

HISTORY MADE AT OEC'S 86TH ANNUAL MEETING

JAN STRANZ BECOMES FIRST FEMALE BOARD MEMBER

An April Fools' Day snowstorm knocked out power for some OEC members, but it didn't keep 222 voters away from their annual meeting at the Oconto Falls High School Performing Arts Center.

Todd Duame, board chairman, welcomed members and called the business meeting to order at 10 a.m. During the chairman's report, Duame stated that the co-op is still facing challenges like inflation and the high cost of materials. Equipment and materials are still in short supply and hard to get, with delivery times out almost a year.

Duame announced that the board has approved to provide an in-person member appreciation day, with a little twist added to it. The event will be hosted in September offering a breakfast along with all of the past fun family activities.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO, started his report with a moment of silence for our military. Nolde discussed how the co-op had its first rate change in four years and how the board decided to make that decision to do so. He noted that all utilities in our area faced rate increases.

Cooperative Principle #2: Democratic Member Control. Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

OEC's board is comprised of seven directors. This year District 4 and 6 were up for election. Our parliamentarian, Attorney Howard Eslien, started off with District 6, which didn't have any challengers up against incumbent Dan Kanack. The annual meeting attendees ratified their election

by vote. Next was District 4. Eslien invited candidate Jan Stranz to the podium and allowed her three minutes to address the membership. Eslien then called upon District 4 incumbent director Doug Allen to speak for three minutes.

Members were instructed to fill out their ballot, which would then be collected by the tellers. The members voted and Jan Stranz is now the director of District 4. Stranz is the first female board member for OEC.

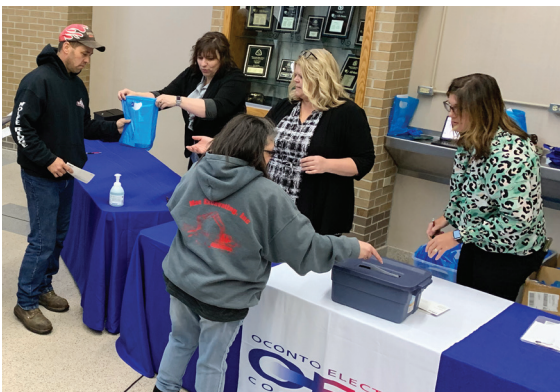
"I, along with the board of directors, would like to welcome Jan to the board. We look forward to working with her to continue making OEC the best cooperative for you, our members.

"We would also like to thank Doug Allen for his 39 years of dedicated service on the board of directors. In working with Doug over the past 20 years, I can tell you that he was a voice of reason and will truly be missed. The board and I wish him nothing but the best.

"Finally, I would like to thank all of you who attended OEC's annual meeting. We look forward to see you all again next year," said Byron C. Nolde, CEO.



"I'm honored and humbled to have been elected to the OEC board. Over the years, more and more women have filled positions within the electric utility industry, including here at OEC. We now join other electric cooperatives across the state and nation who have chosen women to represent members at the boardroom table alongside the dedicated and competent men who also serve in that role."—Jan Stranz



THOUSANDS TREATED EVERY YEAR FOR CHAINSAW INJURIES



Each year, approximately 36,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries caused by using chainsaws. The potential risk of injury increases after major storms when chainsaws are widely used to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches.

When trimming trees, do not trim near power lines. Only OSHA-certified line clearance tree trimmers are allowed by law to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

Aside from serious injury or electrocution from contact with or getting too close to an overhead power line or other electrical source, the three most common injuries from chainsaws are caused by kickback, binding, and pull-in.

Kickback occurs when the chain's teeth catch on something as they rotate around the tip of the blade. It may also happen when the nose strikes another object, starts to bore a cut improperly, or catches the bottom or side of a cut while being reinserted.

Binding (or pinching) occurs when the material clamps down and stalls the cutting chain.

Pull-in happens when the chain at the bottom of the bar stops suddenly due to pinching or striking a foreign object, which can draw the saw forward.

When using a chainsaw on a job or at home, always wear (1235001) protective clothing and glasses. Other basic safety tips include:

Read the owner's manual carefully before operating a

chainsaw.

Choose the proper size and type of chainsaw for the job.

Be sure that bystanders maintain a safe distance from cutting activities.

Check for hazards near the job, such as power lines, poles, or other cables.

