

# Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Northwestern REC

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[www.northwesternrec.coop](http://www.northwesternrec.coop)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kathy Cooper-Winters, District 5**  
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Board Vice Chair

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Board Secretary

**Earl Koon, District 2**  
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**Amy Wellington, Editor**

**Linda King, Managing Editor**

## From the President & CEO



# The very first 'virtual' annual meeting

By Bill Buchanan

WHEN the coronavirus pandemic first hit Pennsylvania in March, the August annual meeting wasn't even on our minds. It wasn't until May when we started to really consider the fact that the 84th annual meeting of the membership was not going to happen. At least not like we had originally planned.

Many co-ops across the country were canceling their annual events completely — something that has never happened in the history of electric cooperatives. Our initial plan was similar to the 2019 annual meeting. We had intended to hold the business portion of the meeting at the New Beginnings Church of God in Mead-

ville, and then provide gate passes and food vouchers to the Crawford County Fair for all the attendees. This format was well received in 2019, and we were looking forward to another successful annual meeting this year.

By the time the Crawford County Fair Board decided to cancel the 2020 fair, we already knew our business meeting could not be open to the public due to all the COVID-19 restrictions in place. Luckily, the New Beginnings Church of God had the technology in place for us to easily “go virtual.” So that is exactly what we did. We also created a drive-thru service at the church for our members to pick up

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WELCOME: Kathryn Cooper-Winters, board chair, and Bill Buchanan, president & CEO, welcome members to the annual meeting gift drive-thru.

**First “virtual” annual meeting**

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their annual meeting gift. There was no meal provided, and the only entertainment that day included Kathy Cooper-Winters and me as we donned our masks and from 6-foot distances greeted the people representing 440 memberships who joined us that day.

The virtual 84th annual meeting of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative went on without a glitch. If you were not able to watch the annual meeting live on Aug. 22, you are more than welcome to view it any time on our YouTube channel, which you can find linked on the top of our website at NorthwesternREC.com. Presentations were made by Kathryn Cooper-Winters, board chair; Earl Koon, board treasurer; and yours truly. We addressed the “State of the Co-op” in each of our presentations, which, to make a long story short, is pretty great.

Ms. Cooper-Winters emphasized the importance of the national Co-ops Vote initiative and exercising your right to vote this November. In this issue of *Penn Lines*, you will find a review of the congressional, senatorial and Pennsylvania legislative seats up for election this year in cooperative territories. Those candidates who have a record of strong support for the rural electric system and the members in our rural area are highlighted for you, the voter. She also announced the co-op will be retiring over \$444,000 in capital credits later this year, so watch for your capital credits checks in early January. If you would like to donate your capital credits check to the Member-to-Member fund before checks are written, simply call the Member Services Department at 1-800-352-0014 to let us know.

I believe it’s important to explore innovative solutions to support our membership and promote our quality-of-life mission. For example, we



ONE WAY: Clarissa Schneider, executive secretary of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, directs traffic at the 84th annual meeting.

want to explore large-scale solar, battery technology, broadband, electric vehicles and charging stations. As we continue to promote energy efficiency and cost-saving programs for our members, we also work to identify new electric loads that will help gen-

*We addressed the “State of the Co-op” in each of our presentations, which, to make a long story short, is pretty great.*

erate future revenues for our cooperative.

As stated in our bylaws, we must achieve a quorum to move forward with an annual meeting. This requirement was met with our director

election process, which included 1,247 electronic or mail-in voters. As announced during the annual meeting by Marsha Furno, chair of the Member Panel for Director Elections, the results of the 2020 election are: District 6, Kim Docter; District 7, David Snyder; District 8, Marian Davis; and District 9, Lisa Chausse.

Yes, the 84th (or the first virtual) annual meeting of Northwestern REC may possibly be as memorable for us as the very first annual meeting was for our forefathers but for very different reasons. As things are today, all we know for certain is the 85th annual meeting will be held on Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021. We hope to have an in-person event, as well as provide gate passes and food vouchers to the Crawford County Fair.

I look forward to serving you this next year and hope to see you in person at our 2021 membership meetings and our next annual meeting. Take care and stay healthy.

Cooperatively yours,  
Bill Buchanan  
President & CEO

# Northwestern REC

Your **Whistone Energy**® Partners 



**MEET EVIE:** Evie the EV was front and center at the annual meeting gift drive-thru. She is a 2019 Tesla Model 3 and the newest member of the co-op fleet.

**NEW DIRECTORS:** New directors elected are, seated from left: Kim Docter and Marian Davis, and standing from left: David Snyder and Lisa Chausse.



