

# HI-LINES

A newsletter for members of JCE Co-op

APRIL 2025

Elizabeth, IL

800-858-5522

jcecoop.com



## CEO'S REPORT by Mike Casper

## Fiber, what's next?

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### APRIL 1

Senior Planet–Savanna  
Museum and Cultural Center  
10:00–11:00 a.m.

#### APRIL 3

Senior Planet–Mount Carroll  
District Library 1:00–2:00 p.m.

#### APRIL 8

Senior Planet–Schmaling  
Memorial Public Library  
Fulton 11:00 a.m.–Noon

#### APRIL 10

Senior Planet–Apple Canyon  
Lake Clubhouse 1:00–2:00 p.m.

#### APRIL 15

Senior Planet–Morrison Odell  
Public Library 11:00 a.m.–Noon

#### APRIL 18

Closed for Good Friday

#### APRIL 24

Senior Planet–Geneseo Public  
Library 10:00–11:00 a.m.

### SPECIAL FEATURE

#### 18B

Shout out to those who help  
us help you!

  
**JCE CO-OP**  
Electric • Gas • Fiber

Spring is here and the frost will soon be out of the ground. With the weather's cooperation we'll be full steam ahead with fiber construction in neighborhoods where we are actively building out in 2025.

To date, we have constructed more than 2,000 miles of fiber and connected over 7,000 fiber internet members. Within the next 3 to 5 years, JCE Co-op expects to construct an additional 1,500 miles of fiber that will provide access to more than 10,000 homes, businesses and farms. We expect fiber to be available throughout our service area by 2030, with much of that completed by the end of 2026.

The number one question we hear is, "when are we going to get fiber in our area?" It's a valid question and the answer depends on several factors.

Multiple grant awards are providing us with the opportunity to bring fiber to rural areas that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive. However, each grant has specific deadlines that we must meet, which drives the timeline in these areas. If an area does not qualify for grants, we rely on your interest and sign ups to help move projects forward.

The path we take to build out fiber most efficiently from the source or the middle mile fiber where we can obtain the bandwidth needed to serve you is also an important factor. Another is where we have the most interest or concentration outside of the grant areas.

We continue to follow a six-step process in building a fiber neighborhood. The process is described at the "Building the Fiber Neighborhood" link under the Fiber tab on our website where you can also find a "What to Expect During Construction" video.

During the construction phase, there are multiple steps before you are contacted to schedule the actual fiber installation in your home and/or business, which can take several months. These include mainline fiber placement (aerial and/or underground) and a smaller dedicated drop fiber that connects to a box on your house. After that is complete, our splicing teams will fusion splice all fiber connections and conduct tests to verify that the fiber to your house is "lit" or functional.

To check the progress in your area, visit our Fiber Communities map, found under the Fiber tab at jcecoop.com.

### Reliability and benefits worth the wait

Fiber internet offers fast, reliable connectivity that enhances various aspects of modern life, from education, healthcare and remote work to streaming, gaming, and smart home applications. It supports uninterrupted online learning to seamless telemedicine consultations, efficient remote work, and high-quality streaming with minimal buffering.

Fiber ensures low-latency online gaming and fast downloads. Additionally, it enables the smooth operation of smart home devices, real-time control, and data-intensive tasks like high-definition security camera streaming. Overall, fiber internet improves everyday experiences and future-proofs your home with its superior speeds and reliability, which can increase the value of your home.

We appreciate your patience during this exciting build-out period as we continue to push forward in bringing fiber optic service to our area. An undertaking this large requires a team effort by the cooperative, your members and new members, and local leaders. Thank you!

## Shout out to those who help us help you!

JCE Co-op employees are dedicated to providing safe and reliable services to our members every day. As our company continues to grow, we're increasingly partnering with contractors to support various projects, from right-of-way maintenance and pole testing to line and broadband construction. This year, we have a variety of contractors working throughout our service area, and the number of workers they bring into the region has steadily increased.

These contractors and their teams play a vital role in stimulating economic growth for our local communities and businesses. Their presence helps support the local economy, creating jobs and opportunities for surrounding businesses.

As you encounter our contractors, along with our own line workers and technicians working along roadsides, please exercise caution and drive safely. Their hard work helps us continue to provide the services our members rely on.

In addition to these contractors on the right, JCE utilizes many local contractors, service providers and businesses.



