Power shutoffs and business continuity during COVID-19 pandemic

CENTURIA – Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative resumed disconnections on July 1, 2020, for accounts with a past due balance. To date, less than 0.1% of our members have had their power shut off for nonpayment. In September, that number was just two out of 21,000 members.

As an electric cooperative, we always work closely with our members who are facing financial challenges and may have trouble paying their electric bill. We also work with our counties’ low-income energy assistance programs and several nonprofits, including the Salvation Army, to assist our members.

And this month, all Polk-Burnett members will see a credit on their electric bills, as we return annual patronage credits, per our cooperative business model. We know this is especially helpful for co-op families this year.

Our mission is to provide reliable electricity for our members, and we always want to help them avoid disconnection. Suspending disconnections are not bill waivers. That’s why we work with our members on payment plans. We encourage members to pay at least a portion of their bill as they are able. Taking this simple step can help avoid a large multi-month balance when the pandemic is over.

When our community is strong, we’re all strong
We recognize the significant economic fallout from COVID-19 on local families and businesses. The economic health of Polk-Burnett Electric Co-op is directly tied to the wellbeing of our local community.

As a not-for-profit electric co-op, we desire to keep energy costs as low as possible for our members, electricity rates are set at actual costs. We have no shareholders and routinely return excess revenues to their members.

Through August, Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative has observed increased energy sales from residential and seasonal members that have offset the declines in commercial sales. Co-op energy sales are about 80% residential and 20% commercial. 40% of our 21,000 members are seasonal, second homeowners.

More flexibility to interact with us online
Polk-Burnett reminds members that co-op lobbies are closed to keep employees and the community
safe during COVID-19 restrictions, but our drive-throughs, phone lines and website are open to assist co-op members.

We’ve encouraged our members to use our electronic options for payments and transactions, including phone, website, auto pay and our SmartHub app. All online services are free, convenient and safe.

We also have a secure drop box at both Centuria and Siren office locations. Polk-Burnett member service representatives are here to help during business hours, and our outage line is available 24/7.

As a local electric cooperative, our member and community focus have never been more critical than in recent months. The COVID-19 virus has tested our co-op, our community and nation, creating both challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we’ve all had to operate and live our lives differently. Polk-Burnett employees are essential workers, who have stepped up to ensure that a reliable power supply and member service have been constant during a time when much is uncertain.

Please visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283 for payment arrangements, more ways to save on your electric bill and information about how Polk-Burnett is working to power our community during this public health emergency.

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Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative is a local Touchstone Energy distribution cooperative in northwestern Wisconsin, with offices in Centuria and Siren. The co-op was established by member-owners in 1938 to bring electricity to rural families, farms and businesses. Today, Polk-Burnett serves 21,000 electric members and 4,000 propane customers with a focus on reliability, efficiency and service.