

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* December 2025 NEWS



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



REINDEER ACRES HOLIDAY CHEER TAKES FLIGHT

"NOT-FOR-PROFIT" MEANS "ALL FOR YOU"

WATER HEATER WOES

BEST OF KIDS AND CRITTERS



BALANCING DEMAND

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

Electricity powers everything we do. From the moment we wake up to the moment we go to bed, we rely on electricity to light our homes, power our appliances, charge devices, and fuel our businesses. Yet, the electric grid that delivers this essential resource faces increasing strain due to our growing dependence on electricity, aging infrastructure, and extreme weather events.

When these factors are combined with the rising demand – typically in the morning and evening – the grid is pushed to its limits. If the electricity demand surpasses the grid’s capacity to deliver, a significant risk of widespread power outages is imminent. Addressing the underlying challenges facing the electric grid, such as investing in infrastructure upgrades and promoting energy conservation measures, is crucial to mitigating the risk of blackouts and ensuring a reliable and resilient power grid.

Since 2023, an additional line item expressed as “Demand Charge” was added to bill statements. Beginning January 1, 2026, you’ll see a demand charge for the highest power usage during a 15-minute period within that month at the amount of \$0.25 kW. The average household monthly demand is roughly 10 kW, which equates to approximately \$2.50 per month.

For example, the graphic compares two homes’ energy demand.

Home A had its highest demand for the month at 12 kW. Therefore, 12 kW multiplied by the demand charge of \$0.25, Home A would be billed \$3.

Home B had its highest demand for the month at 20 kW. Their charge would be 20 kW multiplied by the demand charge of \$0.25, Home B would be billed \$5.

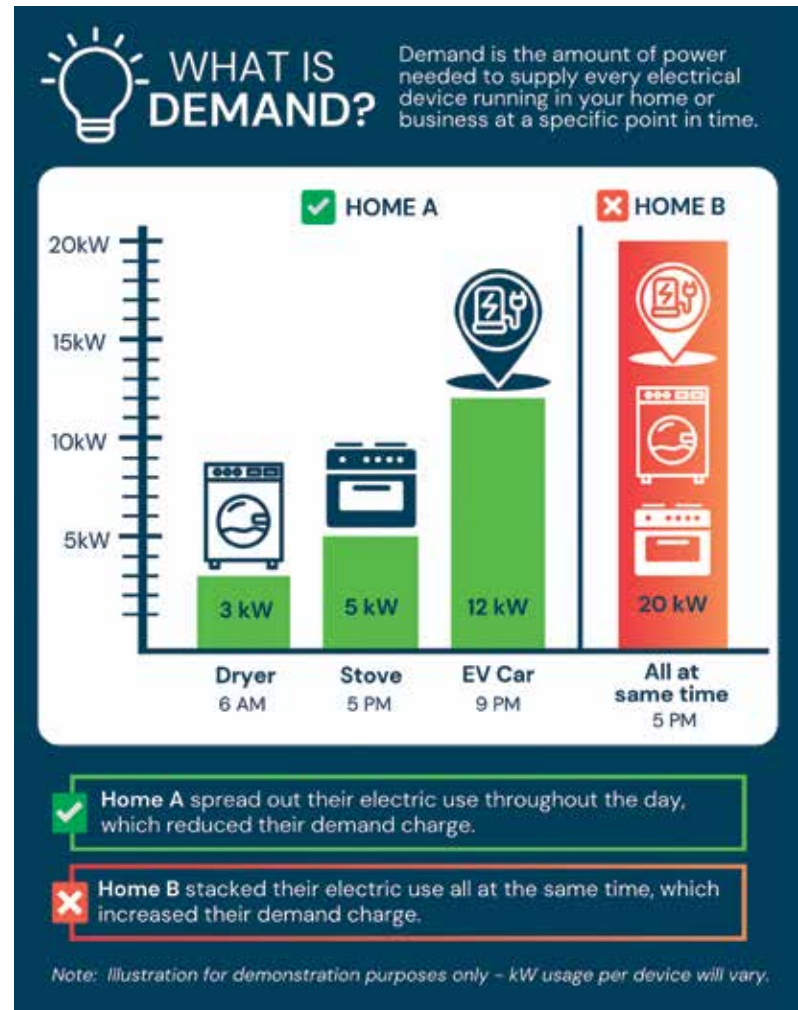
This charge resets monthly and is designed to fairly allocate cost among those who use more power and put more strain on the grid. Additionally, this change aligns with how we are billed by our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power

Cooperative, ensuring accurate cost distribution among our members.

