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# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

May 2026



**Oakdale Electric  
Cooperative**

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## POWER PLAYERS OF THE GRID

**FEMA FOLLOW UP**

**COOPERATIVE LEADERS  
MAKE THEIR CASE IN WASHINGTON**

**KIDS AND CRITTERS**





# PRIORITIZE SAFETY YEAR-ROUND

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

At Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC), we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, however, we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our crews to you, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. We also know how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

Safety means much more than just a slogan to me. As General Manager & CEO, it's my duty to protect co-op employees, as well as to help ensure the safety of our members and local community. That's why OEC regularly holds safety demonstrations at community events and schools, showing the risks associated with electricity. We cover emergency situations, such as how to respond if your car hits a utility pole or encounters downed power lines, and we warn students about hazards like transformers and circuit overloads from too many devices. To learn more, please visit our website.

Electricity is an integral part of our lives. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools, and appliances, I'd like to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

**Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.** Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use, or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

**Avoid overloading circuits.** Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle—by having too many devices running on one circuit.

**Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home.** Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

**Use extension cords properly.** Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you “daisy chain” them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

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We focus on delivering reliable energy every day of the year while ensuring electrical safety for our community.

Contact us for safety tips or to schedule a demonstration at your school or community event.

## ELECTRICITY 101

To stay safe around electricity, start with these **SEVEN** basic tips:

1.



### DON'T OVERLOAD OUTLETS OR CIRCUITS

Plugging in too many items or drawing too much power on a circuit can cause overheating, fire, and damage to devices.

2.



### DON'T USE FAULTY ELECTRICAL CORDS OR PLUGS

Do not use cords that look frayed, worn or cracked. Do not use broken plugs. Never remove the grounding pin from a three-pronged plug.

3.



### HAVE YOUR ELECTRICIAN'S NUMBER IN YOUR PHONE

Most electrical repairs or installations are not DIY projects. Hire an expert to avoid serious injury or wiring problems.

4.



### BE CAREFUL AROUND H2O

Never use electricity while standing in damp or wet conditions. Keep all electrical devices away from water, including cell phones that are charging.

5.



### EVALUATE YOUR APPLIANCES

Do not use appliances in disrepair. Older or broken appliances can overheat, start a fire, and cause serious injuries.

6.



### TEST YOUR GFCIs

Outlets near a water source should be equipped with GFCIs, which help prevent shock and electrocution caused by ground faults. Test monthly to make sure they are working.

7.



### MAKE SURE YOUR HOME IS UP TO CODE

Your home should be properly wired and electrically sound. Contact a reputable electrician to evaluate your home.



# SPARKING REACTIONS AROUND ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Since the early 1970s, Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) has been presenting an electrical hotline safety demonstration to area elementary schools in the spring from Pittsville to Reedsburg, and everywhere in between.

As part of Cooperative Principle Seven – Concern for Community, instilling electrical safety is key to everyone, not just lineworkers.

Area Service Foreman Brock Brown has been leading the demonstration for many years now and explains various scenarios to encourage greater awareness around overhead powerlines and electricity’s path of least resistance back to the earth. Brock assures students that they are not there to scare them but to reinforce that electricity does not have a brain and cannot tell the difference between a tree, animal, or person. He clarified with, “I’m a lineman—I can turn your electricity back on, but I can’t bring a person back to life.”

The electrical hotline safety demonstration rotates each year throughout OEC’s service area elementary schools but has also been demonstrated at local National Night Out events. Smaller safety presentations can be scheduled for local emergency service departments, civic groups, and community organizations.

Visit [oakdalerec.coop](http://oakdalerec.coop), hover over the Member Benefits tab, and click on Presentations and Demonstrations to request a training.



Brock Brown and two student volunteers who dressed up as lineworkers.

## LAST CALL HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!

### Youth Leadership Conference | July 14-16 | UW-Stout

The deadline is approaching to register for the 2026 Youth Leadership Conference (YLC). Registration is open to current high school juniors who will be entering their senior year in fall of 2026.

Student’s parent(s)/legal guardian must be an active OEC member. All costs are covered by OEC, including transportation to and from UW-Stout.

Scholarships are available after attending YLC.

**Deadline to register is May 29, 2026.**

For more information, scan the QR code, contact your school counselor, or call 608-372-8826.





Rita Kranz (center) is joined by John and Charlene Ennis, who nominated her for Oakdale Electric Cooperative’s Selfless Service Award, at the Elroy community meal at Grace Lutheran Church.

