



Kevin Babcock,
General Manager/CEO

SAFETY IS MORE THAN A SIX-LETTER WORD

Safety is a serious issue, especially when it comes to electrical safety. At Jackson Electric, safety is the number one priority. Jackson Electric has created a culture of safety by putting the employees' safety and that of the community above all else. Our mission

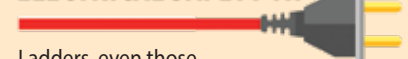
is to provide safe and reliable electricity to our members. At the end of the day, we strive to deliver affordable and reliable electricity, but equally important, we want to return our employees home safely to their loved ones. This requires ongoing focus, dedication, and vigilance.

Jackson Electric has a safety team whose focus is keeping employees and the community safe around electricity. We establish and follow safety protocols based on leading national safety practices for the utility industry. We require our line crew to wear specialized equipment when working next to or with power lines. There are also specific protocols that our line crew follows when dealing with electricity. Our safety team has regular meetings where they discuss upcoming projects from a safety perspective. They monitor and track near-misses of accidents in order to understand them and improve in the future.

As I announced at the March annual meeting, Jackson Electric received a no-lost-time safety award from our insurance provider again this year. We received this award several times in the past, but this award is especially important now because of the new faces at Jackson Electric. Because of retirements, a lack of hands-on experience is a risk. I feel the safety oversight of our employees, looking out for each other, sets our cooperative apart from other businesses.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, each year 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. Many of these accidents are preventable. There is much you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity. Be mindful when it comes to electrical safety, and remember, safety is more than a six-letter word.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP



Ladders, even those made of wood, that come into contact with a power line can prove fatal. Keep all ladders at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. *Source: Esfi.org*

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR LEADERSHIP ABILITIES

Learn how to hone in on your talents at the Youth Leadership Congress

Jackson Electric sponsors high school students who will be sophomores, juniors, or seniors in the fall to attend the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Leadership Congress. This year's YLC will be held July 25–27 at the UW-River Falls campus.

Students who are interested in enhancing their leadership skills, meeting new people who may be contacts for future careers, and enjoy learning about the cooperative business structure should plan to attend this conference. Students will participate in team-building activities, listen to highly acclaimed mo-

tivational speakers, experience a bit of college living, and have an opportunity to interview and campaign to be part of the Wisconsin Youth Board.

Those students attending the YLC have an opportunity to apply for a

\$1,000 scholarship offered by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association.

Enrollment and transportation costs are covered by Jackson Electric. Contact Carol at cblaken@jackelec.com by June 8, 2018, to register for this event.

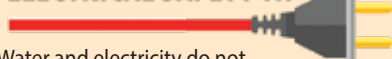
SALES TAX ON SUMMER ELECTRIC BILLS

A sales tax will be applied to your electric bill for electric usage in the months of May through October. According to Wisconsin Statute 77.54 (30) (a) 2, "Electricity and natural gas sold during the months of November, December, January, February, March, and April for residential use" are exempt from sales and use tax. This statute was enacted in 1995.

The state government regards electricity for residential use during the winter months as a necessity; therefore, it is exempt from sales tax during these months. "Residential use" is defined in the statute as a structure or portion of a structure which is a person's permanent principle residence. It does not include use in motor homes, travel trailers, other recreational vehicles, or transient accommodations.

If you feel your farming operation or business meets year-round tax exemption status, please confirm you have a completed and signed Wisconsin Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate on file at Jackson Electric's office. Forms are available from our office or at jackelec.com/My Account/Tax Exempt.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP



Water and electricity do not mix. Avoid damp conditions, including wet grass, when using electricity. *Source: Esfi.org*



DRIFTLESS WISCONSIN'S RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCE

The year is 1932. You and your father are travelling from Chicago and need a place to stay for the night. You find yourselves spending the night at a boarding house in Millston, Wisconsin, and you recognize you are in the center of beautiful forestland. You recently graduated from high school and are seeking an opportunity for employment. During your visit, you ask if there is any work to be done. You are told about the area's sphagnum moss industry. You discover you are in the driftless region that was protected from the wrath of the last glacier. You learn that untouched by the glacier, the sphagnum moss has become a unique feature to the area's landscape. You begin buying moss from harvesters, shipping it to buyers in Chicago. Before you know it, you and your father have founded a company that will continue to be prosperous almost a century later. When you were drafted into the army during World War II, your brother Max became an investor in the business and moved to Millston. He was only going to manage the business until you came back. You and Max ended up managing the business together.

