



GM'S REPORT

# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

I am often asked what the difference is between an electric cooperative and any other electric utility. The poles and transformers look the same, and the kilowatts powering homes and businesses are the same.

So, what is the difference?

Simply put, a cooperative is a not-for-profit business owned and controlled by the people who use its services. Unlike investor-owned utilities or municipally owned systems, Firelands Electric Cooperative is operated by and for people in the communities we serve. Our goal is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power, not to make a profit.

But, electric cooperative members share more than electricity. They share the same principles, and they work hard to improve the quality of life for all.

Just as we work to make sure that your membership in Firelands Electric Cooperative provides a real value and difference in your life, we also draw strength from fellow electric cooperatives across Ohio and the country.

Firelands Electric is one of 25 electric cooperatives in Ohio and one of more than 900 nationwide. Roughly 42 million Americans in 47 states receive their electric power from a cooperative. Through our membership in the statewide services organization, Ohio's Electric Cooperatives, we work with other co-ops to cost-effectively serve co-op members throughout the state.

This partnership allows us to pool our resources and deliver high-quality services to co-op members, such as government advocacy, safety and management training, employee education, member programs and rebates, and *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.

Another reassuring and fundamental way that cooperatives support each other is the mutual aid we offer after natural disasters. Ohio's electric cooperatives assist each other as well as cooperatives outside of the state when major storms and outages strike.

Since the national network of transmission and distribution infrastructure owned by electric cooperatives is built to federal standards, line crews from any co-op in America can arrive on the scene ready to provide emergency support. Having this assistance available can make a huge, positive impact on power restoration efforts following weather-related events like ice storms, hurricanes, or floods. Before an Ohio co-op commits resources to requests for mutual aid, however, they always ensure there are enough crews available for all local needs.

When Firelands Electric needs help, an entire network of cooperatives is ready to come to our aid. And, when we respond to other co-ops' requests for help, our crews receive valuable experience that helps prepare them when power outages happen here.

I encourage you to reach out to me and the employees at Firelands Electric with any questions. This is your cooperative. And that makes all the difference.



Dan McNaull  
GENERAL MANAGER





CO-OP NEWS

# COOPERATIVE TRUSTEES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Firelands Electric Cooperative is guided by a board of trustees — trustees who are also members of the co-op. Being part of this board is an incredibly important position in our community. It is this board's responsibility to represent co-op members' best interests when making significant decisions, which can affect issues such as service rates, work plans, and rights-of-way.

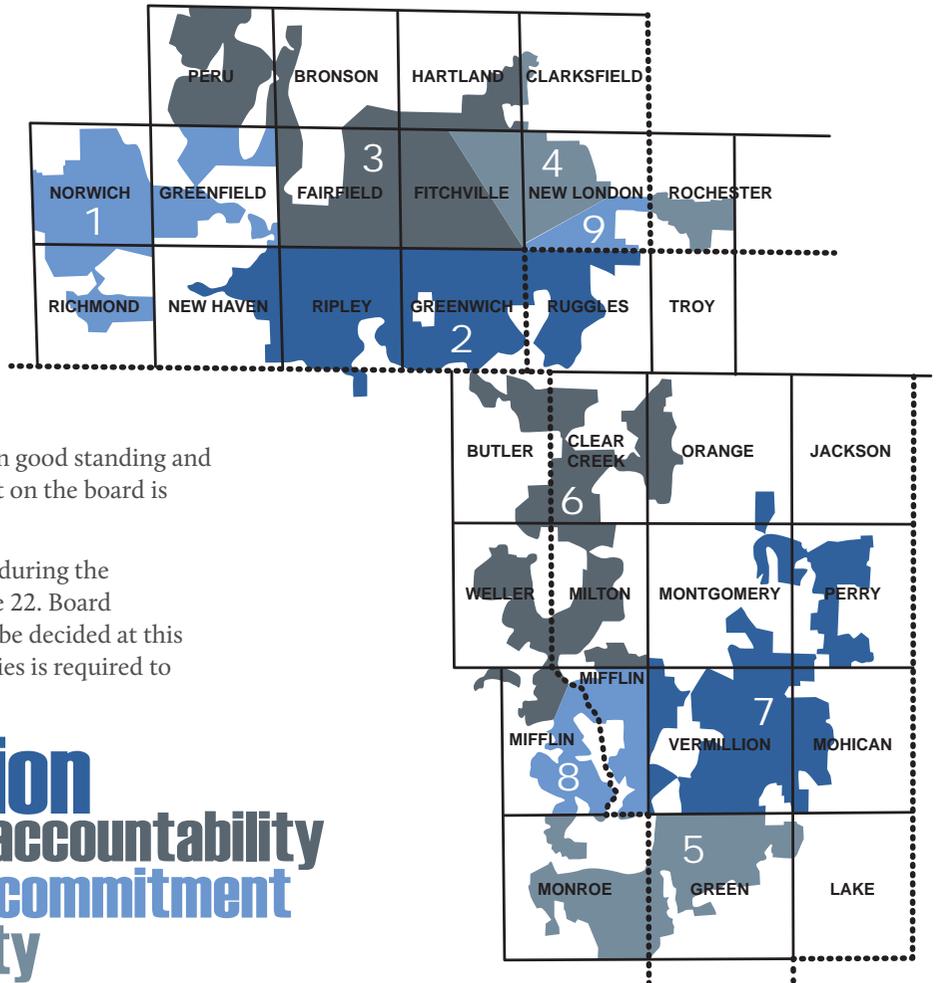
The board needs men and women who understand their community's needs. It is crucial to elect strong leaders, selected from a diverse pool of candidates, to guide the cooperative. The co-op encourages members to run in our board elections. Fresh perspectives help the cooperative enact policies that keep our community competitive.

