

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**



from all of us at DCEC!



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A Message from our CEO

We hope that everyone has safely been weathering the storms and is having a safe and happy New Year!

As we head into this presidential election year, we are reminded that there is so much yet to be determined about our future. How we prepare for and respond to the uncertainty ahead will likely make a big difference in how we weather the upcoming storms, whether they are political storms, economic storms, or actual weather storms!

While we are talking about storms, I wanted to give a brief recap on our December storm which saw a loss of power to as many as 3,192 members for anywhere from a few minutes to multiple days. Cooperative staff worked diligently through this outage, with assistance from Steuben REC, to get the lights back on for everyone. A subsequent storm hit our service territory again on the evening of January 9th, with high winds toppling trees and power poles,

and creating more havoc to our system. Thanks this time to Otsego Electric Cooperative for sending crews to assist.

We at the coop thank the many, many members who call in to not only report their power problems, but to send their prayers and well wishes for our line and tree crew members out there working in adverse weather conditions to restore power. As you are likely aware, when outages occur, the Cooperative dispatches one or more crews to determine the cause of the outage and restore power to those affected. During large storms, this may mean that it could take multiple hours, or even multiple days, to get everyone's power back on.

See elsewhere in this issue for preparation advice on how to be prepared for upcoming storms. While there is no way for the Cooperative to guarantee 100% availability of power, there are steps you can take

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Powering Our Rural Communities

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to be prepared to ride through the occasional outages that do occur.

Many members that have more critical needs for sustained power have worked with the coop to purchase a Generlink switch to work with their portable generator. These switches allow for the safe interconnection of your own generator to your home, so that you can continue to power critical loads during a grid outage. As always, feel free to reach out to us at the Cooperative for more information on getting a Generlink switch for your residence. We have a mock-up Generlink display in our lobby and our staff is happy to explain different options from Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) to portable generators to permanent generators that come in handy during outage situations.

While the weather is always uncertain, we are faced with one certainty going forward, and that is in the rising costs of providing materials and doing business. The coop has not had an energy rate increase since 2016, and has only seen a handful of 50¢ monthly increases in that time, yet our costs have continued to rise. Expect to see the announcement of one or more public meetings coming soon to talk about new pricing structures that the Cooperative is planning to implement.

The US Energy Information Administration (<https://www.eia.gov/state/rankings/?sid=NY#series/31>) has listed New York as the ninth highest cost of energy in the nation at 23.23¢ per kWh*¹ as the average energy price, while DCEC's energy rates remain at roughly less than half that amount. I wish I could say that our rates would always remain that low, but expect that we will be making some adjustments in the next few months.

Once again, I wish everyone a happy New Year and look forward to connecting with you at one of our Member events in the near future!

Cooperatively Yours,

John Gasstrom



*as of September 2023

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration. "Rankings: Average Retail Price of Electricity to Residential Sector, September 2023 (cents/kWh)"

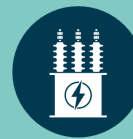
STAYING SAFE DURING AN OUTAGE

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including the:



Extent of the storm's destruction



Severity of utility equipment damage



Number and extent of outages



Accessibility to damaged equipment

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED

- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.



Prepare for a storm by gathering these items:

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|-----------------|
| | Bottles of water | | Extra batteries |
| | Non-perishable food | | Pet supplies |
| | Portable phone charger | | Blankets |
| | Prescriptions | | Warm clothing |
| | Battery-operated radio | | First-aid kit |
| | Flashlights | | Hand sanitizer |

THANK YOU for your patience during outages. When the lights go off, we are working safely and efficiently to restore power. The safety of our employees, as well as those we serve, is our TOP priority.

DCEC's 2024 Youth Delegate Program

BE A PART OF HISTORY! Seeking Youth Delegate Applicants for 2024!

- Are you a junior in High School or a parent of a junior in High School?
- Are you (or your junior-year child) interested in politics, law or environmental science? A utility field?
- Are you interested in helping your community?
- Would you enjoy visiting Washington DC on a free trip?

Then, this experience is for you!

This opportunity is to represent DCEC, as a youth delegate, in D.C. at The Legislative Conference in April. This could lead to another opportunity to represent the entirety of New York's Rural Electric Co-Ops at the National



Erin Coppersmith, 2023 Youth Delegate
2023-2024 Youth Leadership Council for NRECA

Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) 2025 conference. The program connects the young minds in rural America with political leaders in congress and senate. As a youth delegate, you will make change in both your personal community and the country as a whole. If making friends, learning about your community, implementing change and providing insight into what your view of the future is...

