



GM'S REPORT

YOUR SOLAR PARTNER

As the affordability and availability of solar panels continues to grow, so does the number of people considering installing them. Whether you're interested in reducing your dependence on purchased power or helping the environment, there are many reasons to think about renewable energy. But installing solar panels on your property is a major decision. There are many factors to take into consideration — and it's not always the right choice for every home or every homeowner.

As a member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative, Firelands Electric's motives are not profit driven, but rather to improve the quality of life for our members and our communities. That's why our energy advisors are dedicated to providing co-op members with valuable information and advice throughout the renewable energy decision-making process. We want to help members avoid unplanned — and unwanted — surprises down the road.

Firelands Electric can help you determine whether solar panels are a good fit for your home or property, as well as calculate their potential electric generation. We can work with you to make sure the solar vendor's terms of repayment, maintenance fees, and other details of the process are clear.

Our energy advisor can also discuss how your solar panel system will integrate with Firelands Electric's distribution grid and how the energy generated will be offset through our net metering policy. A proactive cooperative-contractor-homeowner partnership from the beginning of the project helps to ensure you have the best possible experience and outcome with your renewable project.

A key consideration when looking to lower your energy consumption is to ensure your home has reached its peak efficiency. Implementing energy efficiency measures like adding insulation or sealing joints and cracks for air leakage are investments you should strongly consider to maximize the value of any energy solution, including a renewable project. An energy consultation can help you get started, and Firelands Electric Cooperative offers members this service for FREE — providing you with specific efficiency recommendations for your individual home.

With the scale of a project like solar panels, choosing the right professionals and vendors is an important consideration, and we want to make sure that Firelands members are making choices that meet their needs and are best for their specific circumstances. Doing research before you sign on the dotted line could save you lots of time, money, and frustration later.

Solar dealers often know very little about Firelands Electric's distribution system and connection requirements. Some have been known to cut corners during installation, inaccurately predict energy output, or fail to advise potential buyers that they will still be responsible for a monthly bill from their electric provider. Make sure to look at the full picture of what your energy costs will be when faced with paying monthly bills for solar panels plus any electricity purchased from the cooperative for the next 15 to 20 years. Always be cautious of promises to reduce your bill by more than half or produce more electricity than your home uses. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

If you're interested in lowering your electric bills or learning more about renewable energy, please reach out to our energy advisors. Firelands Electric Cooperative is a great resource to discuss the benefits and considerations of rooftop solar, especially before committing to an installation. Please contact us before making such an expensive and long-term decision. We're here to help and are always here for you!

For more information about solar panels, check out the Q&A on the next page, visit www.ohiosolar101.com/fec, or contact Firelands Electric's energy advisor at 1-800-533-8658.



Dan McNaull
GENERAL MANAGER



RENEWABLE ENERGY

Solar FAQs

What you need to know before signing on the dotted line

Today's homeowners want options. Some are seeking to reduce the amount of electricity they need to purchase. Others are looking for a green energy source. For these and many other reasons, more and more homeowners are exploring rooftop solar panels.

Before committing to such a substantial project, it's important to do your research. To help in this process, we've compiled some of the essential points to consider prior to signing a renewable solar installation contract.

Consider the condition and location of your home

- Think about the overall energy efficiency of your home. Could it be improved? If the answer is yes, investing in efficiency upgrades may be a better return on your investment than installing a renewable system.
- Is the age and pitch of the roof sufficient to support solar panels?
- Does the orientation of the sun in relation to the home allow for adequate exposure? Will trees or other buildings interfere with the path of sunlight to the panels?

How much electricity can you expect your panels to produce?

A good rule of thumb for small-scale solar in Ohio is that it will produce 1,250 kilowatt-hours (kWh) annually for every one kilowatt-direct current (kW-DC) of installed capacity. So, if you install a 10 kW-DC system, you could potentially generate 12,500 kWh per year (or about 1,000 kWh per month). Also keep in mind that while the nationwide production capacity for solar panels averages 40%, conditions in Ohio typically result in just 14%.

How long is the payback?