Firelands Electric's board is a democratically elected body nominated by members of the cooperative's service territory and voted into position by members who choose to participate in the co-op's open election. Any co-op member who is in good standing and resides in a district with an open spot on the board is welcome to run for that position.

Firelands Electric will hold elections during the cooperative's annual meeting on June 22. Board members for districts 4, 5, and 8 will be decided at this year's event. Any candidate who applies is required to

collect 20 member signatures from within his or her district and submit an election application by Friday, April 12. Petitions are now available at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

Trustees matter and can make a difference. Call 1-800-533-8658 or visit [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com) for additional information on how to run for our board of trustees and to find out more about the election process.



**innovation**  
**accountability**  
**community commitment**  
**integrity**

CO-OP NEWS

# SAVE THE DATE

Member event planned at cooperative's new facility

Now that the big move is complete, Firelands Electric is inviting cooperative members to check out the new facility during an open house event next month.

Scheduled for Saturday, April 27, this event is open to members of Firelands Electric Cooperative and their immediate families. Attendees will have the opportunity to:

- Tour the new all-in-one facility
- Enjoy food and ice cream
- View demonstrations
- Participate in children's activities
- Receive a free gift

Look for more details in the April issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine. And be sure to mark your calendar!



Date: Saturday, April 27

Time: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Location: 103 Industrial Drive,  
New London





YOUTH PROGRAMS



Firelands Electric Cooperative invites children in kindergarten through fifth grade to enter its 2019 Electrical Safety Contest. Children who live in a home receiving power from the co-op are eligible to enter.

**Take the quiz**

To enter, students simply need to show off their knowledge of electrical safety by taking the quiz provided on the next page. A parent or guardian must also complete and sign the section at the bottom.

Submit the completed and signed quiz by mail to: Electrical Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851. Entries may also be scanned and emailed to [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com) (maximum file size of 10 MB).

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Entries must be received by  
Firelands Electric Cooperative  
before 5 p.m. on Friday, March 22.

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**Win a prize**

Students who correctly answer a minimum of six questions will have their name entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three restaurant gift cards.

In May, as part of National Electrical Safety Month, winners will be featured in the local pages of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine, as well as on Firelands

Electric Cooperative's website and social media outlets. The correct answers to the quiz will also be published in this issue.

Official contest rules and the quiz are also available at [www.firelandsec.com/content/contests](http://www.firelandsec.com/content/contests). If you have questions, please contact the member services department at 1-800-533-8658.



**Energy  
Explorers**

## Electrical safety quiz

Test your electrical safety knowledge by taking the quiz below.

Circle the correct answer to each question or statement.

1. Smoke alarms in your home should be tested how often to ensure they work properly?

- A. Once a month
- B. Twice a year
- C. Once a day

2. It is safe to run extension cords under carpet or rugs in your home.

- A. True
- B. False

3. What should you do if you are outdoors and hear thunder?

- A. Hide under a tree
- B. Seek shelter indoors and wait at least 30 minutes
- C. Stand still

4. It is safe to leave the kitchen with a burner on, as long as it's a short amount of time.

- A. True
- B. False

5. How far should items be kept away from space heaters?

- A. At least 1 foot
- B. At least 5 feet
- C. At least 3 feet

6. Overloaded outlets can overheat and cause a fire.

- A. True
- B. False

7. When using an electrical appliance, how far should you keep it from any water?

- A. 10 feet
- B. 5 feet
- C. 3 feet

8. It is okay to play near downed power lines, as long as you are careful.

- A. True
- B. False



Please complete the information below and mail your entry to: Attn: Electrical Safety Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 32, New London, OH 44851.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Parents'/Guardians' Names \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_



## RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

# RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE EQUALS RELIABILITY

There are many ways Firelands Electric Cooperative provides its members with safe, reliable electric service. One of the most crucial is right-of-way clearing, or vegetation management.

