



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



The Big GREEN Box

They're big. They're often green. Some folks don't like the look of these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mounted underground transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences, rock gardens, or flower beds. But stay clear: Even small additions around pad-mounted underground transformers create hazards.

To improve aesthetics of new neighborhoods, utilities often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing underground transformers in some yards. Unfortunately some homeowners, concerned about curb appeal, attempt to screen pad-mounted underground transformers from view—creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including Oakdale Electric Cooperative workers.

"We realize landscaping represents an investment of time and money," shares Glenn Pampuch, operations manager. "We respect the effort and care our members invest in making their properties attractive. However, landscaping around electrical equipment interferes with our ability to deliver reliable power."

Oakdale Electric Cooperative recommends leaving at least 12 feet of clear space in front of pad-mounted underground transformers. Lineworkers repair units while they are energized so members don't experience an interruption in

service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about 12 feet of "elbow room" in front of the access panel.

"In some cases, members may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer, but grow vegetation on the other three sides," explains Pampuch. "This invites other problems. For example, plant roots can interfere with its operation. Overheating is another big concern that can cause service interruptions when air circulation is compromised."

Allow at least 3 to 4 feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

When a power outage occurs, it is Oakdale Electric Cooperative's mission to restore power as quickly and safely as possible for members. However, efficiency can be compromised when linemen cannot locate the underground transformer due to decorative barriers.

Pampuch states, "Over the years, I have seen members

(Continued on page 18)

YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONGRESS

An exciting opportunity for member high school students

The annual WECA Youth Leadership Congress (YLC) is a dynamic three-day event for youth leaders across Wisconsin to develop their leadership skills while learning about the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative businesses.

Who is eligible to attend?

- Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) will sponsor up to six students per qualifying high school to attend the 2017 YLC at UW–River Falls, July 26–29, 2017.
- Student must be a son or daughter (or under legal guardianship) of an active member of OEC residing in the same household.
- Student must be entering his/her senior year in the fall of 2017 at one of 12 qualifying schools: Brookwood, Mauston, Necedah, Nekoosa, New Lisbon, Pittsville, Reedsburg Area, Royall, Sparta, Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, and Wonewoc.

What does it cost?

- All costs are covered by OEC, including transportation to and from UW–River Falls.



Members of the youth board have an opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., in June as part of the National Youth Tour. Last year, OEC's own Emma Herek, Jenna Jereb, and Naly Vang were elected to the youth board and will be joining other student leaders across the country on the National Youth Tour this spring. You could have the same opportunity!

Interested? Here's how to apply...

- Registration materials are available at each respective high school guidance office beginning in March.
- Each high school selects its own student representatives.

Take the opportunity to...

- See what makes the cooperative business model different and successful, and then apply this knowledge to fun and challenging cooperative activities.
- Identify and learn how to develop your own leadership skills.
- Discuss cooperative careers with professionals in the industry.
- Be entertained and challenged by

highly acclaimed motivational speakers who understand teens and address topics that are important and relevant in your life.

The Youth Leadership Congress is a by-teens, for-teens conference that is planned and developed by a youth board elected at the previous year's event.



Mail survey coming in April

In April, our power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, will collect data from co-op members across the state to plan energy for the future. This survey will be sent by mail to a random sample of Oakdale Electric Cooperative members. If you receive this survey in your mail, we thank you in advance for your participation.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Would you like to learn how to apply for a scholarship to help apply towards a post-secondary education? Oakdale Electric Cooperative has three scholarship opportunities available. Scholarships are funded directly through the Federated Youth Foundation by unclaimed capital credits. A volunteer, member-appointed scholarship committee will review and select scholarship recipients.