### JCE Co-op contractors

**Osmose Utility Services, Inc.**

*Provide pole inspection and treatment. Five to 15 employees will be doing work for JCE in the fall.*

**Vanguard Utility Partners, Inc.** (Deforest, WI)

*Co-op's JULIE locating partner, providing service systemwide, except in the Geneseo area. Five to 15 employees may do work for JCE throughout the year.*

**Karcz Utility Services, LLC** (Pulaski, WI)

*Perform underground facility inspections, maintenance and painting. Two to 10 employees will be working in the JCE territory during the spring.*

**J&R Underground** (Blanchardville, WI)

*Provide natural gas, electric and fiber underground installation. Employees work throughout the service territory, except in the Geneseo area.*

**ZieLies Tree Service, Inc.** (Bruce, WI)

*Assist with the co-op's tree trimming. Multiple employees provide tree trimming and removal services year-round.*

**Stichter Construction** (Erie, IL)

*Right-of-way clearing in JCE's natural gas service territory.*

**JJ Vondrum & Sons**, (Lancaster, WI) **BKW Utilities**, (Effingham, IL) **ALB** (East Dubuque, IL), and **Always Underground, Inc.** (Joliet, IL)

*Boring, trenching and plowing. Work throughout the JCE service territory in fiber buildout areas.*

**Wolf Line Construction** (Charleston, SC)

*Assist with overhead fiber construction and overhead/underground drop construction. Work system-wide in fiber buildout areas.*

**Vantage Point Solutions** (Mitchell, SD)

*Field engineering, inspection and project management in fiber buildout areas system wide.*

**Fiber Ops** (Whitelaw, WI)

*Perform fiber splicing for JCE Co-op. Employees do work in the fiber buildout areas.*

**USDI-Utility Safety & Design, Inc.** (Olney, IL)

*Assist the natural gas team with compliance tasks, audits and large construction projects.*

## Meter project continues in 2025

Work is underway to update JCE Co-op's advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) which will improve safety, enhanced system reliability and data collection.

The technology automatically collects data from the meter and transfers that data over a secure network to the co-op's database. The collected data is used for utility billing, analyzing usage trends, providing members with daily usage information as well as advanced outage and gas leak notifications for your convenience and safety.

The system rollout has already started with installation of smart node upgrades to existing natural gas meters. Some homes may receive a new natural gas meter along with the smart node, depending on the age of their natural gas meter.

The co-op expects to begin installing electric meters in late April, according to Brad Edler, Director of Engineering. JCE Co-op has contracted with Utility Metering Solutions (UMS) to install residential meters, with the goal of 10,000 to be completed this year. JCE Co-op technicians will manage and support installation of more advanced three phase meters.

Testing of the software database interface to meters began in March. "We have already received what are called first article meters, that is, electric meters that we utilize for testing purposes, making sure everything works properly," Edler said. "Because we have multiple types of meters, our vendor sends us four of each model to test. Our engineers and technicians connect each meter to the system, verifying each meter has

correct performance and provides accurate data to the software database."

"Key to the testing and operation of the system is installation of base stations that gather the readings from the meters and pass the data to the software database," Edler added. Thirty-four base stations will be installed throughout the co-op's gas and electric footprint. The base station installation is expected to be completed by the end of April.

With the upgrade to the new system, the co-op will "have increased reliability in getting timely information from meters and better communication directly to the meters," Edler said. "We will be able to make upgrades to meters via remote commands, saving money eliminating truck rolls to update meter programming."

He continued stating that the new point-to-point system replaces a power line carrier (PLC) signal system that is no longer industry supported and a radio frequency (RF) mesh system which does not work well in the co-op territory's varied terrain.

The updated system is still RF but is point-to-point instead of mesh so that the base stations communicate directly with the meters. "We've done full propagation studies, working with our provider, to verify that our terrain, the number of base stations and their locations are all where they need to be," Edler said.

Meter changes are expected to begin in late April and early May. Additional information will be provided to members by email, postcard and other co-op publications as the meter changes begin.



### Director's Scholarship deadline approaching!

High school seniors still have time to apply for JCE Co-op's Director's Scholarships that are awarded at the co-op's Annual Meeting of Members.

Up to 10 Director's Scholarships are awarded by drawing, one in each of the cooperative's 10 director districts. If no applications are received from a district, that scholarship will become an at-large scholarship.

Current high school seniors, whose parents or guardians are JCE members and who have not won another JCE scholarship, are eligible to receive a Director's Scholarship. The deadline to apply is May 1.

The applicant and at least one of their parents or guardians must attend the annual meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 28 at East Dubuque High School. Application forms and details are found at [jcecoop.com/scholarship-opportunities](http://jcecoop.com/scholarship-opportunities).



## Celebrating Youth Day

On March 5, JCE Co-op proudly took Alexander Abt of Galena and Hazel Harris of Geneseo to Youth Day in Springfield, IL. Joined by JCE employees Taylor Smith and Jordan McLane, the students had the chance to learn about Illinois legislation and the cooperative business model, while gaining valuable insights from state representatives and senators on the importance of civic involvement.

**Pictured above:** Jordan McLane; Alexander Abt; Hazel Harris; Taylor Smith

## 2025 JCE Co-op photo contest

JCE Co-op is accepting entries for its 2025 photo contest through June 30. Winning entries will be featured in the 2026 JCE Co-op photo calendar.



