

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

September 2026



Oakdale Electric
Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

CELEBRATING FIBER ARTS

FROM LIGHT SWITCHES
TO LIFELONG HABITS

READER RECIPE CONTEST

KIDS AND CRITTERS



10 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT POWER RESTORATION

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

In recent years, members have wondered about the causes of power outages and why restoring electricity sometimes takes longer than expected. Because we depend so much on electricity, any outage is inconvenient. Here are 10 things you might not know about power restoration:

1. **We need you.** If your power goes out, it could be limited to your home or a small part of your neighborhood. Although our metering system typically alerts us automatically when an outage occurs, there is a possibility that we might not be aware of it. Please call our outage line at 800-927-6151.
2. **Our employees might be affected too.** Because Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) is a local electric cooperative, our employees are local too. They are your neighbors, friends, and familiar community volunteers. When you're without power, our people might be too.
3. **It's a team effort.** All OEC employees are dedicated to restoring your power as quickly as possible. Member relations representatives handle your calls, engineers and field staff assess the damage, crews remove hazards, dispatchers coordinate restoration teams, and communicators keep everyone updated on progress and any potential risks. Whenever you experience a power outage, our team works together efficiently and safely to return things to normal.
4. **We assess the situation first.** Every outage is different, and we don't know how dangerous it is or what equipment might need to be replaced. When responding to outages, we first need to see what happened, then figure out what materials we need and a plan for how to fix the problem(s) without compromising electric flow for the rest of our members.
5. **Restoration is normally prioritized by the largest number of members we can get back on in the shortest amount of time.** Our crews focus on responding first to public safety issues and critical services. Then we complete work that impacts the largest number of people first.
6. **Our employees face many dangers.** Besides working around high-voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for wild animals, weather elements, falling trees, and fast-moving cars. (If you ever drive past one of our vehicles, please do so slowly.)
7. **Flickering lights are a good thing.** Flickering lights, or "blinks," show our equipment prevented an outage—often due to animals or tree branches. If your power regularly blinks, please contact us so we can investigate.
8. **You need a backup plan.** We strive to assist those in need; however, if you rely on electricity for life support, it's essential to have a backup plan—please keep in mind we can't always predict how long power restoration will take.
9. **Our employees have to plan and eat.** If you see our trucks at a restaurant during a power outage, our crews are likely regrouping or taking a meal break. They work long hours to restore service and need rest like everyone else.
10. **Sometimes it's a waiting game.** We share our section of the power grid with other electric utilities and keep good partnerships with these interconnected providers. If an outage stems from their supply to our system, we must wait for them to complete their repairs and respect the challenges they face while resolving the problem.

While we strive to minimize power interruptions, occasional disruptions may still occur. In the event of an outage, please be assured the OEC team is responding promptly and following all safety protocols to restore service as efficiently as possible.

UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

Notice of forfeiture of funds held by Oakdale Electric Cooperative

You are hereby notified that Oakdale Electric Cooperative of Oakdale, Wisconsin, has unclaimed funds belonging to our members.

You may claim these funds by contacting the cooperative at 800-241-2468 or emailing Tina Von Haden at tvonhaden@oakdalerec.coop and furnishing proof of your legal interest in such funds on or before November 2, 2026.

You are further notified that unless you do claim such funds

and provide satisfactory evidence of your right to receive the same by November 2, 2026, these funds will be forfeited to the cooperative, pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes Section 185.03(10).

Please visit Oakdale Electric Cooperative's website at www.oakdalerec.coop/capital-credits for a complete list of members' names and addresses identified as having unclaimed funds with Oakdale Electric Cooperative.



RESILIENCE WAS THE THEME AT Youth Leadership Conference

Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) continues to invest in the next generation of leaders by sponsoring nine students to Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) held at the University of Wisconsin–Stout July 14–16.

The three-day conference provides students with opportunities to build confidence, leadership abilities, and cooperative perspective to become effective leaders in their schools, communities, and future workplaces. Resilience became an unexpected lesson as students navigated challenges ranging from limited air conditioning and water pressure to high heat indexes and Canadian wildfire smoke.

Current Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) Youth Board members opened the conference with interactive activities that energized attendees and provided an overview of what to expect during their YLC experience. Students also heard from former Youth Board members Ashton Brusveen, Jayden Mosley, and Dillan Sztuczko, who shared how they embraced opportunities through Wisconsin's electric cooperatives.

The first night's featured speaker Hunter Gillett, who

also attended YLC years earlier, spoke about his first-hand experience with adversity, resilience, and prosperity. Hunter shared his powerful story of perseverance after a plane crash dramatically changed the course of his life and ended his plans to play football at UW–Stout. The aircraft was piloted by his friend, 17-year-old Owen Knutson, who tragically lost his life in the accident. Drawing from his experience, Gillett encouraged students to face adversity with resilience, emphasizing the importance of finding the strength to move forward when life presents unexpected challenges.

During an interactive presentation, motivational speaker Craig Hillier challenged students to become breakthrough leaders with his high-energy session by developing their passion, expanding their perspective, and leading with principle. They gained a new perspective on the importance of decisions from WECA's Director of Compliance Services Ben Bella and also explored how technology is shaping the future with Dairyland Power Cooperative Vice President and Chief Information Officer Nate Melby.

