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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* August 2025 NEWS



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

GROWING HOPE

COOL SAVINGS

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

PEACH RECIPES





CLEARING THE PATH TO RELIABILITY

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

Trees are majestic, beautiful, and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming and our safe spraying program.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see OEC crews or contractors hired by the co-op out in the community trimming trees near power lines or spraying to prevent overgrowth. Our trimming and spraying crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events. Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach

those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Our Vegetation Management Program

We have a robust right-of-way maintenance program, encompassing comprehensive tree trimming and effective spraying techniques. Through these concerted efforts, we ensure the continuity of safe and reliable power supply while harmoniously preserving the natural beauty of our communities.

Tree Trimming — The tree trimming program is on a 5-year rotation. This means that we have tree-trimming

contractors coming to your area once every five years. The contractor is instructed to clear 20 feet both sides of the conductor. They also will be removing trees or tree branches that hang over the lines as well as trees and brush growing in the right-of-way. Trees that are dead, dying or leaning heavy towards the line are considered to be hazard trees and will need to be removed even if they are outside of the right-of-way.

Spraying — The spraying program is a safe and efficient way to help keep the right-of-way clear of trees and brush through the careful use of herbicides. This is done two years after tree trimming. Selectively controlling trees and weeds along power lines and other rights-of-way not only ensures safe and easy access for service and maintenance needs but also preserves and enhances natural surroundings.

Herbicides — The herbicides used in spraying operations are classified as general-use by the EPA and all applicators are licensed by the Wisconsin Department

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

- 1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).
- 2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers.** Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.
- 3. Report dangerous branches.** If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.

Trimming improves safety for all.
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

of Agriculture, Trade, Consumer Protection. The herbicide used controls broadleaf weeds and brush but does not kill grass.

Communication — Prior to tree trimming and spraying operations, members are informed ahead of time in a mailed letter notifying them of the upcoming vegetation maintenance. This is a good reminder to make sure OEC has your most up-to-date mailing address on file.

Affordability

As a co-op, OEC always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Visit www.oakdalerec.coop/vegetation-management for a detailed tree planting guide. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting 608-372-4131.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

SAVE THE DATE Member Appreciation Day

Wednesday, October 1
4–7 p.m.

OEC Headquarters

489 N Oakwood St. on Hwy PP, just
north of I90/94 in Oakdale

DEMAND CHARGE EXPLAINED

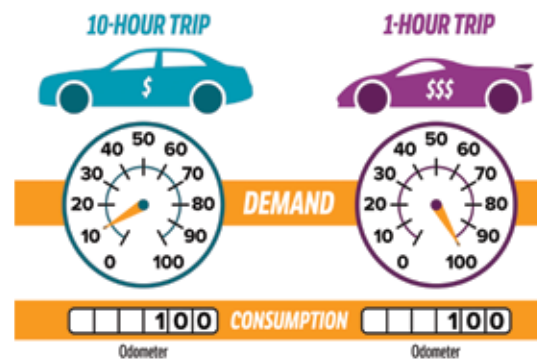
What is energy demand?

Expressed as "kW" or "kilowatts", demand is defined as the rate at which a member consumes electricity at a given time. Electricity is generated based on the real-time demand of those who consume it. When demand is high, supply can become an issue.

'Peak demand' occurs when the need for electricity is highest. Typically, this is during the evening when families return home and use multiple appliances at once. Highest energy demand often occurs during extreme weather events such as hot, humid summer days and extreme sub-zero temperatures in the winter. Using electricity during peak demand periods costs more because more generation is required.

For example, think of electricity like a car. The speedometer measures the maximum speed the car can travel, much like demand (kW) measures the amount of energy used at one time.

The odometer measures distance traveled, much like consumption (kWh) measures energy used. The illustration below shows how two cars could travel the same 100-mile road, one at 10 mph for 10 hours and the other at 100 mph for one hour. It requires more horsepower to power the car at 100 mph than it does to power the one going only 10 mph.



How does energy demand affect you as a member?

Beginning in 2023, OEC added an additional line item on energy statements expressed as "Demand Charge" that has a zero charge to members and is yet to be implemented. Peak demand charges — the highest demand for power in a given month — can be separated from the energy rate to more fairly allocate costs to serve members. Separating demand costs from energy costs can therefore help ensure that we allocate actual costs of service as fairly as possible.

The demand charge has not been implemented yet. Any changes will be communicated to members ahead of time.

What can members actively do to contribute to lower peak demand on the system?

- Set your thermostat to 78 degrees (or a level that is comfortable for the home, but a few degrees higher than normal).
- Closing curtains and shades will help the home feel cooler, longer.
- Run large appliances individually instead of all at the same time.
- A ceiling fan or table fan throughout the afternoon will help circulate the air.
- Set up a schedule for your smart thermostat and smart lighting options, ensuring a minimal amount of energy is used between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- Set the water heater to 120 degrees.
- Wash dishes in an ENERGY STAR® dishwasher instead of by hand.
- Open the dishwasher after the wash cycle to let the dishes air-dry.