- Send us your favorite photos that represent life in our area.
- Entrants must be JCE members.
  - All photos must be the work of the entrant.
  - Photos must be taken within the co-op's service territory.

We will choose 12 photos to appear on the calendar pages and two photos to be featured on the front and back covers. Several other photos are selected each year as honorable mentions. Complete rules and entry information can be found at [jcecoop.com/member-involvement](http://jcecoop.com/member-involvement).

## Call before you dig!

**April is Safe Digging Month.**

Don't knock out internet, power or other critical services in your community.



# LINEWORKERS ARE WIRED FOR SERVICE

In the quiet hours before dawn breaks, while many of us are still nestled in our beds, lineworkers begin their day, often clad in flame-resistant clothing, safety goggles, rubber gloves and thick, heavy boots.

They are the individuals who epitomize dedication to service in its purest form. As we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 14, this is an important moment to reflect on the essential role they play in our daily lives.

Amid towering utility poles and power lines, lineworkers exhibit a strength that goes far beyond the physical. Whether battling inclement weather, troubleshooting technical problems or navigating treacherous heights, lineworkers demonstrate resilience and a quiet determination to keep our lights on, our homes comfortable, and our communities connected.

JCE Co-op crews travel across our long service territory from East Dubuque to Geneseo, building, maintaining and repairing parts of our local system. Their extraordinary skills ensure our homes remain connected to the grid, businesses stay operational, and emergency services remain accessible — a lifeline that connects us all.

In moments of crisis, when the lights go out and we find ourselves in the dark, lineworkers emerge as beacons of hope. Their swift response restores normalcy, offering reassurance in times of uncertainty. Whether repairing storm-ravaged power lines or ensuring continuity during emergencies, their unwavering commitment illuminates life when we need it most.

JCE Co-op lineworkers also answer the call beyond the boundaries of home. Our crews travel to fellow co-ops, near or far, when widespread outages occur, and additional support is needed. Cooperation among cooperatives is one of our seven guiding principles, and no one embodies this core commitment better than lineworkers.

This month, as we celebrate the remarkable men and women who ensure reliable power, let's recognize their unwavering dedication to the local communities they serve.

The next time you flip a switch, please take a moment to remember those who make it possible — lineworkers, who are wired for service and dedicated to illuminating life.

## LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY

April 14, 2025



Pictured above: JCE Co-op Apprentice Lineworker Corwin Moser



## Fiber construction update

Excitement is growing as we continue our 2025 fiber buildout, with our teams working diligently to complete our open construction projects. While winter weather has been challenging, we have implemented strategies to ensure the continued progress of installing fiber optic service for our members throughout the season. At the same time, we are also actively engineering and designing our future fiber projects.

While we have made significant progress in transitioning members to fiber at an exceptional pace, there is still important work ahead. In addition to our technicians, you may see multiple contractors working in your area. We use contractors for field collection, framing, engineering, aerial construction, buried service fiber drop work, and splicing.

Once the fiber construction is complete, if you're in one of our current buildout areas noted on the right column and have submitted your online fiber signup form, our broadband schedulers will reach out to schedule your interior installation at a time that works best for you.

Thank you for being a valued member. We look forward to providing you with the best possible internet experience! You can view your area's progress and buildout phase by visiting our Fiber Communities Map, found under the Fiber tab at [jcecoop.com](http://jcecoop.com).

## Sign up today!



**Do not miss out on this opportunity and sign up now at [jcecoop.com/fiber](http://jcecoop.com/fiber) to have the installation fee waived!**

**\$129.95**  
Value



## 2025 construction projects

**Council Hill** – CHL1 (Rural area)  
*Estimate construction completion June 2025*

**East Dubuque** – ED4  
*Scheduling installations*

**East Dubuque** – ED5  
*Scheduling installations*

**Menominee** – MEN2, MEN3, & SR1 (Rural areas)  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Galena** – G19 (Rural area)  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Garden Plain** – GPN1 (Rural area)  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Hanover** – HAN1 & HAN2 (Rural areas)  
*Estimate construction completion June 2025*

**Lake Carroll** – LCA1 & LCA2  
*Scheduling Installations*

**Lena** – LNA2  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Nora** – NOR1 (Rural area)  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Savanna** – SAV10  
*Estimate construction completion Summer 2025*

**Savanna** – PAL1 & PAL2 (Rural areas)  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

**Woodbine** – WBN1  
*Estimate construction completion Spring 2025*

## YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**David Senn**  
Chairman  
District 7

**Jerry Meyer**  
Vice Chairman  
District 1

**Robert Kuhns**  
Treasurer  
District 10

**Dan Tindell**  
Secretary  
District 4

**Joseph Mattingley**  
District 2

**Allen Hendren**  
District 3

**Patricia Smith**  
District 5

**Thomas Lundy**  
District 6

**Ted James**  
District 8

**Larry Carroll**  
District 9

**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday

**Elizabeth**  
793 U.S. Route 20 West  
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Savanna**  
103 Chicago Ave.  
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
1:30 to 4 p.m.