## NURTURING PEOPLE AND PLANTS IS IN RITA KRANZ’S NATURE

A common definition of nurture is—the act of providing food, protection, support, or encouragement. To nurture someone or something takes active presence, time, and attention. Whether volunteering at the local food pantry, beautifying the Elroy community with seasonal flowers, or bringing treats and visiting with folks at the local nursing home, Rita Kranz is dedicated to nourishing those around her. For her efforts, she was recently presented with Oakdale Electric Cooperative’s Selfless Service Award.

Nutrients through food are one of the basic needs of all living things. In her giving nature, Rita is an avid volunteer with the Elroy Emergency Food Pantry when St. Patrick Catholic Church oversees it, and she is sure to write thank you notes to the pantry supporters. Along with providing sustenance, Rita has helped behind the scenes at Hustler Fest by assisting with the chicken dinner and making pickles and sugar cookies.

As a member of the Hill and Dale Garden Club, Rita’s green thumb is on full display around Elroy throughout every season. The club beautifies the town with blooming flowers in spring and summer, while mums and scarecrow decorations provide a transition into harvest season. They also decorate Christmas trees in the park in winter and maintain a perennial garden that the club established. Beyond the

garden club and tending to her own flourishing lawn, Rita assists her daughter, Donna Bradley, with her greenhouse called the Never-Ending Gardens & Greenhouse, located outside of Camp Douglas.

While her creative side can be seen around town, Rita has a strong faith that leads her to serve at various churches. She volunteers at St. Theresa Perpetual Adoration Chapel in Union Center and assists with funeral dinners and other arrangements for St. Patrick Catholic Church in Elroy. Rita has also made treats and visited shut-ins at local nursing homes to aid in social support.

Oakdale Electric Cooperative members John and Charlene Ennis nominated Rita and were present when she received her award at the Elroy Community meal at Grace Lutheran Church. Charlene stated, “Rita is a big part of what keeps our little burg of Elroy moving. With her hard work and dedication, she truly deserves this recognition.”

Whether it’s nurturing plants, people, or places, it’s in Rita’s nature.





# Chronicles of the Co-op

## 1976-1986

We continue this month celebrating Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 90th anniversary with a closer look at highlights between 1976 and 1986.

**1976** – Some year-end statistics include:

- 346 new services were installed
- 21 miles of line was constructed
- Average member per mile of line was 4.3
- Capital credit retirement was \$845,249
- 1,189 major appliances were sold

**1978** – The electrical safety demonstration became a real-life situation when a young woman collided her vehicle with one of the co-op's power poles and power lines toppled down onto her car. Fortunately, the woman had the presence of mind to stay inside the car until qualified personnel could cut off the power and everyone involved was able to walk away unharmed.

**1980** – Since 1937, until his retirement on December 31, 1979, the co-op was under the dedicated leadership of Lloyd McCaskey as General Manager. Hired as his successor was Darwin Schendel to begin the new decade of the 80's.

**1982** – The co-op saw significant inflation for building a single mile of line. In 1982, it was \$11,187, five years prior was \$7,194, and fifteen years before that was \$3,665. Saving time and money was priority by scheduling jobs together by location whenever possible.

**1984** – To continue education, three Oakdale REC employees completed the USDA Graduate School Bookkeeping and Accounting course relating to theory and practice of accounting for Rural Electrification Administration borrowers. Pictured L-R: Nancy Bushing, Elaine Garrigan, Rosemary Bartholomew, and General Manager Darwin Schendel.

**1977** – Clifton substation went online December 1, 1977, to serve parts of the Townships of Clifton, Oakdale, Glendale, Fountain, Lisbon and Wilton.

**1979** – To keep up with the growing membership and increase in energy demand, Lyndon Station substation was built to alleviate burden on the Mauston substation that was serving both Mauston and Lyndon Station areas. This made the 14th substation across the co-op's service area.

**1981** – A national poll coordinated by the Advertising Council of Cooperatives, shared that Americans were less aware of cooperatives today than they were five years prior. This reiterated why the co-op continued to push for interest in the youth board.

**1983** - In order to try to keep wholesale power costs down, extensive education was put out to members about the load control program focusing on electric water heaters and electric home heating.

**1985** – Tornado destruction hit the New Lisbon and Castle Rock areas that effected 3,772 members – about one-third of the total service locations.

**1986** – The well-known hotline safety demonstration was taken to 37 area schools, with approximately 9,500 students who viewed it. The hotdog fireball still sparks crowd reactions that leave a lasting impression of awareness around electricity. Pictured L-R: Gary Robison, Bonnie Peterson, and Scott Brookman.



**Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO**

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**Jackie McGlin, Editor**



**Oakdale Electric Cooperative**

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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 855-938-3610

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