The payback period can range from 10 years to more than 20 years, depending on the system cost, available rebates and incentives, and the amount of electricity produced. A word of caution: Many solar dealers base the projected payback period on a 3% yearly increase in electricity rates. If the increase is less, it will take longer to receive a payback on your investment. For Firelands Electric members, the cooperative's rates have increased less than 3.3% over the past five years.

Make sure to read the fine print of any financing agreement.

- Is there a large, up-front payment required or are fees spread out over time?
- Will the homeowner actually own the panels or will they be leased?
- Are there ongoing maintenance fees or hidden costs? Are rebates or other financial incentives guaranteed?

What happens if I produce more electricity during the month than what I use?

If your solar system generates excess power, it is credited to your monthly Firelands Electric bill. Any excess kWh continue to roll over to the next month until it is needed to pay for power that you purchase from the cooperative.

Firelands Electric recognizes that consumer interest in green energy sources and renewables is valuable, and we stand ready to help our members determine what will work best for their situation. If you have questions about residential solar, visit <https://ohiosolar101.com/fec> or contact the cooperative at 1-800-533-8658.

COVID-19 PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

When the COVID-19 crisis started to unfold, many of our members saw their financial circumstances change. To help during these difficult and unprecedented times, on March 17, Firelands Electric Cooperative announced the temporary suspension of disconnections, load limiting, and penalties for nonpayment.

As Ohio slowly reopens, the cooperative is also beginning to return to normal. Nonpayment procedures will be reinstated beginning **JULY 13**.

For information or questions on arrangements to pay any past due bills, visit www.firelandsec.com or call our billing department at 1-800-533-8658.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

THE UPS AND DOWNS



A look at what can cause changes in your electricity use

If you've noticed a change in how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) your home has been using lately, it may be time to do some research. We've put together a list of what to examine — and also some of the most overlooked causes of increased electricity consumption.

1. Look at your history

First, verify that your kWh use has in fact changed. Locate your previous bills or log into SmartHub and review your electricity use over the past year. While it may be different than the previous month, it may surprise you to find that your use is actually normal for the time of year. For the most accurate comparison, look at what you used during the same month last year. This will allow you to evaluate two similar time frames, with comparable temperatures and weather patterns.

2. Check the weather

Use SmartHub to track the average daily temperatures. Were there any days that were notably warmer or cooler than usual? Even if your heating or cooling system is always set at 72 degrees, any fluctuation in the outdoor temperature affects how hard it must work — and how much electricity is consumed. For instance, if the outside temperature is 78 degrees, your air conditioner only needs to reduce the inside temperature by six degrees. However, if it's 86 degrees out, that increases the difference to 14 degrees, causing your system to run much more frequently and use more energy.

3. Assess what is plugged in

You might be shocked to learn just how much electricity your home still uses when it is empty. Even if you're on vacation for a week or two, your water heater, HVAC system, refrigerator, freezer, and other appliances still run unless they are unplugged or shut off at the breaker. In fact, items such as TVs, game consoles, entertainment systems, and chargers that are plugged into an outlet always use a small amount of electricity, even if nobody is home to use them.

4. Check your appliances

As appliances, pumps, water heaters, and HVAC systems age, they become less efficient. If yours are more than 15 years old, consider replacing them with a new ENERGY

STAR-certified model. Not only will it save you money in operating costs, but Firelands Electric members can qualify for rebates on many of these purchases. Visit www.firelandsec.com/content/member-programs to learn more. And if you want to find out exactly how much electricity your 120V appliances use, inexpensive monitors are available online and at many home improvement stores for just \$20 to \$30.

5. Consider lifestyle changes

Sometimes changes that seem small can actually have a big impact on your electricity use. Playing host to houseguests for a couple of weeks, for instance, can increase the amount of cooking and laundry, which affects your energy use. Installing new items like a large-screen TV, a swimming pool with a pump, or a hot tub can also have a significant effect on your kilowatt-hour use. Running a pool pump just eight hours a day, for example, can increase your consumption by 500 kWh per month, costing you \$60 to \$70. Other items that can create a noticeable change in your home's electricity use include humidifiers and dehumidifiers, portable heaters, livestock heat lamps, and adding a spare fridge in the garage.

6. Don't compare to your neighbors

No two families use electricity in the same way and no two homes are built exactly the same, so if you are comparing your use with your neighbor's, you're not getting an accurate evaluation. The better comparison is between your home's use of electricity now compared with the same time last year, which is shown on your bill and in SmartHub.