When trimming trees and branches:

Take extra care when cutting branches that have been bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object under high wind.

Realize that branches and trees react in different ways when they are cut, depending on the type, age, and condition of the tree, as well as external factors such as weather and wind speed/direction. Other variables can also exist.

In addition, here are some other safety tips to follow when using a chainsaw.

- Make sure all safety functions on the saw work properly and are in place.
- Keep the chain clean, sharp, and lubricated with the correct oil.
- Keep the cutting area clear.
- Work with a partner.
- Avoid overhead hazards, such as utility lines or dead, hanging limbs that may fall.
- Be careful of inclines and uneven ground.
- Stand to the side of what you are cutting.
- Keep the saw as close to you as possible for better control.
- Keep both hands on the saw handles.
- Cut at full throttle (i.e., bring the saw up to speed before starting to cut).
- Let the saw come to a complete stop before reaching for the chain or bar.
- Turn off the saw or activate the chain brake when carrying the saw.
- Ensure the saw is well-maintained and in proper working order.

These are things we don't want you to do while operating a chainsaw.

- Do not operate a saw alone.
- Do not wear loose clothing.
- Do not use the tip to cut.
- Do not cut with a chainsaw above shoulder height.
- Do not refuel a hot saw.

The tips provided are not all-inclusive; instead, they are a reminder to keep safety first. Remember, an injury is much more inconvenient, painful, and costly than taking the time to do the job safely.



STAY SAFE AFTER A STORM



Clean up with care

Once the storm has passed, it is tempting to go straight into yard clean-up mode. However, take time for safety.

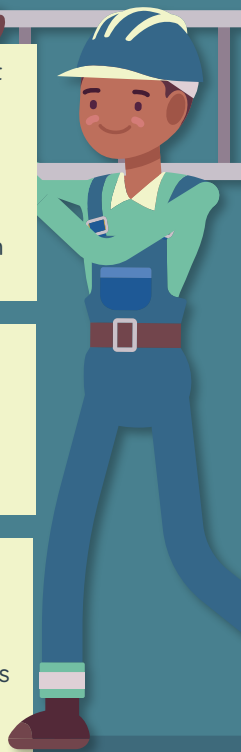
Do not go outside if there is a power outage. There could be a downed power line, which could cause electrocution. Sometimes, downed lines can be covered by branches, storm debris, water, snow or ice.

Keep these additional safety tips in mind:

- **Do not trim trees/branches** within 10 feet of a power line.
- **Read all instructions** and be familiar with equipment you intend to use.
- **Do not use a chainsaw for the first time** during cleanup.
- **Follow all safety recommendations** when using power tools.

- **Carry a ladder horizontally** instead of vertically.
- **Look for overhead power lines** before carrying a ladder.
- **Always look up** for overhead power lines before removing debris from gutters.

- **Take your time.** Rushing can result in serious injury.
- **Wear proper shoes and clothing** when using ladders and power tools.
- **Call your electric utility** to report branches in power lines; never try to remove them yourself.



Remember, wait until an outage is restored before going outside to assess the damage.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The location of your thermostat can impact your HVAC system's ability to maintain an ideal indoor temperature.

For maximum accuracy, thermostats should be placed in the center of the home, away from air vents, plumbing pipes and exterior doors.

Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your thermostat, which can cause the HVAC to run longer than necessary.

Avoid installing thermostats in rooms that tend to feel warmer or colder than the rest of the home. Do not place furniture in front of the thermostat, which can block air flow and result in inaccurate readings.





Photo Credit: Sandi Kane, Oconto Falls

Member Photo Contest

Oconto Electric Cooperative is holding a member photo contest. Winning photos will appear in OEC's 2024 calendar. Photos may also be used in future newsletters or cooperative publications. (906500)

Contest will run through September 10, 2023; however, submitted photos can be taken outside of this date range. Photos must be taken within OEC's service area.

For photo contest criteria, photo contest rules and details and entry form go to ocontoelectric.com/photo-contest/.

National Dam Safety Awareness Day

National Dam Safety Awareness Day occurs on May 31 each year and was created to encourage and promote individual and community responsibility for dam safety, as well as to provide information on what steps can be taken to prevent future catastrophic dam failures. A secondary goal is to promote the benefits dams offer to communities.

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.
- 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.

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 William Eckes, Abrams, and Jerry Hanson, Oconto.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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