



IN MAY, TAKE THE TIME TO PLUG INTO SAFETY

This month, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the importance of safety. May is Electrical Safety Month, and Oconto Electric Cooperative will be sharing safety tips to help raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used.

Our responsibility to you

OEC's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents, and electrocution in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we complete (5200) safety demonstrations in the local schools and at our annual member appreciation picnic. We frequently provide electrical safety content in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, and we encourage the public to contact us if they see a downed power line or any other type of dangerous electrical situation. We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity and to serve as

your trusted energy advisor, now and well into the future.

Our responsibility to employees

It is no accident that safety is a top priority at OEC. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations. In fact, OEC is part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) that follows specific guidelines and protocols for electrical safety that are considered leading practices. Our lineworkers are required to wear

personal protective equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect from electrical shock. Our safety team regularly discusses important safety issues pertaining to work within the building as well as out in the field. OEC employees are getting close to celebrating one million hours' work with no lost-time accidents. This is an outstanding accomplishment, and is far exceeding other electric co-ops in the state.

OEC would like to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. Take a moment to plug into safety. Please visit www.esfi.org for tips about how to keep you and your loved ones safe.



NATIONAL DAM SAFETY AWARENESS DAY

National Dam Safety Awareness Day occurs on May 31st of each year. Every year, hundreds of people are killed or seriously injured at dams. Many of the accidents and fatalities that occur near dams could be prevented by using common sense, practicing safety, staying clear of dams, and understanding the dangers to be found near them.

Oconto Electric offers these common-sense tips to stay safe on rivers and near dams:

- Obey all warning signs, barriers, and flashing lights, horns, and sirens. They are there for a reason and it can be extremely

dangerous to ignore them.

- Wear a personal flotation device (life jacket).
- Leave your boat motor running to provide maneuvering power.
- Stay clear of spillways. Changing currents and "boiling" waves can make boat control difficult near dams.
- Reverse currents occur below dams; they can pull a boat back toward the dam into the spillway and capsize it.
- Never anchor boats below a dam because water levels can change rapidly.



Oconto Electric Cooperative 80th Annual Meeting

1. Members waved their flags while veterans were asked to stand when their military branch anthem was sung.
2. Korean War Veterans Del Schuh, Thomas O'Hearn, and OEC employee Ken Clausen spoke about Old Glory Honor Flight.
3. Oconto Falls High School Jazz Singers. 4. CEO Byron Nolde with Scholarship winner Matthew Kostreva.

OEC ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

A patriotically themed program and abundant good news greeted Oconto Electric Cooperative members at their 80th annual meeting Saturday, March 25, in the Performing Arts Center at Oconto Falls High School.

They learned there will be no increase in rates or facilities charges and heard high expectations for a favorable new wholesale power contract when the current one with Wisconsin Public Service expires at the end of 2018.

Board Chairman David Hischke saluted the co-op's 26 full-time employees—compared with 34 a decade ago and serving a similar number of members—who “stepped up to the plate and helped this co-op become more efficient.”

Hischke said the decision to employ a two-man, in-house brushing crew has paid off in more work, done faster. CEO Byron Nolde affirmed that the new approach saves money.

Thirteen \$2,500 scholarships were awarded to area high school seniors. The amount, financed through unclaimed capital credits, was increased from the previous \$1,000. Earlier, Treasurer Dan Kanack reported the return of nearly \$611,000

in capital credits during 2016, for a total of \$14.9 million over the co-op's history.

The Community Change bill-rounding program financed 18 grants to assist local needs including a sheltered workshop in Gillett and area libraries. The OEC employee charity donated another \$12,000, for a total of \$68,000 to date. A 2017 OEC employee charity beneficiary will be the Old Glory Honor Flight, and two Korean War veterans spoke about their experiences on a prior flight.

The Oconto Falls High School Jazz Singers presented the national anthem and a musical tribute to veterans, while meeting attendees waved small American flags in their honor.

Attorney Howard Eslein announced that two incumbents were the sole board nominees in prior district meetings, and the membership ratified the re-elections of Doug Allen and Dan Kanack on voice votes with no opposition heard. Reorganization kept the lineup of board officers in place, with Hischke re-elected chairman; Allen, vice chairman; Todd Duame, secretary; and Kanack, treasurer.



Youth Leadership Congress

UW-River Falls | July 26-28, 2017



MY CO-OP

WECA Youth Leadership Congress 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.

Take the opportunity to...

- See what makes the cooperative business model different and successful, 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

Oconto Electric Cooperative is looking for sophomore, junior, and senior high school students who want to attend the 2017 Youth Leadership Congress.

OEC will:

- Pay all expenses
- Provide transportation
- Have chaperones on hand throughout the conference

Space is limited. Deadline to sign up is June 2, 2017. Contact Katie Jagiello at OEC by calling 800-472-8410 or emailing kjagiello@ocontoelectric.com.



KEEP KIDS SAFE AS THEY HEAD OUTDOORS

When temperatures begin to rise, outdoor areas begin to fill with both children and adults enjoying the weather. Take time to explain to your kids how to be safe around electricity before they head outdoors.

The *Times Argus* in Vermont reported that a boy received critical injuries after he entered an electrical substation in 2013. He suffered severe burns from coming close to the energized electrical equipment.

SafeElectricity.org provides the following tips to share with kids when having a conversation about how to stay safe around outdoor electrical equipment.

- Always stress the importance of safety around electrical substations. Never enter an electrical substation for any reason. Even if a pet has entered inside or a ball goes over the fence, do not go in. Call the electrical utility for help. Substations should only be entered by professionals.
- Kites should only be flown during good weather conditions and in large, open areas like a park or a field. Always look up and check for the location of overhead power lines and other electrical equipment, so that you can be sure to fly kites far away from them. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead line directly to the person on the ground.
- Before climbing a tree, check that the tree and its branches are not located near any overhead power lines. Even if the power lines aren't touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to

the branch, causing electricity to go through you, and you can be hurt or killed.

- Never throw objects at power lines.
- If you ever see downed electrical wires, stay far away. Call 911 to have the utility notified. Downed lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be carrying electricity and be dangerous.
- Do not play with, tamper with, or open outdoor electrical boxes. They contain electrical equipment for underground service to homes and businesses.
- Check the forecast before going outside. Do not plan outdoor activities if a thunderstorm is expected (654200) because there is no safe place from lightning when you are outside. It is important to follow the advice of the National Weather Service, "When thunder roars, go indoors."

There are also steps parents and caregivers can take to help ensure safe outdoor play.

- Make sure all outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to help prevent electric shock.
- Keep all long-handled tools out of reach of children so they will not be tempted to reach for or accidentally hit an overhead power line.



- Pay attention to trees and power lines. Do not plant trees near them, and if there is a tree that has grown into a power line, make sure to call a professional to trim the tree.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

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 David Kowenstrot, Oconto Falls, and Jason Shallow, Lena.

Oconto Electric Cooperative and OEC's RadioShack in Oconto Falls will be closed on Monday, May 29 in honor of Memorial Day.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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