

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



EDITION: MARCH 2021

A stormy start to 2021

Continuous challenges with winter weather caused many Corn Belt Energy members to experience outages during the first week of 2021 with some locations experiencing multiple outages as ice, snow and freezing fog impacted the co-op's service area.

It all began early on New Year's Day as an ice storm moved through Corn Belt Energy's service area resulting in widespread power outages. As crews worked to restore power, they encountered 1/4" and more ice on lines, trees in power lines and accessibility issues due to snowy and icy roadways and access areas. The damage to Corn Belt Energy's system did not stop there when a snowstorm travelled through the service area less than two days later. The accumulation of snow brought on additional weight to the ice-covered lines and trees and caused further power outages.

During the entire outage event, Corn Belt Energy members



experienced a collective total of 28,762 outages.

Working to restore power

Crews were actively engaged in the restoration process beginning early on the morning of Friday, January 1, and continued to work 24/7 restoring outages. As soon as we were able to determine the bearing of the storm damage, Corn Belt Energy reached out to the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives to activate the Illinois Electric Cooperative Emergency Work Plan and help Corn Belt Energy bring in crews from sister cooperatives to assist in the restoration process. The emergency work

plan is designed to expeditiously provide personnel, equipment and materials to cooperatives in Illinois that need assistance during an emergency. "We are grateful to have the assistance of Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, EnerStar Electric Cooperative, MJM Electric Cooperative, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative and Shelby Electric Cooperative," remarked Don Taylor, President and CEO of Corn Belt Energy.

In typical storm restoration efforts, a storm passes through the region damaging electrical equipment and power outages occur. At that time, we begin restoration efforts





and continually restore power to members reducing the number of overall outages.

Due to the atypical nature of this outage, we experienced new outages over the next 6 days. The effects of this storm caused a unique sequence of outages occurring over time and each day presented more challenges. As we restored power to members, the weather conditions continued to cause additional damage to our system and subsequently over the days following the ice and snow storms, trees and lines continued to fall at various times. This is why some areas that did not experience

outages initially as the ice and snow storms rolled through our region experienced outages two or even three days later and why some locations have had more than one outage during the winter storm.

The result was a cumulative outage number that did not greatly decrease despite the continued progress with our outage restoration efforts. As we restored outages to members, more outages were being reported.

During an outage of this scale, Corn Belt Energy employees are all hands-on deck and work extended hours to serve our membership.

While damages included broken poles, broken cross arms, downed lines, and extensive tree damage resulting in downed trees in lines, other outages did occur during the same timeframe as a result of vehicle accidents as well as loss of transmission feed to one of our substations in the southern part of our service area. Damage not only occurred with Corn Belt Energy owned equipment but members experienced damage of their equipment as well.

Seeing the good

While our storm restoration efforts were not without challenges, it is remarkable to see good in people. We are overwhelmed by the patience and understanding of our members during this difficult time.

And even amidst a pandemic, the generosity that our crews received while out in the public was truly amazing. Many acts of kindness were displayed randomly and often. The kind words, the hot food, the snacks and especially the patience and respect was deeply impactful.

“We continue to be in awe of the understanding and kindness that our members and the public has demonstrated. The team was touched deeply by the gratitude of the members.” stated Taylor.

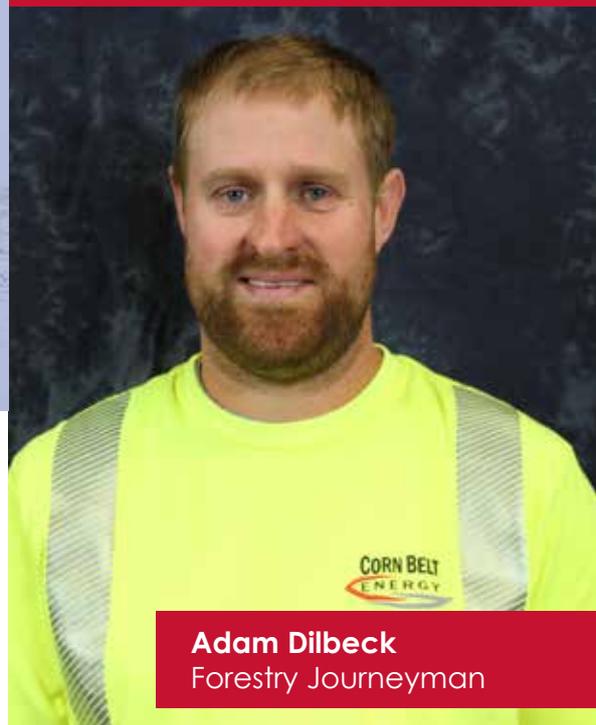
Corn Belt Energy also appreciates the assistance of members who alerted us to downed lines, poles and other damage in their area as well as the assistance of township and county road commissioners, fire departments and law enforcement for providing information and traffic management during the outage.

