

Linemen's Safety Relies on Job Planning



Above: Maintenance is performed on the Shirland Substation, which serves the co-op's southwest region. Right: Lineworkers learn how to troubleshoot the transformer.



The linemen listen as if their lives are on the line. Details of the job are defined. Specific duties are assigned. Hazards are identified. Protective equipment is checked. Work starts only after each worker fully understands his precise role and knows how to perform it safely.

Rock Energy Cooperative line crews start every job with this process, which is referred to as a tailgate because the discussion usually takes place around the back of a truck. For big projects, the meeting might take place around a conference table so linemen can follow along on iPads. Each tailgate has a specific purpose: to keep everyone alive.

At a recent tailgate meeting Chris Tullar, south operations manager, outlined the 43 steps workers would take to shut down the Shirland Substation for maintenance and bring it back on line.

Before the substation could be taken off line, a switching sequence needed to be followed so members served by that substation would still have power during maintenance. While the substation was de-energized, linemen received training on how to test substation transformers. These routine tests help detect problems that can be addressed to prevent equipment failure.

As recognition of their important role to keep power flowing, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association has designated April 13 as National Lineman Appreciation Day. The resolution notes that linemen put their lives on the line every

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Above: Line Foreman Tim Gillitzer and Journeyman Lineman Bill Wright work on the substation. Above right: Journeyman Lineman Bill Wright makes repairs at the Shirland Substation. Right: Matt Meichtry checks the substation transformer.





*Ciera Ballmer
Clinton High School*



*Andrew Hasse
Hononegah High School*



*Jordan Hoffman
Beloit Turner High School*



*Erin Marchant
Brodhead High School*

Congratulations to Scholarship Winners

Rock Energy Cooperative is pleased to announce the 2015 scholarship winners. Each student will receive \$500 to assist with educational expenses at an accredited college or technical school. The co-op awards 10 scholarships each year to graduating seniors living in REC's service territory. Funds for the scholarships come from unclaimed capital credits. ■



*Courtney Wille
Edgerton High School*



*Riley Miller
Evansville High School*



*Allison Sukus
Milton High School*



*Bridget Ryan
Dakota High School*



*Wyatt Reid
Hononegah High School*



*Brett Ott
South Beloit High School*

Pick Up the Phone Before the Shovel

More than half of American homeowners who plan to dig as part of do-it-yourself projects will put themselves and communities at risk by not calling 811 to learn the location of underground utilities, a recent survey says.

An underground utility line is damaged every six minutes nationwide because someone decided to dig without first calling 811, according to data from the Common Ground Alliance, the organization dedicated to protecting the lines and the safety of people who dig near them.

The alliance and its 1,400 members, including Rock Energy Cooperative, recognize April as National Safe Digging Month. It is formally recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate and has traditionally earned the support from nearly every state governor across the country.

When calling 811, homeowners and contractors are connected to their local one-call center, which notifies the appropriate utility companies of their intent to dig. Professional locators are then sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags, paint, or both.

Striking an underground line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

A call must be placed to 811 before *every* digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs to building a deck or installing a mailbox.

“As April marks the traditional start of digging season, we are using this month to strongly encourage individuals and companies to call 811 before they begin digging,” said Denny Schultz, director of utility opera-



tions at Rock Energy. “By calling 811 to have the underground utility lines in their area marked, homeowners and professionals are making an important decision that can help keep them and their communities safe and connected.”

Here’s what happens when you call 811:

- Your call will be routed to your local One Call Center. That’s Diggers Hotline in Wisconsin and JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) in Illinois. Wisconsin requires the call to be made three business days before the start of the project, while Illinois law specifies two business days.
- A representative will ask for the location and description of your digging project.
- Utility companies servicing the area then will send a professional locator to the proposed area to mark any buried lines with flags: red for electric; yellow, gas or petroleum; orange, communications; blue or purple, water; and green, sewer or drainage.
- Wait until your official project start date before beginning to dig to make sure all the utilities have been marked. If your planned work site is marked, don’t dig in that area.
- In Wisconsin, your project must begin within 10 days of your official start date. In Illinois, work must begin within 14 days of your locate request and is valid for 28 days. ■

For More Information:

- ▶ Nationwide, visit www.call811.com or call 811.
- ▶ In Wisconsin, visit www.diggershotline.com or call (800) 242-8511.
- ▶ In Illinois, visit www.illinois1call.com or call (800) 892-0123.

Linemen

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day while working to build, maintain, and repair electric lines.

“Linemen do not often receive the recognition they deserve,” said Denny Schultz, director of utility operations at Rock Energy. “They work all hours of the day and night, often in hazardous conditions, going above and beyond to make sure our members have power. Our linemen, as well as linemen throughout the country, deserve this special day of recognition.”

On April 13, linemen will start their day as they always do—with a tailgate meeting. This review of job procedures, potential hazards, and safety precautions is



Right: South Operations Manager Chris Tullar details the project with, from left, Devin Simpson, apprentice lineman; Brent LaBuy, Matt Mortimer, and Bill Wright, all journeyman linemen; Tim Gillitzer and Jack Slaback, both line foreman.

serious business. The lineworkers know all too well that the electricity they’re working with can be deadly. They need to feel confident that they understand the scope of the job and their specific role. Also crucial is the trust that linemen put in their co-workers because they know that one person’s actions can affect the whole crew.

If you happen to see a lineman on April 13—or any day for that matter—be sure to take a moment to say thanks for lighting up our lives.

National Lineman Appreciation Day

Resolution adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board:

“Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain, and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and

Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognizes the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives, materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America’s electric cooperatives.” ■

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Happy Easter!

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, April 3, in observance of Good Friday. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, call (608) 752-4550 or toll-free (866) 752-4550.



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