

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



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Beyond the Meter

Electric cooperatives stand out from other types of businesses because we are built and led by the communities we serve. As independent, not-for-profit electric utilities, we are owned and governed by our local members, not outside shareholders or investors. That is a powerful differentiator.

But it goes **Beyond the Meter**.

Corn Belt Energy is more than just your electric cooperative. Here are a few ways Corn Belt Energy brings unique value to our members and to the local communities we serve:

• Membership.

Did you know that when you joined Corn Belt Energy, your electric cooperative, you weren't just signing up for electric service? You're becoming a part of something bigger—you're a member. And while "member" and "customer" might sound the same, they're not. Being a member of a cooperative isn't about transactions; it's about connections. Unlike a for-profit utility company, which is owned by shareholders, your cooperative is owned by you and your neighbors. That means every decision your co-op makes is designed to serve its members, not distant investors.



•We put people before profits.

When you're a member, you're part of a story that's about more than keeping the lights on. It's about community. Every dollar you spend on electricity doesn't just disappear into corporate coffers; it stays in your service territory, supporting local schools, businesses, and initiatives. And when your co-op does well, so do you. Unlike for-profit utilities, cooperatives return any extra revenue to members through capital credits. That's money back in your pocket — something no "customer" of a traditional utility will ever see.

•Community comes first.

We live and work here, too, and we care deeply about our local communities. That's why

we engage in development and revitalization projects, sponsor local students for scholarships and youth programs, and give back to local organizations to help our neighbors in need. We organize various events designed to engage with our members in meaningful ways. Among these are our annual meeting, regional meetings that allow for more localized conversations and networking opportunities. Additionally, we host "Coffee with Corn Belt," an informal gathering that fosters open dialogue, connection among members, free coffee and a pastry too! (*see Page 6 for details*) Each event is tailored to meet our members where they are, ensuring you have the opportunity to share your insights and experiences while staying informed and

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Beyond the Meter

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connected with our community and your cooperative.

•Safety.

Corn Belt Energy prioritizes safety internally and externally by educating our team, our members, and the community through resources available in print, online, and through programs and workshops.

Our team is dedicated to providing ongoing safety training and educational workshops. We ensure that employees have the necessary information to keep the co-op safe and reliable and are up to date on current safety standards and regulations.

Corn Belt Energy continually seeks ways to enhance cooperative safety through first responder training, educational videos, and demonstrations at various events.

Safety involves much more than just educational tools. It also includes vegetation management to reduce the risk of trees and other plants affecting the safety and reliability of power lines. Additionally, it encompasses storm preparedness, the necessary actions to take if you or your vehicle comes into contact with power lines, and electrical safety.

Corn Belt Energy is committed to maintaining a culture of safety through continuous education, training, and proactive measures to protect both our team and the community. Together, we can create a safe environment for everyone.

•Affordable, reliable power is our priority.

Corn Belt Energy purchases electricity from Wabash Valley Power Alliance, our wholesale energy partner. Wabash Valley Power Alliance is a generation and transmission cooperative formed by a group of electric co-ops in our central region. This cooperative business structure allows us to pool local resources and provide electricity at a lower cost than if we purchased it from outside sources.

Corn Belt Energy provides a range of rebates, programs, and services to support our members. Through free energy audits and rebates for heat pumps, geothermal systems, battery-powered equipment, and more, Corn Belt Energy is committed to helping our members reduce their energy consumption. Energy efficiency can lower bills and contribute to a more sustainable future.

•Innovation.

As a new year begins, we're focused on our members' energy needs—not only for today but for the long haul. We're advocating for more innovative energy policies prioritizing reliability and affordability. We recognize we must be inclusive of all energy sources, so we work closely with Wabash Valley Power Alliance, The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, and our local government to ensure the use of a diverse mix of sources to generate the electricity we provide to our members. Corn Belt Energy is working to power a brighter future through innovation that meets tomorrow's energy needs.