Continued focus on safety

As our line crews work to protect the safety and well-being of themselves and others, we encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of you and your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations.

If you have a portable generator, please be sure to follow proper safety precautions. Portable generators can also prove fatal to line workers and your neighbors when used improperly. Generator





Adam Dilbeck
Forestry Journeyman

owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules. For more information on generator safety, refer to our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com.

If someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life sustaining equipment, remember to include backup power in your emergency preparedness plan. Always be prepared and

put together an emergency preparedness kit including: bottled water, food, flashlights, hand-crank or battery powered radios, first aid kit, medications and medical items, and cell phone device chargers.

For a list of radio stations providing outage updates and emergency information for your local area during an outage, visit our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com or contact us at 800-879-0339 for the most up-to-date information.

Improving reliability through tree selection and maintenance

Trees play a valuable role in our member communities and around their homesteads. They provide shade, wildlife habitat, and many other environmental benefits. However, tall trees that exist near power lines can threaten our ability to provide safe, reliable electric service. Approximately 90% of tree-related interruptions are caused by seemingly healthy tree branches that have been broken and come into contact with power lines. High winds, ice and storms such as the ice storm in January can cause tree branches to break and fall onto lines, utility poles and other equipment, causing damage and service interruptions. Corn Belt Energy recommends planting low-growing trees and shrubs near

power lines and keeping tall trees at a further distance. Local nurseries can offer expertise in tree and shrub selection to help members choose vegetation that will work best around power lines while adding beauty to their property.

Corn Belt Energy has certified arborists on staff to ensure that the trimming adheres to the same professional standards as other companies. The difficulty comes when arborist practices are not possible due to the proximity of the main body of the tree to the power line. Corn Belt Energy uses “directional trimming” techniques to discourage the growth of sprouts that could grow into Corn Belt’s equipment, while also minimizing

How long have you worked at Corn Belt Energy?
5 years

What is your role at Corn Belt Energy?
My role includes trimming trees, removing hazard trees and right of way work.

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?
I enjoy removing hazard trees and storm work the most.

If there is one piece of advice that you could share with our members, what would it be?
If you're unsure about any trees close to power lines call Corn Belt Energy for assistance.

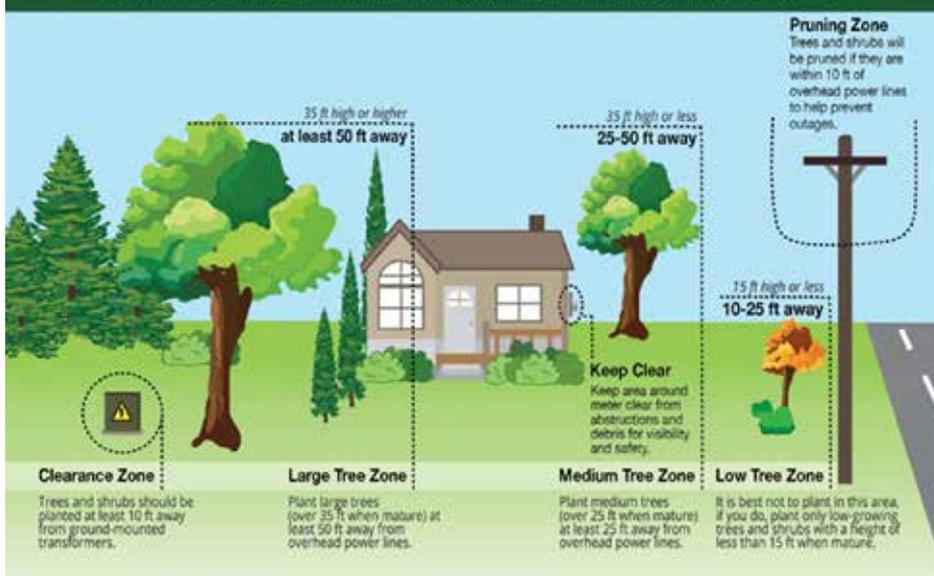
Corn Belt Energy puts SAFETY FIRST. What safety tip would you share with our members?
If trees or power lines are down stay back and call Corn Belt Energy.

