



# THE WIRE



CURRENT NEWS FROM THE ELKHORN RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

August 2024

Serving the Elkhorn River Valley since 1940

Volume 33, Number 8

## CONSTRUCTION SEASON: A YEAR OF PROGRESS AND CHALLENGE



*From the GM - Mark Johnson*

As a distribution utility, we at ERPPD have the responsibility of construct-

ing and maintaining the electrical system that powers your home, farm, or business. Building new facilities, maintaining existing plant, and replacing aging infrastructure is a constant focus for our staff. This month, I'd like to share some insights into the work that has been completed so far this year.

The vast majority of our construction takes place in late winter/early spring, starting as soon as the weather permits and finishing before irrigation season. There are two main reasons we target this time of year for



*Jim Wennekamp, John Paul and Brad Doffin pulling up wire after the June 25, storm.*

construction. First, most of the new power lines we are building are being constructed to serve new irrigation services throughout our territory. Second, ERPPD is a summer peaking utility, meaning we have a larger demand for electricity during the summer months making line switching much more difficult to coordinate.

Just this year, our crews constructed over 17 miles of new three-phase power lines. We also contracted out the construction of an additional

9 miles. These 26 miles of new three-phase lines connected 87 irrigation services. We maintain an irrigation list to assist with the planning required to build service to future irrigation wells. Our crews also have extended service to other new residential, farm, and commercial services. Throughout the construction season crews worked with safety as the number one priority and it shows, as they have worked 1,413 days as of the

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### CONTEST ALERT!

Comment on our People are the Power Facebook posts for your chance to be entered in a drawing for \$50 off your electric bill in December. Share your thoughts on each Facebook post published in February, May, August, and November.

The best comment from each posting will be published in the next month's edition of *The Wire* and that month's winner will receive some ERPPD swag!

Don't have Facebook? Mail or E-mail your response. Email: [erppd@erppd.com](mailto:erppd@erppd.com)

August post: How do you spend time with your loved ones during Family Fun Month?



# BOARD SELECTS NEW OFFICERS

With the retirement of Mark Miller, subdivision I director, from the board in June, a vacancy was left for the office of president.

Joe Thiele, subdivision III director and current vice president, was elected as president to fill the unexpired term until January of 2025. With his election, the office of vice president was vacated.

Ray Payne, subdivision III director, was then elected as vice president.

Joe Thiele, an electrician and farmer from Clearwater, has served on the ERPPD board for 19 years and served as vice president for the last six years. Joe has earned board certification through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and held Director Gold Certificate since 2018. The Director Gold Certificate requires 3 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain.

Ray Payne, farmer from Elgin, has served on the board since 2017. Ray has earned his Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and has hours toward the Board Leadership Certification through the NRECA.

Both directors show great dedication and leadership for the board, customers and the organization. They are committed to serving the mission to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective electricity to our customers.



*Joe Thiele, subdivision III director, was elected president of the ERPPD Board of Directors*



*Ray Payne, subdivision III director, was elected vice president of the ERPPD Board of Directors*

## THE PLACES OF PUBLIC POWER IN NEBRASKA



The electricity used to power the homes, businesses, and irrigation wells supplied by Elkhorn Rural PPD is purchased from our wholesale power provider, Nebraska Public Power District. NPPD generates power using a wide mix of resources around the state including nuclear, coal, wind, hydro, gas/oil, and solar. In 2020, ERPPD added to its energy mix by signing a purchase power agreement for solar generation in our territory. Three separate solar facilities, 1.5 MW from a facility west of Elgin, 2 MW from a facility north of Battle Creek, and 3 MW from a facility southwest of Norfolk supply electricity to ERPPD. Since 2021, this added value has had the most impact during the irrigation season by allowing irrigators to run longer during the hottest days of the summer.

Source: *The Wire* 1/2020



On August 11, or 8-11 Day we are reminded to find out what is buried underground before we do any digging.

You can contact the hot line for underground locating by calling 811, or 800-331-5666 or going online to <https://call811.com> or search for Nebraska 811.

Be ready with the address/location of where you will be digging and what type of project you will be completing. You will want to plan and give at least 2 days notice before digging so that any underground facilities may be located. Remember to confirm that all utilities have responded before starting to dig.

After the utilities have responded, dig carefully around any markers or consider relocating projects that are close to them.

## TIPS TO BEAT THE SUMMER PEAK

When we all work together to lower energy use during peak hours, we can lock in lower electricity rates, so everyone saves. Here are a few simple ways to save during peak summer hours.

- 1 Raise the thermostat a few degrees.
- 2 Use ceiling fans (in occupied rooms) to feel cooler.
- 3 Avoid using major appliances.
- 4 Close drapes and blinds to block heat from the sun.
- 5 Turn off and unplug non-essential electronics and lights.

## COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.

- WEATHER**: High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.
- CRITTERS**: Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.
- ACCIDENTS**: Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.
- Scheduled MAINTENANCE**: Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.



# CONSTRUCTION SEASON CON'T.

writing of this article without a lost time incident! A record that we are proud of as that means employees go home whole each day.

On the sub transmission side, contractors constructed 9 miles new of 69 KV line. This new line was built as part of our sub-T plan and completed the transmission loop feed in the western part of our district. This loop feed allows us additional flexibility to back feed substations from a different source during outages or if maintenance is needed. We were awarded a grant through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Program that covered 75% of the total project cost.

The integration of advanced technologies has been a continued focus in this year's construction season.

We finished the installation of our new advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system. We have also been working on installing smart grid components and automated distribution systems. These technologies enhance our ability to monitor and manage the grid, improving efficiency and reducing outage



*Crews working to repair line after a car accident in rural Pierce county.*

response times. AMI, in particular, provides us with detailed usage data, helping us to better understand our customers' consumption patterns.

However, our progress has not been without its challenges. Severe storms and adverse weather conditions have occasionally disrupted our construction schedules and caused temporary setbacks. Our crews always show remarkable resilience and dedication during power restoration efforts. Supply chain disruptions and increased material costs have also posed significant hurdles. Our staff has done a great job of navigating this new supply chain landscape and made sure we have had the necessary materials to serve the needs of our customers.

All this work truly takes a team effort. I have continued to be impressed with the efficiency and work ethic displayed by our team. Looking ahead, we are optimistic about the progress we've made, and the groundwork laid for future improvements. The upgrades and expansions undertaken this year will pay dividends in positioning ERPPD to better serve our communities. We remain committed to investing in our infrastructure, adopting new technologies, and meeting the evolving needs of our customers. As always, we are here to serve, today, and into the future.

 <p><b>206 N 4TH ST PO Box 310 Battle Creek, NE 68715</b></p> <p>Office Hours: M - F 8:00AM - 4:30 PM</p>	 <p><b>General Manager:</b> Mark Johnson <b>CFO/Office Manager:</b> Carmen Christensen <b>Operations Manager:</b> Todd Knutson</p> <p>Connect with us Online:</p>   <p>Customer Service: 402-675-2185 For Outages: 1-800-675-2185</p>	<p><b>Board of Directors</b></p> <p><b>Subdivision I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dennis Kuchar, Treasurer</li> <li>• Hunter Frisch, Director</li> </ul> <p><b>Subdivision II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tim Means, Secretary</li> <li>• Jerrell Dolesh, Director</li> <li>• Rod Zohner, Director</li> </ul> <p><b>Subdivision III</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joe Thiele, President</li> <li>• David Hoefer, Director</li> <li>• Raymond Payne, Vice President</li> </ul>
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