Making a few small changes to how your home uses electricity can have a big impact on overall consumption and your monthly bills. If you would like further assistance in determining what is using the kilowatt-hours in your home, contact Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule your FREE energy consultation.





SAFETY

CLOSE CALL

Safety is our top priority

After completing repairs on a cooperative member's home, a contractor was backing his truck out of the yard toward the driveway. Misjudging the distance, he accidentally sideswiped the electric meter with his vehicle. The meter was torn off the house and split into two pieces, which also damaged the meter base and socket.

The member, wondering what had caused his power to go out, emerged from his home just as the contractor tried to place one half of the broken meter back into the socket in an attempt to restore power. At that moment, an arc flash occurred between the meter and the socket — an event that can reach up to 35,000 degrees, or nearly four times hotter than the surface of the sun.

Hit by nearly 2,000 pounds per square foot of blast pressure, the contractor was thrown back eight feet and landed on the ground in a daze.

While the story above may sound like something out of a safety manual, it describes an actual event that recently took place in Firelands Electric Cooperative's service territory. The contractor was extremely lucky and walked away from the accident with minimal aftereffects. Those working in the electric industry know others who have not been so fortunate. Incidents like the one above and those involving other electrical equipment such as power lines, utility poles, and transformers, can result in severe injuries.

Anytime someone comes into contact with electrical equipment, no matter how brief, there is a risk of injury. Everything from a simple fall to muscle and nerve damage, serious external and internal burns, and even cardiac arrest can result from just a split second of exposure to electricity. Regrettably, in some cases electrical contact even leads to death.

The best way to prevent shock is to avoid any kind of contact with electrical equipment.

- NEVER purposely touch equipment.
- Steer clear of power lines, utility poles, transformers, and guy wires.



- Don't try to remove or alter electric meters. Without proper protection and procedures, this is very dangerous. Meter-tampering is also against the law.
- Never use anything to nudge or push at devices, even items like tools, sticks, brooms, or ladders.
- Always be mindful when using power tools, ATVs, tractors, and other vehicles near electric lines.
- Be aware of your surroundings and stay a minimum of ten feet away from any electrical equipment.
- Remember that the power lines coming into your home are not the same as your inside wiring. These outside lines typically carry 7,200 volts, and in some cases nearly 12,500 volts.

Even with taking precautions, we know that accidents can still happen. If, for example, a balloon, toy, or tree branch gets caught in a power line or a vehicle knocks into a meter or pad-mounted transformer, DO NOT attempt to fix the problem on your own. Call for help — contact Firelands Electric Cooperative or your local law enforcement agency. If the situation is an emergency, dial 911. If you encounter an accident involving another person, don't rush in to assist if they are near electrical

equipment. Although you have the best intentions, this can actually increase the danger by putting you at risk for injury and possibly further harming the victim. Call 911 right away. They will send help and contact the electric provider immediately.

Unlike the general public, Firelands Electric's linemen and meter technicians are armed with tools and equipment specifically designed to work with live power lines. Fire-retardant clothing, insulated rubber gloves and overshoes, nonconductive telescoping hot sticks, and other tools are used to safely work on power lines at the scene of an accident and on everyday maintenance. This equipment is tested frequently and replaced on a regular basis to ensure it will properly protect the cooperative's linemen.

In addition to their specialized gear, all of Firelands' journeyman linemen have accumulated over 8,000 hours

of extensive training and experience on the operation and safety of the cooperative's equipment. In fact, linemen participate in safety training every month in order to stay on top of the latest procedures and best practices.

Firelands Electric Cooperative's mission is to provide safe, reliable, affordable power to our members. Safety for our members, our employees, and our community is first and foremost. Our linemen are well trained to perform their jobs so that both they and the public are protected from potential hazards. Our staff works hard to educate members of all ages about staying safe around electricity. For more information on electrical safety, visit www.firelandsec.com/content/safety-line-clearance or contact our office at 1-800-533-8658 if you have specific questions.

WHAT TO DO

If a power line falls on your vehicle, the safest option is to stay inside your vehicle until help arrives. Only attempt to leave the vehicle if it is on fire.

