

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

May 2024

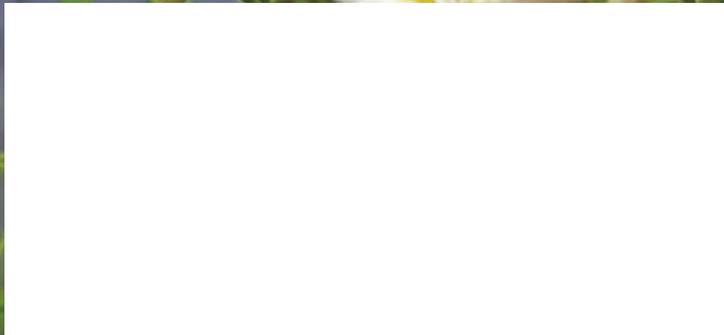


## PARK IT HERE, PART 2 **ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS AT THESE COUNTY-PARK GEMS**

**INVESTING IN ENERGY**

**WHY SOLAR IS NOT FREE**

**BEEF RECIPES**





Charli Broderick



Keira Cole



Michaela Crandall



Callie Gagnon



Alex Haines



Brynn Hodkiewicz



Lauren McDowell



Grace Molitor



Lillyan Neta



Abigail Roskom



Amber Seitz



Anna Spaulding

# Congratulations

Oconto Electric Cooperative is proud to announce our 2024 scholarship recipients. This year OEC was able to award 12 scholarships each in the amount of \$2,500. Scholarships are made possible through unclaimed capital credits.

**Charli Broderick**, daughter of Chris and Tina Broderick, senior at Coleman High School, will be attending NWTC for Electro-Mechanical Technology.

**Keira Cole**, daughter of Daniel and Carin Cole, senior at Oconto Falls High School, will be attending NWTC for Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

**Michaela Crandall**, daughter of Brett and Lisa Crandall, senior at Oconto Falls High School, plans to attend UW-Stevens Point for a degree in Family and Consumer Sciences with a Child Life Specialist certification.

**Callie Gagnon**, daughter of Devon and Lisa Gagnon, senior at Oconto Falls High School, plans to study Technology Education at UW-Platteville.

**Alex Haines**, son of Jason and Jamie Haines, senior at Oconto Falls High School, plans on attending UW-Platteville to be an Electrical Engineer.

**Brynn Hodkiewicz**, daughter of Bryant (deceased) and Kristin Hodkiewicz, senior at Oconto Falls High School, will be attending Wisconsin Lutheran College for Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

**Lauren McDowell**, daughter of James and Michelle McDowell, senior at Oconto High School, will be attending NWTC for Nursing.

**Grace Molitor**, daughter of Tom and Kelly Molitor, senior at Oconto Falls High School, will study Mechanical Engineering at UW-Madison.

**Lillyan Neta**, daughter of Jeremy and Ophelia Neta, senior at Lena High School, will be attending Carthage College to major in Mathematics with a possible major in Physics.

**Abigail Roskom**, daughter of Scott and Jacqueline Roskom, senior at Oconto Falls High School, will be attending Fox Valley Technical College to be a Veterinary Technician.

**Amber Seitz**, daughter of Mark and Cindy Seitz, senior at Pulaski High School, will attend UW-River Falls to become a USDA Meat Inspector.

**Anna Spaulding**, daughter of Jeff and Tricia Spaulding, senior at Oconto Falls High School, plans on attending NWTC to study Dental Hygiene.

# WINTER STORM CORA IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

MONTHS OF CLEANUP ARE IN OUR FUTURE

**T**uesday, April 2, began with heavy rain, which transitioned to wet snow around 3 p.m. Winter Storm Cora then unleashed its fury on Northeast Wisconsin, blanketing the region with up to a foot of heavy, wet snow. The combination of snow and ice proved too much for power lines to bear, and wind gusts reaching 50 miles per hour compounded the chaos.

As outage calls came in, our crews immediately went out. Power restoration was slow going because of impassable roads caused by snow, downed trees and branches, and damaged power lines and utility poles. (891401)

“This smoked our whole system,” said OEC Line Superintendent Jack Pardy. At the height of the event, approximately 9,000 members were without power. Due to the extreme damage, Pardy made the decision to call in assistance from the ROPE (Restoration of Power in an Emergency) program right away Tuesday night. The additional personnel and equipment were much needed. We understand that people need electricity and we always put forth our best effort to restore power as quickly and safely as conditions allow.

ROPE is a very unique program of co-ops helping co-ops. It is managed by Dairyland Power Cooperative. In the event that a major storm causes extensive damage to a cooperative’s distribution system, that co-op can call Dairyland Power to ask for help through the ROPE program. Dairyland Power will then call neighboring co-ops that were unaffected by the storm to help restore power to the affected co-op’s system. A combined force of 30 linemen from nine co-ops came to our aid.

## Steps to restoring power

First we start with the transmission lines, the backbone of our system as they carry high-voltage electricity from generation sources to our substations. A transmission line problem cuts power to everyone, making it a priority repair.

Substations are next. They reduce the high-voltage electricity from the transmission lines so it can be safely carried on distribution lines. If there is an issue at a substation, it must be addressed before re-energizing distribution lines.

