

The Connection

POWERING LIVES AND
EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.

Whatever it Takes: Powering Life, from a Lineworker's Perspective

Lineworkers are ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at Consumers Energy work rain or shine, in often challenging conditions to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024. The following column was written by an anonymous dedicated lineworker.

My name is John, and I'm one of many lineworkers across the country 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 the weather is 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.

continued on page 8-B ►

WIN

ONE OF TWO MONTHLY \$5 BILL CREDITS

THIS MONTH'S CONTEST:

Submit your answers to the word scramble about directors on page 8-C. The answers will be published in the May newsletter.

◆ ◆ ◆

Winners for the month of February:
Debby Clair, Colo
Richard & Nancy Sorenson, Ankeny

Here's how to enter:

1. Answer the question or challenge posed each month.
2. Send answers to Consumers Energy with:
 - Name
 - Service Address
 - Account Number
 - Phone Number
 - Email Address
 Submit via email or mail:
 Email to: kglenney@consumersenergy.coop
 Subject line: Contest

 Mail to: Consumers Energy
 Attn: Contest
 2074 242nd Street
 Marshalltown, IA 50158
3. Winners' names will be drawn at random and published in upcoming issues of *The Connection*.

April 2024

Dates To Remember:

APRIL

- 1 Read Meters
- 3 Bills Due
Automatic Payments Deducted
- 8 Lineworker Appreciation Day
- 10 Email / Mail Bills
- 25 Automatic Payments Deducted

May

- 1 Read Meters
- 3 Bills Due
Automatic Payments Deducted

Whatever it Takes *(continued)*

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.

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.

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 all hours and in the middle of the night. I've missed a lot of soccer 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 (and sisterhood). 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.

I have 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.

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. 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.

APPRECIATE YOUR LOCAL LINEWORKER

Lineworker Appreciation Day celebrates those men and women who put their lives at risk to keep the power flowing through our communities. Without them there would be no power lines carrying electricity to our homes and businesses, keeping the lights on and the furnaces going, and ensuring that we have the warm glow of the TV to curl up around as the night creeps in.

While we appreciate their hard work every day of the year, Consumers Energy is celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8. Thanks, lineworkers of Consumers Energy! We appreciate your hard work every day, in all conditions, to keep the lights on!



Bridget Itzen
CEO/General Manager



WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER RUNNING FOR A SEAT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

Members are eligible to serve as director if they live and are being served in the co-op's service territory and are able to enter legally into binding contracts.

There are a few exceptions that can make a member ineligible such as being related to a current employee.

UNSCRAMBLE THE BOLDED WORDS TO FIND OUT SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF SERVING AS A DIRECTOR FOR YOUR COOPERATIVE! ENTER THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER CONTEST BY SENDING IN YOUR ANSWERS! CONTEST DETAILS ARE ON PAGE 8-A.

You get to serve your community and the **mmerhseipb**.

Directors have the opportunity to travel to regional and national **sietnemg** to represent Consumers Energy.

Being a director means you get to learn a lot about the **cielrect** industry.

Directors are paid a per diem rate plus mileage for the work they do for the **eitrvoopcea**.

Decisions made by **cordseirt** impact issues such as rates, rights-of-way, and work plans.

The **obard** works for the good of all members of the co-op.

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE HAS THEIR INITIAL MEETING IN EARLY APRIL.

If you are interested in running for a seat on the board or need information on how to get in contact with members of the Nominating Committee, contact the cooperative:



By phone: **800-696-6552**

Request Bridget Itzen or Kippen Glenney.



By email: **admin@consumersenergy.coop**

Annual Notice

Consumers Energy is committed to providing safe and reliable electric service to our members. Our employees are trained and qualified in screening and resolving complaints and will work to assist in answering your questions.

If your complaint is related to Consumers Energy's service rather than its rates, and Consumers Energy does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 877-565-4450; by writing to Customer Service, 1375 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069; or by email to customer@iub.iowa.gov.

CONSUMERS ENERGY 2024 ANNUAL MEETING



THURSDAY AUGUST 1, 2024



COME TO YOUR COOPERATIVE'S ANNUAL MEETING TO ELECT DIRECTORS, HEAR HOW THE CO-OP IS DOING, EAT SOME YUMMY FOOD, AND ENJOY SOME ENTERTAINMENT!