To exit safely:

- Jump out of the vehicle, making sure NO part of your body or clothing touches the ground and vehicle at the same time.
- Land with both feet together and in small, shuffling steps, move at least 40 ft. away from the vehicle.
- The ground could be energized. Shuffling away with both feet together decreases the risk of electrical shock.



Congratulations to Dan Whitaker of New London! Dan was the winner of the \$25 bill credit in our recent SmartHub text messaging contest.

The Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be closed on

Friday, July 3

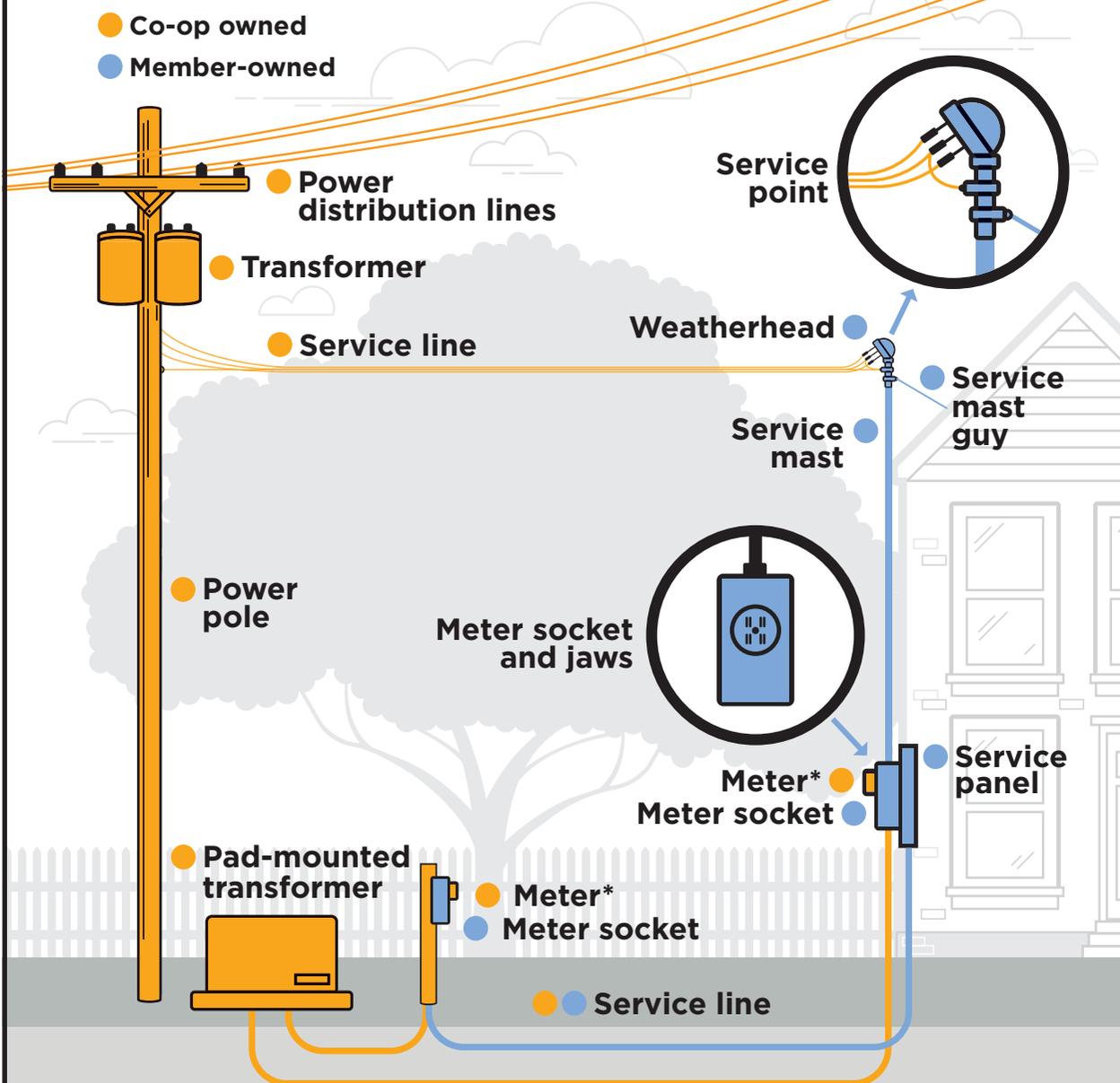
in observance of Independence Day. As always, emergency service is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-533-8658.



