

EMPOWERING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Past accomplishments, future projects highlighted at OEC's annual meeting

Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 84th Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, March 23, at Tomah High School. Coffee and donuts were served prior to the start of the business meeting. Robert Hess, board chairman, called the business meeting to order at 10 a.m. MaKenna Linenberg, member, beautifully sang the national anthem, and James Van Wychen, director, provided the invocation. Hess expressed, "I appreciate being able to spend time with you, my fellow members, to celebrate this great cooperative."

Bruce Ardel, general manager, welcomed members and thanked them for their attendance. He stated the future of the co-op is dependent on the next generation. Ardel further elaborated, "Whether we are participating in career fairs, hot line demos, providing scholarships, or making long-term decisions to ensure a reliable source of electricity for our members, we are



always working towards the goal of empowering future generations."

Oakdale Electric's accomplishments from the prior year as well as future projects were highlighted during the business meeting. This included 231 new services added, increased kWh sales from large loads, line and system upgrades, and right-of-way maintenance. "Clearing the right-of-way protects our electric system, decreases outage restoration time, and help prevent fires," Ardel stated. The co-op invested \$5 million in 2018 to improve the electric system, and plans to invest another \$5 million in 2019. Projects will

include new construction, conductor replacement, and line upgrades.

"We are very proud of the dedication of our 44 employees," Ardel said. "The use of technology and good equipment allows us to do more with less," he stated. Shared Services is a way for co-ops to work together to save money and share talent. Oakdale Electric shares a safety and compliance specialist and vegetation management supervisor with other co-ops and participates in the IT Shared Services group.

Oakdale Electric offers a variety of residential, commercial, and agricultural rebates for energy efficiency





improvements. Over \$275,000 in energy incentives were received by members in 2018. Information on available incentives and how to apply can be found on our website, oakdalerec.com, or by contacting the office.

The co-op's single largest expense item is the cost of power purchased from Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC), which accounts for approximately 64 percent of the budget. Rates have remained stable over the last few years due to kWh sales growth and wholesale rate stability. Even with a slight projected wholesale power cost, Ardelt stated, "Our budgeted electric sales should be enough to cover budgeted costs so little or no rate increase should be needed."

Oakdale Electric Cooperative partnered with Dairyland Power Cooperative, Ground Round Grill & Bar in Tomah, and ZEF Energy to bring the first public electric vehicle (EV)

charging station to western Wisconsin in September of 2018. The Tomah area was selected to house the charging station because of its proximity on the I-94 corridor.

Attorney Drew Parrish presented the proposed bylaw amendments. Prior to the membership voting to approve all proposed bylaw amendments, members had the opportunity to ask Parrish questions and voice any concerns.

Longtime co-op attorney Thomas Zarembo held his final director election. Incumbent directors Greg Eirschele and

Jon Williams were up for re-election and retained their positions through a member voice vote. Both directors will serve a three-year term.

Dairyland Power Vice President of External and Member Relations Brian Rude was the annual meeting's guest speaker.

A change in board leadership positions occurred at the reorganizational meeting. The new officer positions are as follows: board chairman, Rick Barrett; vice chairman, Gregory Eirschele; secretary, Jonathan Williams; treasurer, James Van Wychen; assistant secretary, Cherlyn Moseley; DPC director, Robert Hess; and alternate DPC director – Rick Barrett.

Five members received a \$100 bill credit. Following the business meeting, members enjoyed a Kentucky Fried Chicken lunch, and received a one pound block of cheddar cheese from Humbird Cheese Store upon their departure.

"The use of technology and good equipment allows us to do more with less."

–Bruce Ardelt, CEO

HEY TEACHERS!

How would your classroom like a pizza party & \$50?

Because May is National Electrical Safety Month, we think it's a great time to reinforce the life-saving lessons of staying safe around electricity. Tell us, in 250 words or less, how you plan to teach your students about safe electricity use at home, outdoors, and in the classroom this month.

We'll randomly select five local classrooms (PreK – 5th) to receive a pizza party and \$50 to spend on your class! This program does not affect electric rates; it is funded with unclaimed capital credits through the Federated Youth Foundation.

Public or private schools in Oakdale Electric Cooperative's service territory are eligible. This includes schools in the Mauston, Necedah, Nekoosa, New Lisbon, Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton, Pittsville, Reedsburg, Royall, Sparta, Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, and Wonewoc School Districts.



- **Do you need some lesson planning inspiration?**

Visit safeelectricity.org or esfi.org for classroom resources.

- **Do you have a specific electrical safety question?**

Email Ben Bella, safety and compliance coordinator, bbella@ecec.com.

Submission Details:

Email: Deana Protz, dprotz@oakdalerec.com

Mail: Oakdale Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI 54649

Please include the following information with submission:

Teacher's Full Name

Teacher's Contact Information (email and phone)

School Name

School District

Number of Students in Classroom

Submission deadline: May 17, 2019

Selected classrooms will be contacted by May 24, 2019.



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Electrical Safety When Working Outside

Spring fever has never been stronger this year! Now that the days are getting longer and temperatures are on the rise, many homeowners have the itch to get outside and get their hands dirty. As you prepare to slip on your work gloves, keep electrical safety in mind for all your outdoor projects.

Winter storms may have damaged

trees on your property, and you want to trim and beautify these trees. However, if they are near power lines, leave trimming strictly to professionals. If you try and do the job yourself, your tools could come in contact with power lines.

If you plan on working with a ladder, remember to stay far from power lines. Always watch the weather forecast, and

if conditions are either damp or windy, save the outdoor chores for another day. Water conducts electricity, and wind could blow a ladder out of control and into a power line.

As you head outdoors, look up and check to see how close your work may take you to overhead power lines and avoid contact with them. If you see a problem, alert your local cooperative immediately.

Planning to use some power tools in your efforts? Make sure you won't be standing in puddles or wet areas when you use them—wait for those areas to dry out.

Finally, check the condition of cords before plugging in electric tools, and use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) if your outdoor outlets don't have GFCI protection. GFCIs monitor the flow of electricity, and can detect situation where an electric shock is likely. They shut off power to electronics before a shock happens.

Work safely as you work outdoors to ensure your enjoyment for seasons to come.



Make a Difference with Operation RoundUp

Since 2002, over \$66,000 has been awarded back into our communities from Operation Round Up. Please consider joining the 1,676 members who currently opt to Round Up their electric bill. Your change can make a difference!

Left: Operation Round Up Chair Colleen Woggon presents a \$250 check to Tomah Area Cancer Support.



Bruce Ardel, General Manager

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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.