

## Southwest Power Pool releases initial findings on February 2021 winter storm event

In February, Corn Belt Power and utilities across the Midwest encountered historically low temperatures and record-high electricity use that resulted in load curtailments, better known as rolling blackouts.

The events during the week of February 14 were unprecedented. The extreme and prolonged arctic weather significantly impacted Southwest Power Pool's (SPP) 14-state footprint, stretching from Canada to northern Texas. In the following weeks SPP worked to find the root causes of the event and find ways to mitigate future energy emergency alerts.

In March, SPP's board of directors directed a comprehensive review of the event to identify how SPP can better prepare for future extreme reliability threats. Five teams and several hundred stakeholders including Corn Belt Power, conducted an in-depth analysis. SPP announced the analysis produced key observations including:

- **Lack of available generation was the primary cause of the event's reliability impacts. Lack of fuel was the biggest cause of generation unavailability.**
- **Extremely high natural gas prices were the primary driver of record-high energy**



**All hands on deck**

**Above |** Mike Cowell, shift operator, Corn Belt Power, secures a hose from a fuel truck to Wisdom Station's fuel oil unloading skid during the Feb. 14-16 winter weather event.

### SPP REGION IN COLDEST PART OF U.S.

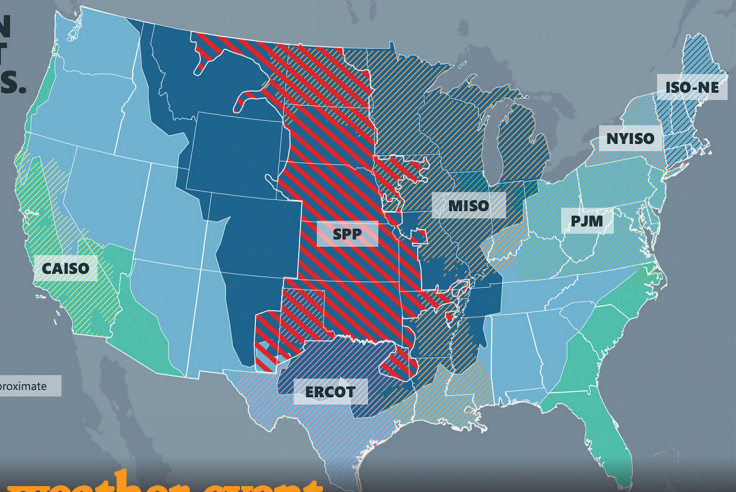
 Southwest Power Pool

Lowest temperatures forecast for Feb. 14-16, 2021

Sources: National Weather Service, Global Forecast System

- SPP service territory/balancing authority
- Temperatures below 0°F
- Between 0° and 32°F
- Above 32°F

\* Locations of ISOs/RTOs are approximate



### Winter weather event

**Above |** Record temperatures led to electric generation issues nationwide, Feb. 14-16, 2021. According to SPP's newly released observations, a lack of available generation was the primary cause of the event's reliability impacts. A lack of fuel was the biggest cause of generation unavailability. SPP's board directed work to begin addressing observations to mitigate future events.

offers, exceeding SPP's market offer caps for the first time.

■ **Rapid spike in SPP's market prices raised concerns about market participants' liquidity & exponentially increased short-term credit exposure.**

■ **Relationships & interconnections with neighboring systems facilitated critical helpful assistance.**

■ **Full use of generation in certain locations was limited by congestion on SPP's system.**

■ **Early preparation, timely decisions & effective communication helped minimize reliability impacts while effective execution of load-shed procedures mitigated the risk of uncontrolled blackouts.**

■ **Stakeholders indicated general satisfaction with SPP's emergency communications, information sharing &**

**credibility, while recognizing the need for improvements.**

The analysis is complete and now work begins. Following these findings, the SPP board directed work to immediately begin on recommendations that address root causes, and requested additional analysis to explain the failure of natural gas supply. Staff were instructed to prioritize work on the remaining recommendations, provide a project plan and quarterly progress updates, and issue letters to generator operators in the SPP region requiring them to inform SPP about their plans to assure generation availability for the upcoming winter.

Corn Belt Power continues to work with its member-cooperatives and industry partners on ways to improve processes should an energy emergency situation ever take place again. ■

# Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa announce inaugural statewide "Shine the Light" contest winners



## Two of three winners from the Corn Belt Power system

**Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa** created a new contest this summer with a goal to shine the light on community volunteers across Iowa and reinforce the cooperative principle of commitment to community.

