



# news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## MAINTENANCE KEY FOR SYSTEM RELIABILITY

**L**INCOLN Electric Cooperative is committed to increasing system reliability and reducing the frequency and duration of outages. There are many things we do to accomplish these goals, and many require the cooperation of our members.

Over the last several years, we have been converting portions of our system from overhead to underground in areas with a high frequency of outages. This is being done in stages as projects like this are expensive to complete. However, over time they help to pay for themselves as outage restoration costs are reduced.

As we perform overhead to underground projects, our members have been amazing with signing amended easements and accommodating the necessary planned outages to convert the powerlines.

One of the most important ways we help to reduce outages is continual maintenance of our electric system. This ranges from pole replacements, substation inspections, protection upgrades and right-of-way maintenance.

For many maintenance projects, there may be minimal member involvement from allowing us access to our facilities to weathering planned outages. But for right-of-way maintenance, we typically need a higher level of member cooperation.

At Lincoln Electric, every mile of our overhead powerline corridor is completely maintained at least every



These photos show the difference right of way maintenance makes to reduce the risk of vegetation-caused outages on our overhead power lines.

seven years. Between regular scheduled maintenance, we also perform spot maintenance in problem areas.

Having a clear and open right-of-way is essential to helping reduce tree-caused outages. By limiting tree growth within and on the edges of the powerline corridor, we can prevent some outages to save our members time and money.

This requires that our members allow us to perform our right-of-way maintenance at the highest possible standard. During right-of-way maintenance, we will need to enter properties and trim or remove vegetation that is, or could become, a hazard to the overhead powerlines.

See **MAINTENANCE**, next page

**BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS**

<b>FINANCIAL OVERVIEW</b>	<b>YEAR TO DATE DECEMBER 2023</b>	<b>YEAR TO DATE DECEMBER 2022</b>
<b>kWh SALES</b>	133,003,134	135,517,769
<b>REVENUE</b>	\$13,505,184	\$13,016,734
<b>COST OF POWER</b>	\$5,390,659	\$6,093,235
<b>OPERATING EXPENSE</b>	\$4,843,417	\$4,281,961
<b>MARGINS</b>	\$1,650,219	\$1,175,294
<b>NUMBER OF MEMBERS</b>	5,216	5,098
<b>NUMBER OF METERS</b>	6,529	6,375
<b>MILES OF LINE</b>	1,013	1,004
<b>TOTAL UTILITY PLANT</b>	\$39,246,795	\$38,218,742
<b>MEMBER EQUITY</b>	\$14,747,095	\$13,148,898
<b>DECEMBER AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL USE (KWH)</b>	2,050	2,719
<b>DECEMBER AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL BILLING</b>	\$183.40	\$213.22

**The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on January 15. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:**

- Approved awarding eight Luck of the Draw Scholarships from unclaimed capital credits as one each of \$5,000, \$3,000, and \$2,000, and five of \$1,000.
- Approved the 2024 general capital credit retirements of 3 percent of the total margins and equities, using the 50/50 FIFO/LIFO blended method.
- Authorized staff to randomly select a committee of members to count the mail-in ballots of the upcoming election.
- Approved Resolutions 2024-1 through 2024-6 assigning check signers on the checking accounts held at Glacier Bank.
- Assigned Marianne Roose as the NRECA voting delegate.
- Authorized Rod Kane, Marianne Roose and Rick Peterson to attend the online Director's Course 2640.
- Authorized Rick Peterson to attend the Western Montana Manager's meeting in Missoula.
- Authorized Marianne Roose to attend the NRECA PowerX-change in Texas in March.

# MAINTENANCE

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To maintain a sufficient right-of-way, our right-of-way crew will remove all trees and brush within the overhead powerline corridor. They will also look outside the right-of-way for any potential dangers, such as trees with branches encroaching the right-of-way. These will typically be trimmed, but if this cannot be done safely the tree will be felled.

We also look for dead or dying trees outside of the right-of-way that can reach the powerline and pose a fire hazard or outage threat. These will be felled.

Our right-of-way crew is responsible for the debris. Brush and limbs within 50 feet of vehicle access to a property will be chipped. Brush and limbs will be scattered or piled if they are more than 50 feet from vehicle access. If you prefer a different debris treatment, please contact LEC's Right-of-way Coordinator after you receive your notification letter.

Regular right-of-way maintenance is a typical operations expense for electric companies with overhead powerlines. However, please remember that our members also have a responsibility to respect the right-of-way corridor on their property. Any planted vegetation, structures or other

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**LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

**CONTACT**

1-406-889-3301  
 info@lincolnelectric.coop  
 www.lincolnelectric.coop  
 Secure Payments: 1-833-890-6258

**ALWAYS REPORT OUTAGES TO:**

1-406-889-3301

**OFFICE**

312 Osloski Road  
 PO BOX 628  
 Eureka, Montana 59917

**OFFICE HOURS**

Monday - Thursday  
 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

- Tina Taurman**  
President
- Joel Graves**  
Vice President
- Sandi Mason**  
Secretary-Treasurer
- Myra Appel**  
Becky Evins  
Rodney Kane  
Rick Peterson  
Marianne Roose  
Ethel White

Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings at the boardroom in the cooperative office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. Members are encouraged to attend. If you have any items of interest, please contact the general manager prior to the meeting.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:  
 TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2024**



**Lincoln Electric  
 Cooperative, Inc.**

**HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?**

**SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:**  
 memberservices@lincolnelectric.coop

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obstructions encroaching the right-of-way or safe minimum distance of the powerline will be removed or moved.