**Geneseo**  
1004 S. Chicago St.  
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
1:30 to 4 p.m.

**Services and  
billing questions:**  
(800) 858-5522  
jcecoop.com

**For emergencies  
and outages call:**  
(800) 858-5522

## Resume of Minutes

**January 31, 2025**

### Board Meeting Minutes Summary

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Friday, January 31, 2025.

**Safety Moment** – Director Bob Kuhns discussed the dangers of chronic stress and practices to manage.

**Approval of Agenda** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.

**Consent Agenda** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the consent agenda.

### Presentations

CFO Chuck Woods provided a status update from the 2024 JCE Co-op Audit. Brent Ridge, Dairyland Power Cooperative President and CEO, will present during Executive Session.

**Governance Topics and Board Policy Review** – None.

### CEO/Financial Operating Report

**CEO Report** – President and CEO Mike Casper, shared highlights from the CEO Closeup Conference, as well as the APGA Legislative Summit. In addition, Casper shared that JCE Co-op was recently awarded a grant from Older Adults and Technology Services (OATS), and, as a result, has launched a new program with Senior Planet, a national nonprofit which harnesses technology to change the way older Americans age. JCE Co-op is offering classes and workshops about technology and other topics.

Director Al Hendren attended one of the workshops and commented positively on the program.

**Financial Operating Report** – Chuck Woods, Chief Financial Officer, provided a summary of the preliminary 2024 unaudited financial statements. Revenue is approximately \$69 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are approximately \$56 million, which is \$942,881 over the budget of \$55.2

million, due to multiple factors. Margins are approximately \$1.9 million versus a budgeted amount of \$1.4 million and amount to \$522,628 greater than budget. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

**Operations and Regulatory/Legislative Update** – None.

### Board Issues and Action Items

**Approve Proposed Revisions to Billing Policy 411/Net Metering & Avoided Costs** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve revisions to Billing Policy 411.

**Approve Proposed Revisions to Rate Policy 814/Infrastructure as a Service** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve revisions to Billing Policy 814.

**Voting Delegate for National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Member Business Meeting** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve Pat Smith as the Voting Delegate for the NRECA Annual Member Business Meeting.

**Voting Delegate for the NRTC Business Meeting (held in conjunction with the NRECA Annual Meeting)** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve Pat Smith as the Voting Delegate for the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) Member Business Meeting.

**Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) Annual Meeting** – Attendees were selected for the upcoming NWILED Annual Meeting. NWILED, a regional development entity, was formed to grow the economy and public/private partnerships in Jo Daviess, Carroll and Whiteside counties in NW Illinois.

# Resume of minutes *(Continued)*

**Renew Membership with Mid America Cooperative Council (MACC)** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve a membership renewal with MACC. MACC was created to promote, foster and enhance the values of cooperatives.

## Executive Session

**Into Executive Session** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:39 AM.

**Out of Executive Session** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 11:44 AM.

**Action Resulting from Executive Session** – None.

## Reports/Updates

### Directors Conference Roundtable Discussion

– Directors shared highlights from the Directors Conference, specifically Artificial Intelligence technology (AI). They discussed how the industry will navigate the risks and benefits of AI's fast-paced growth. Casper shared that an AI Usage Policy was adopted by JCE Co-op on September 24, 2024, to address the responsible use of AI at the co-op.

**Other Business** – None.

**Adjournment** – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 11:59 AM.

**Lockbox services change now in effect**

As of March 5 we've moved our lockbox payment processing to a new location in Chicago, IL. This change will streamline payments and reduce mail delays, ensuring your payments are processed more efficiently.

Mitch D Vanzuden

For more information please reference the March bill insert or visit our website at [jcecoop.com/publications-resources](http://jcecoop.com/publications-resources). For any questions, contact Member Services at 800-858-5522.

**FREE classes in technology from your co-op!**

**SENIOR PLANET**  
FROM **AARP**

*JCE Co-op is launching a new program to help older co-op members learn new skills and make new friends.*

In partnership with Senior Planet, a national nonprofit which harnesses technology to change the way older Americans age, JCE Co-op will be offering classes and workshops about technology and other topics.

**Pre-sign up required for class. CONTACT US!**

 Taylor Smith  
815-591-0091

 [jcecoop.com/senior-planet-aarp](http://jcecoop.com/senior-planet-aarp)




**Reader prize!**

Each month we print the name of a JCE Co-op member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact JCE Co-op.