One of the ways you can help is by staggering the use of high-energy appliances throughout the day. For instance, like Home A rather than charging your electric vehicle, cooking, and doing laundry at the same time, spread these tasks out at different times. By spreading out your energy consumption, you can help ease grid pressure and minimize demand charges on your bill.

As our reliance on electricity continues to grow, it’s crucial for us to actively participate in sustaining the grid that powers our daily lives. By being mindful of when and how we use electricity, we can help alleviate stress on the system and ensure a reliable supply for everyone.

Beginning January 1, 2026, you’ll see a demand charge for the highest power usage during a 15-minute period within that month at the amount of \$0.25 kW.





OPERATION ROUND UP SURPASSES \$100,000!

Oakdale Electric Cooperative's (OEC) membership deserves a round of applause for their generous contributions to the Operation Round Up® program. With the average donation being only \$6 per year, having 16,660 member accounts rounding their energy bill to the next nearest dollar adds up in a hurry. This year was a testament to the phrase "small change adds up" because in 2025, communities throughout OEC's service area got a piece of the \$106,350 pie.

By serving five counties and multiple small communities within those counties, Operation Round Up® leaves a favorable impact on eligible parties within OEC service area – not just members. The Operation Round Up® Board of Trustees is comprised of seven OEC members that meet quarterly to disperse donations. Those trustees are

Allan Bernhardt, Tammy Burdick, Pat Christensen, Sandy Chroninger, Robin Hiles, Sue Rezin, and Colleen Woggon.

At the program's inception in 2002, members had to opt into the program. In 2023, OEC enrolled all members into Operation Round Up® where it is still a voluntary program that members who wish not to participate may opt-out at any time. The yearly donation totals averaged \$12,000. Following the transition to all members enrolled into the program, \$80,600 was donated back in 2023, and keeps growing for 2025 to be the year that surpassed \$100,000.

