CELEBRATING 75 YEARS SPOON RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
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Spoon River News

President's Report

William R. Dodds
President/CEO

Our office in Canton is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., other than holiday closures. When you call our office during those hours, you'll be able to talk to one of our employees, who lives here, is familiar with our territory and knows many of you personally.

But not all power outages occur during regular business hours. So what happens after we've closed the office for the day? Your calls to our phone number are answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, but during non-business hours they are forwarded to a contractor in Minnesota. The contractor only has one business: answering after-hours calls for many cooperatives throughout the U.S. Their employees are trained to respond to your call and help.

Remember that the dispatchers who take those calls are trained to respond to emergencies only, such as a power outage or a downed line. They can't help with questions about billing, because they don't have access to that information about your account. Please call during non-business hours only if you have an emergency.

During an after-hours call, you'll be asked a series of questions. The questions are scripted, because the dispatchers who ask them need to find out the nature of your problem as quickly as possible so they can dispatch one of our linemen to respond. The dispatchers are courteous and helpful, but remember, they have calls for many other co-ops, not just ours. They are trained to get help out as soon as possible and move on to the next call so they can gather as much information as possible to help us analyze the outage.

During a large-scale outage, the phones can get backed up not only at our office, but also by the after-hours contractor. They have an automated system that allows you to report an outage by entering your phone number rather than waiting on hold. Please make sure we have a current primary phone number for you on file at our office. Confusion can result when members aren't sure if their home or cell number is listed as primary, so check with us if you need to.

If you have a question about your account, or what's going on here at Spoon River Electric Cooperative, we'd love to hear from you at (309) 647-2700. Just remember to call during business hours, from 8 a.m. to 4:30, Monday through Friday.

VanTine joins staff

Joel VanTine recently joined the staff of Spoon River Electric Cooperative as a customer service representative. Joel will be responding to member inquires about billing and service issues. He has an Associate of Arts and Science Degree from Spoon River College. Joel lives in Canton with his wife Taylor, an art teacher at the Avon-Abingdon K-8 school.

Mark your calendar

2014 SREC Annual Meeting of Members

Thursday, June 19, 2014
Canton High School

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

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bdodds@srecoop.org

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brothert@srecoop.org

Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,249 • Number of members served: 4,944
Number of power poles in territory: 29,255

Why animals and power don't mix

By Megan McKoy-Noe

What do birds, squirrels, and power outages have in common? Animals trigger 11 percent of power outages across the nation.

"Our members sometimes shake their heads in disbelief when I blame a squirrel for an outage," said Spoon River Electric Cooperative Operations Manager Frank Romane. "We spend more time than you might think addressing animal management and removal."

To ensure safe, reliable power delivery (and healthy wildlife), co-ops go to great lengths to keep animals away from electricity.

Animal Attraction

Electricity seeks the fastest route to the ground. Utility pole insulators keep power flowing safely in your neighborhood, but unwitting squirrels offer high-voltage electricity a way around insulators. If a squirrel doesn't jump far enough, a powerful electric current—up to 12,500 volts—makes the squirrel a conduit to the ground. The squirrel does not survive.

If a squirrel's body falls to the ground, the power blinks but stays on. If it falls into equipment, like a transformer, safety measures shut off power. The co-op sends a lineworker to remove the animal and restore power.

Squirrels are the main culprit, but they're not alone. Opossums, raccoons, foxes, snakes, birds, and other animals trigger outages, too.

Animal attraction to power infrastructure hurts animals and leaves frustrated co-op members in the dark. Clean up, recovery, and restoring power costs utilities between $15 and $18 million a year, estimates Tyco Electronics, a utility equipment firm.

Grid Guardians

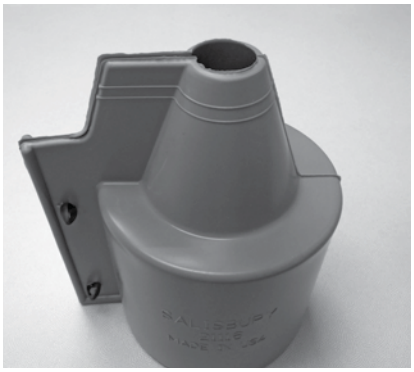
No one wants wildlife hurt.

Eighty percent of electric co-ops, public power districts, and public utility districts install animal guards to protect equipment and wayward animals.

3M's Electrostatic Animal Guard resembles a tarantula. A dozen metal rods arch like bent legs around an insulator, forming an electrostatic barrier. Errant wildlife receives a mild shock if they get too close; the guard acts as an electrified fence.

"Electric co-ops can minimize outages without injuring animals. Guards can be installed easily without de-energizing the circuit," notes Jim Stanley, a product marketing manager in 3M's Electrical Markets Division.

Alternatives such as the Rauckman Wildlife Shield™ and ZAPShield™ create a barrier to keep teething squirrels, rodents, snakes, and other animals away from dangerous parts of electrical infrastructure. Frisbee-sized plastic or metal discs guard equipment in substations, too.



Wildlife guards like the one shown above can prevent squirrels from causing power outages.

Animal guards are not foolproof. But the measures help drive down the number of outages caused by animals. Another option is building habitats to help animals and power safely co-exist.

Osprey and other birds of prey don't use power lines as highways. Instead, they're attracted to poles as perches. Raptors often nest on top of utility poles—a dangerous spot. An osprey's nearly five-foot wingspan can form a conduit between an energized power line and a neutral wire. Like squirrels, these birds may get hurt as high-voltage electricity looks for a path to the ground.

Some co-ops encourage birds to settle on man-made nest platforms. The utility removes a dormant nest from electrical equipment and places the nesting material on a nearby raised platform (as tall or taller than the utility pole). When the birds return to the area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service claims odds are good they'll use the safer structure.

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