This is the father/son story of William and Lewis Epstein, the grandfather and father, respectively, of David Epstein, who has filled the role of the third-generation owner of Deli, Inc. since 1979. If you are not familiar with Deli, Inc.'s corporate name, you may be more familiar with the company's branded consumer products, such as Mosser Lee or LabTech. "We have several divisions that operate in very different markets,"

shares David. "We started as a harvester and seller of long-fibered sphagnum moss for growers and have grown from there to several divisions that have developed many consumer products." About 75 percent of sales are consumer products and 25 percent of sales are to growers.

Although the largest, harvestable quantities are found in Jackson County, sphagnum moss is also found in Monroe, Clark, and Juneau Counties. The moss can also be found in small patches around the United States, but not in harvestable quantities. The sphagnum moss industry is somewhat competitive. However, many harvesters are not in business anymore, and there is not a significant number of domestic competitors. Deli, Inc.'s Mosser Lee division is the largest harvester and fabricator of long-fibered sphagnum moss products in North America. There are other markets in Chile, China, and New Zealand. However, their product is expensive to import and is typically not used for the same applications as Mosser Lee's products.

Sphagnum moss possesses two important properties. The first is that it can hold 20 times its weight in water. "If we completely saturated a 10-pound bale of moss," explains David, "it would weigh 200 pounds." The moss is a sufficient application for growing plants and keeping them moist. It works great for placement inside of a wire hanging basket because it will absorb the water and keep it close to the roots. It is also used

The sphagnum moss dries in an area next to the manufacturing facility (shown at left).

Deli, Inc. utilized the rural development revolving loan fund for business expansion.

for seed germination, air layering, orchid propagation, seedling transplanting, mulching gardens, and decorative soil coverings. The second property is the moss resists the growth of bacteria; it's a sterile product. "During WWII it was used as a sponge during surgery because it could absorb liquid and normal sponges were not accessible," adds David.

Other than the long-fibered sphagnum moss, the Mosser Lee division also offers consumer products such as moss-lined hanging baskets, natural green sheet moss, Spanish moss, reindeer moss, totem pole plant supports, decorative soil covers, living wreaths, airlayer grow kits, polished stones, and NoDampOff seed starter. Damping-off is a bacterial disease that kills or weakens germinating seeds. NoDampOff is an organic seed starter used by large commercial growers and consumers to start seeds and cuttings without the threat of damping-off. The product increases germination yield and growth rate. Growers cannot afford for disease to hit their seeds, especially when the seeds are expensive, like palm seeds and heirloom vegetables.



David Epstein presents a bale of moss. The moss becomes a consumer product after it is dried and packaged into bags and cases.

The greatest challenge facing the company in the last growing season was obtaining enough moss. The excess rain over the summer raised water levels, making it difficult to harvest the moss. The moss also needs good weather to dry. Another challenge is educating the consumer on the various uses of Deli, Inc.'s branded products.

In 2014, the company developed its LabTech division, offering a line of consumer testing products to identify contaminants such as lead and bacteria in water. The two water test kits analyze the quality of drinking water in homes and private wells. A number of factors could contribute to water contamination from faulty plumbing to chemicals and fertilizers seeping into groundwater supplies. LabTech also offers Soil Master soil test kits and meters and home contaminant detection kits for mold and radon gas. Radon gas is the number one cause of lung cancer among people who do not smoke, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Asked what the greatest accomplishment is that he has witnessed in his years with the company, David says, "Bringing out new products and new uses for products developed by my father." David also shares that it is nice to be able to bring employment to eastern Jackson County through



In 2014, the company developed a line of products to serve in testing for home contaminants.



Left: Sphagnum moss can hold 20 times its weight in water. It must be dried before being sent to the packaging department. Right: Sphagnum moss resists the growth of bacteria and was used as a sponge in surgery during WWII.



a meaningful, well-paying job. The moss is harvested by seasonal employees from May through November. Other job opportunities within the company include general office, electronic order processing, shipping and receiving, and packing positions.

