

President's Report



William R. Dodds
President/CEO

Is a power line insulated? (and other myths debunked)

Have you ever wondered why a bird can sit on a live wire or what you should do if a power line is on the ground? Here are some Q-and-As to clear up some common misconceptions concerning power lines, birds on a wire and other conundrums:

What do I do if I see a downed power line?

Vacate the area. Call 9-1-1 to report. Do not return to the area until you are given the go-ahead by authorities.

Can I tell from looking (or listening) if a downed power line is still live?

Absolutely not. A live wire may not spark, arc or make any noise at all.

Where might downed power lines be?

A downed power line might be in the street, ditch or field after a bad storm or car accident. It could also be lurking in flood waters or under debris, trees or other objects after a severe storm.

If a line is on the ground, is it dead?

Once a line is on the ground, it doesn't mean it's dead. There's a chance the line is still energized, which not only means you should not touch it, but also means the surrounding ground and any metal objects nearby could be energized and extremely dangerous, even deadly.

Why can a bird sit on a power line and not be hurt? Doesn't that mean the line is insulated?

No. Lines are sometimes coated for protection against the elements but still deadly upon contact. A bird or other critter can sit on a power line all day happy as a lark because there is no path to ground. If the animal were to contact the utility pole or other grounded source, it will be electrocuted, just as a person would be under the same circumstances.

Why might a power line be down or damaged?

A car accident may cause a line to be hanging down or on the ground; severe weather could damage a pole or line; or in some cases it's caused by another unforeseeable reason, such as a storm-damaged tree or a hungry squirrel.

Do different kinds of utility lines look different?

Perhaps, but for the most part, the non-utility professional cannot know what kind of line it is and what it carries (electricity, phone service, cable TV and so on) just by looking. You also can't tell how much voltage it is carrying by its appearance.

What if my car comes in contact with a downed power line?

Do not get out. Do not try to drive over it. Call 9-1-1 and wait for utility personnel to de-energize the line. If you smell gas or if there is a fire, exit your car with a solid jump landing on both feet (but don't touch the car at the same time) and DO NOT WALK, but hop away.

Can I help someone who has been in an accident involving a downed power line?

No. Do not go near the scene and warn others not to do so. Although our first instinct is often to help, a person running near an energized area could get electrocuted.

Contact us at 309-647-2700 with any questions about downed lines. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Spoon River Electric Cooperative

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8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
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Chairman

Bernard Marvel, Browning

Vice Chairman

Terry Beam, Cuba

Secretary

Jack Clark, Lewistown

Treasurer

Lyle Nelson, Abingdon

Assistant Treasurer

Robert Lascelles, Ipava

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James Banks, Canton
Wesley Strode, Marietta
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Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,272
Number of members served: 5,022
Number of power poles
in territory: 29,361

Spoon River Electric Cooperative holds 82nd Annual Meeting

Spoon River Electric Cooperative celebrated its 82nd Annual Meeting, Thursday, June 6 at Farmington Central High School in Farmington. Approximately 200 members and guests were present and enjoyed a delicious pork chop dinner prepared by the cooperative's employees. Member-owners were updated on the cooperative's 2018 financial results, system investments, Future Energy and Job Act Legislation, and the cooperative's new rate design implemented July 2018. In the tradition of their founders, the annual meeting reflected the cooperative business model by applying three of the seven cooperative principles: democratic member control, members' economic participation and concern for community.

President/CEO Bill Dodds explained that at the end of 2018 the cooperative's total margins were \$487,943 which was an increase from 2017. The increase was due to more heating and cooling days in 2018 and slightly lower power costs. Dodds then went over the cooperative's new rate design that was implemented in July 2018. An overview of system investments and operational updates were talked about such as a meter replacement project that will replace all the cooperative's meters in the next 5 years.



Jack Clark and Terry Beam

Osmose pole testing is also helping the cooperative locate the poles that need replaced to help give us better system reliability. Dodds also touched on the Future Energy and Job Act that was passed in 2016 to help increase renewable energy sources in Illinois. It was challenged in the courts with Commonwealth Edison stating that cooperative members should not receive the benefits of this program. The courts found that to not be the intent of the legislation and cooperative members can now receive the benefits of this program.

