



More Power to You MEMBERS CAN HELP US KEEP TREES AWAY FROM POWER LINES



Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

Planting trees near power lines can be like lining up dominoes. When the first domino falls, the others soon follow.

Something similar can happen if a tree grows too close to a power line. But instead of fallen dominoes, the result could be a dangerous and costly power outage.

Heavy rain and straight-line winds of 60 mph swept through the area on Wednesday, May 17. Here at Rock Energy Cooperative, the storm caused about 850 outages that were spread throughout our service territory. Almost all the outages were caused by high winds that toppled trees, which then fell onto power poles and lines. Fortunately, no injuries were reported in our area.

Farm irrigation systems took a beating during the storm. The combination of downpours and strong winds knocked over 17 irrigators on our lines. Some longtime co-op employees said they've never seen that happen before. The tipped irrigators didn't cause any outages because they weren't close to electric lines.

That's not the case with the trees. Look around your yard or along streets and roads, and you'll see trees growing under, over, and through power lines. No one plants a 50-foot spruce tree near power poles, but over time that 6-inch seedling will grow and start to threaten the reliability of electricity to your home.

During the May 17 storm, trees caused extensive damage to the co-op's utility poles and power lines, resulting in hundreds of outages and costing thousands of dollars to repair. You might think that the property owners or their insurance providers would be responsible for that cost. But instead it's shared by the entire co-op membership.

That's why it's so important for all members to plant the right tree in the right place. Before planting trees in your yard, think about how tall they may grow and how wide their branches may spread. As a rule of thumb, 25 feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of our utility poles to give power lines plenty of space. Choose tree varieties with care and plant with power lines in mind. The graphic on page 18B offers helpful advice about tree selection and location.

Since 2010, trees and high winds have caused about 25 percent of our power outages. Figures for individual years vary depending on the number of storms that roll through the area and their severity. See chart at right.

Notice that in 2012, outages caused by trees

Outages Involving Trees, High Winds

Year	Number	Percentage	Members Affected
2017*	100	42%	2,329
2016	129	27%	4,454
2015	107	21%	2,436
2014	100	16%	3,535
2013	123	25%	6,306
2012	171	28%	10,535
2011	184	29%	4,682
2010	145	25%	4,368

*Through June 5

MY CO-OP



Left: Rock Energy crews clean up storm debris on May 17 after an evergreen tree knocked down power lines on West Creedy Road, north of Beloit. Branches and limbs from the massive tree buried the pole and wires and had to be removed before power could be restored. Below: Straight-line winds gusting to 60 mph tipped over this irrigator on a farm south of Avalon Road. The storm damaged a total of 17 irrigators in Rock Energy's service territory.

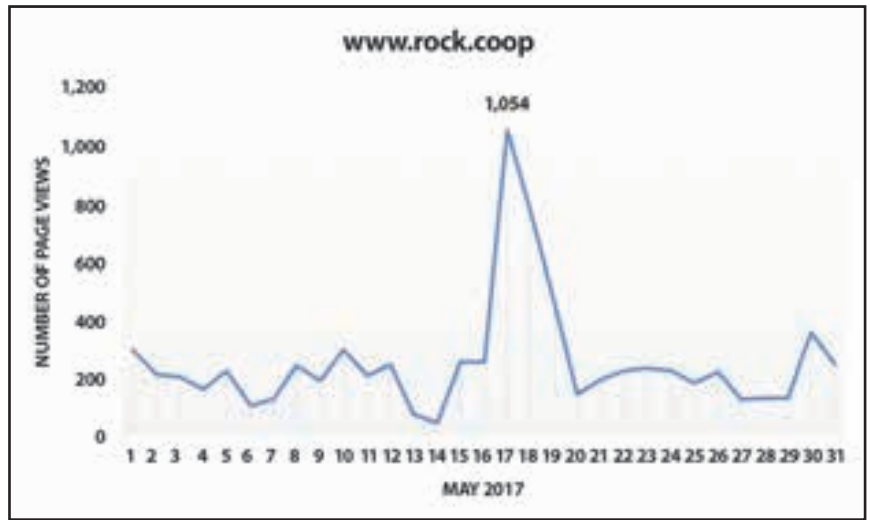


and strong winds affected 10,535 members, a significant amount more than other years. You might remember the July 24, 2012, storm that produced straight-line winds gusting up to 60 mph and causing about 7,000 power outages on our lines. It was the largest outage in the co-op's history. As we're coming up on the five-year anniversary of that event, let's hope history doesn't repeat itself.

To reduce potential tree-related problems, Rock Energy operates a vigilant tree-trimming program. It's a job that's never finished. By the time our four full-time workers finish trimming along our 1,265 miles of distribution lines, vegetation has started to grow back at the starting point and the cycle continues. As needed, we also hire contractors to make sure we stay ahead of the game.

Members can help us keep a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of power flowing by letting us know if you notice trees or branches that might pose a risk to our power lines.

We maintain tree clearance on primary distribution lines that run along roads and rights-of-way. These are lines that carry high-voltage electricity from substations to pole-top transformers. Our crews look for foliage under lines, leaning trees, overhanging branches, trees that could grow into lines,



Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.

