

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

November 2025



CAMP NAWAKWA REVIVING A CAMP, RENEWING A MISSION

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE POWER

PREP NOW FOR WINTER SAVINGS

KIDS AND CRITTERS



A Season of Thanks "giving" The Power of Community "Change"

As the leaves turn and the air grows crisp, the season of Thanksgiving reminds us of the power of gratitude—and the beauty of giving back.

In a quiet corner of Wisconsin, something extraordinary happens every day, thanks to the generosity of Oconto Electric Cooperative members. Through a simple act—rounding up their electric bills to the nearest dollar—members contribute to a fund called Community “Change”, a program that has quietly transformed lives since 1999.

Each member gives an average of \$6.00 per year—just pennies a month. Some choose to give more, adding an extra dollar or two to their monthly donation. It may seem small, but together, these contributions have added up to over \$170,000 in grants distributed to local civic groups, charitable organizations, and neighbors facing hardship.

This Thanksgiving, we celebrate not just the season, but the spirit of giving that lives in our community. We give thanks for those who already contribute to Community “Change”—thank you for your kindness, your compassion, and your commitment to making a difference.

If you’re not yet a contributor, won’t you consider joining us? It’s one of the most rewarding things you can do—for just a few cents a month. And if you’re already giving, maybe this season is the perfect time to increase your donation

by a dollar or two.

To sign up or adjust your contribution, simply call the office. Your small change can bring big hope.

In 2025 grants were awarded to:

- 4 House Fire Victims
- Grace Lutheran Church, Oconto Falls—Operation Christmas Child Program
- Oconto Area Humane Society—Spay/Neuter Program
- Lena Public School—Student Needs Closet
- Oconto County Sheriff’s Department —Ballistic Shield
- Town of Brazeau Emergency Services — Water Rescue Equipment
- Sunshine Child Center, Inc., Gillett— Upgrading playground surface
- Little Suamico Fire Department — AED for town park

How to apply for grants

If you know of a charitable or service organization, civic group, or individual with unusual financial needs, you can encourage them to apply for a Community Change grant. Applications can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com or in the OEC lobby. Applications for the December board meeting must be submitted by November 21.

*Together, we are the heart of Community "Change."
Together, we give thanks. Together, we give.*

Secure. Contactless. 24/7/365 Payment

Automated Payments By Phone
1-855-953-3499



Reminder, starting November 1, Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) representatives will no longer be able to accept credit card, checking, or savings account information verbally over the phone. To better safeguard your personal and financial information, credit card companies and the Payment Card Industry (PCI) have introduced stricter security standards.

However, making payments by phone is still easy and secure. Simply call our PCI-compliant interactive voice response system at 1-855-953-3499 and follow the prompts.

We understand this change may require some adjustment, but it's a necessary step to protect your information and ensure compliance with PCI standards.

You can continue to make secure credit card payments on our website or through SmartHub. Just click the SmartHub button at the top of our homepage or the "Pay Now" button: ocontoelectric.com. You still have the option of mailing in your payment or stopping in at the office.

Monitoring your account has never been easier!



SmartHub also lets you:
View your energy usage
Set up or manage autopay
Report issues or outages



Scan the QR code to download the SmartHub app.

PROMPT: Welcome to Oconto Electric's automated phone system.

PROMPT: For English, press one. Para usar español, oprima dos.

PROMPT: To check your account status or make a payment, press 1. To create or update your pin number, press 2 (pin number is required to pay by checking or savings account). To edit your stored payment information, press 3.

PROMPT: To check your account status, press 1. To make a payment, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3.

PROMPT: If you would like to pay by credit, or debit card, press 1. If you would like to pay by checking account, press 2. To return to the main menu, 3.

PROMPT: To look up your information by phone number (this is phone number OEC has on file), please press 1. To look up your information by billing account number, please press 2. To look up your information by caller ID, please press 3. To go to the main menu, please press 4.

PROMPT: (If pressed 2) Please enter your billing account number followed by the pound key.

PROMPT: If you are calling in regards to your Electric service for billing address ####, please press 1. If not press 2.

PROMPT: The total amount owed is \$\$\$, and is due on ####. To pay the balance, press 1. To pay a specific amount, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3.

PROMPT: (Bill amount) has been added to your total.

PROMPT: To proceed to check out, press 1. To add another payment, press 2. To review your pending payments, press 3.