The members also exercised the second cooperative principle, democratic member control, through re-electing Terry Beam of Cuba, Jack Clark of Lewistown and Robert Lascelles of Ipava to its board of directors.

It is in the spirit of the third cooperative principle, members' economic participation, three \$1,000 scholarships were awarded. The



Scott Parrish Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Allyn Putnam, a graduate of Knoxville High School. Evan Link, a graduate of Knoxville High School, was awarded the Scholastic Scholarship. A \$1,000 Honorary Scholarship was awarded to Cailin Kimbro, an Astoria High School graduate. Several other student who live in the cooperative's service area were awarded \$100 scholarships.

Service awards were presented to employees and directors as follows:

Mark Balbinot 35 years of service
 Bill Dodds 15 years of service
 Cody Schall 5 years of service
 Taryn Mellert 5 years of service
 Bill Sego 5 years of service
 Tyler DeRenzy 5 years of service
 Dusty Wintermote 5 years of service

Bernard Marvel 25 years of board service
 Lyle Nelson 25 years of board service

In addition to the third cooperative principle, members demonstrated the seventh principle, concern for community. At 2017 Annual Meeting, members voted to adopt the Operation Round-Up program. This program allows members to provide financial support to community betterment projects. Funding is donated by volunteers that round up their monthly electric bill to the next whole dollar. In 2018 Spoon River Electric's Operation Round up has donated \$21,250 back into the communities they serve. Organizations receiving money include: VIT High School Technology Program, Cuba FFA Chapter, Knoxville FFA/Ag Department, Cuba Fire Protection District, Ingersoll Scout Reservation, Fulton County Fair & Racing Association, Astoria Fire Department, Browning Volunteer Fire Department, Smithfield Fire Protection District, Astoria School District, Vermont Ballpark Playground, Loving Bottoms Diaper Bank, Dickson Mounds Museum Society – Tot Time, Lewistown Association of Churches Food Pantry, Cuba Cares, and the Cuba Church of the Nazarene.

Entertainment was performed by Lee Hall of Lee Haw!



About Spoon River Electric Cooperative

Spoon River Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, serves more than 5,006 meters in Fulton, Knox, McDonough, Peoria and Schuyler Counties. The locally owned cooperative has 1,291 miles of lines and a utility plant valued at more than \$31.6 million. This not-for-profit member owned utility service is committed to providing reliability, fiscal stability and increasing the products and services available to enhance their member's quality of life. Learn more at www.srecoop.org.





Building a new grain bin on your farm? Remember grain bins have clearance requirements

To stay safe, many farming tasks require looking up and around for power lines: when operating large equipment with antennas or when using long implements, for example.

Another safety issue farmers should keep in mind related to power lines is grain bin location. The National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with specific requirements. The code does so to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with a live electrical line and because utility lines have clearance requirements.

If you plan to build a new grain bin or remodel around an area that already has one, contact Spoon River Electric Cooperative at 309-647-2700. We can help with specific code requirements. The taller a grain bin, the farther it must be placed from a power line. Not only is placing a grain bin too close to a power line extremely dangerous, it will most likely need to be relocated due to one or more code violations, and usually at the owner's expense.

Remember, calling us before installing a new grain bin or making changes around an existing one is free. Moving one is costly, it interrupts your farming schedule and is just an all-around hassle. The NESC specifies both horizontal and vertical distance requirements so don't leave a bin's location to chance.

For example, a grain bin that is 30 feet high must be at least 93 feet from a power line, and all bins must have an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the bin's filling port. There are also distance requirements for non-loading sides of bins. In addition,

changes to the ground (landscaping, filling) and drainage work can affect clearance heights.

Even if you are not getting a new grain bin or making changes around an existing one, remember to always maintain adequate clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin or when moving machinery or farming equipment anywhere on your farm.

Contact with a power line could be deadly. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

SAFETYNOTE: If your machinery or vehicle does contact a power line, do not get out of the cab. Call 9-1-1 and the dispatched utility will de-energize the power so you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Routinely replace or clean your air conditioner's filter. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter can reduce your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5 to 15 percent.

Source: energy.gov

