



**Jump River
Electric Cooperative**
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



DAVID OELKERS NAMED JREC'S INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER

David Oelkers was named interim general manager of Jump River Electric Cooperative, Inc. at the March 14 board meeting.

Oelkers will serve as the interim general manager while the board searches for a permanent general manager.

Oelkers most recently served as the general manager of Riverland Energy Cooperative in Arcadia, retiring in 2013. He served as Riverland's general

manager for over 22 years. Prior to that, Oelkers served as Riverland's assistant manager for almost three years.

Other professional experiences include having served as past chair of the Wisconsin Managers Association, Dairyland Managers Association, Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) Training and Safety Committee, WECA Education and Communication Committee, and the Trempealeau County Tourism Council. Oelkers also served on the WECA board.

Among his many accomplishments,

Oelkers was a past recipient of the Herman C. Pothast Award, which is the highest award in the state for cooperative safety; and in 2014 he received the ACE (Ally of Cooperative Electrification) Award, the highest award bestowed upon a cooperative leader in Wisconsin.

Oelkers said he was, "looking forward to working with the Jump River membership and board and employees. It's a good organization that has the potential to be even better." He is married to Jo Ann and has three married daughters and eight grandchildren.

JREC INTRODUCES STAFF CHANGES

In April, Sam Howard began his new role at JREC as the operations manager.

"I am looking forward to starting my new position as operations manager in the Ladysmith office and working with the board of directors, employees, and members of JREC," he said. "My goal is to continue to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to all our members. I am glad to have this new opportunity at Jump River Electric."

Sam started his career at JREC as an apprentice lineman in April 1985. During the past 32 years, he has held the positions of Hannibal leadman, meter technician, and, since January 2015, the Hayward operations supervisor. During this time, Sam has served in one capacity or another at all three locations of the cooperative. This has allowed him to gain a good overall knowledge of the cooperative's service territory, which will be very beneficial in this position.

In Sam's free time he enjoys hunting and fishing. Congratulations, Sam!



WILLIAM VAN DOORN REINSTATED AS DISTRICT 5 DIRECTOR

The JREC board of directors voted to reinstate William van Doorn as the District 5 director at the March 28, 2017, board meeting.

van Doorn became a member of JREC in July of 1979 when he married Susan and moved to their residence, where he has lived for the past 37 years. He has three children and four grandchildren.

van Doorn lived and worked in Rusk County for all but two years, at which time he worked in the Chicago area for a roofing business. Throughout the past years, he has been involved in several community activities and organizations, including coaching both Little League and Babe Ruth baseball. He is one of the 10 founding members of the Rusk County Wildlife Restoration Association, and he served on the Wisconsin Conservation Congress for over 20 years. As a member of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, van Doorn served on the Executive Council and held the positions of chairperson and secretary for two separate committees. In addition to his community involvement, he continues to operate the repair shop in Ladysmith that he's owned for the past 27 years.



JREC congratulates Joe Donnellan on his recent promotion to line superintendent. Joe has been with JREC for 15 years. Prior to becoming the line superintendent, Joe was the Hayward foreman, which was the position he held since August 2005.

"I am happy to be able to serve our members in this new capacity and look forward to continuing to provide the excellent service our members deserve," Joe said.

Joe has coached hockey, softball, and baseball throughout the years and loves his time outdoors and with his family. Congratulations, Joe!



HANK LEW BIDS FAREWELL TO JREC AFTER NEARLY 43 YEARS OF SERVICE

Looking back at 1974, a postage stamp was 10 cents, a gallon of gas was 55 cents, the average income was \$13,900, the national speed limit was lowered to 55 miles per hour, an 8-track player was an optional feature in some cars with the average car costing \$3,500, and Hank Lew began his career at Jump River Electric Cooperative (JREC).

Hank graduated from the Electric Power Distribution school on a Friday and started his career at JREC the following Monday. From the beginning and throughout his nearly 43 years of service to JREC members, Hank has been dedicated to keeping your lights on.

The first step in Hank's journey at JREC was completing the apprenticeship program in 1977 and soon after he advanced to the position of lead lineman, followed by a promotion to foreman in 1985. Ten years later, Hank became the line superintendent, the position he held until he retired.

Hank recalled that one of his greatest accomplishments was "when I became line superintendent I set up a new right-of-way clearing program to reduce outages. From this program we achieved significant reduction in outages and blinking lights."

Hank has had the opportunity to work with many linemen over the years; he believes that number to be somewhere around 25. Steve Kuchta, retired JREC line foreman, shared, "I worked with Hank for almost 39 years and in that time I came to view him as a friend and confidant. We were partners on the same truck for many of the early years and he made the job fun, yet we were able to get much work done for just a two-man crew. In the later years, I came to respect and trust his judgment, not only in the electrical field but also life issues in general. I miss the morning talks we had about anything from politics to Packer prognostication. He has always had a good sense of humor and I don't remember Hank ever losing his temper. Hank is a man of integrity and good moral character, which makes him a good leader. Hank will be greatly missed."

As they say, change is inevitable and to say the least Hank has seen his share of it over the years, from the equipment and vehicles the line crews use to the many changes to the electric meters the cooperative has used over the years.

"When I started all the meter did was display a reading. Every month the members would have to read and turn it in with their bill. During the winter months this meant shoveling a path to the meter. The meters we have now send the information to the cooperative. Some of the information that we

receive is the usage, voltage levels, and if the power is on or off. We can queue the meters during a major storm to check which accounts are still without power," Hank said.

When Hank was asked to share his greatest memories or stories, he recalled an outage that was experienced by a member who was on an island across the river. Hank said, "Steve Kuchta and I arrived to find that one of the strands of wire separated and was shorting out to the neutral wire. To make the repair we had to drop the line into the river. The member brought his boat across the river for our use. I climbed the pole and lowered the line to just above the river. Steve was in the boat and the member got into the water and held the boat from going downstream while Steve made the repairs. The water level was about chest deep. After making the repairs and restoring service the member thanked us for all that we did for him. I am not sure how we would have repaired the line without the member's help; he deserved all the thanks."

Former General Manager Bill Schmidt said, "What became evident to me when I arrived at JREC was that Hank had the ability to inspire the trust of his employees. That trust has allowed JREC to deliver extraordinary operating results over his tenure. JREC's system reliability and our ability to respond to outages was and continues to be outstanding. As a result of Hank's leadership and communication style, JREC's safety record is phenomenal. Employee and member safety has been a top priority for Hank—the results have proven that. Thanks for your leadership and commitment to serve JREC's members."

Hank set a good example of how to best serve our members, and with all his experience he was a go-to person for not only line department questions, but also when it came to computers, software and when you could just use some good advice.

"It has been my pleasure to have worked with Hank over the past 30-plus years," said Operations Manager Sam Howard. "We will miss his dedication and experience that he brought to JREC."

Finance Manager Scott Peterson added, "I have enjoyed working with Hank for the past 29 years. He was always professional and did what was best for the members. It will be hard to replace Hank's knowledge; you don't replace 42 years



(Continued on page 18)



THIS MAY, TAKE THE TIME TO PLUG INTO SAFETY

May is Electrical Safety Month, and JREC will be sharing safety tips and reminders throughout the month on our website, www.jrec.com, to help raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used.

Our responsibility to you

JREC's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents, and electrocution in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we provide free electrical safety demonstrations and handouts to area elementary students

as well as local EMS. We frequently provide electrical safety content in this magazine, and we encourage the public to contact us if they see a downed power line or any other type of dangerous electrical situation. We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity and to serve as your trusted energy advisor, now and well into the future.

Our responsibility to employees

It is no accident that safety is a top priority at JREC. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations. In fact, JREC is part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) that follows specific guidelines and protocols for electrical safety that are considered leading practices. Our lineworkers are required to wear personal protective equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will



self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect from electrical shock. Our safety team regularly discusses important safety issues pertaining to work within the building as well as out in the field.

Take a moment to plug into safety. Please visit www.jrec.net for tips about keeping you and your loved ones safe.

CAST A LINE FOR SAFETY

When relaxing on or near the water, the dangers of electricity may seem far off. However, for those boating, fishing, and swimming, awareness of potential electrical hazards in and around the water is very important. It is National Safe Boating week May 20–26, and Safe Electricity provides tips to help you stay safe when enjoying water recreation activities.

To ensure a safe season on the water, there are safety items that you must legally have on board your watercraft—including life vests, fire extinguishers, a throwable flotation device, and properly working lights. However, the list shouldn't end there.

Be aware of your surroundings. Look out for signs that warn of hazards or areas where swimming is not allowed. Heed the advice, and never take a chance with your safety. It is also important to look up and look out for overhead power lines. Always remember to look up before you begin to fish. Do not cast your line when you are anywhere near overhead lines.

Also, take the time to plan your route before transporting and launching your boat. Make sure the masts of sailboats have plenty of clearance from all overhead wires. Do not raise a mast or antenna when your boat is near a power line. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way so that a boat can pass underneath. Keep in mind that water levels are constantly changing, altering the distance between the water and the line.



Be sure the dock area is safe. Make sure electrical connections are properly installed and safely maintained. Even if you are just renting the dock, it is important you notify the dock owner of any safety violations so they can be fixed immediately.

If your boat does come in contact with a power line, do not enter the water. The water could be energized. Instead, stay in the boat and avoid touching anything metal until help arrives or until your boat is no longer in contact with the line.

Do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If you are in the water and feel a tingle of electric current, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not head to boat or dock ladders to get out.

To help prevent the risk of electricity entering the water, have your boat and dock electrical systems regularly inspected and maintained by a professional familiar with marine electrical codes.

Check weather forecasts. You are not safe from lightning strikes while outside, so once you hear thunder, get to a safe shelter. Wait until at least 30 minutes have passed without thunder to return outside.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



YOU COULD WIN \$50 IN OUR 15TH ANNUAL POSTER CHALLENGE!

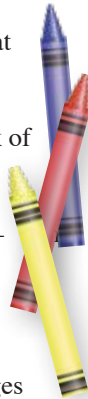
Area Youth—are you up for a challenge? Grab your art supplies and participate in our 15th annual poster contest in tribute to May being National Electrical Safety Month. Create a poster that depicts ways to be safe around electricity in the home, outside, or at school, and submit it to our Ladysmith office by either dropping it off or mailing it to the address on the entry ticket below. To enter, please follow these guidelines:

- Poster must depict how you can be electrically safe at home, outside, or at school.
- You must be between the ages of 5 and 18 to enter.
- Complete the drawing ticket and attach it to the back of the poster.
- Submit poster by June 6, 2017.

Four \$50 cash prizes will be awarded, one contest winner per age category. Age categories are as follows:

- 5–7 years of age
- 8–10 years of age
- 11–13 years of age
- 14–18 years of age

Winning posters may be featured in JREC’s center pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* magazine.



Poster Entry Ticket

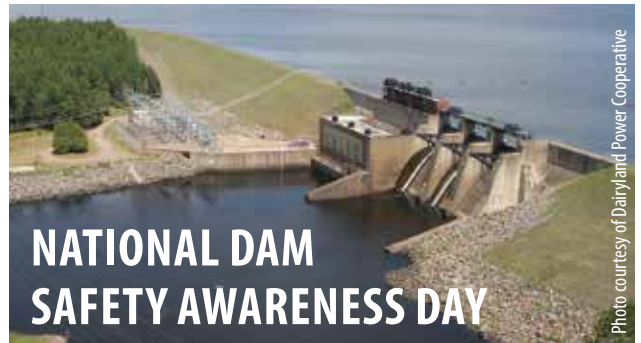
Name _____

Member Acct. _____

Grade _____ Age _____

Phone _____

Return to JREC, P.O. Box 99, Ladysmith WI 54848



National Dam Safety Awareness Day occurs on May 31 of each year to commemorate the failure of the South Fork Dam in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1889. The dam failure resulted in the loss of more than 2,200 lives and was the worst dam failure in the history of the United States.

National Dam Safety Awareness Day was created to encourage and promote individual and community responsibility for dam safety, as well as to provide information on what steps can be taken to prevent future catastrophic dam failures. A secondary goal is to promote the benefits dams offer to communities.

Tips to stay safe on rivers and near dams:

- Obey all warning signs, barriers and flashing lights, horns and sirens. They are there for a reason.
- Wear a personal flotation device (life jacket).
- Leave your boat motor running to provide maneuvering power.
- Stay clear of spillways. Changing currents and “boiling” waves can make boat control difficult near dams.
- Reverse currents occur below dams; they can pull a boat back toward the dam into the spillway and capsize it.
- Never anchor boats below a dam because water levels can change rapidly.

Hank Lew (Continued from page 16)
of experience easily. He will be missed.”

As for his plans for retirement, Hank said, “I have a long ‘Honey Do’ list that I will need to look at.” He is looking forward to retiring and said he will finally be able to enjoy the rain without worrying about outages. “If I hear of a snow storm coming I will only need to think about when I will go out and plow the driveway,” he said. “We plan to do some traveling and working around my yard with my tractor. One of the things I

look forward to is when we go someplace it will be great just to know we can stay a little longer as I will not have to get up in the morning and get ready for work.”

As for hobbies, he says he usually gets the boat ready in the spring and it “stays ready” all summer. He hopes that he can now spend more time on the lake.

Hank added, “I want to say how much I appreciated working for Jump River Electric Cooperative. The first 20 years spent as a lineman working to keep the light on, then the next 22 years as

line superintendent overseeing the line department. Over the years, I could not have asked for a better place to work. It has been very difficult the last few years; however, things are improving. I am thankful for the great crew that I had supporting me. I will miss my co-op family. They care for each other and they care for the cooperative. God Bless each and every one.”

JREC’s directors and staff wish Hank a long and enjoyable retirement, and thank him for his many years of service.

1102 W. Ninth St. North, P.O. Box 99, Ladysmith, WI 54848
715-532-5524 • www.jrec.com

After-hour emergency service, call 866-273-5111

JREC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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JREC offices will be closed Monday, May 29, for Memorial Day. Have a safe holiday weekend.