CONSUMERS ENERGY
Central Iowa Electric Cooperative

WE'RE HIRING A JOURNEYMAN LINEWORKER

Full details on the position and how to apply are on our website at:
www.consumersenergy.coop
or by scanning this QR code.

LINEWORKER SAFETY GEAR WORD SEARCH



Lineworkers use a variety of gear to stay safe while working near power lines and other electrical equipment. Read about their safety gear below, then find and circle the **blue** words in the puzzle.

- Safety **goggles** keep debris out of a lineworker's eyes while they work.
- Rubber **gloves** are insulated and protect lineworkers from electric shock.
- Steel toe **boots** provide extra protection when lineworkers lift heavy objects.
- **Hard hats** protect lineworkers from potential head injuries.
- Lineworkers wear a safety **harness** to prevent falls while climbing poles or working in a bucket.
- Lineworkers use a **hot stick**, an insulated tool made from fiberglass, when working on energized lines.



BRIDGET ITZEN

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



JOB: CEO/GENERAL MANAGER



DREAM VACATION: ANYWHERE THAT HAS A BEACH AND ALASKA



FAVE SONG: RAPPER'S DELIGHT BY THE SUGARHILL GANG



FAVE MOVIE: MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING

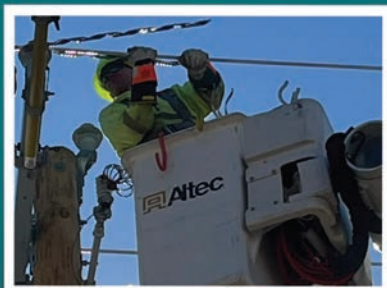


FAVE FOODS: ITALIAN & FRESH FISH

New employee at CONSUMERS ENERGY

Tucker Wall grew up in Liscomb, graduating from BCLUW, then went on to the Powerline Program at Northwest Iowa Community College. In his free time, Tucker enjoys hunting, fishing, and doing pretty much all things outdoors!

Tucker began work at Consumers Energy as an Apprentice Lineman Intern in the summer of 2023. You may have seen him working on the live line demonstration at the Annual Meeting! He was hired full time as an Apprentice Lineman in December of 2023. Tucker looks forward to growing and learning with the cooperative while providing reliable power for our members!



Tucker Wall
Apprentice Lineman



Welcome to the team, Tucker!

Answers to Brain Teasers

THESE WORD PUZZLES WERE PUBLISHED AS THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER CONTEST LAST MONTH. HERE ARE THE ANSWERS!

EZ

iiiiiiiiii

Easy on the eyes

BSICK ED

Sick in bed

STORM

Eye of the storm



X-Box

history
history
history

History repeats itself.

PIÑAPPLE
CAKE

Pineapple upside down cake

2023 Reliability Report

By Kevin Peterson, Operations Manager



In 2023, the cooperative continued to grow at a steady rate. The following indices provide insight into specific areas of growth over the past years.

SYSTEM GROWTH INDICES			
	Annual Number of New Services	Total System Miles of Line	Total System Plant Value
2023	194	1285	\$63,882,669
2022	198	1282	\$59,852,194
2021	214	1277	\$54,972,033
2020	143	1269	\$52,394,355
2019	128	1261	\$51,930,505

Throughout the year the cooperative’s outside crews worked extensively on maintenance and upkeep of the distribution system. **These activities directly enhance the reliability and efficiency of Consumers Energy’s system.**

In 2023:

- **163 poles were replaced.**
- **79 oil circuit reclosers (breakers) were serviced.**

When it comes to reliability, the cooperative has implemented controls to reduce many of the outages caused by avoidable circumstances, such as trees or animals coming into contact with the power lines. However, as a distribution cooperative, we are unable to control outages on the transmission system or those caused by major weather events. In 2023, **no major storms affected the cooperative’s electric service area.** In total, co-op members were without power for 115.29 minutes in 2023.

