

POWERLINES

POLK-BURNETT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE | JANUARY 2019

Photo by Roman Trofimiuk on Unsplash



2019 looks bright for co-op and members

by General Manager Steve Strohshane

I'm pleased to report that 2018 was a successful year for Polk-Burnett, with performance that demonstrates a commitment to reliability, efficiency and extraordinary service. Our goals for 2019 are driven by your feedback on recent member surveys, and continue to focus on improving our value to you and our community.

Below are 2018 results and 2019 goals.

99.97% RELIABLE: Less than one hour without power per member per year, that's the target we work toward, and that's the result that puts Polk-Burnett in the top 25% nationwide for reliability. To achieve our reliability goal, we invested **\$3.5 million** in 2018 to upgrade and maintain a reliable electric system for you.

Our 2019 investment is again **\$3.5 million**. Watch for co-op crews working to improve your reliability:

- Replacing 30 miles of aging underground cable
- Replacing 55 poles that didn't pass inspection
- Building 17 miles of new overhead power line
- Converting 22 miles of overhead line to underground line
- Upgrading 200 security lights to LEDs to improve energy efficiency and reduce maintenance expenses
- 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

ADDING MEMBER VALUE: In addition to reliable power, we provide you with new payment and communication technologies, like **SmartHub** account access, outage texting and an updated website (see back). We also offer **EnergySense rebates** to help you improve energy efficiency in your home.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY: Beyond operating expenses, **58¢ of every dollar** we collect goes to Dairyland Power Cooperative to purchase electricity for you. Because we're watching expenses closely and working more efficiently, we are happy to report that we have the capacity to pay our debt, expand technology and services, invest in a reliable grid and return Capital Credits to you. *You can help us hold wholesale power costs down by enrolling in **Beat the Peak** and reducing electricity when costs and demand are high.*

RETURNING \$1 MILLION TO MEMBERS: In 2018, Polk-Burnett returned more than \$1 million in Capital Credits, including **\$860,000 to members** who purchased electricity in 1996 and/or 2015, plus a Capital Credit retirement of **\$197,343** from Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, to members who purchased power in 1990. Capital Credits are a direct benefit of co-op membership and a sign of good financial stewardship. *We'll give money back in 2019; watch for Capital Credits again next fall.*

\$112,071 in COMMUNITY GIVING: Community service is one of our core values. In 2018, we demonstrated this with **\$55,000 in scholarships** to the Class of 2018 from unclaimed Capital Credits, and **\$57,071 in Operation Round Up grants** to 72 local nonprofits. In addition, co-op employees performed more than 650 hours of community service last year, and Polk-Burnett is helping to finance the new Alden Fire Station with a **\$694,880 zero-interest pass-through loan** from the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan program. This provides \$350,000 in savings for fire district taxpayers and improves our local quality of life.

RENEWABLES AT 18% AND GROWING: We are pleased to offer a growing renewable energy supply to our members through Dairyland Power Cooperative, our La Crosse-based power provider. Each year, **Dairyland adds more solar and wind** generation to reduce carbon emissions. At present, about 18% of the energy that flows into our distribution system from Dairyland is from renewable sources.

Polk-Burnett also offers rebates for members who install residential solar and wind, and you can purchase renewable energy blocks through our **Evergreen** program. On a high note, our **10-acre SunTuria Solar** array opened in Centuria in 2017 and is generating renewable power for our membership. See our **solar energy tracker** on polkburnett.com and let us know if your school or community group would like a tour.

In 2019, you'll hear more from us about e-vehicles, beneficial electrification and improving reliability while holding down costs. In all our efforts, our co-op business model is mission-based and puts people first.

We thank you for your membership, and invite you to stay in touch with us this New Year through surveys, our new website and of course, your Powerlines.

Put money in your pocket in 2019 with co-op rebates

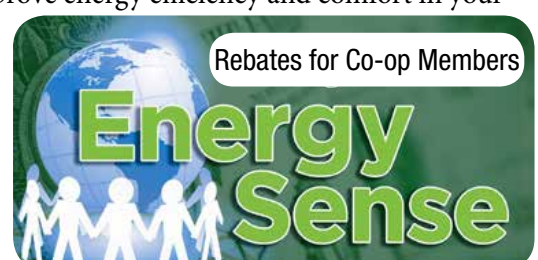
Polk-Burnett's EnergySense rebate program has helped members conserve and save since 2008. Again this year, we're offering rebates and incentives to help you improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home, while lowering your electric bills.

2019 EnergySense Rebate Program

- Home Performance Testing and Upgrade Rebates
- Appliance and Appliance Recycling Rebates
- Lighting Rebates
- HVAC and Geothermal System Rebates
- Renewable Energy and e-Vehicle Incentives
- Commercial and Ag Efficiency Incentives

For 2019 rebate forms and information, visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

 **HAPPY NEW YEAR** 
FROM POLK-BURNETT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Member owned. Community focused.





Co-op launches new website: Are you ready to join 4,000 people who connect with us through our digital front door every month?

Polkburnett.com is visited about 4,000 times each month. SmartHub, our member account portal, gets about 3,000 to 4,000 visits each month, and our outage map gets 1,000 to 2,000 hits per month, depending on power outages.

More and more of us are seeking information and conducting transactions online. That's why we've improved our website. When you visit polkburnett.com, you'll find a fresh new look, updated content and simplified navigation. The new site is

fully responsive for a consistent experience on all computers, tablets and mobile devices. *We invite you to make the new polkburnett.com your digital gateway to access co-op service and information.*

Our website is easy to use, with everything at your fingertips. On the homepage, you'll see new outage and propane centers, plus member account access through SmartHub. You'll also see more videos and online forms. Members can apply for rebates, security lights, in-home solar connections and even sign up for new electric service. The site also provides tips to help members save energy and money, and is transparent with rates, policies and board governance information. *We hope you visit polkburnett.com soon and often!*

See real-time **OUTAGE MAP** and **SOLAR ENERGY TRACKER** on polkburnett.com

Deadline to apply for 2019 board election is March 8



Polk-Burnett holds elections each spring for the co-op board of directors. This year, board positions in co-op districts 4, 5 and 6 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 4, 5 or 6, contact the general manager's office, 800-421-0283, ext. 313. The deadline to apply is March 8.

For a district map and more details about board elections, visit 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

Find our outage map on polkburnett.com and [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.

*Our goal is to restore power safely and quickly, while keeping you informed.
To report outages, call 800-421-0283.*



Safety tip: 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.

ENROLL TO RECEIVE PEAK ALERTS

We'll send you an alert by text, email or phone asking you to **REDUCE ELECTRICITY** when demand and price are high.

You'll help save money, energy and our environment

polkburnett.com



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Is your hot water tank warm to the touch? Consider insulating it to save 7 to 16 percent annually on water heating costs. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.



IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SURVEY, WE APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICIPATION TO HELP US IMPROVE.
All members who submit a survey will be entered into 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



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