In the past, Deli, Inc. needed to grow and expand in order to add new product lines and become the company it is today. The company built a 12-month manufacturing facility around the existing plant. "We identified the rural economic development loan fund as an opportunity to grow the business," explains David. The rural development revolving loan fund, a partnership between Jackson Electric and Jackson County Bank, is a supplemental, low-interest, 10-year term loan that can be used for land, building, infrastructure improvements, and the pur-

chase of machinery and equipment. The program allowed the company to grow not once, but twice. Deli, Inc. completed the loan application and was approved to add to their facility. When the first loan was paid off, the company returned to economic development funds to build its largest warehouse. Due to the economic development funds, the company was also able to increase employment from 14 employees in 1979 to almost 30 employees today. David recommends the program to eligible businesses.

Long-fibered sphagnum moss was saved from the last glacier and evolved into a consumer product. Now, uses for the moss have expanded beyond horticulture. In the past, a company in the vitamin creation industry developed an innovative moss application for use with liquid vitamins for piglets to help with anemia instead of giving them shots. Use of long-fibered sphagnum moss, Wisconsin's renewable natural resource, seems to have endless possibilities.—*Brandi Shramek, communications intern*

MY CO-OP

Jackson Electric's Board of Directors



Jackson Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors are, front row, left to right, Stan Gran, District 1; Gary Woods, president and District 9; Dan Smrekar, District 8; Jerry Huber, Dairyland Power representative and District 3. Back row, left to right, Dave Peasley, secretary/treasurer and District 5; Chris Curran, vice president and District 4; Kristi Hanson, District 2; Brian Huber, District 7; and Jerry Wagner, District 6.

At the March annual meeting of the members, three directors were ratified and will serve on the board for a three-year term. They were Chris Curran, Dave Peasley, and Brian Huber.



GEOTHERMAL TAX CREDITS ARE BACK!

30% federal tax credit for residential installations through the end of 2019

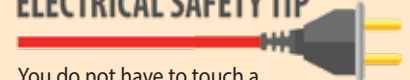
In an extra bit of good news for members who installed a geothermal system last year, the 30 percent federal tax credit for geothermal heat pumps is retroactive to include systems installed on or after January 1, 2017, and extends through 2021.

The tax credit begins to phase out after two years with a 26 percent tax credit in 2020, and 22 percent credit in 2021. Jackson Electric members who installed a geothermal heat pump in 2017 and believe they might be eligible for a renewable energy tax credit should contact their accountant or tax preparer.

The tax credit was part of the Continuing Resolution spending bill approved by Congress. Since the end of 2016, when geothermal heat pump tax credits expired, groups such as the Geothermal Exchange Organization (GEO) and National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) have been advocating for the reinstatement.

Rebates are available from Jackson Electric for the purchase and installation of a geothermal heat pump. As of January 1, 2018, new geothermal installations are not allowed on Jackson Electric's dual fuel rate.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP



You do not have to touch a power line to be in danger. High-voltage electricity can jump to anyone who gets too close. Stay at least 10 feet away from power lines and their connections.

Source: *Esf.org*

REMINDER FOR BUDGET BILLING PARTICIPANTS

Members on the Budget Billing Plan will receive a bill in May, which is considered the "clean-up" month. Your remaining payment on your budget billing plan is due on or before June 1, 2018.

Please contact our office for your remaining balance.



We continue to seek participation from members who may be interested in purchasing and installing a solar system. Please contact our office if you would like to participate in this pilot project.

Managing Your Account Has Never Been So Easy!

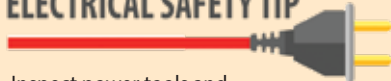
With SmartHub, you can:

- ◆ Access your account, and multiple accounts, from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.
- ◆ View and pay your bill online.
- ◆ Receive timely account information.
- ◆ Set up how you want to receive account notifications.
- ◆ Sign up for auto-pay with a credit card or bank draft.
- ◆ Receive paperless bills.
- ◆ Download the FREE app to your iOS or Android smartphone.



Access your account at www.jackelec.com

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP




Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housing. Repair or replace damaged items. Source: *Esf.org*

REBATES AVAILABLE

Jackson Electric has rebates available for the purchase and installation of Energy Star appliances, electric heat pumps, electric boilers, and LED lighting. Go to jackelec.com or contact our office for more information.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Customer Service 715.284.5385
800.370.4607

Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)

Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511

Credit Card Payments 844.759.3984

www.jackelec.com    

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Daniel Smrekar, Kristi Hanson, Stanley Gran, Brian Huber, Jerry Wagner

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