



**Mike Smith**  
President and CEO

## Whatever it takes: Powering life, from a lineworker's perspective

*Linework is ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at McDonough Power Cooperative work rain or shine, often in challenging conditions, to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024. The following column was written by Jamison Holthaus, one of our many dedicated lineworkers.*

My name is Jamison Holthaus, and I'm one of seven lineworkers at McDonough Power Cooperative who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face, and more importantly, why we do it.

### The danger

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You have to be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. We often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when weather is the worst. I'm often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we can officially be called a lineworker. We typically start as a groundperson, helping crews

with tools and keeping job sites safe; then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman lineworker status — that's when we're considered officially trained in our field.

But, the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures. 8120SL487-830B

### The physical demand

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of us complain about that. I know what I signed up for — loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, we go places the trucks can't, so I might be hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most of us are just glad to be outside.



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**SAVE the DATE!**

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7**

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#### The sacrifices

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. I’m often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating, like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. You don’t know what type of situation you’re going to face or when you’re going to face it. We get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. I’ve missed a lot of ball games and family dinners, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

#### It’s worth it

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you have to depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It’s a culture of trust, teamwork and

service. It’s all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else. 532RM69-900C

I take a lot of pride in my work. Even when it’s cold and wet, I know I’m working to keep people warm. There’s a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell “Thank you!” from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired I am or how long I’ve been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

McDonough Power Cooperative and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off, too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible — so you can get back to normal life.

# what does a LINEWORKER do?

On any given day or night, in all kinds of weather conditions, lineworkers install and maintain overhead and underground electrical systems.

We entrust our lineworkers with your safety, so they hold a very important job. We also rely on their expertise to power our world.

## Safety comes first

Lineworkers must commit to safety above all else for the benefit of those they serve (you!), fellow crew members and themselves. They spend thousands of hours in safety trainings each year and must learn and apply numerous safety regulations.

## They are specially trained to:

- Climb poles to service power lines in areas inaccessible by trucks.
- Stand in an elevated bucket to assess and repair overhead lines.
- Install poles, overhead lines and other equipment.
- Work on both energized and deenergized lines.
- Install and service underground lines.

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## REMINDER

*Lineworker Scholarship  
application deadline is*

**APRIL 30, 2024**

*Visit [mcdonoughpower.com/  
community/scholarships/](https://mcdonoughpower.com/community/scholarships/)  
for details.*

## Member Prizes

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



 **JULIE** BEFOREYOU.DIG.COM



## JULIE celebrates Safe Digging Month

April marks Safe Digging Month in Illinois, reminding homeowners and professional excavators to contact JULIE before every digging project this spring, regardless of the size or depth. Putting up a fence, installing a mailbox post, building a deck or patio and planting trees and shrubs are all examples of projects that require a notification to JULIE first. This is a free service.

Striking a buried utility line can cause injury, repair costs, penalties and inconvenient outages. Here are five important steps to take before putting a shovel in the ground:

1. Pre-mark the dig site with white paint or flags.
2. Go to [www.JULIEBeforeYouDig.com](http://www.JULIEBeforeYouDig.com) or call 811 anytime to submit your locate request.
3. Wait the required amount of time (two business days).
4. Respect the marks.
5. Dig with care. 11127C7A-1004B

Member utilities have two business days to respond to your request. Notifications received after 4 p.m. are processed as received at 8 a.m. the next

day. So, if you want to start your outdoor project on the weekend, contact JULIE before 4 p.m. on Wednesday. JULIE's call center agents are available to receive and process requests 24 hours a day, seven days a week. E-Request is a free, self-service option available anytime at [www.JULIEBeforeYouDig.com](http://www.JULIEBeforeYouDig.com).

Nationwide, more than 49.3 million Americans will put themselves, their families and their communities at risk by not contacting their local 811 center before digging. As Illinois' free notification service to prevent underground utility line damage, JULIE is dedicated to keeping homeowners, landscapers, contractors, professional excavators — and the entire community — safe. Based in Joliet, the not-for-profit organization represents 1,980 members and covers Illinois, outside the city of Chicago. JULIE personnel do not perform locating or marking services. For an explanation of the color-coded markings, DIY project tips or information about the process, visit [www.JULIEBeforeYou.com](http://www.JULIEBeforeYou.com). 6224C2A-116B