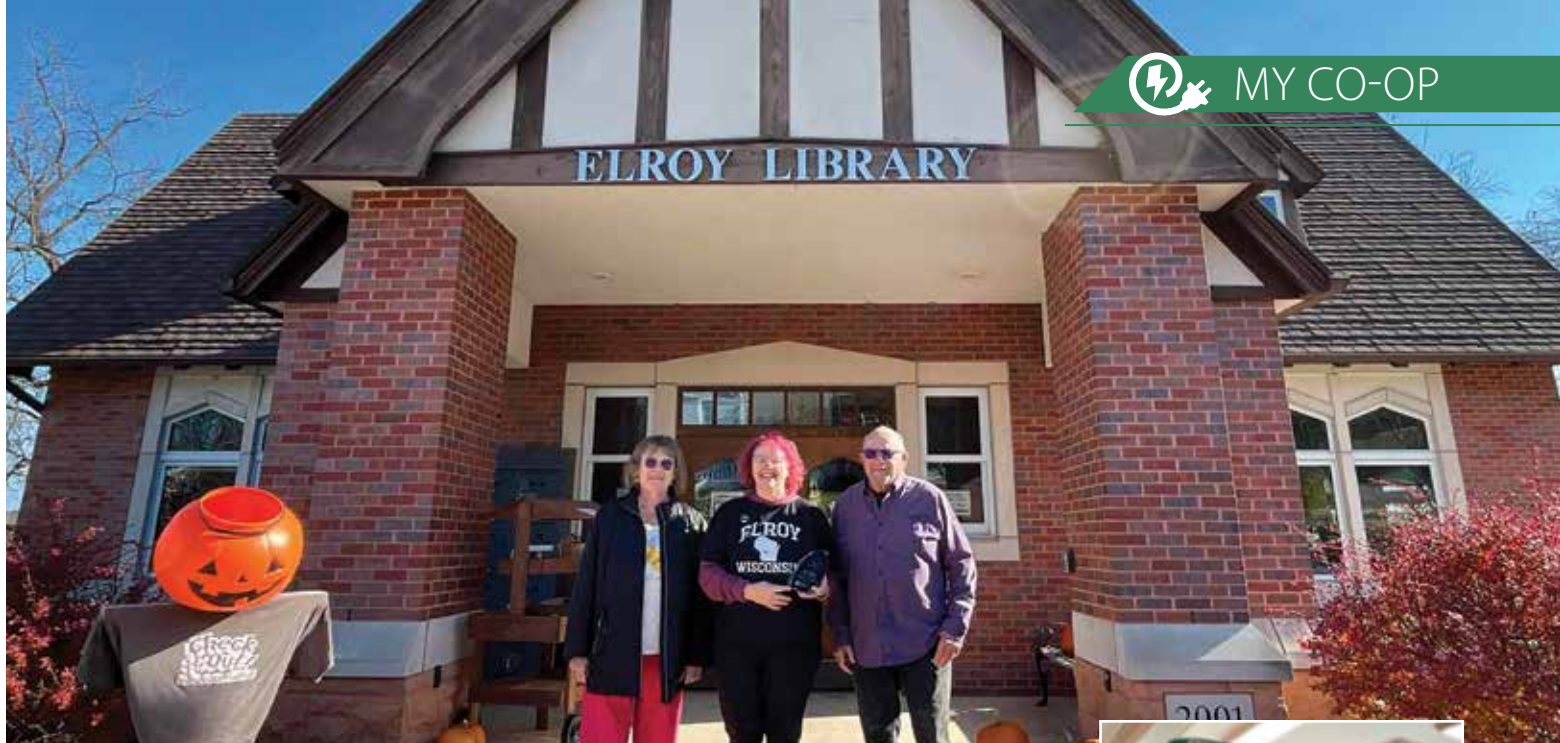
"I can speak for the board of directors and myself that choosing to enroll all members and changing to an opt-out program has surpassed our expectations on the amount of reach Operation Round Up® has been able to deliver," stated Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO.

Donations are allocated to multiple organizations like American Legions, VFW posts, police K9 units, 23 fire departments, ambulance services, food pantries, animal shelters, and agriculture/fair societies. Along with holiday community dinners, child and family welfare programs, local Toys for Tots, and school programs.

Operation Round Up® Board Chair Colleen Woggon said, "Being able to donate all of this back into our communities, I'm proud and co-op members should be too."

If you are involved with a community-focused organization, apply for a grant. Application forms can be found at www.oakdalerec.coop/operation-round. Quarter one applications for 2026 are due by Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.





Kari Preuss and OEC members who nominated her for the award. L-R: Cheryl Lange, Kari Preuss, and Ken Lange.

KARI PREUSS, THRIVING ON COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In a town with a population of 1,356, Elroy is known for being the first rail-to-trail project in the United States, transforming railroads to bike and walking paths. Along with its connection to former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, Elroy is also home to a woman who thrives on small town community connections. Between being the director of the Elroy Library, serving as the Elroy Chamber Director, to purchasing and renovating the Elroy Theatre, Kari Preuss wears many hats to keep her hometown connected and viable. Therefore, Kari Preuss was recently presented Oakdale Electric Cooperative's Selfless Service Award.

Inspired by the small town of Elroy, Kari makes it her purpose to provide connections in her community. In 2005, she purchased The Elroy Theatre that was originally built in 1937 that to this day, has the very same bricks that once were made up Main Street. With decades of shared family memories, Kari took it upon herself and family to purchase and renovate the building. The original Art Deco furnishings remain but updates were made to the projector, sound, seating, and screen. It has been the hotspot for 88 years and always remains a budget-friendly outing with all seats, for only \$5.