PROMPT: To pay with a new credit card, press 1. If you would like to pay with a stored credit card, press 2.

PROMPT: To pay using the credit card ending in, #, #, #, #, press 1. Otherwise, press 2.

PROMPT: Your payment has been posted.

PROMPT: Your payment verification code is #, #, #, #, #, #, for payment amount \$\$\$\$. If you are finished making payments, you may hang up at any time. To hear this information again, press 1. To continue, press 2.

Prompt will vary depending on what you choose.



PREPARING FOR THE BIG HUNT

LOOK OUT FOR POWER LINES

I could barely sleep last night. I kept thinking about the big buck Dad saw on the trail cam last week. My alarm went off way too early, but I didn't even care—I was already wide awake. I threw on my warmest gear, grabbed my backpack, and tiptoed out the door like a ninja so I wouldn't wake my little sister.

It was a cool, crisp morning. My boots crunched with every step as we walked to the stand, and my breath made little clouds in the cold air. Dad gave me a thumbs-up before he walked to his stand nearby, and Grandpa and I climbed in his.

Now I'm sitting here, watching the woods wake up. The sunrise is turning the sky orange and pink, and it's so quiet I can hear my own heartbeat. Then—crunch. I freeze. Something's moving. My hands grip the rifle tighter. Could it be him? The big one?

I hold my breath and wait. I nudged Grandpa to show him that the buck was coming. "Can I shoot?" Before Grandpa could even answer I had my barrel out the deer blind window and waited for the perfect shot. Boom! "Grandpa I got him."

Now came the hard part, waiting. After 30 minutes, Grandpa said that we could finally walk over to the deer. There it was, a nice 7 pointer.

As hunting season approaches, excitement builds for time outdoors. I'd like to share these safety tips with you before you head into the woods. My mom works at OEC and has shared them with me.

Power lines and utility equipment are often out of sight — and out of mind — especially in wooded or rural areas. Ignoring them can lead to serious injuries or even death.

Keep these tips in mind to stay safe and avoid costly or

dangerous incidents:

- Scout the area. Before hunting, take time to scout your area during daylight. Look for power lines, poles and electrical equipment. Note their locations to avoid them later.
- Power safely. If you're using a portable electrical generator on your hunting trip, don't use it inside a cabin or RV, or in a confined area. Make sure it's used outside where there is plenty of ventilation.
- Avoid aiming toward power lines or equipment. Never fire near or toward poles, lines, substations or transformers. A stray bullet could knock down a line, interrupt power or create a deadly hazard.
- Keep your distance. Always stay at least 10 feet away from overhead lines, poles and other electrical infrastructure when setting up or taking down tree stands.
- Never climb a utility pole. Even if it looks like the perfect vantage point, don't do it. Poles carry high-voltage lines, and climbing them can be deadly.
- Don't use utility poles for support. Tree stands or blinds should never be attached to or supported by power poles or electrical equipment.

Know the danger of downed lines. If you come across a downed power line or damaged electrical equipment, stay at least 50 feet away, even if it doesn't appear to be live. (728900) Power lines can still carry electricity when on the ground, posing a risk of shock or electrocution. Call 911 or your utility right away to help prevent a dangerous situation.

Whether you're a seasoned hunter or heading out for the first time, staying aware of your surroundings could save your life.



*Blake Jagiello, son of Katie Jagiello,
OEC's Communications and Marketing Specialist.*



A warm welcome to Angela

We're pleased to introduce Angela Rabas, who joined Oconto Electric Cooperative in early September as our new Member Services Representative. Angela will be the first person to greet you at the front counter and the friendly voice you hear when you call our office.

Angela brings warmth and dedication to her role, and we're thrilled to have her on board. She is married and a proud mom of two daughters. Outside of work, Angela raises show cattle and enjoys spending quality time with her family and her two dogs, and staying busy with their family business, Chad Rabas Express.

We're excited to have Angela on board and know she'll be a wonderful addition to our team. Be sure to say hello next time you stop by!

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers will try anything to pressure customers into providing their personal information. If you are ever asked to pay your utility bill through a third-party transaction app, such as Cash App or Venmo, it's a scam. Remember, utilities will never request a payment through a third-party app. Always use authorized payment methods when paying your utility bills.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



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 October account numbers belonged to John Zimanek, Abrams and Gary and Debra Pagel, Pound.



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