

President's Report



Josh DeWees
President/CEO

Wired for growth: Balancing data center demand and reliability

Data centers may feel like a big-city phenomenon, but more and more of them are showing up in rural communities like ours — and there's good reason for that. Rural areas offer what data centers need most: affordable land, room to grow and access to transmission lines that can move large amounts of power.

What makes data centers different from other large businesses is their appetite for electricity. These facilities run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Servers must stay online constantly, which means power has to be reliable every minute of every day.

For electric cooperatives like Spoon River Electric, powering data centers creates both opportunities and challenges.

On the plus side, data centers have the potential to bring steady, long-term load growth that helps support investments in the local grid. With proper planning and policy support, those upgrades — including new substations, stronger lines and smarter technology — could benefit all Spoon River Electric members and help keep electricity rates steady.

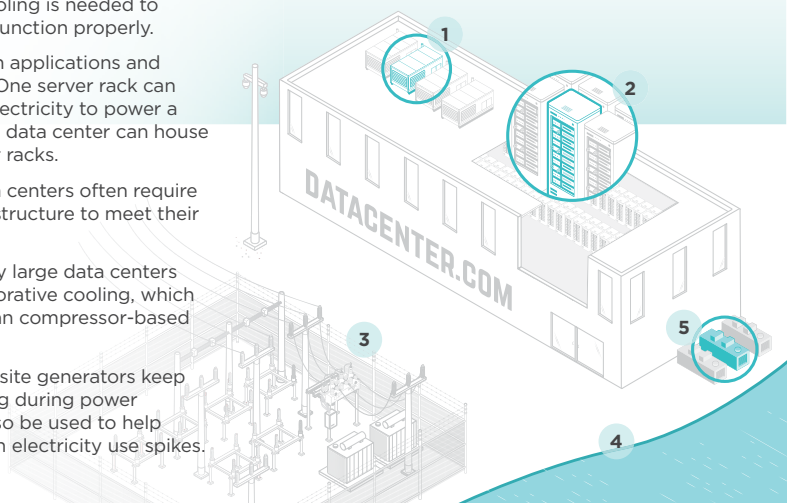
But providing power to data centers presents challenges, too. These large facilities can be constructed and operating in as little as one year, but ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment and electricity requires longer lead times and significant financial investment.

Continued on 18B ▶

Big Data, Bigger Demands

Many companies are choosing rural areas for their data centers because of cheaper land, available power and potential tax breaks. Data centers require huge amounts of electricity to operate, which presents new opportunities and challenges for electric co-ops.

- 1 **HVAC:** Constant cooling is needed to ensure the servers function properly.
- 2 **Servers:** Servers run applications and process data 24/7. One server rack can consume enough electricity to power a small home. A large data center can house thousands of server racks.
- 3 **Infrastructure:** Data centers often require new electrical infrastructure to meet their power needs.
- 4 **Water Source:** Many large data centers are deploying evaporative cooling, which is more efficient than compressor-based systems.
- 5 **Backup Power:** On-site generators keep data centers running during power outages and can also be used to help lower demand when electricity use spikes.



Spoon River Electric Cooperative

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Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,272
Number of members served: 5,022
Number of power poles
in territory: 29,361

Data centers continued from 18A

Strategic planning and partnerships, as well as long-term power supply strategies are essential to the process.

While Spoon River Electric does not currently serve any data centers, co-ops nationwide are fielding requests and inquiries from tech companies, and we anticipate similar requests in the not-too-distant future.

As a member-owned cooperative, our responsibility is twofold: to listen to the communities we serve and to provide reliable, affordable electric service to all Spoon River Electric members. Balancing those responsibilities is not always simple, especially as new types of large-scale energy users, like data centers, become part of the local landscape.

No matter what the future holds, our priority will be supporting growth with fairness — that means ensuring large-scale energy users pay their fair share so residential bills don't spike and our local communities feel invested in.

The energy landscape is changing, and with it comes both opportunities and challenges. My commitment, and the commitment of Spoon River Electric's board and employees, is to continue listening, communicating and working with our members and community partners to ensure all decisions reflect the best interests of the people we serve.

If you have questions or concerns regarding data centers, your energy bills or any other co-op matters, we encourage you to stay engaged and reach out.

Your voice matters at Spoon River Electric.

Help the Lineworker Spring into Action

Did you know March 20 is the first day of spring? This time of year marks new beginnings and fresh blooms, but it can also bring powerful storms that interrupt electric service.

Help the lineworker find his way through the maze to the bucket truck so he can restore power.



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.
- ⚡ 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.

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®

- ⚡ Do not enter damaged buildings until electricity and gas are shut off 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.



ATTENTION 2025-2026 SENIORS!

Spoon River Electric Cooperative is Awarding Four \$1,000 Scholarships to High School Seniors

High school students who are seniors during the 2025-2026 school year, and are the son or daughter of a Spoon River Electric member are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Scholastic Scholarship, a \$1,000 Honorary Scholarship, the \$1,000 Scott Parrish Memorial Scholarship, and the \$1,000 Terry Beam Memorial Scholarship, which will be awarded at this year's Annual Meeting on June 4, 2026.

Applications must be turned in by May 8, 2026 to be considered. Official rules and descriptions of scholarships below.

OFFICIAL RULES

- **Applying students and their parent/legal guardian must be present at the Annual Meeting, June 4, 2026 to win.**
- Students must be a son or daughter of a Spoon River Electric Cooperative Member.
- Students must be a high school senior during the 2025-2026 school year and begin college undergraduate studies in the 2026-2027 school year. Students must plan on attending a two-year or four-year accredited college or university, including vocational/technical schools.
- Scholarship winners must be full-time students (at least 12 hours) during the 2026-2027 academic year.
- Scholarships are for one year and are non-renewable.
- Past Spoon River Electric Cooperative scholarship winners are not eligible.

SCHOLASTIC, SCOTT PARRISH MEMORIAL & TERRY BEAM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

- The Scholastic and Scott Parrish Memorial Scholarships will be awarded based on an application detailing GPA, college entrance test scores, work and volunteer experience, participation in school and community activities, and a biographical statement.
- The Terry Beam Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to a student pursuing a vocational trade program.
- Finalists will be notified by phone or e-mail with a time and place for a personal interview.
- Those not chosen as finalists for the Scholastic and Parrish Scholarships will be automatically placed in the Honorary Scholarship drawing.

HONORARY SCHOLARSHIP

- The Honorary Scholarship will be awarded by a drawing as students are recognized at the Annual Meeting.
- All applicants are eligible for the Honorary Scholarship drawing except the Scholastic, Parrish & Beam Scholarship winners.



Scholarship Participation Request

Name of Student _____

Address of Student _____

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Telephone Number _____

Return To: Taryn Mellert
Spoon River Electric Cooperative
PO Box 340
Canton, IL 61520
647-2700

Applications can also be found online at: srecoop.org/scholarship