### What is a right-of-way?

A right-of-way is the strip of land underneath or around power lines and transformers that the electric cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. Trees and other vegetation must grow at a proper distance from equipment in order to prevent harm to people or disruptions in electric service. Specifications vary, but a general guideline for maintaining a safe right-of-way is 20 feet of clearance on either side of primary lines. The area above poles and primary wires should be kept completely clear of all vegetation. For pad-mounted transformers (those installed on the ground), shrubs and other plants should be kept a minimum of 10 feet away.

### The importance of maintenance

Clearing the right-of-way is vital to keeping our members' power on. Branches and limbs that come into contact with primary wires at the tops of utility poles can cause voltage fluctuations, blinking lights, or even an outage for hundreds of cooperative members. In 2018, around 25 percent of Firelands Electric's power interruptions were caused by trees and brush, compared to 19 percent caused by small animals. These numbers are down 7 percent and 2 percent from 2017, respectively.

Right-of-way clearing also keeps your family safe by ensuring that tree branches and vegetation do not become energized due to close contact with a downed power line or other electrical equipment. With the ability to carry up to 34,500 volts, a power line can energize a tree branch. This can be incredibly dangerous — even deadly. Be mindful when around trees that are close to power lines and make sure children know that climbing trees near power lines or playing near pad-mounted transformers is extremely dangerous.

### It's a big job, but we're ready

Firelands Electric maintains 995 miles of power lines, which bring power to nearly 9,100 cooperative members. This gives Firelands Electric's right-of-way maintenance crews a big job to do. Each year, a plan is made for tree contractors to work in specific areas of the cooperative's service territory to keep ahead of any potential issues.



James Miller  
SYSTEM RIGHT-OF-WAY  
COORDINATOR

If a tree invades the right-of-way, the cooperative's vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers, and mowers. Chemical control methods are occasionally used to stop low-growing plant species, which can climb and surpass the tall trees growing beneath power lines.

Please notify Firelands Electric if you have existing trees on your property that are in danger of coming into contact with power lines. For more information on the cooperative's vegetation management program, questions about tree trimming, or assistance in selecting the right tree to plant, visit our website at [www.firelandsec.com/content/right-way-clearance](http://www.firelandsec.com/content/right-way-clearance) or contact Firelands Electric's System Right-of-Way Coordinator James Miller at 1-800-533-8658.

## Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard ... especially to power lines.

### LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

### MEDIUM TREES

Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

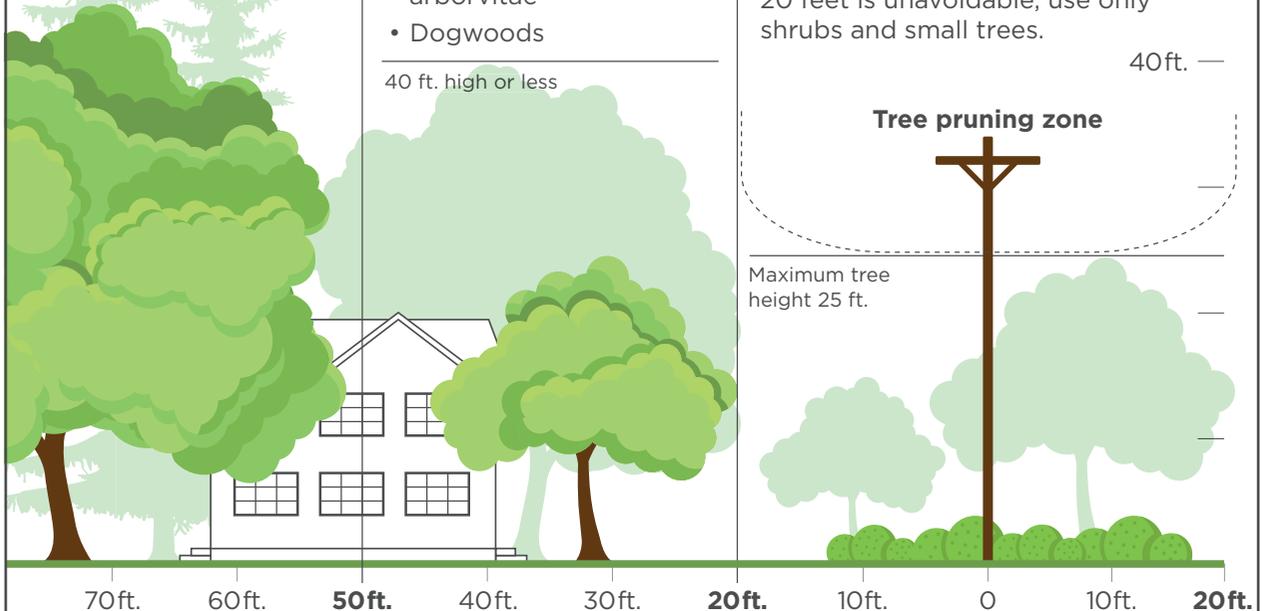
- Washington hawthorn
- Golden rain tree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

