



By Tim Holtan, CEO

RESTORING POWER

from a lineman's point of view



Riverland Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

When most people experience an outage, the first thing they ask is, “How long is this going to take?” It doesn’t take much time sitting in the dark to realize our reliance on electricity and how significantly it enhances the quality and ease of our lives.

Yet, what goes into restoring these lights? Why does it sometimes require an extended period? The majority of individuals may never have the chance to see or comprehend the extensive effort invested in ending these outages. I hope to shed light on the intricate process and dedication exhibited by the line crews to bring back your power.

Power lines extend across vast distances, and outages can result from various factors like fallen trees, equipment malfunctions, or accidents. The first thing that linemen ask when getting the phone call is, “Is this an individual outage or a line outage?” A line outage will be a large section of line and will include a large number of people. An individual outage will just be a single transformer or pole.

If the outage occurs after-hours, it requires the line worker to respond from home. Depending on where the outage is, the drive alone can sometimes take an hour.

It can take several drive-bys to locate the cause of the outage. Linemen first check the breaker to verify that it’s open. Then they drive by again to check the line for what may have caused the outage. This can take some time. It’s one of the more time-consuming steps, but also the most important as it can be dangerous. The outage could be a line down in someone’s yard,

or it could be equipment failure. Re-energizing the line under those two examples would be very dangerous to the public and could cause more damage and extend the outage longer. That’s why it’s very important to visually check the line before trying the breaker.

Another factor that can add time to inspecting the line is terrain. Most poles are located along the road, but they can’t always be, especially in rural areas the cooperative serves. Some lines are located in extremely remote places. Terrain and the direction of line requires the crew to go off-road and oftentimes check on foot.

Locating the Outage: Prioritizing Safety

Once the outage is located, there are safety steps that must be taken before the linemen can start the work. These safety procedures add time, but they are vital. It is how line workers are protected and ensures everyone goes home to their families.

They begin by assessing the situation and identifying potential hazards, such as downed power lines, damaged equipment, or unsafe working conditions. They then isolate affected areas by de-energizing the damaged lines or equipment to ensure their safety and the safety of others in the vicinity. They work to clear debris, fallen trees, and other obstructions that may be blocking access to power lines or equipment, hindering the restoration process.

Once the outage is determined and the safety briefing is complete, the outage restoration process begins.

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Outage Scenario from a Lineman's Point of View

6:45 p.m. – The outage call comes in.

We get to the shop, get the truck ready and head out.

7:45 p.m. – Arrival at the outage location.

We conduct a line inspection and safety briefing.

9:00 p.m. – All safety procedures are in place. We can begin the work.

Let’s say for this scenario, the outage was caused by a tall oak tree that fell through the line. It’s off the road, but we got lucky—it broke a cross arm, but the pole is good. The wire isn’t broken either, but it’s currently under the oak tree. We have to chop the tree and

free the wire. This will take some time. Anyone who has ever cut a downed tree will understand the danger. Downed trees can shift and roll while being cut. You also have power lines under tension, pinned down by the tree and adding an extra layer of danger. Special care and awareness are crucial to remove this tree. While we work to clear the tree from the line, new material is on the way. We are going to need a cross arm, cross arm braces, new insulators, bolts and ties to tie in the wire.

10:30 p.m. – The tree has been cleared and the material has arrived.

Remember, the pole is off the road, so that means we can’t get a bucket

truck to it. We will have to climb the pole. One of our lineworkers will put on his belt and hooks and climb to the top of the pole. He'll bring all the tools he'll need with him. One thing he will take with him is a handline. It's a rope in a pulley that's long enough to go from the top of the pole to the ground in a loop. This will be used to lift material and other objects to the lineworker that were too heavy or awkward to take up in his belt.

Once he gets to the top of the pole, he will get to work. He'll start by removing all the broken material. He'll also inspect the top of the pole for damage that couldn't be seen from the ground. Once he has it cleaned up, we will start sending up material on the handline. He should have taken the crossarm bolt with him when he climbed and installed that in the pole. The lineworker on the ground should have already put everything on the crossarm. Next, the lineworker on the ground will tie the crossarm onto the handline in a way that will allow the lineworker on the pole to just guide the arm onto the bolt as it's being lifted up.

Once the new crossarm is on the pole and all the bolts are tightened, the wire will be lifted up, also with the handline, and placed on the arm. The wire ties will be sent up, again on the handline, and the lineworker will tie in the wire.

After completing all the work in the

air, the lineworker will send down the handline and climb down. Once down, he'll remove his belt and hooks and pack them away. The lineworker on the ground will now be "making up the handline," which means he is getting it ready to store until it's needed again. We all carry the tools that we used back to the truck and get them packed away.

11:45 p.m. – Repairs complete

Now if you happen to be on your porch and saw us drive by hours ago when the power first went out, you will see the crew drive by again. This is good news because you are about to get your power restored—we're heading for the breaker. Once we get to the breaker, we'll call dispatch and get clearance to re-energize. I'll let them know who is with me and if they are in the clear. They will check to make sure no one else is working on the line and then give me clearance to try the breaker. At this time, I will close the breaker and your power will be restored.

12:05 a.m. – Power restored. Outage over.

Keep in mind this is just one scenario; not every outage is the same. Each outage varies in time for restoration. This example outage took around five and a half hours to restore. If the tree had broken a pole, it would have been even longer.



1:00 a.m. – Lineworker returns home, safe and sound.

