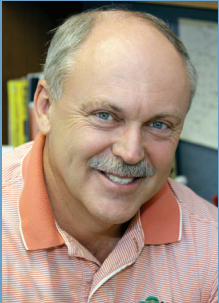


## President's Report



William R. Dodds  
President/CEO

## Voluntary and Open Membership

Why this principle still applies to electric co-ops

By Adam Schwartz

When electric co-op members look at the seven co-op principles, many may question if they really live up to the first principle: Voluntary & Open Membership. It is a fair question. There is a two-part answer.

First, it is important to remember that when Spoon River Electric was first being formed back in 1938, every potential member had the option to refuse service. While it may be hard to believe today, there are numerous stories from electric co-ops throughout the country where the farmer said, "No thanks. We are doing fine with kerosene." Of course over time they changed their minds and eventually became members of the co-op.

Due to the incredible cost of offering electric service, the vast majority of people and businesses only have one choice if they want to connect to "the grid" and receive electricity. While that may change in the future due to rooftop solar or other

generation sources, the best option for most people for safe, reliable and affordable power is from your electric co-op.

Today, electric co-ops focus on the second part of the principle, "Open Membership." All residents and businesses in the service territory of Spoon River Electric are welcome to receive power. Co-ops continually strive to ensure that your membership has value to you not just through the service of electricity but by being an active part of our community.

Co-ops offer and welcome your participation in the governance of the organization through a democratically elected board of directors. As a locally owned and controlled utility, co-ops are in a better position to understand the needs of its members and can be quicker to react to help ensure the membership receives the best service possible.

Continued on 16b ►

## Seven Cooperative Principles

- VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP**  
Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
- DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL**  
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.
- MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**  
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE**  
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.
- EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION**  
Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
- COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES**  
Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**  
While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

## Spoon River Electric Cooperative

930 South Fifth Ave, PO Box 340,  
Canton, IL 61520  
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
309-647-2700 • [www.srecoop.org](http://www.srecoop.org)

### **President/CEO**

William R. Dodds  
[bdodds@srecoop.org](mailto:bdodds@srecoop.org)

### **Chairman**

Bernard Marvel, Browning

### **Vice Chairman**

Terry Beam, Cuba

### **Secretary**

Steve Pille, Glasford

### **Treasurer**

Lyle Nelson, Abingdon

### **Assistant Treasurer**

Robert Lascelles, Ipava

### **Board of Directors**

James Banks, Canton  
Jack Clark, Lewistown  
Greg Leigh, Avon  
John Spangler, Marietta

### **Editor of Spoon River News**

Taryn Martin  
[tmartin@srecoop.org](mailto:tmartin@srecoop.org)

## Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,255  
Number of members served: 4,808  
Number of power poles  
in territory: 29,255

## Continued from 16a

Members are welcome to suggest improvements to the co-op's operations and, unlike large investor owned utilities often with millions of customers, you can be assured your ideas will actually be read by a real person in real time.

All co-ops, whether it is your credit union, farm co-op, telephone

co-op or any other of the 29,000 co-ops that exist in the U.S. today, live by these seven co-op principles:

By using all of these principles integrated together, Spoon River Electric is able to serve your needs every day.

## IN COMPARISON TO OIL OR GAS FURNACES, ELECTRIC HEATING HAS MANY ADVANTAGES

### **Electric resistance heat**

(i.e., energy-efficient space heaters, baseboard heating):



...is 100% efficient – every single Btu in a kilowatt-hour is delivered as usable heat.



...is quick to respond and can be very quiet.



...takes up less space in the house than other conventional systems (assuming space heaters are used).



...can warm select rooms, allowing you to keep your main thermostat down while ensuring continued comfort.

### **Electric heating systems are:**



...generally less expensive to purchase and install.



...safe because there is no combustion process. There is no chance of flames starting a fire or having combustion products contaminate the air.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Your home works hard for you. Consider giving it an energy checkup. Hire a professional energy auditor to diagnose where your house could be losing energy and where you can start saving money. Auditors check for air leaks, inspect insulation, survey heating and cooling equipment and more. After making efficiency upgrades, you could save 5-30 percent on your energy bills.  
Source: EnergySavers.gov

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



# Clearing for reliability

By Meghaan Evans

There are many ways that Spoon River Electric provides you with safe, reliable electric service. One of the most common – and crucial – ways is referred to as right-of-way clearing (or vegetation management).

A right of way (ROW) refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. Trees must grow at a distance far enough from conductors where they will not cause harm to individuals or disruption to electrical service. Specifications can vary, but a general guideline of maintaining a safe ROW is 15 feet of clearance on either side of the primary conductors and 20 feet of overhead clearance above the highest wire on the pole.

Clearing the ROW is critical to keeping our members' lights on. An average of 15 percent of power

interruptions occur when trees, shrubs or bushes grow too close to power lines.

If a tree encroaches on this safe distance, our vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers and mowers. Chemical control methods can also be used as a way to support the growth of low growing plant species that will outcompete the tall trees growing beneath power lines.

ROW clearing also keeps your family safe by ensuring that tree branches do not become energized due to close contact with a downed power line. Power lines can carry up to 34,500 volts, and an energized tree branch is incredibly dangerous – even deadly. Be mindful when around trees close to power lines, and make sure your children know that climbing trees near power lines is extremely dangerous.

ROW clearing is also critical to ensuring that we provide members with affordable electricity. Staying ahead of the game keeps us from having to come out after a storm to restore power due to fallen trees. Remember to contact Spoon River Electric if you decide to trim or remove trees near any power service or line. And never trim a tree in the right-of-way zone on your own.

ROW clearing just makes sense. Contact Spoon River Electric (309)647-2700 to find out more about our vegetation management program and to receive information about how to keep the ROW in your service territory clear.

*Meghaan Evans writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*



# Major outages after hours

When there is a major outage after hours, Spoon River Electric Cooperative is equipped with an automated outage reporting system. This allows calls to be taken faster and more effectively. This system is only used when a major outage occurs affecting a large number of members after hours. You can report your outage through the ser-

vices menu and it will instantly be reported to our Member Services personnel who are responsible for notifying our service crews.

If the automated system doesn't recognize the number you called from, it will ask for the primary number on file. The primary number is the main number attached to your account. In order for this system to

operate efficiently, it is important the cooperative have your primary phone number on file. You can call Spoon River Electric Cooperative office (309) 647-2700 and verify that your phone number is listed correctly or fill out the Phone Number Request form below and return to SREC.



## Phone Number Request

We need to have your phone number on file for outage reporting.

Help us update our records by writing your current phone number on this slip and returning it with your payment.

Please return this slip to: P.O. Box 340  
Canton, IL 61520 or call: (309) 647-2700

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Rest assured that Spoon River Electric Cooperative will not share your information with anyone else.

Nowadays, some of us take electricity for granted. But no matter where you go, you expect it to follow. And it does. It's there because your electric co-op is here. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).



TOGETHER WESAVE.COM

# YOU'RE EVERYWHERE THESE DAYS. SO IS YOUR POWER



*Don't forget to  
move your clocks  
forward on Sunday,  
March 8th.*