For additional questions about energy demand, contact our office at 608-372-4131.



Dan Rux and his appreciative neighbors. Back row L-R: Bob M., Dave F., Ruth H., Beverly S., Nicole S., Randy K., and Bonnie K. Front row L-R: Diane M., Michael S., Dan Rux, Dan's wife Cindy Rux, and Ricky S.

DAN RUX — THE NEIGHBORHOOD HANDYMAN

As the term goes — a man of many talents, most would say they know someone who could be defined as such. Whether it's helping install wheelchair ramps, replacing security lights, or assisting neighbors with lawn care, Dan Rux of Mauston is the handyman. Recognized for his unwavering commitment to supporting his neighborhood, Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) member Dan Rux was recently awarded the Selfless Service Award.

An active community member herself, OEC member Beverly Smith, nominated Dan for his willingness to lend a helping hand, not only for her but for all their neighbors. Each week, the rural neighbors, more so close friends, host a safety meeting to discuss whether anyone needs any assistance and to share camaraderie over a potluck dinner. "This is our social hour and helps us keep tabs on one another," stated Beverly.

One year, when Beverly was wrapping gifts and packaging snacks for the Lyndon Station Christmas gifts, Beverly's husband Michael had an abrupt health concern that needed immediate attention. Neighbors Dan and Al, along with other friends, picked up and delivered all the presents and snacks to the school. Beverly mentioned, "It was my way of giving back to the community, but when I couldn't, Dan and our neighboring friends stepped in for me, and I didn't have to worry about a thing."

Some individuals like Dan just know when to get

something done, even when others don't ask. While Beverly and Michael were on vacation, Dan installed new paneling in their sunroom and replaced the door. He has snow-blown, mowed grass, replaced security lights, and more for Beverly and Michael while either on vacation or laid up from surgery. "Dan just does it out of the kindness of his heart and will never accept any money in return," Beverly and Michael acknowledged.

Beyond helping Beverly and Michael, Dan has replaced a water heater for neighbor Al, assisted with moving furniture for neighbor Ricky, and will help anyone in an instant. Although he is not a member of the Mauston Lions Club, Dan has installed wheelchair ramps and supports delivering eye retinas for the club.

Knowing he won't accept any form of payment, friends and neighbors shared their gratitude for Dan when Beverly organized a small get-together where he was surprised by the award. A handyman indeed, Dan Rux is proof that helping your fellow neighbor strengthens the community.



DORM ROOM

ELECTRICAL SAFETY: TIPS FOR A SAFE SEMESTER



Be smart and stay safe. Share these tips with your campus-bound students.

DON'T OVERLOAD OUTLETS
Too much power draw = fire risk.

Tip: Plug dorm room fridge directly into wall outlet.

DECORATE SAFELY
Don't use nails or tacks to secure cords or light strands.

Tip: Use plastic hooks to hang string lights.

NEVER USE DAMAGED CORDS
Frayed or cracked cords can spark a fire.

Tip: If a cord looks worn, replace it — don't tape it!

REPORT ELECTRICAL ISSUES FAST
Flickering lights? Warm outlets?

Tip: Tell campus maintenance ASAP; don't wait.

UNPLUG WHEN NOT IN USE
Even when off, devices can still draw power or overheat.

Tip: Unplug fans, chargers and appliances when you're out.

NEVER CHARGE A PHONE UNDER PILLOWS OR BEDDING
It could overheat or catch fire.

Tip: Create a dedicated charging station in your room.

KEEP CORDS COOL & CLEAR
Don't run cords under rugs, beds or doorways.

Tip: Keep cords visible to avoid overheating.

Learn more:

Safe Electricity.org®

SMARTHUB DRAWING WINNERS

Congratulations to the following 15 members who enrolled in SmartHub during the promotional period in June. An additional five members were drawn for members who already utilize SmartHub. A random drawing took place, and each received a \$25 Culver's gift card.

Joanna S.
John N.
Lula S.
Troy F.
Mike O.
Kathleen G.
Margaret S.
Mark P.
Ryan M.
Brent P.
Walter B.
Sherry V.
Kellie V.

Jim H.
Angela F.
Norm P.
Tim M.
Gerald D.
Dean B.
Charles T.



Last Call for Your Best Shots!



There's still time to enter our Member Photo Contest to be featured in our 2026 calendar. Photo winners will receive a \$25 Co-op Cash card and a \$50 Co-op Cash card for the cover winner. Photos must be submitted by Friday, August 15, 2025. For contest details, visit www.oakdalerec.coop.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

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info@oakdalerec.coop

Jackie McGlin, Editor



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Office Hours: Monday–Thursday 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Closed Friday.

24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: 800-927-6151

Toll-free Online Bill Payment 855-938-3610

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call 800-242-8511.