As a lineworker, it's always a good feeling to help people get those lights back on. I can remember times when I've been working on extended outages after a storm and heard people in their homes cheering as their lights came on for the first time in days. No matter how tired I am or how long I've been working, that feeling will always make it worthwhile.



We work for you, our neighbors.

We've become so dependent on electricity that every outage, whether it is a short outage or an extended one, can be stressful for those without power. The longer outages last, the more stressful and irritating it can become. I hope that we provided a better understanding of the restoration process so you have an idea what's happening while you wait. Just know that your line crews are doing their best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible.

Riverland Energy Cooperative and its employees are members of your community. 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. We will always be committed to serving our members and communities by providing safe and reliable electricity—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Left: Lineman Adam Pronschinske takes on an outage on foot.



THANKS FOR JOINING US FOR MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Thank you to everyone who came out to Riverland Energy Cooperative's Member Appreciation Day on Wednesday, September 27. Approximately 400 co-op members and guests attended the event at Danzinger's Vineyard in Alma for food, games, music, giveaways, and prize drawings.

Members enjoyed brats and hotdogs catered by SteakShop Catering. Attendees could enjoy the music by Katie and Mac, and kids could play games, construct things with the giant LEGOS, paint pumpkins, or check out the trucks and equipment. Other entertainment included balloon art by Balloons by Kevin, and members could roll the dice to win prizes. For those interested in co-op programs and promotions, Riverland employees were on hand to answer any questions.

Cutting boards were given to all members who attended, and

attendance prize drawings for \$25 electric bill credits were given away to 30 members, with one \$250 electric bill credit.

Congratulations to Doug and Jane Ledbury, who won the \$250 bill credit, and to the winners of the \$25 electric bill credits: Beth Killian, Curt/Bev Youngbauer, Robert Hammond, Gary Fischer, Stuart Berg, Dennis M. Olson, Lenore A. Knudson, Terry/Sue Shafer, Maynard Smieja, Roger Bollinger, James Lakey, Joe/Joan Malchaski, Michael L. Erickson, Joanne

Murray, Dennis Korpall, Bruce Denk, Andrew/Karen Engstrand, Scott/Patricia Auer, Thomas/Tammi Bechel, Robert Kamrowski, W. J. Hamlin/R. L. Dohlman, Jerald M. Johnson, Claire Waters, Sharon Bauer, Keith Weisenbeck, Ronald Bergh, Susan Slaby, Paul Konkel, Ronald Funk, Wade Noren.

Thank you to everyone who came out to this year's event!



SEASONAL REMINDERS:

Snowbirds

If you're planning to leave your home for an extended period of time this winter, remember to make billing arrangements while you are away. Riverland Energy has a couple of options to offer:

- Automatic checking/savings withdrawals or credit/debit card payments.
- Online Payments, readings, account management, and daily/monthly power use available through SmartHub on our website or download the SmartHub App for android and iOS users.

Thanksgiving Closing

Riverland Energy will be closed November 23-24 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. Call 800-927-6206 to report outages at any time, night or day, weekends or holidays. You can also report outage through SmartHub. Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

2023 Rebates

Riverland Energy has a variety of rebates available to members who purchase energy efficient products and appliances that meet or exceed specific criteria. Those rebates are only available until funds are depleted, or December 31, whichever comes first. Rebate forms are available at www.Riverlandenergy.com or by calling 800-411-9115.

Interruptible heat test Nov. 15

If you participate in Riverland Energy's interruptible heating (also known as dual fuel or load management), your system will be tested on Wednesday, Nov. 15, beginning at 7 a.m. At that time, the electricity powering your electric heating system will be interrupted and cause your backup heating system to operate. All power will be restored by 11 a.m.

This annual test is conducted to ensure that your backup heating system is working and will adequately keep your home at a comfortable temperature during control periods this winter. The test also ensures the control equipment is functioning properly.



ENTER OUR PHOTO CONTEST FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$25 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT

Congratulations to Joe Wick for getting the most votes for our September photo contest.

Submit your best photo and encourage your friends to vote! The photo receiving the most votes will win a \$25 electric bill credit and will be printed in our magazine, along with a few other favorites. By entering, you will also be entered into a drawing for a \$250 electric bill credit.

The November theme is Best of Fall. Photos can be submitted through November 25. Go to our Facebook page or website to submit and vote.

Right: Daddy's little helper feeding calves, Joe Wick



Other favorites, top to bottom:
Sunset at Perrot State Park, Jerald Dekan
Rustic Mill Park, Linda Janke
Buena Vista Park, Sharaya Reed

MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

Show your photography skill & save money on your next bill!

Every entry will be entered into a \$250 electric bill credit drawing!

THIS MONTH'S THEME:



CONTEST DEADLINE
NOV. 25

SHOW US YOUR FAVORITE FALL PHOTOS TO CELEBRATE THE CHANGING OF SEASONS!

If you need financial assistance in paying your electric bill, we suggest you contact one of the following agencies:

Trempealeau County:

Trempealeau County Social Services: 715-538-2311
Western Wisconsin E.O.C.: 715-985-2391

Buffalo County:

Buffalo County Human Services: 608-685-4412

La Crosse County:

La Crosse County Human Services: 608-784-4357
CouleeCap: 608-634-4575

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Outages & Emergencies

Call 1-800-927-6206
24 hours a day

Office Hours

Arcadia: 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
Holmen: 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

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