



COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

Cooperation Among Cooperatives Demonstrated through ROPE



Cooperation among cooperatives is more than just one of the seven cooperative principles. It's a value that cooperatives live and breathe, setting them apart from other business models. Cooperation among cooperatives may come in different forms, but the main concept is that cooperatives do not hesitate to help each other in times of need.

The greatest form of cooperation among cooperatives in the electric cooperative world is found in Restoration of Power in an Emergency assistance, more commonly referred to as ROPE. "The significance of ROPE is that we have cooperatives willing to help each other, and that's one of our guiding principles," shares Lee Albertson, lead program safety manager (distribution cooperatives) at Dairyland Power Cooperative.

Lee coordinates and leads the Jackson Electric crews' monthly safety meetings, and he's also the main point of contact when Jackson Electric makes the decision to call for ROPE assistance. Lee oversees the ROPE umbrella for the Dairyland member-cooperatives. "Calling for ROPE is dictated by what the crews are reporting from the field,"

explains Eric Steien, Jackson Electric's line superintendent. "It's a judgement call on how much and how widespread the damage is, along with how many broken poles and the temperature. We would be quicker to activate ROPE in the winter."

Together, Eric, Jackson Electric's General Manager/CEO Kevin Babcock, and Line Foreman Brian Schultz meet to discuss the crews' input and make the call to Lee. "When a cooperative calls for assistance, I need to know how many crews they are requesting, what type of equipment is needed (bucket trucks, Digger Derricks, skid steers, tracked UTVs, tracked Digger Derricks) and whether they need assistance from tree contractors," says Lee. "I keep a list of the equipment that each cooperative has and is willing to provide."

Eric explains situations when you would request certain equipment. A bucket truck is used to hoist line workers to make repairs on top of the lines, while a Digger Derrick is used to bore holes and set poles. Since Jackson was lucky in the sense that there were only two broken poles in the December storm, the main need was for bucket



Lee Albertson, lead program safety manager at Dairyland Power, leads a monthly safety meeting at Jackson Electric. Lee oversees the ROPE program.

trucks. "The tracked UTVs were also highly beneficial and essential in the rights-of-way that couldn't be accessed from the road," Eric says.

A cooperative may also request hardware or materials, such as poles or wire, from other cooperatives if they've sustained significant damage to their system. In that instance, a cooperative would make calls to their contacts and suppliers to see who can accommodate material. "Generally, you're not housing enough inventory to cover a large storm," says Eric.

Once the call is made to Lee, he does the legwork to determine which cooperatives he will call upon for assistance. "I start geographically with the closest co-ops that are unaffected," he says. "I then



Cooperatives help each other in times of need. Jackson Electric is appreciative of the help received from the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative (above left), Vernon Electric Cooperative (left), Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative (right), and MiEnergy Cooperative (above right) crews during the December 2022 outages.



branch out from there depending on the severity of the storm. I also factor in the requests for specific equipment.”

The December storm affected cooperatives in most of western Wisconsin, making the search for assistance and available crews a little more difficult. “Thankfully, we have a large ROPE group with partners in Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota that we called upon heavily in December,” says Lee.

“When there’s a storm that has affected cooperatives across the geographical area, you can only get as much assistance as is available,” adds Brian.

When a cooperative is contacted by Lee to provide assistance, they must first evaluate that they have enough staff to handle their own day-to-day needs and any issues that may come up. In Jackson Electric’s case, Eric would check with the crews to see who is available to volunteer to go, excluding the lineman on-call during that time. Eric is given an estimate of how many days assistance is needed, and the available crew members are sent home to pack the clothes and gear that they will need. “There has never been a time where we were not able to send someone,” says Eric. “Someday it may come back that you need assistance.”

Most recently, Jackson Electric sent four crew members to assist with power restoration in June of 2022 when a storm missed our service territory, but a neighboring cooperative wasn’t so lucky. That favor was returned when the same cooperative was able to assist Jackson Electric with restoration efforts during the December 2022 outages. “The advantage of having ROPE volunteers is that we do things similarly across the state,” says Lee. “You’re going to receive help from workers that understand the system. We also do uniform safety training, so they all know the same protocols.”