Encroachments in the right-of-way or safe minimum distance pose a serious (potentially lethal) safety hazard to the member, Lincoln Electric employees and the public. If the obstruction cannot be removed or moved, the landowner will be financially responsible for the relocation of the powerlines.

Typically, operational expenses are collected from the entire membership via their electric rates. However, if a landowner requests tree(s) remain within the right-of-way on their property, they will be directly charged for the additional trips and labor to maintain their corridor outside the normal schedule.

## 2024 RIGHT OF WAY CLEARING

Per Montana Code Annotated, Title 69, Chapter 4, Part 1, you will receive a letter and be contacted if your property is scheduled for right of way maintenance. As a reminder, please verify your address and phone number(s) on file with Lincoln Electric are updated.

Additionally, if Lincoln Electric crews must perform right-of-way maintenance beyond the normal rotation for landowner-planted trees, the landowner will be responsible for the additional maintenance expenses. The

landowner may also choose to hire a certified line-clearance tree trimmer to maintain those trees on a regular basis. This expense would be borne by the landowner.

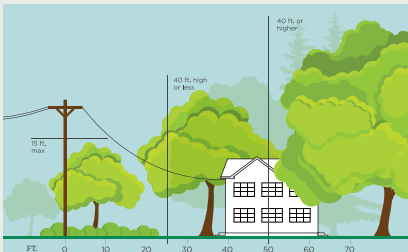
As a member-owned cooperative, we do not believe the expenses for an action to benefit a single landowner should be shared by the entire membership. Billing the individual landowner helps keep our maintenance costs as low as possible, while still providing excellent service to our members.

Our vigorous right-of-way maintenance program has been, and will continue to be, essential to the reliability and safety of our overhead powerline system. We appreciate our members' continued support and cooperation with this program. RM

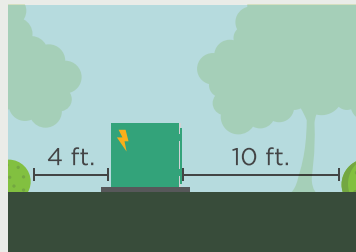
# 3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to remove and trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do what we can to reduce removal and trimming. **Here's how you can help:**

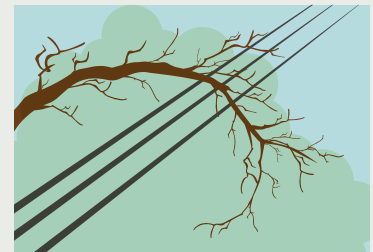
**1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



**2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers.** Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



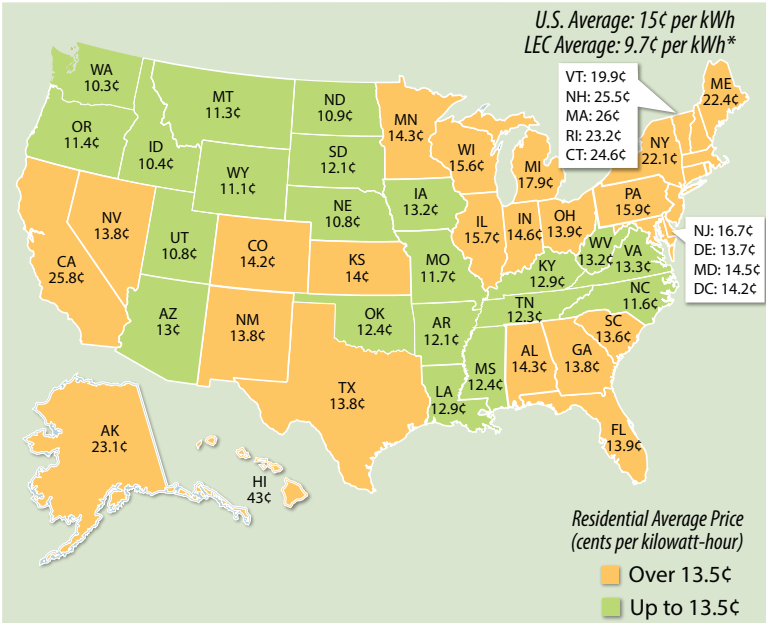
**3. Report dangerous branches.** If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.  
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

## Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2022 figures, in cents per kWh



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration  
Numbers rounded to nearest tenth of a cent

\*2022 LEC is a blended calculation of the system maintenance, kWh, and demand charges  
LEC 2022 residential revenue \$9,905,882 with residential sales of 102,128,632 kWhs

## Dig Smart. Dig Safe.

Before you dig, call 811 or visit call811.com to mark underground utility lines. 811 is a free service that helps keep our community safe.



# LUCK OF THE DRAW SCHOLARSHIPS

APPLY NOW FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A SCHOLARSHIP  
FOR THE SUMMER OR FALL 2024 SEMESTER

- Drawing held at Lincoln Electric's Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 20, 2024, at the LCHS Auditorium in Eureka
- Student or their parent/legal guardian must be an active member of Lincoln Electric currently receiving electric service

- Student and/or their parent/legal guardian must register for the Annual Meeting and at the Luck of the Draw Scholarship table prior to 9:15 a.m. to be eligible

See the application for full eligibility details

APPLY ONLINE AT [WWW.LINCOLNELECTRIC.COOP](http://WWW.LINCOLNELECTRIC.COOP)

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MONDAY, APRIL 8**