



# PUTTING SAFETY FIRST THIS MONTH – *and throughout the year*

It's May—and Oakdale Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is a priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety excellence.

This year, we're focusing on electrical safety in the home. Electricity is the cause of over 140,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 deaths, 4,000 injuries, and 1.6 billion in property damage, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

There are many measures you can take to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Use these helpful tips from ESFI to safeguard your home.

## In the Kitchen

- Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to clear dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create fire hazards.
- Keep all countertop appliances away from the sink.
- All appliance cords should be placed away from hot surfaces. Pay particular attention to cords around toasters, ovens, and ranges. Cords can be damaged by excess heat.
- The top and the area above the cooking range should be free of combustibles, such as potholders and plastic utensils. Storing these items on or near the range may result in fires or burns.

## Light the Way to Safety

- The wattage of the bulbs you use in your home should

match the wattage indicated on the light fixture. Overheated fixtures can lead to a fire.

- Check lamp cords to make sure they are in good condition—not damaged or cracked. Do not attempt to repair damaged cords yourself. Take any item with a damaged power cord to an authorized repair center.
- Extension cords should not be used to provide power on a long-term or permanent basis. Have additional receptacles installed by a professional to provide power where needed.

## Be Prepared

- Nearly two-thirds of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be located on every level of your home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area.
- Test smoke alarms every month. Batteries should be replaced at least once a year—or sooner if indicated in the manufacturers' instructions. All smoke alarms should be replaced at least every 10 years.
- Talk to your family about an emergency plan in the event of a fire in your home. If you have small children, include them in planning an emergency escape route—they are more likely to remember the plan if they're involved in creating it.

Electrical safety awareness and education can save lives. For more tips and information about electrical safety, visit [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org).



# Oakdale Electric Cooperative holds 81st Annual Meeting

Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 81st Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, April 2, at Tomah High School. Doors opened at 9 a.m. for registration, with the business meeting starting at 10 a.m. Members socialized with Oakdale employees and other members prior to the meeting, while enjoying coffee and doughnuts.

Bob Hess, board president, called the meeting to order; MaKenna Linenberg, Tomah High School sophomore, sang the national anthem; and Jim Van Wychen provided the invocation. Hess welcomed members and expressed his appreciation for their continued support.

"I believe our greatest single strength as a cooperative is our people—the members, the employees who operate it, and the directors that you have selected to guide it. By working together cooperatively, we keep Oakdale Electric Cooperative strong," he said.

Hess further explained that through programs like Operation Round Up®, Youth Leadership Congress, scholarships, and volunteer activities, Oakdale Electric supports its surrounding communities and prides itself on being more than just a utility provider.

Bruce Ardel, general manager, stated that "it's an interesting time to be in the electric industry. Technology enhancements, smart appliances, and a new focus on a mix of renewable sources all signal a time of change and growth."

Ardel highlighted some of Oakdale Electric's

accomplishments from the prior year as well as future projects that ensure the cooperative's success continues. This included line and system upgrades, right-of-way maintenance, and future technology enhancements. The co-op works year-round to increase reliability, with \$3.6 million dedicated to electric system improvements in 2015, and over \$3.8 million to be invested in the co-op's infrastructure for 2016.

Ardel also spoke of the cooperative's community solar project. "Dairyland, our power supplier will be installing a 1,500-kW project on our system," he said. "The developer, SoCore Energy, will be able to add Oakdale's 200-kW community solar system right next to it at a much lower cost than building a stand-alone system in a different location. Plans are to get the project installed this year and available to members to purchase

the output of the solar panels and receive a credit on their monthly electric bill. We see this as an easy way for members to utilize solar energy."

Rates are always a priority to members, and Ardel explained rates have been stable in the last three years due to kWh sales growth and wholesale rate stability, and by controlling costs. But with wholesale electricity purchases accounting for 66 percent of the co-op's total expenses and the forecasted wholesale rate increase of 2.65 percent, the co-op's rates will need to be reviewed this year.

Guest speaker John Carr of Dairyland Power Cooperative gave a presentation on the anticipated effects of the

**"I believe our greatest strength as a cooperative is our people..."**

**—Bob Hess, board president**

Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan on the generation and transmission co-op.

Four candidates participated in elections for two board seats. Incumbent directors Jonathan Williams and Greg Eirschele retained their positions. The re-elected directors will serve a three-year term.

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association Statewide Manager

**“We see this as an easy way for members to utilize solar energy.”**

**–Bruce Ardel, general manager**

Steve Freese was introduced to the members and told them about the organization and the services it provides to member cooperatives.

Jack Zdun, a senior at Pittsville High School, spoke to the members about his experiences at the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC), his responsibilities on the WECA Youth Board, and as a scholarship recipient. He expressed his thanks to Oakdale Electric Cooperative not only for the much-needed scholarship, but

also for sponsoring him to attend YLC.

Following the business meeting, the board reorganized for the coming year. Bob Hess continues as board president, Greg Eirschele as vice president, Jon Williams as secretary, Rick Barrett as treasurer, and Cherlyn Moseley as assistant secretary. Ron Churchill will represent the co-op on the Dairyland board, with Jim Van Wychen as alternate.

Members were served a hearty Kentucky Fried Chicken lunch. Safety flashlight door prizes were given out to members upon departure.



MY CO-OP



1. WECA Youth Board member Jack Zdun, Pittsville, addresses the membership. 2. Directors Jonathan Williams (left) and Gregory Eirschele were re-elected for a three-year term. 3. Board President Bob Hess welcomed the members and shared his thoughts about electric co-ops and the unique ways they serve us.



1. La Valle Ironton students watch the demonstration. 2. Tomah Area Montessori School student Brennan dresses up like a lineman. 3. Tommy Liddane uses a hotdog to show what would happen to a finger that touches electricity. 4. Brock Brown shows students what a finger would look like after touching electricity. 5. Brown speaks to Westside Elementary School.

## LINEMEN TEACH ELECTRICAL SAFETY TO AREA YOUTH

This past March, Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) Linemen Brock Brown and Tommy Liddane visited the Reedsburg Area School District and presented the Hotline Safety Demonstration to local elementary students. Additionally, the Tomah Area Montessori School visited the co-op for its own safety presentation and facility tour. A total of 550 youth was taught to respect of the danger of electricity and provided with valuable information on

how to stay safe around it. They saw firsthand what happens when a tree branch, kite, or person (simulated by a hotdog) accidentally touches a power line energized to 7,200 volts.

“I’m not here to scare you,” stated Brock Brown, “but to reinforce how dangerous electricity is.” Brown further explained that electricity does not have a brain, and cannot tell the difference between a tree, animal, or a child. “I’m a lineman. I can turn your electricity back on, but I can’t

bring a person back to life,” he said.

The Hotline Safety Demonstration is a long standing tradition at Oakdale Electric Cooperative, and Brock and Tommy are proud to be a part of it. They get a lot of satisfaction knowing lives are being positively impacted and potentially saved with each presentation.

To schedule a demonstration, civic and community organizations included, contact Deana Protz at [dprotz@oakdalerec.com](mailto:dprotz@oakdalerec.com) or call 608-372-4131.

### Bruce Ardel, General Manager

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### Deana Protz, Editor



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Cooperative**

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