Then, this opportunity is for you!

Applications are due **February 16th, 2024** (interviews taking place 2/27/2024)
The Legislative Conference is held **April 22-24th, 2024** in Washington, DC

For application, information, and to hear more about 2023's Youth Delegate, Erin Coppersmith's experience, please visit our website at:

<https://www.dce.coop/2024-youth-delegate-program>

To be considered, students must meet the following qualifications:

- Be in their junior (11th grade) year
- Be a son/daughter of a member of DCEC
- Participate in extra-curricular activities & community service
- Be able to participate at DCEC's Annual Meeting



2023's Annual DCEC Food Drive benefited The Walton Food Pantry

Thank you to all members, employees, and directors who participated in DCEC's 2023 Food Drive. This year, we worked with the Walton Food Pantry to collect non-perishable, unexpired food items to support their effort of putting together Holiday Food Baskets for community members in need.

The Walton Food Pantry handed out their Holiday Food Baskets on December 12th and 19th. DCEC staff delivered our collected contributions on December 15th to Studio 190, an Arc of Delaware County program which coordinates volunteer staff to run and support the Walton Food Pantry.

We look forward to our annual food drive every year and are grateful to live and give in this wonderful community. Thank you again to all who participated!



Snowstorm and Outage Event 12/11 - 12/13/2023

Early in the morning on December 11th, a snowstorm covered the coop's service territory with anywhere from four inches to more than a foot of heavy, wet snow. As the snow stuck to our power lines, as well as tree branches, the temperatures dropped, causing even more trouble! This added weight caused tree limbs, and even entire trees, to fall – often impacting our lines (see photo below). To make the situation worse, this weight also caused our wires to sag, which can bring them in contact with another wire – resulting in a fuse opening. As we clear these problems and close the fuses back in, the snow and ice will often melt off the wires, and they spring back up making contact again, and re-opening the same fuses.



Cooperative staff began responding to outage calls early that morning. As the day went by, outage numbers climbed to nearly 3,200 members, with distribution circuits affected, as well as the NYSEG transmission feed to our Jefferson substation. Some of the first responding cooperative staff worked nearly 22 consecutive hours responding to storm impacts.

On December 12th, the cooperative's crews were joined by workers from Steuben Rural Electric Cooperative. With the mid-morning restoration of the transmission feed into our Jefferson Substation, the crews were able to restore power to large tracts of the Harpersfield, Davenport, Jefferson, Summit, and Gilboa areas. Wednesday, December 13th, brought the final day of storm work. Crews restored power to the remaining members of the cooperative and then began clearing up known issues that had not yet impacted power.

The cooperative would like to thank all of the dedicated staff who worked tirelessly to respond to this weather event, as well as all of the cooperative members for weathering this storm with us. We also thank all those who relayed critical information about the location of trees and downed wires.



Clean up with care

Once the storm has passed, it is tempting to go straight into yard clean-up mode. However, take time for safety.

Do not go outside if there is a power outage. There could be a downed power line, which could cause electrocution. Sometimes, downed lines can be covered by branches, storm debris, water, snow or ice.

Keep these additional safety tips in mind:

- **Do not trim trees/branches** within 10 feet of a power line.
- **Read all instructions** and be familiar with equipment you intend to use.
- **Do not use a chainsaw for the first time** during clean-up.
- **Follow all safety recommendations** when using power tools.

- **Carry a ladder horizontally** instead of vertically.
- **Look for overhead power lines** before carrying a ladder.
- **Always look up** for overhead power lines before removing debris from gutters.

- **Take your time.** Rushing can result in serious injury.
- **Wear proper shoes and clothing** when using ladders and power tools.
- **Call your electric utility** to report branches in power lines; never try to remove them yourself.



Remember, wait until an outage is restored before going outside to assess the damage.



Operations Update

The DCEC crews have been hard at work and are ready for a busy and productive 2024. We send our sincere appreciation to Steuben Rural Electric Cooperative for sending crews to assist with outages on December 12th-13th, and to Otsego Electric Cooperative for their help on January 10th. We had many outages all across our service territory during both of these storms, and all of the Cooperative's Line and Tree crews were in the field working on all of the outages in order to get power restored for you as quickly as possible. They all did a great job getting the electricity back on in a safe and systematic way and we applaud all of their efforts!