### SMALL TREES

Height/spread of no more than 25 feet, such as:

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.



Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

## 2019 RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Vegetation management has already begun in some areas. Right-of-way tree maintenance is tentatively scheduled in 2019 for the following areas and will include brush hogging, cutting, trimming, and any necessary tree removals:

- Ashland County — Green and Clear Creek townships
- Huron County — Bronson, Peru, Norwich, Greenfield, and New London townships



## RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

# Planting new trees this spring?

Use these guidelines to avoid coming in contact with power lines later down the road

It is inevitable that a tree planted under power lines will have to be cut down in the future. Why not move it to a better location outside the right-of-way before you plant? This way you can enjoy your new tree for many years to come.

- Look up to see how a new tree will affect the overhead utility lines and do not plant under power lines.
- Avoid planting big hardwood shade trees near power lines. Maple trees will grow between 60 and 80 feet when mature, oak trees can reach 75 to 80 feet, and the mighty sycamore will reach upward of 115 feet when fully grown.
- Consider decorative trees instead, since they generally don't grow as tall. For example, the Ivory Silk Lilac reaches a mature height of just 20 feet.
- A good rule of thumb is to plant trees at least as far away from utility lines as the tree is expected to grow. For instance, if you're planting a sugar maple that could grow to be 75 feet tall, plant it 75 feet away from power lines.
- Keep shrubs and other ornamental plants at least 10 feet from ground transformers in your yard or landscaping.

## SHRUBS AND PAD-MOUNTED TRANSFORMERS

Shrubs, ornamental grasses, and other plants should NEVER be planted next to a pad-mounted transformer, also known as a ground transformer. Always keep vegetation at least 10 feet away from the back and sides of the unit. The area in front of the transformer should be kept free of all types of foliage. Fences, shrubs, and trees located too close to pad-mounted transformers can significantly slow restoration times during a power outage. They can also create a serious safety hazard for Firelands Electric Cooperative crews who need to access or service the units. If vegetation is hindering crews' work, it may become necessary to clear it away. Firelands Electric crews never want to trim or remove a member's landscaping, so plan ahead when planting near a pad-mounted transformer.



Shrubs planted too close to a pad-mounted transformer can cause access and safety issues, like in the photo at the left. Unfortunately, as shown in the other photo, crews had to cut away a large portion of the shrub in order to perform maintenance on the unit. Avoid this dilemma by planning before you plant.

We want  
to HEAR  
FROM

YOU!

Your thoughts and opinions about Firelands Electric Cooperative help us serve you better.

In April, Firelands Electric Cooperative will be working with NRECA Market Research Services to complete a member satisfaction survey.

The surveys will be both by phone and email, but not everyone will be contacted. If you are contacted, we would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time to share your opinions of the cooperative.

We strive to provide all members with safe, affordable, reliable, and clean electric service. By participating in the survey, you will help us make decisions that benefit you, your family, and your neighbors.

Thank you!

Firelands  
**Electric**

COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

All information is confidential.



IN THE COMMUNITY

BY TRACY GIBB

# REELING THEM IN

From late August through early June, Ryan Bond can be found in front of a classroom at Willard City Schools, where he teaches seventh-grade science. During the summer and warm-weather weekends, you'll find him on Lake Erie. He'll be the one at the helm of his 27-foot boat, a Sport Craft hardtop named Eye Spy II.

Ryan has enjoyed hunting and fishing his entire life. Growing up, he spent countless hours fishing on Lake Erie with his father and grandfather. As an adult, he purchased his own boat and, at the suggestion of a friend, successfully completed the U.S. Coast Guard test to receive his captain's license.

Ryan operates April through October, weather permitting. He is based out of Wild Wings Marina in Oak Harbor the majority of the season, but he follows the perch and walleye to the waters north of the Huron River in the fall, setting up shop at Huron Lagoons Marina.