SERVICE RELIABILITY				
	SAIDI Outages/Member	Outages/Member (Excluding Major Events)	Outages/Member (Excluding Transmission)	Service Reliability
2023	115.29 minutes	115.29 minutes	104.60 minutes	99.98%
2022	64.56 minutes	64.56 minutes	58.11 minutes	99.99%
2021	114.5 minutes	82.46 minutes	82.46 minutes	99.98%
2020	3545.3 minutes	47.88 minutes	47.88 minutes	99.33%
2019	162.21 minutes	87.57 minutes	76.64 minutes	99.97%

CONTROLLED BURN TIPS

Properly controlled burns can have many benefits for agricultural and prairie land. However, if these burns are not managed safely, they can cause property damage, power outages, injury, and even death. Consumers Energy urges you to make safety a priority and shares tips on special considerations to be taken around power lines.

- Make yourself aware of laws and regulations. Only those who are experienced with fire and burn paths should conduct controlled burns. Avoid burning near public roads or airports, as this can create a potentially dangerous visibility hazard. Alert those who may be affected by the burn—including neighbors, the local fire department, and law enforcement. Depending on local regulations, you may also need to obtain a burn permit.
- Take special precautions around power poles and lines. Burning a power pole could cause a widespread power outage and be costly for the individual responsible for the fire.
- Also note guy wires and guards – those are the tensioned cables with plastic covers that stabilize power poles. These are costly to replace, and crews are taken away from other important jobs for the cooperative to make these repairs.

DO THIS!

Cut down grass and weeds, and water the area near the poles and guy wires and guards as to not encourage fires to encroach. Be careful to keep water streams out of power lines.

- If a power pole catches on fire, call the fire department and alert Consumers Energy by calling us at **800-696-6552** to handle the possible electrical dangers. Even if you think you can put out the fire yourself, alert Consumers Energy to the fact that it caught fire. The creosote, a preservative, on the inside could still be burning the pole from the inside out. If the pole catches on fire, it could create shock or electrocution hazards to those who may be nearby or spark fires in unintended directions from downed lines.
- Keep environmental factors, such as temperature, humidity, and wind direction & speed in mind. The wind speed in the area should be low and in a steady direction so the fire doesn't get out of control. As environmental factors are subject to change, check forecasts and actual conditions before you begin the controlled burn.
- Nearby trees can catch fire which can lead to power poles or lines melting or catching fire.
- If damage occurs and a power line falls, always assume it is live. Move a safe distance from any downed lines, keep others away if possible, and contact Consumers Energy immediately by calling **800-696-6552**.
- Do not burn brush piles under power lines or near power poles. Flames and heat from brush fires can reach higher than expected and cause unintended damage to power lines or poles.
- If you have any questions about how to better prepare for a controlled burn, contact the cooperative at **800-696-6552** or **info@consumersenergy.coop**.

Resources are available to assist in planning these fires, including planning guides and regulations. These are available at these sites:

Iowa Department of Natural Resources at

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Fire-Management>

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach at

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/smallfarms/spring-time-prescribed-fire-time-iowa>

CONSUMERS ENERGY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1 - Marshall, Jasper, & Tama Counties:
Denny Beckman
President
dbeckman@consumersenergy.coop

Bill Hobson
Director
whobson@consumersenergy.coop

Pat VonAhnen
Secretary-Treasurer
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Steve Quick
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Tony Lem
Director
alem@consumersenergy.coop


Jennifer Sease
Director
jsease@consumersenergy.coop

Energy Efficiency Cost per kWh:
\$0.000381


To report an outage, call 800-696-6552.

For the most accurate outage updates, check SmartHub or www.consumersenergy.coop for messages, the statewide outage map, or call Consumers Energy.


WAYS TO PAY YOUR CONSUMERS ENERGY BILL




Automatic recurring monthly payments




Online or the app
www.consumersenergy.coop




In person



By phone 24/7
844-201-7196




By mail



By dropbox

 2074 242nd Street | Marshalltown, IA 50158

 641-752-1593 | 800-696-6552

 641-752-5738

 www.consumersenergy.coop

 info@consumersenergy.coop

OFFICE HOURS
7:30 AM - 4:00 PM
MONDAY - FRIDAY



SMARTHUB

- Use SmartHub online or download the app!
- Manage payments, contact the co-op, & view usage history!



EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Consumers Energy offers educational programs for FREE!

For information on ways to pay or programs and services offered, contact the Member Services Department.