Distribution lines, sometimes called primary lines or feeders, carry power from the substation to various areas for further distribution. Repairing damage to these components



The wire pictured to the right just below the pen is the size of the wire that is covered by at least 6 inches of snow and ice above. When the buildup happens on the lines, combined with wind, it creates galloping lines. When that happens, the lines either fault across each other or pound on the mechanical connections until something breaks.



is the next necessary step in the power restoration process.

Lastly are the tap lines and secondary lines that carry power from distribution lines to smaller groups of homes. If an entire portion of your neighborhood is without power, the tap line is a likely source of the problem. This is the most time-consuming part of the restoration process.

## Restoration efforts

We had over 40 people working 16-plus hours a day to repair the damage to get our members restored. Many OEC employees were without power for several hours and days; many are members of OEC while others are serviced by WPS, We Energies, and Oconto Falls Municipality. Visiting crew members left their families for days to restore power to OEC members.



For the first few days of the restoration, crews were still battling snow and rain, making for less-than-ideal working conditions. In remaining days the sun came out, the temperatures rose, and the snow melted, leaving standing water everywhere.

Crews worked for over a week to get all members restored, replacing 130-plus poles and 70 broken cross arms, performing hundreds of wire splices, and restringing miles of power lines.

While crews were busy making repairs in the field, the office staff was busy fielding countless calls that were coming in, some to report their outage, others to report trees on lines, broken poles, and downed lines.

With an outage of this extent, it's nearly impossible to accurately predict how long you will be out of power. We tried to keep members informed as often as possible through our Facebook page.

Hotel accommodations were hurriedly made for the line crews that were coming in from outside of our co-op. Each day, a hot breakfast was prepared and the crews would gather early to eat, get their work orders, and head out for the day. (927800) We also provided boxed lunches with food provided by our members—in some cases meals were delivered on site—and a hot meal was provided each evening.

## Looking ahead

Storms across our service territory continue to grow in strength. Members should evaluate their needs and decide if a generator would be a good investment. For members who rely on electricity for medical equipment, having a battery backup system or alternative plan in place is highly recommended. Contact your local emergency management agency for aid or assistance.



**Normal power line**      **Lines weighed down by ice**      **Top line melted after bottom line**

### ICE ON POWER LINES IS A WEIGHTY SUBJECT

When it comes to getting electricity across power lines and into homes, ice can be a force to be reckoned with.

#### ICE ON DISTRIBUTION LINES

Ice can quickly lead to broken power poles and other pole equipment. Ice can also make falling tree branches 30x heavier and much more likely to break power lines.

#### ON A 300-FOOT SPAN OF 1-INCH-THICK POWER LINES

- 1/2 inch of ice adds 281 pounds of weight
- 1 inch of ice adds 749 pounds of weight
- 2 inches of ice adds 2,248 pounds of weight

#### WHEN ICE MELTS

Melting ice can cause power outages. If ice on the bottom (neutral) line melts before the lines above, it can cause the lines to touch.

#### OTHER ICE FACTS

- Damage can begin when ice exceeds 1/4 of an inch
- 1/2 inch of ice can cause a line to sag up to 12 inches
- Pressure can also be caused by a broken tree limb
- Both ice and melting ice can cause power outages

**Safe Electricity.org**

Source: Jerri Ingarten-Whitley and Victory Electric Cooperative





Thank a linemen and thank their families too. Many personal and family plans are spoiled by weather or other untimely events that cause an outage, but our linemen are dedicated and always ready to go. In the case of Winter Storm Cora, a lineman missed seeing his twin sons crawl for the first time while he was assisting OEC with the storm repairs. When a storm of this magnitude hits our system, it is all hands on deck, so don't forget to thank your office staff and their families too.

### Cooperatives that answered the ROPE Call

Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative  
4 linemen, 2 bucket trucks

Barron Electric Cooperative  
4 linemen, 2 bucket trucks

Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative  
2 linemen, 1 bucket truck

Clark Electric Cooperative  
4 linemen, 2 bucket trucks

Dunn Energy Cooperative  
4 linemen, 1 bucket truck, 1 digger

Eau Claire Energy Cooperative  
2 linemen, 1 bucket truck

Jump River Electric Cooperative  
4 linemen, 1 bucket truck, 1 digger

Price Electric Cooperative  
2 linemen, 1 digger

St. Croix Electric Cooperative  
4 linemen, 1 bucket truck, 1 digger



Thank you! OEC would like to say thank to our members for your patience and understanding during the April storm. The outpouring of support and prayers we had from all of you was amazing. Thank you to those who dropped off food and beverages at the office and directly to the crews. The visiting co-ops said we have the nicest, appreciative, and caring members around. We agree!

## HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. The April account numbers belonged to Robert Dumke, Green Bay, and David and Janet Terp, Coleman.



Ryan Miller, CEO

Katie Jagiello, Communications and Marketing

7479 REA Road, P.O. Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54154  
www.ocontoelectric.com

**Hours of Operation:** 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

**Hours of Lobby:** 9:00 a.m.– 3 p.m. Friday

**Non-emergencies:** 920-846-2816

**Emergencies & outages:** Toll FREE 800-472-8410  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week