What are your hobbies and outside interests?
I enjoy spending time with my family, four-wheeling and golfing.

Who or what inspires you?
I am inspired by my family.

RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE!

Before planting new trees to improve the look of your yard, you will need to keep a few things in mind.



any stress on the tree. Trimming clearances are based on the growth rate and mature size and shape of each tree, and most importantly the location of the tree in relation to the power line. Other considerations can be what type of electric facility is present, the condition or health of the tree. Trees trimmed for power line clearance may be significantly changed in appearance and in some cases complete tree removal may be necessary. It is also much more cost effective to remove small saplings of tall-growing tree species that are planted directly or voluntarily grown beneath cooperative power lines.

Corn Belt Energy follows industry best practices when determining if tree removal is necessary.

Additionally, when it comes to selecting the best tree to plant near power lines, think low-growing trees that mature at heights of less than 25 feet. Selecting the right trees will help members avoid power outages and will reduce the need for utility tree trimming in the future. There are a number of low-growing species members can consider, with different features and characteristics. Many of these trees have flowers, fruit, or differences in fall color. Consider the

space available for the tree and other site conditions, as well as the mature height and width of your tree selection.

Considering growth rates, and mature heights can be hard for a member at the time of selection. There are other things they should consider. There is a need to make sure that the tree selected is conditioned for the climate it will be established in. The amount of moisture needed, temperature, amount of sunlight, and the soil composition at the planting are valuable considerations.

Power lines and lot lines consistently intersect, whether in front or in the rear of a member's property. When considering your goals, if privacy is one of them, then shrubbery may be your answer. Shrubby can be used to screen your view of a neighbor's back yard or distract the eye from nearby power lines and other utility equipment, but don't plant them too close to cooperative poles or equipment, as they can become an obstruction for crews that need to access Corn Belt Energy equipment. Some species of shrubs can provide a good visual break between properties and have beautiful ornamental traits that make them smart choices when landscaping your home.

For more information about safety around power lines, questions about trees/shrubs or Corn Belt Energy's vegetation management program, contact us at 800-879-0339.

TREE PLANTING TIPS

- Choose a tree that will fit the space.
- Decide if you want single stem, multi-stem, fall color, seeds and/or blossoms.
- If road salt or salt spray will reach your tree, choose one that is salt tolerant.
- Make sure the tree you select is compatible with your soil conditions. Your soil might be predominantly wet, dry, clay, silt or sandy
- Some tree suggestions include: Amur maple, Eastern Redbud, Cornelian or Kousa Dogwood, Ann or Star Magnolia, and Prairie Fire Crabapple.
- Be safe! You are required by Illinois law to call 811 (800-892-0123 or illinois1call.com) to locate gas, electric, and telephone lines before you dig—and that includes when planting a tree. Contacting a power line with a shovel or pick can damage power lines—or worse—cause severe injuries or death.
- The hole you dig for your tree should be about 1" to 2" shallower and two to three times wider than the root ball. Be sure the top roots are no more than 2" to 3" below the root ball soil surface. Remove any excess soil. There should be no gap in the soil around the base of the trunk.
- If the ball is encased in a wire basket, remove at least the top third of the basket. If the ball is wrapped in burlap and rope, remove them from the top of the root ball and the trunk of the tree.
- Cut any roots that are extending from the root ball, roots that may be circling a containerized tree, or other defective roots. Be sure to cut cleanly with a sharp tool.

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