Another historical building on Main Street that you can find Kari at is The Elroy Library. She has been the director since 2016 and provides a multitude of community engagement activities. The Elroy Public Library officially opened for business in 1908, with renovations done in 2001, and basement renovations in 2005. Today, various programs fill the library everyday such as tai chi, strong bones, book clubs, movie nights, art programs and more.

Kari's favorite event of the year is the Summer Library Program. Kids ages 5 – 13 can go to the library for numerous activities, not just reading. It is put on for three weeks with about 70 kids each day. "It's a play forum because kids need to play and we need to let them play," Kari reflected. Her favorite day of the summer program is water day where Kari gets the hose for water fights and a slip and slide.

The civic-minded Kari wears yet another hat as the Elroy Area Chamber Director since 2018. Events that Kari has organized or assisted with are the holiday craft fair held the first Saturday after Thanksgiving, downtown wine walk, Santa breakfast, winter lights at city park, and more. Working to boost and encourage community involvement, Kari provides a voice for others and makes sure to promote local entities like Rittenhouse Farm's massive Winter Wonderland display.

Long-time library customers and Oakdale Electric Cooperative members Cheryl and Ken Lange nominated Kari for the award. Cheryl stated, "Kari is a real asset to the Elroy community and very uplifting to those around her."

A real asset indeed, and through Kari's commitment to community connections, she continues to make a lasting impact on the small town of Elroy. In Kari's words, "I want those connections and to celebrate others in our small town. It truly fills my cup and is what makes me thrive."



DIRECTOR NOMINATION PETITION FORMS DUE

What to do next for interested parties in Districts 1 & 7

Oct. – Dec. 18

Request Nomination Petition Form by contacting Human Resources or scan the QR code to fill out a form online.

Dec. 19, 2025

Submit completed Nomination Petition Form by 12 p.m. on December 19, 2025.

April 25, 2026

Attend the Annual Meeting and Director Election on April 25, 2026.



Scan code to fill out a Petition Nomination Form online.

Questions? Contact HR@oakdalerec.coop or call 608-372-4131.

HOLIDAY LIGHT RECYCLING DRIVE



Have you pulled out those old holiday lights and plugged them in, only to find they don't work anymore? You can RECYCLE them at the co-op! Or maybe you are considering replacing them with ENERGY STAR® LED lights since they are 75% more energy efficient.

Either way, we want you to RECYCLE those old clunky, not working holiday lights with us!

December 1 – February 1, 2026

489 N. Oakwood St., Tomah, WI 54660

The collection bin is located at the co-op's front entrance. Please remove light strands from bags and boxes and place them into the bin.

2025 Incentive forms must be submitted by **December 26, 2025**.

Visit

www.oakdalerec.coop/incentives

or contact us at (800) 241-2468 with additional questions.

Be SANTA SMART and Sign Up for SmartHub



Take one thing off your list this holiday season and enroll in SmartHub – your co-op's online payment system – and take control over your energy bill. You too can kick back and enjoy some milk and cookies with these SmartHub benefits:

Auto Pay Program

- Enroll in the Auto Pay Program and enjoy having your bill automatically paid each month from your bank account or card. Never worry about late fees or due dates again.

IMPORTANT: When your credit card or banking information is added to the Auto Pay Program through SmartHub, you are enrolled in the recurring Auto Pay Program starting with the NEXT billing cycle. Any current bills that have already been generated will need to be paid manually by the bill due date.

Paperless

- Leave the paper for wrapping presents and sign up for paperless billing. You'll waive a monthly paper bill statement in the mail by receiving your statement via email.

Notifications

- Receive email notifications on billing and miscellaneous messages, which can be personalized for your specific preferences.

Sign up by visiting oakdalerec.coop/smarthub. Mobile access is available to download for free on Apple and Android devices.

For additional assistance, contact the co-op Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. at (800) 241-2468 to speak with a member relations specialist.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI 54649

608-372-4131 • 800-241-2468

[f](https://www.facebook.com/oakdalerec) [x](https://www.x.com/oakdalerec) [ig](https://www.instagram.com/oakdalerec) info@oakdalerec.coop

Jackie McGlin, 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 855-938-3610

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