During the second day, water pressure throughout the



YLC participants take part in team-building activities, presentations, and interactive sessions during the three-day conference at UW–Stout.



Students put professional dining skills into practice during YLC's formal etiquette dinner.

city went out, causing the air conditioning to go down as the heat index climbed. Despite the circumstances, UW-Stout employees worked to make everyone as comfortable as possible by moving activities to cooler rooms and providing bottled water due to the boil water notice. The evening continued with a formal etiquette dinner designed to prepare students for professional and interview dining situations. The final night concluded with an entertaining hypnotist performance when Canadian wildfire smoke set in causing a hazardous air quality index of 409.

The final day consisted of speeches from teens vying for a position on the WECA Youth Board. Votes were cast for

the youth board and the election resulted in OEC youth delegate Tyler Boettcher of Tomah being elected to the WECA Youth Board. He will work with his fellow elected Youth Board members to plan and direct next year's YLC event along with attending the Youth Tour in Washington D.C. in summer 2027. Tyler reflected on his YLC experience with, "Attending the Youth Leadership Conference was an honor, providing me with valuable lessons in cooperative principles, teamwork, and public speaking, and I am grateful to OEC for making the experience possible."

Despite circumstances beyond their control, the conference provided students with an opportunity to strengthen their resilience and create lasting memories along the way.

Following YLC, students have scholarship opportunities to apply for with OEC and WECA. Interested in attending YLC next year? Contact the member relations department at 608-372-4131 to learn how you can take part in this cooperative tradition.



Tyler Boettcher of Tomah was elected to the WECA Youth Board during the conference.

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY RETURNS TO WEDNESDAY NIGHT!

**FREE Family
Fun for All
Members!**

**OCTOBER 7, 2026
4 – 7 p.m.**

- ★ Dinner from the Meat Shop, LLC
- ★ Co-op Cash Scratch-Offs
- ★ Flu Vaccine Clinic
- ★ Gift Bags with 2027 Members' Photo Featured Calendar
- ★ Hotline Demonstration
- ★ Ice Cream by Oakdale Credit Union
- ★ Face Painting by Tappy's Face Painting
- ★ Games & Prizes
- ★ Educational Booths
- ★ Balloons by Kevin
- ★ Drawings *winners drawn after event
- ★ Crafts and more!



**Located at Oakdale Electric Cooperative
Hwy. PP, just north of 90/94**



Chronicles of the Co-op

2016–2026

This month, the Chronicles of the Co-op comes to a close as we round out the last decade after highlighting 90 years of Oakdale Electric Cooperative over the past nine months. Although 2016 may feel like yesterday, a lot has happened at the co-op over the past ten years. Let's take a look at the highlights from 2016 to today.

2016 – Employees showed concern for their community by voluntarily donating a couple extra dollars per week in order to wear jeans while at work on Fridays. The program did a challenge to raise \$750, which was met and split among three organizations.

2018 – The co-op partnered with power supplier Dairyland Power Cooperative, Ground Round Grill & Bar (Taphouse Twenty), and the Michigan to Montana I-94 Clean Fuel Corridor project to bring the first public electric vehicle (EV) charging station to western Wisconsin.

2020 – Unprecedented times sprung when the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside-down. The year also had multiple notable happenings.

- General Manager Bruce Ardelts retired after 20 years and welcomed Chris Tackmann as the new general manager.
- Annual meeting was held on August 4 at the co-op headquarters, with social distancing and masks required.
- Member Appreciation Day turned into Co-op Comes to You where members could enter the drawing to win a basket delivered to their residence.



2022 – An EF2-rated tornado passed through Tomah, Oakdale, and Wyeville that impacted 7,081 members. With mutual assistance from other co-ops and tree clearing services, power was fully restored after just under 48 hours.

2025 – Bear Creek substation was constructed to increase power delivery and reliability. Member Appreciation Day was changed to a Wednesday evening that packed the co-op for a BBQ dinner from The Meat Shop, LLC, along with all the traditional family-friendly activities the event brings.



2017 – SmartHub was launched for paying energy bills online and managing energy usage online. SmartHub continues to be a free mobile and web app that helps members manage their account.

2019 – Tomah High School Roots and Shoots Club members volunteered with garden site preparations for the co-op's monarch garden established onsite at the co-op headquarters building.

2021 – The Selfless Service Award was launched to recognize individuals who engage in community volunteerism, performing valuable services that benefit and improve quality of life within the communities served by OEC. The first recipient of the award was a Warrens area staple, Sara Moseley.



2023 – Two utility-scale solar projects were constructed and completed in New Lisbon and Mauston townships totaling 6,708 panels to generate 4.5 megawatts annually. The board of directors voted to enroll all members into the Operation Round Up program with an opt-out option. That small change across more members made a huge difference to OEC communities with a total of \$80,600 donated back in 2023 alone.

2024 – Updates were completed to the co-op headquarters building, including tuckpointing and a color palette makeover. The pay-by-phone number was changed to 1-855-938-3610.



2026 – Per the co-op's 10-year workplan to ensure reliability, Jackpine substation got an upgrade that serves the ethanol plant owned by United Cooperative, and construction has begun on the new Countyline substation in Armenia.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

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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.