Who Owns What?

Firelands Electric Cooperative-Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by Firelands Electric (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the cooperative, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



*This graphic depicts overhead and underground service. Please be aware of which type of service you receive at your home or business. *Note: If you have a pad-mounted transformer, the meter can be installed one of two ways, as shown.*

GOVERNMENT

ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action®

Supporting those who advocate for electric cooperatives

Whether we like it or not, legislation can impact the ability to provide safe, reliable, affordable power. That's why it's important to elect individuals who understand the concerns of America's electric cooperatives. It's also why so many cooperative members choose to join ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action.

ACRE Co-op Owners brings together cooperative members from across the country who are dedicated to making their voices heard on issues that affect their electric bills as well as the quality of power in their homes, businesses, and communities. A grassroots movement, the group is powered by more than 6,000 electric cooperative members in Ohio and over 34,000 throughout the U.S.

Support

Contributions from those who belong to ACRE Co-op Owners are used to support candidates on both the state and federal levels who recognize the unique needs of member-owned electric cooperatives. As a bipartisan organization, it backs those who support the goals of the nation's electric cooperatives — regardless of their political party.

Advocate

Having elected officials who are on the same page as electric cooperatives is essential. It places advocates for the co-op at the heart of the policymaking arena. By understanding the concerns of rural America, these legislators can encourage the passage of policies that help electric co-ops continue to provide dependable power and quality service to 42 million Americans.

Educate

ACRE Co-op Owners educates current and potential lawmakers about the distinctive business model of electric cooperatives, including its advantages and its challenges. Through newsletters and other communications, the organization also serves as a tool to keep co-op members informed of proposed legislation that could affect their electricity.

Make your voice heard! Use the form below to join ACRE Co-op Owners today, or visit www.firelandsec.com for more information.



I want to help keep the voice of rural electric cooperatives heard in the political process by participating in ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action.

Monthly Bill Addition

- REGULAR: \$2.08 PER MONTH (\$25/YEAR)
- CENTURY CLUB: \$8.33 PER MONTH (\$100/YEAR)
- PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$41.66 PER MONTH (\$500/YEAR)*
- OTHER \$ _____

One-Time Contribution

- REGULAR: \$25
- CENTURY CLUB: \$100
- PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$500*
- OTHER \$ _____

I affirm that my contribution has been made with non-corporate funds (Please make checks out to Firelands Electric Cooperative):

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____
 CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ COOPERATIVE: _____
 EMAIL: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

*Federal Election Law requires the following information for contributions exceeding \$200:

EMPLOYER: _____ OCCUPATION: _____

Contributions to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Action Committee for Rural Electrification® (ACRE®) are not tax deductible. Contributions to ACRE are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. You have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Any contribution guidelines presented are merely suggestions. You are free to contribute more or less than the suggested amounts, or not at all. NRECA will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount contributed or a decision not to contribute.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met April 28 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 29 membership applications for approval by the board.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department, including work being completed in conjunction with county and state road projects.
- The board reviewed and approved a report from a safety meeting held April 26.
- General Manager Dan McNaull reviewed the trustee election process.
- The board discussed the current coronavirus pandemic situation in Ohio. For the health and safety of all, the board and management decided to convert the annual meeting of members to a virtual format. The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on June 20 via broadcast video and an audio-only option.
- McNaull advised that the cooperative's drive-thru would reopen to the public on Monday, May 4.
- Trustee Kevin Reidy reported on the April OREC meeting that he attended via teleconference call.
- McNaull reviewed the outage report for March and the status of the 2020 tree trimming program.
- The board discussed potential capital credit retirements in August. Decisions regarding the 2020 retirement will be made at the May meeting.
- McNaull reviewed the results of the cooperative's American Customer Satisfaction Index 2020 survey. Firelands received an 89, its highest score to date.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the March financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28, at Firelands Electric's facility, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

OUTAGE HOTLINE

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OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
www.firelandsec.com



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GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaull

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

