart phones, tablets and battery-operated laptops, even when the electricity is out.

*Restoring power safely and quickly, while keeping you informed.*

**REPORT POWER OUTAGES  
on SmartHub or 800-421-0283**

## Keep your propane tank clear of snow and ice



As a courtesy to your propane driver, please maintain a path to your LP 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 30% or less full.

Call Polk-Burnett Propane if we can assist with propane deliveries to your home or business, 800-421-0283, ext. 378 or 411.

**SIGN UP FOR OUTAGE TEXT ALERTS  
SEE LIVE OUTAGE MAP** [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com)

**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.

Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter.

**800-421-0283 • [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com)**



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