At Corn Belt Energy, we pride ourselves on being more than just power lines, transformers, and meters; we are a community of people, members, neighbors, a dedicated board of directors, and a committed team of employees. Reliable and affordable electricity is more important than ever, and our focus remains on serving the best interests of the local members and communities, extending Beyond the Meter.

Thank you for being a member!



Be Ready for Storm Season

Spring is on our doorstep and like many of you, we're looking forward to more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy warmer weather.

Springtime brings many of our favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, time spent working in the garden and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

Unfortunately, spring and summer can also create the perfect conditions for severe storms.

Corn Belt Energy crews are always prepared and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines.

We encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit www.ready.gov and cornbeltenergy.com for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your First Aid kit is stocked with pain relievers,

bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.

- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from potential power surges and will also help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and lessen the impact of the storm's effects.

Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and follow us on Facebook for the latest power outage updates. If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 309-662-5330. This is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out.

We hope we don't experience severe storms over the spring and summer months, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Corn Belt Energy, we recommend that you make a plan today—because storm preparedness is always our best defense.

ARE YOU STORM READY?

Follow these safety and preparation tips during spring and summer storm season.

Be Prepared.

- Create an emergency kit with power outage essentials: batteries, power banks, flashlights, non-perishable foods, water, medical supplies and prescriptions.
- Develop an emergency family plan with meeting points, communication methods and evacuation routes. Share your plan with all family members.
- Monitor weather for important updates that could impact your emergency plan.

Stay Safe.

- Ensure a safe shelter. Stay away from windows and doors. In tornadoes, move to a basement or an interior room without windows.
- Use portable generators safely: operate outdoors in well-ventilated areas, place on a flat, dry surface, do not overload and always read the operating manual before use.
- Severe storms can bring down tree limbs and power lines. If you encounter a downed line, stay back. Always assume a downed line is live and dangerous.



Surge protection for your entire home

Storms often increase the threat of power surges, which could damage your valuable electronics and appliances.

Many people think a blink in power is a surge generally caused by 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.

A power surge is a sudden, short-lived increase in voltage that can enter the home through power lines, telephone lines, cable/satellite connections, and other metallic systems. Protect your electronics and appliances from

potential damage with Corn Belt Energy's help.

Internal Surges

80% of temporary power surges come from inside the home; Surge protection for your entire home: protect your equipment with surge protector devices like power strips.

When shopping for surge protectors, look for the UL 1449 label and consider the joule and surge-current ratings; the higher the rating of these two categories, the higher the quality of internal surge-stopping components. Check out Corn Belt's surge strips and outlet receptacles for options that

meet 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.

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 309-662-5330.

Stay safe during planting season

National Agriculture Day is March 18th and Corn Belt Energy and Safe Electricity want to remind all workers to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. As farmers return to their fields this spring, please follow these safety tips:

If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, **do not get out**. Once contact has been made with a live line (even when your tractor or truck makes contact), you are now a "pathway to ground" and you could get electrocuted if you step out. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to de-energize the power.

If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from a distance) to stay in the tractor or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Do

not approach the scene.

When using machinery with long extensions or tall antennas and when using ladders, look up to avoid contact with overhead power lines.

Even if there is no contact, an electrical current can jump or arc so keep equipment at least 10 feet from surrounding power lines at all times.

Remember, non-metallic materials (such as tree limbs, ropes and hay) can conduct electricity, depending on dampness and dust/dirt accumulation.

Visually inspect overhead lines, which may not meet height codes due to age or pole damage. If a wire is hanging low or is on the ground, consider it energized and stay at least 50 feet away; call 9-1-1




to have the operator dispatch the utility.

Every day, map out where equipment will be moved to ensure it will clear power lines. When working in the vicinity of power lines, always use a spotter who has a broad vantage point.

Train anyone working with or for you (including seasonal employees) to be aware of power line locations and teach them proper clearance distance. Also design and implement a safety training program that includes a review of electrical hazards and how to safely deal with power lines.

Thank you for your hard work, your perseverance, your dedication to caring for the land and most importantly, thank you for putting food on our dinner tables. Be safe!

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