When a cooperative crew member volunteers for ROPE, they essentially become the responsibility of the requesting cooperative. Once ROPE crews are identified, Lee follows up with the requesting cooperative, providing them with information on how many crews will be sent and the contact person (usually the line superintendent). “Then I can call the line superintendent directly and find out who are they sending, what equipment, and what time we can expect them to arrive,” says Eric.

The cooperative requesting aid ensures the volunteers



Line Superintendent Eric Steien gives the MiEnergy Cooperative crew instructions when they arrived to assist Jackson Electric with outage restoration after the December 15, 2022, storm.

have food, lodging, and are always accounted for. When ROPE crews come to Jackson Electric, Eric is responsible for designating who they will work with from Jackson’s crew and where in the service territory they are needed. “Once they’re working in the field, a leader from Jackson’s crew will direct them where they need to go,” says Eric.

Sometimes cooperatives need additional resources to help with restoration efforts. For example, Jackson Electric called upon its vegetation maintenance contractor, New Age Tree Service, to simply clear limbs and trees from the lines so that the linemen could restore power. Other times, the help needed is access to roadways. “In some cases, we may work with the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) to contact utilities outside of our ROPE program, or WECA may locate resources to help counties with clearing roadways and obstructions,” says Lee.

ROPE crews are volunteers and allowed to leave whenever they need to, but generally stay until the outages are restored. During outage restoration efforts, the line crew does what is needed to get service restored as quickly and safely as possible. This may mean temporary fixes to equipment. The crew relays to the operations department the areas where they will need to revisit. “We were still cleaning up from this storm a month after the fact,” says Eric. It’s important to understand that it can take up to six weeks to get back to normal, and sometimes you have to put other projects on hold.” —*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*



Left: Most recently, Jackson Electric crew members Grant, Adam, Tanner, and Hazy assisted our neighbors at Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative in June 2022 after a summer storm struck their service territory. Center: After Jackson Electric’s outages were resolved, Matt and Grant headed east to Oconto Electric in July 2019 to assist in setting and framing poles. Right: Hazy and Spencer headed to Freeborn-Mower Cooperative in Albert Lea, Minn., in April 2019 to restore power after a late winter/early spring storm.



WELCOME, DODY

“I look forward to being the best financial resource as possible for Jackson Electric’s employees, board of directors, and membership,” shares the newest member of Jackson Electric’s team. Dody Wubker’s first day at Jackson Electric was January 16, 2023, and she is serving as the cooperative’s chief financial officer.

Originally from the Rhinelander area, college brought Dody to the Eau Claire area, where she currently resides. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Lakeland University and a Bachelor of Science in business administration in accounting from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She is also a graduate of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Management Internship Program.

Her interest in finance extends back to when Dody worked at a grocery store during high school. “I quickly transitioned to the night bookkeeper, balancing the drawers and completing the daily deposits,” Dody shares. “I realized immediately that I loved that work.”

Dody is no stranger to electric cooperative finance. She brings with her 28 years of varied financial experience, with six years of service to Price Electric Cooperative and 14 years of experience as CFO at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative. Dody explains why she chose to stay with cooperative finance: “The cooperative business model is truly amazing, and once you’ve experienced this model, the cooperative core values become a part of you.”

When Dody’s not analyzing the budget or preparing for an audit, you’ll find her attending concerts and plays at the Pablo Center in Eau Claire or being a cheerleader at her kids’ athletic events. “I also garden and love traveling to Mexico,” Dody says. “I’d eventually like to establish residency there.”

We also had Dody draw some questions from a hat to get to know her on the spot:

1. What song would most likely prompt you to sing along if it came on your radio?
a. *Brown-eyed girl – that’s the first one that comes to mind.*
2. Does your family practice any unusual traditions?
a. *We make pizza bread every Christmas Eve for dinner.*
3. A genie grants you the ability to have an infinite amount of one item. What is it?
a. *Knowledge*

DON’T PASS ON A SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Jackson Electric is awarding up to ten \$1,000 youth scholarships to qualified graduating high school seniors who demonstrate their desire to continue their post-secondary education. Student must be a child (or under legal guardianship) of an active member (primary residence) of Jackson Electric and reside in the same household.