We have also been working on installing a number of new services, updates to existing services, and setting new poles. Line Superintendent, Mike Pietrantonio, reports that the line crew has set 75 new poles since July, which helps to strengthen our over-all electric system resiliency. We are expecting a busy spring as many members are getting their building plans in order for the upcoming year.

The Right of Way crews are working in the Andes area and have some special projects they will be working on as well. They will be clearing out the Tanglewood Lake line segment in the town of Delhi, clearing out trees around the Andes Substation and working on the new work orders that have been coming in. Next up, they will be in the Jefferson, Stamford, and Gilboa area working on our regular Right of Way clearing cycle.

We have also been working on updating some of our policies and procedures to make sure we are as efficient as possible and ready to handle anything that comes our way, and to ensure that we are continuing to keep our focus on safety as a primary concern. Look for an updated Service Rules and Regulations document and a Line Extension Policy on our website to become familiar with changes to our services.

-James G. Small
Manager of Operations, Job Training & Safety

Load Management Program Update

DCEC is in the process of selecting a new metering system and this system also performs our load control functions. Consequently, DCEC is no longer accepting applications to join the existing water heater load control program. Members currently enrolled will continue to be able to participate in the existing program and will be offered an opportunity to participate in our future load control programs when they are available.



firing up one **PORTABLE GENERATOR** is like starting **HUNDREDS OF CARS**

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), one fuel-powered portable generator produces as much carbon monoxide (CO) as hundreds of combustion-engine cars.

Using a portable generator in your home, garage or too close to your home is like starting a parking lot full of cars and letting the CO poison seep into your home. And the devastating result is almost immediate: The CO from one generator can kill in minutes.

USING A PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFELY

1. Always use a generator at least 20 feet away from your home.
2. Never operate one inside a home, on a porch or near windows and doors.
3. The 20-foot rule also applies to other locations, such as a shed, cabin, camper or trailer.
4. When shopping for a generator, look for one that produces reduced emissions.
5. Also look for one that shuts off automatically when high levels of CO are present.
6. Keep your generator well-maintained and follow all manufacturer's instructions.
7. Ensure CO detectors are installed on every level of your home and near or in bedrooms.
8. Test CO alarms monthly; also track their age. They need to be replaced every seven years.

Source: CPSC

Learn more at: 

TOP 3 REASONS for using a generator

1. Weather-related power outages.
2. Power shutoffs.
3. Temporary locations.

CO deaths associated with PORTABLE GENERATORS

Approximately **85** individuals die in the U.S. each year.

81% of deaths occur in residential locations.



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What You Need to Know About Capital Credits

In late 2023, DCEC's Board of Directors approved a Capital Credit retirement (refund) of 1997 in the amount of \$210,811.65. Members who are still active received a credit on their December 2023 bill listed as "1997 Capital Credit Retirement." Members no longer receiving electric service from DCEC were mailed a check, provided DCEC has their current address and the refund is \$5.00 or greater.

What are Capital Credits?

Capital credits represent each member's ownership of the Cooperative. They are the margins credited (or allocated) to the members of the Cooperative based on their purchases from the Cooperative the previous year. These margins are used by the Cooperative as capital to operate the business for a period of time.

What's the difference between an allocation and a retirement?

Allocations are made annually for each member, based upon the amount of revenue contributed the previous year. An allocation is the amount set aside into a separate account to be used as

operating capital for reliability improvements and maintenance over a period of years. Your allocation notice will be printed on your bill usually during the summer months. In 2023, this information was printed on the June bill. A retirement is the amount you receive back as a capital credit refund. It is a portion of your total capital credit balance. The portion to retire is decided by the board of directors annually, based upon the financial condition of the Cooperative. Your retirement is applied to your bill in December if you are an active member, if not a check will be mailed to the last known mailing address of the inactive member.

Why can't my capital credit allocations be refunded to me all at once?

Remember that capital credit funds are used for reliability improvements and maintenance—and these are long term investments. Capital credits cannot be refunded all at once because they help the Cooperative remain financially sound, thereby ensuring a stable, reliable electric service for the benefit of the members we serve.

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK



Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the

Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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"This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

DCEC is Committed to Helping Members During Financial Hardships

DCEC encourages members currently struggling to meet their monthly payment obligation to contact the local agencies listed below for payment assistance.