**FRONT LINES:** R -L Emily Roberts and Amy DeWoody, field services, help a member register for her free gift.

# Northwestern REC's pole testing and treatment program: A fundamental piece of NREC's electric system reliability

by Stephen Miller, *engineering manager*

ALMOST 50,000 wooden utility poles cover Northwestern REC's service territory. These poles help to deliver power to our members' homes and businesses. They are exposed to our harsh Northwest Pennsylvania winters and bask in the sun during our humid summer months. Each pole is expected to last 30 years or more, and our pole testing and treatment (PTT) program can extend and protect that life.

PTT is a maintenance program that, like any maintenance program, helps ensure reliability. Our goal is to inspect and, if needed, treat each pole every 10 years. For us, that's about 5,000 poles per year.

The PTT program relies on contractors who are experts in pole inspection, maintenance and restoration. It has a direct impact on safety and reliability. Our goal is to replace poles before they can cause an interruption to service for the membership. By treating healthy poles to prevent decay, we can extend their useful life. This saves money for the membership and makes your cooperative a good steward of natural resources.

## If we visit your property

Northwestern REC has set the goal of inspecting our poles every 10 years, and when they're located on member property, the PTT team's goal is to be as unobtrusive as possible. Ideally, we want our crews to get in and out without the member ever knowing we were there.

In advance of a PTT inspection,



AT WORK: This silhouette of a lineworker was taken by Ross Thomas, journeyman lineman.

members will receive a letter detailing inspection dates as well as the contracting company that may visit their property. The co-op will also attempt to notify members of these upcoming inspections by the use of automated phone calls. We ask that members maintain accurate address and contact information on their co-op accounts so they can receive these beneficial notifications.

At its most basic, this is how we keep our poles standing strong:

### ► Poles 0-14 years old

Contractors complete a visual inspection. If the pole is not visibly damaged (say, by weather or pests), then it's good to go.

► **Poles over 15 years old**  
Contractors complete a visual inspection, as well as partial excavation with sound and bore inspections (hitting the pole with a hammer while listening for the sound of voids and pole deficiencies). They measure the remaining shell thickness with a special tool looking for any internal decay. Healthy poles are treated with an eco-conscious preservative and fumigant to prolong pole life. Damaged poles or poles with a reduced strength are replaced.

► **Poles 30-plus years old**  
Contractors complete all of the above inspections, plus do a full excavation around the pole and remove any external decay. If the pole meets the strength and condition requirements, it is treated with an internal eco-conscious fumigant and groundline treatment.

► Our inspectors also visually assess all poles for other potential maintenance issues, such as damaged or broken crossarms, slack or damaged guy wires, or other faulty equipment, adding an additional layer of safety and reliability to our system.

At the end of the day, Northwestern REC's pole testing and treatment program is about preserving reliability and about doing everything we can to ensure that electricity is being delivered safely. It is our responsibility to maintain these poles and give them physical care, and we are proud to serve our members. ☀

## Will charging your electric vehicle leave you ‘Singin’ in the Rain?’

MANY NOVICE electric vehicle (EV) owners and those interested in plug-in cars wonder what will happen if they charge their electric vehicle in wet or snowy conditions.

Will I get shocked? Is it dangerous? Those are good questions to ask because usually electricity and water do not mix. Normally, standing on a wet surface and plugging something in is a bad idea.

However, using your EV-charging equipment is usually safe to do in wet conditions. The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) designed and rigorously tested EV-charging equipment to ensure safe charging in almost any weather conditions (we don’t advise it during a hurricane or flood, for example). The car’s electrical system is engineered to resist rain and water intrusion, as well as dust particles, all of which could damage it.

Reputable charging equipment systems should be engineered with

the same precautions. After all, if they weren’t, EV enthusiasts could only charge their vehicles on a nice day.

That being said, there are some general charging station precautions to keep in mind. Safe Electricity and Northwestern REC point out these EV-charging safety tips:

1. All components of a charging station should be in good working order. Look closely for signs of vandalism or disrepair.
2. Although it sounds obvious, never use an EV charger if it is off its base or otherwise damaged, which could be caused by a natural disaster, major construction mishap, or other type of accident.
3. If you are considering having a Level 2 charging station installed at home, make sure it is certified by a reputable and independent testing laboratory (or purchased from the car manufacturer) and profession-

ally installed. (Level 1 charging requires a regular outlet. Level 2 equipment is more complicated and requires a 240v outlet.)

4. Always follow the manufacturer’s directions when charging your vehicle.
5. Place charging components up and out of reach when not in use.
6. If you have an at-home unit in a carport or exposed area, make sure the outlet is covered so water does not get inside the outlet.

For more information about electrical safety, go to [NorthwesternREC.com](http://NorthwesternREC.com) and check out our EV pages.

If you have questions about an at-home Level 2 charging station and its energy use, contact our Energy Solutions Department at 1-800-352-0014. Level 3 charging stations, which fully charge an EV in about an hour or less, are usually offered at public charging stations. ☀

Then. Now. Always.  
We’re proud to power your life.  
**October is National Co-op Month.**



**#PowerOn**