

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



EDITION: SEPTEMBER 2020

Don't sacrifice safety for speed during harvest

For many farmers, the harvest season is a flurry of activity with long hours and little rest. The pressure to harvest as much as possible — in combination with fatigue and looming deadlines — can result in too little attention being paid to potential hazards. Safe practices should never be compromised for the sake of speed. Doing so could potentially end in tragedy.

Farmers and agricultural workers have dangerous occupations. One of the causes of injury and death in the agricultural industry is electrocution. Of those injuries, overhead power lines are the most common cause of electrocution.

If you are a farm operator or worker, be aware of the location of power lines and keep the following safety guidelines in mind during the harvest season:

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines — at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions to the lowest setting



when moving loads.

- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call the local utility immediately.
- If your equipment does hit a power line do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

The only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is

on fire, which is very rare. However, if this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

To help ensure a safe harvest, stay alert for power lines, exercise caution, and always put safety first.

If you or someone you know would like more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

WHAT TO DO DURING AN OUTAGE

Power outages can be caused by many things; ice accumulation weighs down power lines, tree limbs break off into the lines, an animal gets too close to a warm transformer, or maybe a car hits a utility pole. Here are some steps to take if you experience an outage:

Step 1: Make sure the outage is on our end; check your fuses and breakers and see if your neighbors have lights.

Step 2: Report your outage through our free SmartHub app or by calling our automated outage reporting system at 1-800-879-0339. These two reporting mechanisms tie directly into our outage management system (OMS) for efficient and cost-effective reporting. Some members are concerned when they call in and don't speak to a live person; if the automated phone system tells you that we've recorded your outage, our dispatch center has been immediately notified through the OMS.

To make the outage process even more efficient, **make sure we have your current phone number(s) associated with your account.** Check your latest bill stub or log in to your online SmartHub account to see which number(s) are currently linked to your account.

Please do not report your outage to us via Facebook or Twitter as these outlets are not manned 24/7 and are not directly linked to our OMS.

Step 3: Be patient. As our outage management system is predicting the extent of the outage, our dispatch center assigns crews to investigate the issue and make necessary repairs. If your outage occurs after business hours, keep in mind that often times linemen need to stop what they're doing and

grab necessary gear and supplies before heading out to the outage location to restore power, usually in adverse weather conditions. A little bit of patience goes a long way as our linemen work as quickly and as safely as possible.

Step 4: Check our website, Facebook account or Twitter account for updates on major outages. We usually post status updates for larger outage events (*those affecting 500 co-op members or more*).

Check the extent of the outage by viewing a live outage map at www.cornbeltenergy.com. If you don't have internet access, we also post status updates on our main phone greeting at 1-800-879-0339 during major outages.

If you experience a power outage, rest assured that we're doing everything in *our* power to restore yours as quickly and safely as possible. Our co-op member-owners are our **ONLY** priority; that's the cooperative difference.





Remove the element of surprise on your monthly electric bill

Are you looking for a way to budget your monthly electric bill so that you are not surprised with fluctuations throughout the year?

Budget Billing gives you a way to guard against large fluctuations in your monthly electric bill, without ever having to play “catch-up” at the end of the year. With Budget Billing, your monthly electric bill becomes a “rolling average” of your electric usage for the most recent 12 months. By averaging your

changes in usage over a 12-month period, your bill will remain fairly consistent every month, even in very cold or hot months when usage may be significantly higher.

Our Budget Billing program is completely free for members with accounts in good standing and with at least 12 months of service history. Call us today at 800-879-0339 to sign up and for more information.

Help us keep our records up-to-date

If you have changed your phone number or disconnected your landline phone and are now using a cell phone number, Corn Belt Energy would like for you to help us keep our records updated.

Check your latest bill stub or log in to your online SmartHub account to see which number(s) are currently linked to your account. Phone numbers listed on your account can be found in SmartHub by going to My Account > Notifications > Manage Contacts. You may also add additional phone contacts on this screen.

To update your phone number(s), simply call us at 800-879-0339, email us at cbec@cornbeltenergy.com, correct the info on your next

bill stub, or fill out the online form at: www.cornbeltenergy.com/billing/update-contact-info.html

We can record up to three numbers to associate with your account, including cell phones. We won't sell or share your contact information with anyone else.

By having your current phone number(s) on file, it will also help our automated outage reporting system to work efficiently. When you call in to report an outage, our automated system takes the phone number you are calling from and checks it against phone numbers we have on file in our account management system. If your number is on file, it makes outage reporting faster and more efficient.

Meet our employees



Linda Dubblede
Senior Warehouse /
Purchasing Agent

How long have you worked at Corn Belt Energy?
39 years

What is your role at Corn Belt Energy?
Ordering and receiving material. Process invoices for material. Pulling material for jobs. Inventory control for all our material. Helping our crews with what ever they need to do their job.

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?
Every day is different for me. I like to work with other departments to get our jobs done efficiently and safely.

If there is one piece of advice that you could share with our members, what would it be?

We are always working hard to keep the lights on. If the power does go out we are working at all times to get the power restored. Please have patience!

Corn Belt Energy puts SAFETY FIRST. What safety tip would you share with our members?

Always respect electricity. Never go near downed power lines. Drive safely and please slow down in work zones.

What are your hobbies and outside interests?

Fishing, boating, off-roading, riding motorcycles, cooking, and recently doing small landscaping projects and flower gardens.

Who or what inspires you?

My parents have always inspired me to be a better person and help out everyone if you can.

If you had to select a hashtag to describe yourself, what would it be?

#givemorethanyoutake

Is there anything else that you would like to share with our members?

I am thankful to make my career be at CBEC. It has been an interesting and fun journey. I have many good friends from our Co-op and other Co-ops in Illinois!



Surge protection for your entire home

Storms often bring an increased threat of power surges which could damage your valuable electronics and appliances.

Many people think a blink in power is a surge, but these are generally caused by something such as a tree contacting a line. When a blink occurs, Corn Belt Energy's protective devices work, causing an interruption to protect the wires and other components.

What is a power surge? A power surge is defined as sudden, short-lived increase in voltage. Power surges can enter the home in a variety of ways including power lines, telephone lines, cable/satellite connections and any other metallic system that connects to your home.

Corn Belt Energy can help protect your home from the threat of power

surges which could damage your valuable electronics and appliances.

Internal Surges

80% of temporary power surges come from inside the home; protect your equipment with surge protector devices like power strips. Make sure to look for the UL 1449 label, which guarantees it meets tested and approved standards. Surge protectors carry a "joule" and/or a "surge-current" rating; the higher the rating of these two categories, the higher the quality of internal surge-stopping components. Corn Belt carries several surge strips and outlet receptacles that may fit your needs.

External Surges



Whole-house protection is recommended for more severe surges, including lightning strikes. Corn Belt can install a surge protector on your exterior electric meter for

\$6.95/month (200 amp meter) and a \$25 installation fee. 400 amp meter protection is available for \$8.95/month with a \$25 installation fee.

Inside your home, a panel-mounted circuit panel or service entrance suppression device (TVSS) forms a second layer of defense by greatly reducing harmful surges entering your home. A qualified electrician can ensure proper installation.

For more information about whole house surge protection or any other Corn Belt Energy programs, services or rebates, please visit our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com or call us at 800-879-0339.

CONTACT US

1-800-879-0339 | cbec@cornbeltenergy.com | www.cornbeltenergy.com |  
1 Energy Way, Bloomington IL 61705 | Office hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