Scholarship applications are available from our office or can be downloaded at www.jackelec.com/scholarships-0. Completed scholarship applications can be submitted to info@jackelec.com or mailed to:

Jackson Electric Cooperative
Attn: Scholarships
N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, WI 54615



Scholarship application deadline is March 24, 2023, 4 p.m.
No late applications will be accepted.



CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES

Grant Witcraft, left, and Spencer Paulson, far right, received their journeymen line worker certificate at a recently held apprenticeship graduation. To receive this certificate, each was required to complete 7,360 hours of on-the-job training and 640 hours of related instruction time. This was completed over a period of four years. Pictured with Grant and Spencer is Jackson Electric’s Line Superintendent, Eric Steien.

Jackson Electric Cooperative 86th Annual Meeting

Monday, April 24, 2023, 7 p.m.
Lunda Theatre, Black River Falls

Watch for your annual meeting report
in next month’s *Wisconsin Energy
Cooperative News*.





NEW YEAR, NEW BUILD?

Contact Jackson Electric now to schedule your line build

If you're planning for new construction in 2023, your first contact should be Jackson Electric. Beat the summer rush by contacting us now to begin discussing your plans and electrical service needs. The sooner we know your plans, the sooner we can get your new service installation scheduled.

Before finalizing your new home plans, make sure you check with us to find out what energy efficiency rebates and incentives are available for items you should consider installing in your new location. Jackson Electric offers generous rebates on geothermal and air source heat pumps, water heaters 75-gallons or greater, lighting, and Energy Star appliances. If central air conditioning is a must-have for your new build, we highly suggest seeking a bid for an air source heat pump. An air source heat pump will function the same as your central air conditioner in the summer months but can revert to an efficient and cost-effective heating source in the shoulder months.

Don't forget to let us know about future electrical needs for your home, such as an addition of an electric vehicle or a solar system. We need to know these plans so we can appropriately size your electrical service. Jackson Electric sells electric vehicle chargers and JacksonSolar can provide you with a bid on a solar system.

For more information about Jackson Electric's new build process, energy efficient rebates, EV chargers, and solar systems, go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office.

SELLING OR BUYING A HOME ON OUR LINES?

We Need to Know

If you are planning to sell your home or buy a home on Jackson Electric's service lines, we need to hear from you. Both the buyer and seller need to contact us so we can help make the service transfer as smooth as possible.

Home sellers need to contact us to confirm the transfer and closing date, determine the correct date to finalize your account, and obtain your forwarding address for any future capital credits retirement.

Home buyers may need to complete a membership application and any deposit obligations before service is transferred.

If you are an owner of a property that will be rented, you need to complete a landlord agreement form with us so we know who is responsible for the meter. This makes transferring meters between tenants much more efficient.

If you have question, please contact our office, or go to www.jackelec.com.

2023 ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

Jackson Electric offers rebates to members who purchase qualified energy efficient items and lighting. Learn more at www.jackelec.com.

Must apply within 60 days of your item's invoice date.



ENERGY ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE

Jackson Electric utilizes the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) to administer energy assistance to its members. This program is funded by monthly fees collected by Jackson Electric from each of its members.

The "Commitment to Community" line item on members' billing statements is collected where half is distributed to WHEAP and the remaining to Jackson Electric's in-house rebate program.

If you are in need of energy assistance, please visit homeenergyplus.wi.gov or contact your county's Department of Health and Human Services to learn more about this program and income guidelines.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Customer Service 715.284.5385
800.370.4607
Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)
Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511
Card Payments 844.759.3984
www.jackelec.com

Mailing Address: N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, WI 54615
Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Board of Directors: Gary Woods, President
Chris Curran, Vice President
David Peasley, Secretary-Treasurer
Jerry Huber, Dairyland Power Representative
Daniel Smrekar, Kristi Hanson, Brian Huber,
Troy Torkelson, Les Dokkestul

Kevin Babcock, General Manager/CEO

Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner