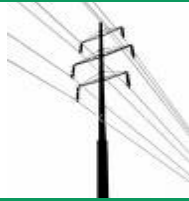




*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



# CATSKILL HI-LINE

Newsletter — December 2024

## Happy Holidays!

### From the desk of CEO John Gasstrom

Happy Holidays and greetings from the offices of your electric cooperative. It has been a rough year for storms, and we appreciate the patience everyone has shown as we've battled the effects of unprecedented bad weather. The impacts of the Emerald Ash Borer have also been evident as trees seem to be falling more easily now in the heavy snow storms we've had. To address member concerns about outages, I want to talk about a few key issues that impact storms, restorations, and the resiliency of our grid in this area.

First, no matter how much we proactively trim trees and other vegetation in the rights-of-way, there will still be unplanned outages. Our area of the state is highly wooded, and many members enjoy living in the beautiful, wooded areas. With this beautiful scenery, comes tree-related power interruptions. While we would like to say we could prevent them all by enlarging our rights-of-way, even then we could not prevent every outage. Most outages during the last few storm events have come from trees outside of the right-of-way, which are only 30 feet wide. This means, DCEC has the legal right/authority to trim vegetation for fifteen feet to either side of the power line. Unfortunately, many dead trees of 80 feet or taller are lurking just outside this fifteen-foot distance, and they always seem to fall towards the lines.....

There is an order we follow when restoring. Power comes into our substations from our transmission provider, where we lower the voltage for safer distribution to your homes and businesses. From there, it travels out along the lines, which span many miles, each with more than a thousand homes on some of the lines. When we have an outage, particularly a bad outage where entire circuits are affected, we have to patrol each line to find the source of the interruption and ensure there are no unsafe conditions before we start restoring.

By the nature of the way electricity works, we have to start at the substation and work our way to the end of the line to properly and effectively restore power. It would sort of be like trying to repair a lamp that won't turn on without first making sure it is plugged in.

Sometimes, members will call in and wonder why their neighbors have power, while they don't. There are usually three main reasons for this. They may have a generator that is supplying their home's power while the grid is out. Or they may be served by another distribution line, circuit, or phase. Just because someone is near you from a physical perspective, doesn't always mean your power is coming from the same circuit (or even the same power supplier). And an important reason may be that the main breaker at your location tripped. Please familiarize yourself with the location of the main breaker in your home, and how to reset it if it trips. Sometimes, when you call to report an outage, we will ask you to look at the small LCD display screen on your meter (see example on page 4). If this screen is showing numbers, that means there is power to your meter, and the problem may be as simple as resetting your main breaker in your panel.

On the topic of generators, please remember that any equipment that burns fuel will emit carbon monoxide and possibly other dangerous emissions. Please only run generators outdoors. Do not put them in an enclosed garage, and try to locate them farther away from your house's air intake vents. Carbon Monoxide is odorless, colorless, and can kill you quickly.

.....Continued on page 2



## Powering Our Rural Communities

5 North Depot Street  
PO Box 471  
Delhi, NY 13753

AUTOMATED LINE (payments & outage reporting): **(855) 939-3672**

Office Phone: (607) 746-2341

Fax: (607) 746-7548

*Continued from page 1...*

Also, ensure that your generator is properly connected to the appliances in your home that require it, and does not back-feed the electric grid. If you improperly install a generator by directly connecting it to your electric panel, you could cause a dangerous situation that could injure or kill others outside of your home (such as linemen working on the lines).

Another safety item of note is to always stay away from downed power lines. A wire on the ground may look dead, but without proper testing equipment, there is no way to know if it is energized. We've actually seen where downed phone wires are touching a power wire downstream, and become energized and can electrocute someone. Also, while we appreciate the desire to help, do not ever attempt to remove branches or trees that are touching wires. This is a potentially deadly scenario, and our personnel are specially trained to deal with this.

Often, folks will call in wanting information on the storm, and our crews. I am very confident in saying that once we know there is an outage, and our crew has determined the extent of damage, we dispatch the appropriate number of crew members to resolve the problem. Lately, the size of the storms has resulted in calling in all available linemen, and often our tree crew. Our dispatching staff, management staff, and myself all work to get information, supplies, equipment, and additional aid as necessary to our crews. We strive to provide as many updates as possible to you, our members. We try to post frequent updates on our Facebook page, and I encourage you to visit it at [www.facebook.com/DelawareCountyElectricCooperative](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareCountyElectricCooperative). Even if you don't have a Facebook account, you can still see basic updates without logging in and we are working on ways to have those updates mirrored on our webpage.

I'm sorry, but for the safety of our crews, we do not give out their physical location. Unfortunately, there have been instances of people trying to find and harm workers. So, please understand that we are not going to give out specific locations of our staff. You may not see a DCEC truck on your road, please realize most of our power lines do not run along roads, and often our crews are deep in the woods working. When you do run across our crews, please be aware that they are often working in dangerous situations utilizing proper protective equipment. By approaching them, you could be entering a dangerous work zone unprotected – and they likely do not have the full information on restoration work. The best way to get updates is to visit our Facebook page, or call our outage line at 855-939-3672.

Occasionally, someone will comment on how many linemen are just sitting and waiting in a parking lot somewhere. Please know, those folks are more than likely contracted to another utility provider, and not DCEC. We have well established process for getting aid during a storm, and we don't ask crews to go sit in a parking lot and wait for an assignment. Outside crews are paired with DCEC personnel immediately upon arrival at our office, and are usually out working within minutes of arriving.

We are always evaluating the size of our crews, whether we need more linemen or tree personnel, and whether we need to call for outside help. These are complicated decisions, and we carefully consider them. We proactively trim trees in the rights-of way. We also will remove a "danger tree" outside of the right-of-way as permitted by law or with permission of the landowner. A "danger tree" is one that we determine is dead and likely to fall in a way that creates a problem for our power infrastructure.

Please know that we will always strive to answer all of your questions about your electric cooperative. Sometimes, during the middle of a storm isn't the best time for me to give an answer, but I will gladly take a call or sit down and meet after the storm event is over. Also, I will continue to hold regularly scheduled Q&A meetings in locations around the service area. Please keep reading the newsletter and watch our website/Facebook page for announcements about the next one. At these meetings I talk about the work we are doing to try to improve reliability and answer whatever questions I can for you about how your cooperative is operating.

Again, I thank all of you for your support and patience during outages, and at all times.

Cooperatively Yours,

*John Gasstrom*



## Operations Update:

DCEC has had a very busy stretch as many of our members are well aware. Our area was hit with as much as 18 inches of heavy wet snow in a few hours time, and it affected our entire service territory. The damage from the snow included nine broken poles, dozens of pulled anchors, significant tree damage (approximately 400-500 trees were cut by our crews) and a huge number of outages.

The storm actually ended up being the worst storm in the history of DCEC in terms of the percentage of members without power, and the number of mutual aid crews that were brought in to work on restoration of our membership. The mutual aid that was brought in included crews from Otsego Electric Cooperative, Steuben Rural Electric Cooperative, Sherburne Electric, and New Hampshire Electric Cooperative. We estimate that the storm repairs would have lasted an additional three days without their help. We appreciate the efforts of all the mutual aid crews involved as well as the DCEC Line, Tree and Operations employees, everyone worked very hard, stayed safe and were dedicated to getting the power restored to our members....well done!!!

It was just a few short weeks ago that our nice, dry, fall weather allowed our crews to get to many locations with buckets and digger trucks very easily. The elements have quickly changed, and the dry hard ground has turned into a wet, muddy mess. This will make it much more difficult for both our Tree and Line crews to get into locations to cut trees, set poles and get our daily work done. DCEC has equipment you may see in the field that allows us to get to these areas. The skidder bucket is currently in the Jefferson area clearing ROW and the track digger has just been moved to Andes to set some poles and anchors.

We hope you enjoy the Holiday season and enjoy time with family and friends. Rest assured the DCEC Crews will do everything we can to keep your Christmas lights on. Merry Christmas to everyone from DCEC.

Manager of Operations JT&S,  
James G. Small

### DCEC Trivia Questions!

1. Over the past six years, what month of the year are the most DCEC new member services hooked up?
2. DCEC has many different pieces of equipment that are used on our system, how many feet off the ground can our highest piece of equipment reach?
3. How wide is a DCEC Right of Way (ROW)?

Answers on Page 6



DCEC Skidder truck used by DCEC tree crew

### Is Your 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! **Good luck!**

### DCEC's UPDATED NUMBERS:

**AUTOMATED LINE**  
for payments & outage reporting:  
**(855) 939-3672**  
**LIVE Representative 24/7/365:**  
**(607) 746-2341**

AN 5-51-8A



Celebrating our Tree Crew Foreman, Randy Tweedie, and his 25 year commitment to sprucing up our Cooperative! Thank you for all you've done.