#1: Youth Scholarship

Scholarships are awarded as follows to the authors of the top three essays to students at each of the 12 participating public high schools:

- First place – \$1,500
- Second place – \$1,250
- Third place – \$1,000

ELIGIBILITY:

- Participants must be between their junior and senior years in high school while attending the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC).
- The student must be a son or daughter (or under the legal guardianship) of an active member of the Oakdale Electric Cooperative.
- Student must be planning to attend a college, university, or vocational/technical school within the next 12 months after receiving the award, or the scholarship will be forfeited.
- A prerequisite for earning a scholarship is participation in Youth Leadership Congress, held on the UW-River Falls campus during the summer, and writing a winning essay upon the student's return home.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONGRESS:

Oakdale Electric Cooperative will sponsor up to six students per high school to attend the 2017 YLC at UW-River

Falls July 26–28. Registration materials are available at each respective high school guidance office beginning in March. The high school is responsible for selecting their student representatives.

DEADLINE:

The essay will be available following Youth Leadership Congress, and must be post marked by August 25, 2017.

#2: At-Large/Non-Traditional Scholarship

A \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded yearly to a high school senior not enrolled in one of the 12 participating public high schools in our service area (At-Large), OR an individual returning to university or technical college after spending time in the work place or raising a family (Non-Traditional).

ELIGIBILITY:

- Applicant must be a member or the son or daughter (or under the legal guardianship) of an active member of the Oakdale Electric Cooperative in good standing and accepted at a post-secondary program or accredited training program.
- Applicants do not have to attend Youth Leadership Congress, but are required to write an essay.
- The disbursement of this scholarship will be awarded after all qualifications are met and verification of enrollment. ▶



APPLICATION:

The complete rules and application for the At-Large/ Non-Traditional scholarship is currently available on our website, www.oakdalerec.com. Otherwise, they can be mailed or emailed to interested applicants.

DEADLINE:

The essay must be postmarked by May 5, 2017. The scholarship will be awarded in June 2017 and claim for the \$1,000 award can be made at that time.

#3: LINEWORKER SCHOLARSHIP

A \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior pursuing a post-secondary education in an electrical lineworker program.

ELIGIBILITY:

One \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to an applicant pursuing a post-secondary education in an electric lineworker

program. Any applicant enrolling in an electric lineworker program or any applicant who can prove they are on a waiting list for the next open enrollment period is eligible. Preference will be given to OEC members and residents of Monroe, Juneau, Jackson, Sauk, and Wood counties.

APPLICATION:

The complete rules and application for the Lineworker Scholarship is currently available on our website, www.oakdalerec.com. Otherwise, it can be mailed or emailed to interested applicants.

DEADLINE:

The essay must be postmarked by May 5, 2017. The scholarship will be awarded in June 2017 and claim for the \$1,000 award can be made at that time.

For complete rules on all scholarships visit our website, www.oakdalerec.com, or contact Deana Protz at dprotz@oakdalerec.com or 608-372-4131.

Big Green Box (Continued from page 15)

come up with some very creative ideas to disguise the underground transformer—everything from faux rocks to decorative houses, and anything in between.” To ensure reliability, safety, and timeliness, Pampuch advises to “please, just leave the big green boxes alone.”

If there is something currently planted around the underground transformer at your residence or workplace, call 811 to schedule a free location of underground cables. Always be in the know of what is below before diggings, and call a few days prior to the start of the project.

Underground inspections start this spring!

Karcz Utility Services has been contracted by Oakdale Electric Cooperative to perform routine inspections on the pad-mounted underground transformers. Pampuch said the cooperative is on a 10-year rotation to have every box inspected. Crew members from Karcz Utility Services will inspect approximately 700 pad-mounted underground transformers in areas receiving power from the Mather and Tunnel City substations between the months of April and October. All affected members were mailed a notification in March.

Transformers need to be left alone

- Never let anything grow closer than 12 feet from a pad-mounted underground transformer. (The access panel is marked by a handle, lock, and sticker on the front.)
- Never enclose a pad-mounted underground transformer with fencing, shrubs, or anything else with less than a 12-foot-wide gate or opening.
- Never allow children to play near pad-mounted underground transformers.
- Never pour waste oils, chemicals, or other liquids on or near a pad-mounted underground transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.

Bruce Ardel, General Manager

P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI 54649
608-372-4131 • 800-241-2468
info@oakdalerec.com

Deana Protz, Editor



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: 800-927-6151
Toll-free Online Bill Payment 866-392-4307

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call 800-242-8511.