1. Contact DCEC's Billing Department to set up payment arrangements: 1-607-746-2341
2. Contact your local County Social Service program:
 - a. Delaware County 1-607-832-5300
 - b. Schoharie County: 1-518-295-8334
 - c. Otsego County: 1-607-547-4200
 - d. Delaware Opportunities provides assistance through certain agencies and can be reached at 1-607-746-1600
 - e. Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Hotline: 1-800-342-3009

DCEC can provide supporting documentation regarding your account to these agencies that can assist in expediting your application.

HEAP Benefits

The New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides payment assistance for income eligible residents to use towards the 2023-2024 heating season. This year's regular HEAP benefits opened November 1, 2023. For eligibility, income guidelines, and how to apply contact your local Department of Social Services or the NYS OTDA Hotline at:

1-800-342-3009

Additional information is provided on:

<https://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap>

2023-2024 HEAP Monthly Income Limits

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps low-income people pay the cost of heating their homes. Your total household gross monthly income for your household size must be at or below the following guidelines:

2023-2024 HEAP Benefits Gross Monthly Income Guidelines:

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$3,035
2	\$3,970
3	\$4,904
4	\$5,838
5	\$6,772
6	\$7,706
7	\$7,881
8	\$8,056
9	\$8,231
10	\$8,407
11	\$8,582
12	\$8,890
13	\$9,532
Each additional	Add \$642

Third Party Notification

Every member has the right to designate a third party to be notified if the member's bill is not paid and if the member's service becomes subject to disconnection for nonpayment. For example, a parent can designate an adult child as the third party to receive notifications. Third party notifications can be very helpful in situations where health troubles or other factors might make it difficult for the member to stay on top of bill payments.

For more information about third party notifications, please contact the office.

DE 4-4-4

CATSKILL HI-LINE is a Publication of the Delaware County Electric Cooperative, Inc. and is published bi-monthly for the membership. This newsletter has articles and content submitted by CEO John Gasstrom; COO Ryan Sullivan; Manager of Operations, Job Training & Safety James G. Small; Lead Billing Representative Rosemary Alwine; and editor: Manager of Cooperative Relations Janelle Linehan.

The information contained herein is designed to promote action and discussion among members. Statements published do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Cooperative. The information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, and the editor has exercised reasonable care to assure its accuracy.

Board of Directors

- President.....Edward Pick Jr.
- Vice President.....Jeffrey Russell
- Secretary.....Laurie Wehmeyer
- Treasurer.....Edward Furgol
- Director.....Steve Oles
- Director.....David Krzyston
- Director.....Patrick O'Brien
- CEO.....John Gasstrom

Is Your Service Location Number in This Issue?

Your service location number begins with two letters and is located on your bill next to your account number. Keep your eyes peeled for the "hidden location number" in this newsletter! If you find the number, and it is your service location, call us at (607)746-2341 and you will receive a \$10 bill credit! You must call within 60 days of publication—there are FIVE numbers in this newsletter, go and find 'em! **Good luck!**

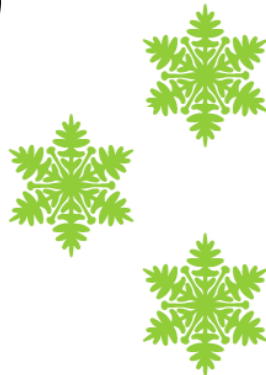
2024 Board Meeting Schedule

- January 30, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - February 27, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - March 26, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - April 30, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - May 28, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - June 25, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - July 23, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - August 27, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - September 24, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - October 22, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - November 26, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
 - December TBD 2024 - Regular Board Meeting
- *All dates are subject to change.*



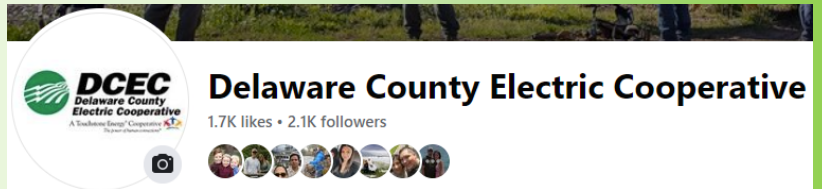
DCEC Office Closure:

DCEC's office will be closed on Monday, February 19, 2024 for Presidents' Day



JE 2-6-5

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