Charter trips with Eye Spy Fishing accommodate up to six people for a flat rate of \$540. They depart the marina at 6 a.m. and return about 2 p.m. Previous fishing experience isn't necessary. Ryan enjoys sharing his boat and his fishing experience with others, including his children, 8-year-old Kenley and 5-year-old Camden, who often join him on trips. "We invite all different levels of experience to book a day on the lake — even those who don't know how to hold a pole," Ryan says.

Ryan and his wife, Tana, reside outside of Willard. Learn more about booking an excursion by visiting [www.eyespyfish.com](http://www.eyespyfish.com) or by searching for Eye Spy Fishing Charters on Facebook. To contact Ryan, call 419-706-4095 or email [ryan@eyespyfish.com](mailto:ryan@eyespyfish.com).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RYAN BOND

Now he runs his own charter-fishing business, Eye Spy Fishing, and has been sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for the sport of fishing with others for more than 15 years. He conducts roughly 50 excursions on the lake in a year. "We are usually booked six days a week during the month of June," Ryan says.

About 15 groups have become regulars with Eye Spy Fishing, scheduling charter trips with Ryan every summer. His calendar fills up quickly, too. "Around Thanksgiving, we had roughly 35 trips already booked for this coming summer," he says.



*Places & Faces is a regular feature that showcases people, businesses, and organizations located throughout the Firelands Electric Cooperative service territory.*



EMPLOYEE NEWS

# FIRELANDS ELECTRIC CO-OP WELCOMES MELISSA WILSON

Last September, Firelands Electric Cooperative welcomed Melissa Wilson to its operations department.

A native of New London, Melissa graduated from New London High School and received her associate degree in business management from Hocking College. Hired as the cooperative’s engineering data analyst, Melissa filled the position following the retirement of her predecessor, Vicki White.

Melissa brings a wealth of experience to her new position at Firelands Electric Cooperative. For over 14 years, she performed a variety of duties for the Village of New London. Most recently, she served two years in the Office of Facilities Planning and Construction at Oberlin College.

In her role at Firelands Electric, one of Melissa’s primary responsibilities is maintaining and updating the cooperative’s digital mapping system, which contains records about the location and details of the poles, transformers, wires, and other equipment that bring power to Firelands’ members.

In addition to mapping, Melissa also handles right-of-way easements and pole contacts, which are the use of a co-op’s poles by another utility, such as a cable company, to attach their equipment. Melissa processes the necessary paperwork to ensure these connections are completed correctly and that Firelands Electric

Cooperative receives compensation for the use of its pole.

“I’m glad to be working in New London again and serving my community through my work at the co-op,” Melissa says. “I am blessed to work with amazing co-workers who are always willing to lend the new person a helping hand. They have welcomed me since the first day. It’s a rewarding job — and everyone here takes pride in providing our members with outstanding service.”

Melissa and her husband, Josh, live in the New London area with their children, Peyton, Paige, and Pailee. She serves as the fiscal officer for New London Township and is a volunteer for the New London Football Backers Club. Melissa enjoys supporting her children’s many activities, as well as camping, hiking, and spending time with family and friends.



Melissa Wilson  
ENGINEERING DATA ANALYST





COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING

highlights

Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Dec. 19 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported the cooperative received 39 membership applications for approval by the board.
- The board reviewed a report for a safety and training meeting held on Dec. 14.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the November financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- General Manager Dan McNaull reviewed the cooperative's organization chart for 2019.
- McNaull reported on the cooperative's FEMA flood insurance renewal costs. He noted changes to the coverage were a result of a decreased flood risk due to the cooperative's move to its new facility.
- The board discussed plans for an open house event at the cooperative's new facility in April. Following discussion, the board moved to finalize plans at the January meeting.
- Director of Electric Operations Don Englet reviewed recent projects and crew activities in the operations

department. He reported that the Fitchville substation would hopefully be returned to service in mid-January. He advised the board that this would not include all necessary repairs, but would allow the cooperative to reduce some of the power load off the Boughtonville substation.

- Director of Member Services and Communications Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services department. She also updated the board on information technology projects and reviewed the plan to relocate the co-op's network infrastructure to the new facility.
- The board voted to dedicate the meeting room at the co-op's new facility, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London, as the Carl Bruce Community Room.

Firelands Electric Co-op is democratically controlled and governed by local people committed to policies that result in a safe and reliable electric system, fair rates, financial responsibility, and superior member service.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26, at Firelands Electric's new facility, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

OFFICE

103 Industrial Drive  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
419-929-1571

OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
www.firelandsec.com



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer  
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach  
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Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:  
members@firelandsec.com