### Helpful Tips:

- **Meters** Can't get to your meter? Maybe we can't either! Know where your meter is located, keep it clear and accessible. If you're the first person calling in to report an outage, we may ask you to verify your meter is blank. This information allows us to more quickly diagnose the size of the outage and restore power.
- **Phone Numbers** Make sure your contact information is up to date. There are times we need to contact you – confirming your power is restored, billing purposes, and alerts are a few reasons.
- **Security Cameras** If you call to report an outage because your cameras are not working we will need someone to check that the meter is blank. Cameras can be out due to other factors than power outages.



## 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

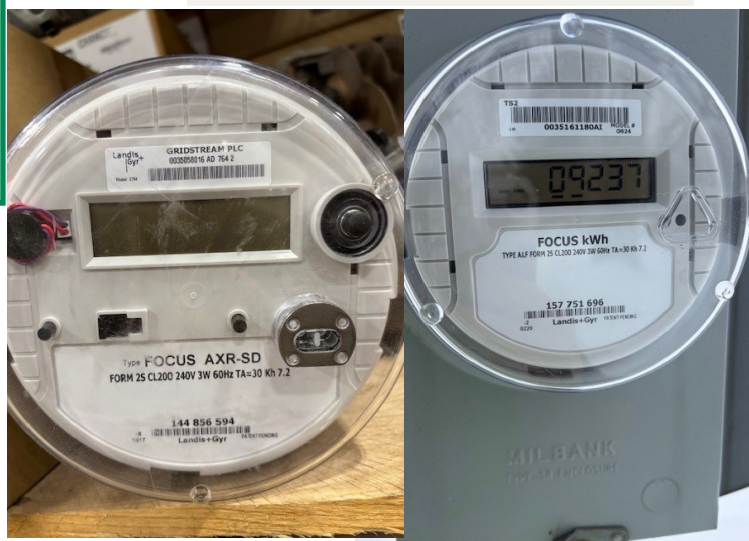
- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.

### 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.

Safe Electricity.org



Pictured are a blank meter, and an operational meter receiving power

# Stay Safe on Winter Roads

Winter months can bring snow, ice and windy conditions, creating hazards for drivers. It is important to be prepared in case there is an accident.



Safe  
Electricity.org®

## Before a winter storm

Perform seasonal maintenance on your car to ensure:

- Batteries are charged.
- Tires have sufficient tread.
- Spare tire is inflated.
- Jumper cables are in good condition.
- A winterized car emergency kit.
- Windshield wipers work.
- Headlights, brake lights and turn signals work.
- At least a half-full tank of gas.

## Prevent frostbite and hypothermia

If you are stranded in your car after an accident, observe the following precautions:

- Do not stay in one position for too long.
- Stay awake.
- Do not overexert yourself to avoid strain on your heart.
- Watch for signs such as a change in skin color, numbness, shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination or confusion.

## Winter storms and power lines

Always treat sagging and downed power lines as energized and dangerous. Keep at least 50 feet away from the area.

- If your vehicle hits a power pole, stay inside.
- Contact 9-1-1 and wait for the power to be shut off by utility workers.
- If your vehicle is on fire, jump clear with feet together, avoiding contact with both the vehicle and ground simultaneously.
- Shuffle or "bunny hop" away from the vehicle, keeping feet together to prevent different electric currents through your body.
- Never drive over a downed power line, which can cause additional hazards.



## 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.***

Like our page on Facebook to follow our news:



Follow us on  
Instagram:

dce.coop

Create your SmartHub account today! You can click straight to SmartHub through our website:  
**www.dce.coop**



## DCEC Office Closures:

*Tuesday, December 24, 2024 – Christmas Eve  
Wednesday, December 25, 2024 – Christmas*

## 2024-2025 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:

### 2024-2025 HEAP Benefits Gross Monthly Income Guidelines:

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$3,322
2	\$4,345
3	\$5,367
4	\$6,390
5	\$7,412
6	\$8,434
7	\$8,626
8	\$8,818
9	\$9,010
10	\$9,201
11	\$9,393
12	\$9,585
13	\$9,952
Each additional	Add \$672

## HEAP Benefits

The New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides payment assistance for income eligible residents to use towards the 2024-2025 heating season. This year's regular HEAP benefits opened November 1, 2024. 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>

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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 submitted by CEO/General Manager John Gasstrom, Operations Manager James Small, and Cooperative Relations Manager, Stacey Young.

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.

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### Trivia answers:

- 1) The month of August, DCEC averages 7 new member hook ups
- 2) The DCEC Bucket Truck has a reach of 75', which is crucial for tree removal work.
- 3) 30 feet wide in total, 15' either side of the pole