



Mike Smith
President and CEO

Operation Round-Up supports local community needs

Thanks to the generosity of Operation Round-Up participants, funding was recently awarded to two organizations making a meaningful impact in McDonough County and on the WIU campus. **8120SL349-830B**

The Western Illinois Regional Council – Community Action Agency (WIRC-CAA) received \$1,500 in support of its Good Food Pantry program. The pantry operates like a neighborhood grocery store, allowing income-eligible individuals and families to choose foods that best meet their needs — from fresh and frozen items to pantry staples — while maintaining dignity and respect. As food insecurity continues to rise locally, the Good Food Pantry serves dozens of new households each month and provides vital assistance to neighbors facing hunger.

The Wesley Foundation at Western Illinois University received \$2,500 toward a bathroom renovation project in its nearly 50-year-old facility. The upgrades will help maintain a safe, welcoming space for students and community members who rely on the Wesley Foundation for meals, support services, educational programs and outreach activities. Students and volunteers will complete much of the work themselves, gaining valuable hands-on experience while improving a shared community space.

These projects reflect the heart of Operation Round-Up — neighbors helping neighbors and investing locally to strengthen the communities we serve.



Organizations interested in applying for Operation Round-Up funding can find more details at mcdonoughpower.com. The next application deadline is Monday, April 6.



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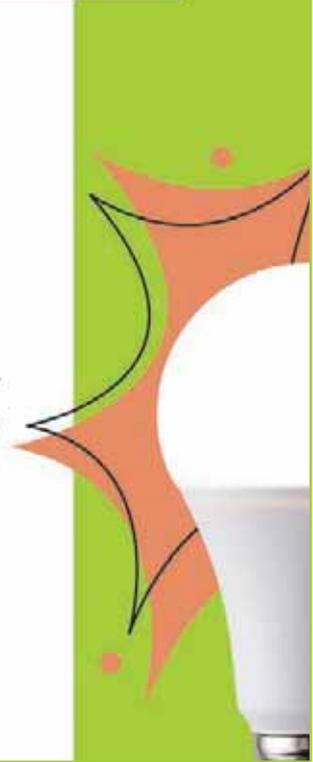
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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home. Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system. It's also a great time to replace dirty air filters, which helps your system run more efficiently and improves indoor air quality. As daylight increases, turn off unnecessary lights and rely on natural sunlight when possible. Small seasonal adjustments like these can reduce energy use, lower monthly bills and help keep your home comfortable as winter transitions into spring.



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Scammers and cyber criminals look for weak points to exploit before software companies can fix them. Update software programs on your computer, tablet and mobile phone as soon as possible when a newer version becomes available. Software updates often contain critical patches and protections against security threats. Turn on automatic updates to automatically update your security software, internet browser, operating system and mobile apps. 531A8A-950A



Source: consumer.ftc.org



MARCH MADNESS & COOPERATIVE POWER:

What it takes to win for our members

March is synonymous with buzzer-beaters, brackets and underdogs making unforgettable runs. It's also a fitting time to talk about what it takes for an electric cooperative to succeed — because, much like March Madness, delivering reliable power is a team sport built on preparation, trust and heart.

While the court may be filled with squeaking sneakers and roaring crowds, the parallels between college basketball and McDonough Power Cooperative are closer than you might think — especially right here in McDonough County and the surrounding communities we serve.

The Bracket: Preparation is everything

No championship team shows up in March without months — sometimes years — of preparation. The same holds true for McDonough Power. Long before storm season arrives, our crews are inspecting lines, trimming trees, upgrading equipment and planning for contingencies to keep power flowing across our local system.

Just like a coach studying film and building a game plan, cooperative staff members analyze data, weather patterns and system performance to ensure the lights stay on for homes, farms and businesses throughout our service territory. When challenges arise, preparation often makes the difference between a quick recovery and a prolonged outage.

Teamwork wins championships

In basketball, even the biggest star can't win alone. Championships are built on teamwork — players knowing their roles and trusting one another under pressure.

That's exactly how McDonough Power operates every day. Lineworkers, dispatchers, engineers, member service representatives and operations staff all play critical roles. When outages occur, it's not just the crew in the bucket truck you see along a county road — it's an

entire team working behind the scenes to restore power safely and efficiently for our members.

Defense wins games: Safety first

Coaches often say defense wins championships, and in the electric utility world, safety is our strongest defense.

Every decision McDonough Power Cooperative makes — from training and equipment investments to restoration priorities — is guided by safety. Our lineworkers face hazardous conditions, often working long hours in difficult weather, to restore power. Their commitment to safety protects not only themselves, but our members, neighbors and the communities we serve.

Upsets happen — and resilience matters

March Madness wouldn't be March Madness without the unexpected upset. In the cooperative world, those upsets come in the form of severe storms, ice, wind or equipment failures.

What matters most is how we respond. Electric cooperatives are built on resilience — locally governed, community-focused and ready to adapt when the unexpected happens. Through mutual aid agreements, McDonough Power can call on neighboring cooperatives — or send our own crews to assist others — when the stakes are high and widespread outages occur.

Our members are the home crowd

Unlike investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives are owned by the people they serve. Our members aren't just spectators — they're the reason we exist.

Every decision made by McDonough Power is rooted in keeping power reliable, affordable and safe for the families, farms, schools and businesses across our service area. When the final buzzer sounds, success isn't measured in trophies — it's measured in homes

powered, businesses operating, and communities thriving.

The Final Four Values

As March Madness captivates fans across the country, McDonough Power continues its own pursuit of excellence — guided by values that have served rural communities for generations:

- Commitment to community
- Teamwork and accountability
- Preparation and planning
- Safety above all else

These values are what keep us competitive, resilient and focused on what matters most — serving our local members. **539B6B-266B**

So, as you fill out your bracket this March, remember: Behind the scenes, McDonough Power Cooperative is playing its own championship game every day. And thanks to strong preparation, dedicated teamwork and the support of the communities we serve, we're proud to be your home team.

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.

Tornado safety and electrical hazards

Tornadoes can strike with little warning, leaving behind downed power lines, damaged electrical equipment and dangerous debris. Preparing before a tornado, and knowing how to stay safe afterward, can help prevent electrical shock, fire and injury. Make sure your emergency plan includes electrical safety steps so you and your family are ready to act quickly and safely.

Before a tornado

- Prepare an emergency kit with water, battery-powered flashlight, radio, extra batteries and portable phone charger.
- Keep your electric utility's phone number handy in case you need to report an outage or downed line.
- Fully charge cell phones and backup power banks before severe weather hits so you can use them in an emergency.

During a tornado

- Seek shelter immediately in a basement or a small, interior room with no windows, such as a bathroom or closet. **10111A8-404A**
- Turn off and unplug appliances and electronics to protect them from power surges. Leave one light on so you'll know when power is restored.
- Do not stay inside a vehicle or try to outrun a tornado. Exit the vehicle and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If none are available, lie flat in a low-lying area away from the vehicle and power lines.

After a tornado

- Stay away from downed power lines and anything they could touch, such as trees, fences or debris. Always assume they are energized.
- If you see a downed line while driving, do not exit your vehicle. Call 911 and your utility, and warn others to stay away.
- Do not touch anyone who is in contact with a power line. Call 911 immediately and wait for emergency responders.
- Do not enter damaged buildings until electricity and gas are shut off

WATCH

A watch means there is a **great chance of a severe thunderstorm or tornado.**

“Watch” and wait for more information while taking precautionary measures.

WARNING

A warning means that a **severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted or seen** on radar.

The moment you get a warning, **take shelter in the safest part of your home.**

Safe Electricity.org

by professionals. Never attempt to turn off power if you must stand in water to reach the breaker.

- Avoid flooded areas with electrical outlets, appliances or cords, and never touch electrical equipment when wet or standing in water.
- Have all water-damaged electrical systems, appliances and devices inspected by a licensed electrician before use.

Power outages and generator safety

- Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces such as garages, porches, or near open windows and doors. Place it at least 20 feet away from your home to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep the generator dry by placing it on a tarp or under a canopy, and follow all manufacturer's instructions.
- Never plug a generator directly into a wall outlet. This can inadvertently energize power lines and pose a lethal risk to you, neighbors and utility workers.

Stay informed, stay alert, and share this information to help protect your family and community during severe weather events.

Our office will be closed April 3 for Good Friday.