For more tips, visit ArborDay.org/trees/

LARGE TREES	MEDIUM TREES	SMALL TREES
<p>Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maple • Birch • Oak • Sweetgum • Spruce • Linden • Pine 	<p>Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington hawthorn • Goldenrain tree • Eastern redbud • American arborvitae • Dogwoods 	<p>Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.</p> <p>Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star magnolia • Crabapple • Lilac

Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

and other potential hazards that could pull down a power line.

The co-op does minor branch trimming near secondary lines, which carry low-voltage electricity from pole-top transformers to members' houses, barns, and businesses. If you need more extensive trimming or tree removal, you can hire a contractor. To help with the process, we would be happy to de-energize and drop the line so you can have the tree safely removed. Then we'll reconnect power when work is finished. This is done without charge during our regular operating hours if scheduled in advance.

A column about trees and storms wouldn't be complete without mentioning why many power lines remain overhead rather than underground where they would be more sheltered from the weather. The simple answer is cost and long-term reliability. Overhead lines are less expensive to install and last longer, while underground lines become less reliable as they get older and are more difficult and costly to repair. For a more detailed explanation, visit our website at www.rock.coop/overheadorunderground.

It's also interesting to note that traffic to our website soars during storms and outages. Technology allows us to easily communicate outage information to members by placing a link to our outage map at the top of our website. This real-time map shows how many outages the co-op is experiencing at any given time. Most of the time, the map will not show any outages. But if your power goes out during a storm, you can use a battery-powered laptop, smart phone, or tablet to see if your outage is an isolated one or whether it's part of a larger problem.

The chart above shows the number of page views our website received during May. Notice the spike on May 17 with 1,054 page views. As you might have guessed, the majority of users—75 percent—viewed the map on their cell phones.

The map is updated every two minutes by the co-op's outage management system, which employees use to track outages and repairs. When members call to report an outage, their account information is entered into the outage system. If several members on the same line are without power, the

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Back to School Supplies Drive

Rock Energy Cooperative is sponsoring a School Supplies Drive so our employees and members can donate back-to-school items to help families who are having difficulty providing the proper tools for their children to succeed in school.

Needed supplies

#2 wooden yellow pencils
Ballpoint pens
Plain pocket folders
Spiral notebooks - wide ruled
Notebook paper - wide ruled
3-ring binders
Box of 24 or 64 crayons
(preferably Crayola)

Pink erasers
Glue bottles
Glue sticks
Dry erase markers
Colored pencils
Washable markers
Watercolor paints
Highlighters

Zipper binders
Protractors
Rulers (1/8 scale and metric)
Scissors (preferably Fiskars)
Backpacks
Kleenex
Deodorant

Donations will be delivered to the following school districts for distribution to needy families:

Beloit	Durand	Milton
Beloit Turner	Edgerton	Parkview
Brodhead	Evansville	Prairie Hill
Clinton	Hononegah	Rockton
Dakota	Janesville	South Beloit

Drop-off locations

Rock Energy Cooperative offices
2815 Kennedy Drive 15229 Willowbrook Road
Janesville, WI South Beloit, IL
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

Lake Summerset Association
1202 Lake Summerset Road
Davis, IL
8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday,
8 a.m. to noon Saturday

Donation deadline is August 1!





More Power to You

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system projects that the entire section must be off and indicates an outage for all accounts on that line. After just a few calls are received, our line crews have a good idea where the problem is and how many members are affected.

Members are still advised to call 866-752-4550 to report outages in case the outage management system has not yet identified the problem.

We're pleased that members find the map so valuable but always hope they won't have to use it. Have a great summer, and let us know if there's anything we can do to improve our service. But, unfortunately, we have no control over the weather, and summer storms are inevitable.

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!



Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday, July 5. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices during the holiday. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call 866-752-4550.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Let the sun work for you! Consider solar lights for outdoor lighting. Solar cells convert sunlight into electricity that can be stored in a battery and tapped at night to make light. Check manufacturer's instructions to make sure your solar lights are situated to receive sufficient sunlight to recharge during the day.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

HOMEOWNER'S INSURANCE POLICIES COVER LOSSES FROM POWER OUTAGES

Rock Energy Cooperative works diligently to make sure your electricity is there when you need it. But like all things, nothing is 100 percent guaranteed.

Power outages or voltage issues—whether triggered by a storm, lightning, trees, equipment failure, animals, or vehicles hitting power poles—can damage computer equipment, TVs, and other appliances in your home. These events are out of our control, and Rock Energy Cooperative does not compensate for any damaged equipment.

However, most homeowner's insurance policies cover losses from power interruptions caused by lightning, windstorms, and other sources. Make sure you're familiar with your policy and what is covered. Call your agent if you're not sure about your specific coverage.

You can help protect your own equipment by unplugging it during a power outage and by installing surge protection.

Mark Your Calendar!

Member Appreciation Day 2017 Pancake Breakfast

**Saturday, Sept. 9
8 to 10:30 a.m.**

REC Headquarters, 2815 Kennedy Road, Janesville, Wis.

Watch for details!



Shane Larson, CEO

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Barbara Uebelacker, Editor



ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE
Empowering Members Since 1936