

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



EDITION: MARCH 2024

Clearing the Path to Reliability

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Corn Belt Energy strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Corn Belt Energy crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near



power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact. Drone inspections of power lines and

vegetation allow us to reduce labor and equipment costs while bolstering reliability. Through the use of small drones, we can accurately monitor the health and growth of trees and identify potential problems.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone.

>> *Continued on page 18B*

Clearing the Path to Reliability

>> Continued from page 18A

Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Affordability

As a co-op, Corn Belt Energy always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left

unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the

transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting us at 309-662-5330.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

Fight back against scams

Scammers are targeting energy consumers everywhere. They often call threatening to shut off power unless payment is made immediately. Or they may call saying you overpaid and ask for credit card or bank info to provide a credit.

Never give out personal information to anyone who calls claiming to be from your utility!

Many of these scam attempts play out like this: the caller poses as a representative of your power provider, says you are behind on the bill and a truck is on the way to disconnect your service unless you pay your bill right now – over the phone. Some ask their targets to purchase prepaid cards and call back with the prepaid card number to pay the bill.

Don't fall for these scams! Any possible disconnection would be preceded by written notice in the mail or emailed to you. Corn Belt Energy will never call demanding immediate payment over the

phone. If you get such a call, or have questions about your bill, call us immediately at 309-662-5330.

Attempts have also been made in person at the door or via email. If Corn Belt Energy needs to replace or service equipment in your home, we will contact you in advance. Never respond to an email that claims to be from your utility that provides a link for payment or asks for personal information.

If you suspect someone is trying to scam you, please hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door. If you ever feel you are in physical danger, call 911.

Members who suspect that they have been victims of fraud should also contact local law enforcement authorities. The Federal Trade Commission's website (www.ftc.gov) is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

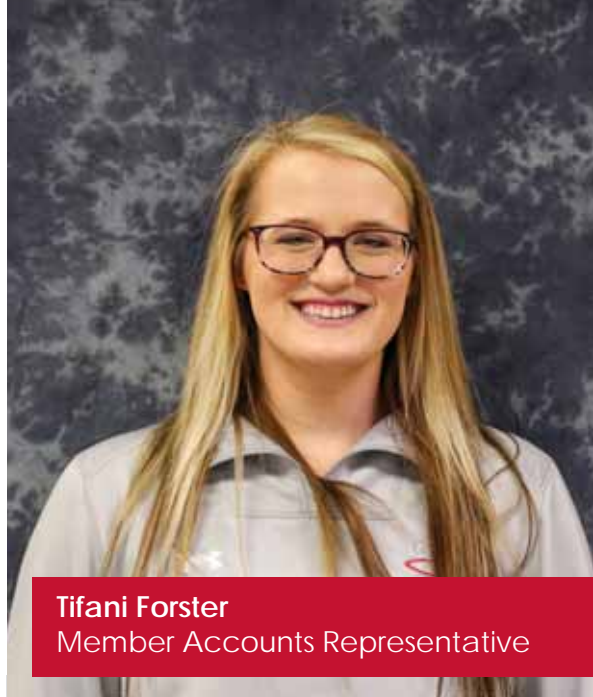
National Agriculture Day

Every year, National Ag Day celebrates the abundance provided by agriculture across the United States.

This year, March 19th marks the day where we honor and acknowledge the dedication of farmers, ranchers, farmworkers, fishers, foresters, and other agricultural laborers.

It is worth noting that more than 21 million jobs are linked to agriculture, and these individuals have contributed greatly to the growth of our nation. From the food on our tables to the clothes on our backs, farmers make it all possible.

We don't say it enough, but thank you for all you do!



Tifani Forster
Member Accounts Representative

How long have you worked at Corn Belt Energy?
8 months

What is your role at Corn Belt Energy?
Member Accounts Representative

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?

Connecting and communicating with members and helping them however I can.

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

Stay away from down power lines and when in doubt just report it. Better safe than sorry.

What are your hobbies and outside interests?

I love spending time with my kids. I enjoy being outside and staying busy. I enjoy watching my kid's playing sports.

Who or what inspires you?

My husband, my kids and my mom

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

#blessed

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

I am very grateful to work with so many wonderful people at Corn Belt Energy.



A Balanced Team for Reliability

The winningest basketball teams in history are ones that are consistent and have players with varying abilities. Some are better at shooting three-pointers, some are best at defense. Having a balanced mix of skills makes the team a powerhouse on the court. The way to keep electricity reliable is a bit like that too.

The power team first requires a foundation of consistent sources that can be put in the game any time they're needed. Having enough "always available" fuel sources like natural gas and coal can ensure consistent power generation.

Just like a team needs different players for different situations, our power grid requires multiple sources to keep the grid running. Relying solely on one player to win every game is not an effective strategy—if they get injured, you'll likely lose. Similarly, using a single fuel source for electricity generation poses a significant risk to energy reliability. Natural disasters,

geopolitical tensions or unforeseen disruptions can severely impact the supply chain of a particular fuel. A diverse mix of energy sources acts as a safeguard, ensuring that the grid remains operational even in the face of unexpected challenges.

A diverse energy mix also enhances grid flexibility by accommodating the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources like solar and wind. Think of solar power like a team's inconsistent three-point shooter. It's awesome when the sun is shining bright, but what if it's nighttime or a cloudy day? That's where the other players, like wind, hydro, nuclear, natural gas and coal can step up and keep the team scoring.




Diverse fuel sources contribute to the stability and reliability of the electric grid. The different sources have varying characteristics, including generation patterns, responsiveness and storage capabilities. This diversity allows for a more balanced and resilient energy system that can adapt to

fluctuating demand and unforeseen circumstances. Having a mix of these energy sources is like having a team with different skills to handle various situations and scenarios.

A diverse set of energy sources is essential, but that's not the only thing we need to have reliable electricity—or a winning team. Basketball teams are always trying out new plays or training rookies to create a versatile lineup. Similarly, electric cooperatives are constantly innovating to maintain reliability for tomorrow. But creating new ways to make our power sources more efficient and reliable takes time, money and advances in technology that aren't necessarily ready yet.

As we continue to work on the innovations of tomorrow, the key to keeping our electricity reliable right now is ensuring a diverse "team" of fuels. Each one brings something special to the table, and together, they make sure we have the power we need, whenever we need it.

CONTACT US

309-662-5330 | cbec@cornbeltenergy.com | www.cornbeltenergy.com |   
1 Energy Way, Bloomington, IL 61705 | Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