The Shine the Light contest opened in June with winners announced in August. Each winner won a \$1,500 donation in their name for their cause.

## Walthart rescues animals at Emmet County Animal Shelter

If you ask Dawn Eveleth, there's one person you go to in a pinch when you need a volunteer: her cousin, Marlene Walthart.

"I've known her forever," Eveleth says. "For as long as I can remember she's been a volunteer. From the time she was a little kid, up until now, it's kind of been her life. You can ask her anything, if she's available to do it, she's always willing for anyone or any animal."

While Walthart is known to volunteer elsewhere in her Estherville community, she becomes a winner in the inaugural Shine the Light competition for her work at the Emmet County Animal Shelter.

Kristy Henning founded the shelter in 2010. Right away, Walthart saw the shelter as just another way to help her community.

I wanted to do something with (my) Girl Scouts to win the silver award badge," Walthart said. "I got in touch (with Kristy) and started doing things around the shelter. It just went from there."

Henning says she can't count how many times she relied on Marlene and her husband,

Larry, in those early days.

"Larry and Marlene are invaluable to the shelter. They've spent numerous hours here."

What motivates Marlene? It's her lifelong love for animals.

"My husband and I believe I am part cat," she said. "All my life I have wanted (cats). My dad wanted dogs. I would bring a cat home and they would say no. I would take it back and cry."

Today the shelter has grown from a predominately cat rescue to also include a canine section.

"We have the opportunity to save a lot of animals' lives," Marlene says. "We usually have around 100 cats. When I first got in touch with Kristy, she told me about some instances of animal cruelty that I was unaware of."

For Marlene and her husband Larry, volunteering goes far beyond just loving on

animals. The duo set up a non-profit can redemption center adjacent to the shelter. The can redemption center serves as a funding vehicle for the shelter.

As for what the shelter will use its \$1,500 grant for, Henning says with the mission to rescue, rehabilitate

and rehome the unwanted, unloved and the abandoned, expansion is always needed.

"The need for puppy rescue is overwhelming right now," she said. "We're going to put an outside run on the intake kennel. If we can run two groups of puppies at the same time, we can rescue more puppies." ■



Adopt a pet today:  
[emmetcountyanimalshelter.org](http://emmetcountyanimalshelter.org)



## Marlene Walthart, Estherville

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa donated \$1,500 to the Emmet County Animal Shelter in Marlene's honor.



the community. Something he's lived by.  
 "Part of life's responsibility is to pay it forward, give back to your community, do what you can to facilitate the growth and ambiance," he said. "To me, that's just part of living." ■

[visitwilderpark.com](http://visitwilderpark.com)

Contact Allison City Hall to reserve your cabin or camping spot.

## Dr. George North, Allison

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa donated \$1,500 to Wilder Park in George's honor.

### North instrumental in creating Wilder Park

If you drive too far east of Allison on Highway 3 without looking north you'll likely miss Wilder Park. Those who take time to stop and drive through won't forget it; at least that's what Dr. George North hopes.

Dr. North, a Shine the Light contest winner, had a vision for the park in the early 1990s. Today, that vision has become a reality.

Dr. North's vision began when the land the park sits on was acquired via a gift from the original property owner.

"My early involvement was with the Scouts, planting trees," the former dentist said. "We planted 250 to 300 trees."

Today, the park is full of large mature trees. It has turned into a recreational destination for people across Iowa, full of activities ranging from camping to fishing and frisbee golf.

Deb McWhirter nominated Dr. North for the Shine the Light contest. She says the growth of the park is due much in part to Dr. North's vision.

"It was a farm field," she said. "They have turned this into a destination spot for a lot of campers and people. It's developed over the years. Dr. North has been the mastermind of the whole project. It takes a lot of volunteers. I'm sure he would say the same thing, but it still takes a person to see a vision about what you want to have happen to the future

of this park. He's been very instrumental in making a plan and following through, making sure things happen."

It all started with getting his Boy Scouts involved with the environment by planting trees. The trees have been a metaphor of sorts, according to North who turns 92 this year, for what having a vision means.

"Rarely when you plant trees do you get to see the result of that activity," he said. "Trees don't grow that fast. Fortunately, I've lived long enough to see the fruition of the vision. A lot of people have a very difficult time seeing down the road. Seeing what the possibilities are. Seeing what

the positives are of having this type of facility."

Dr. North knew he wanted more for the park and the area than just having trees.

"Our mission is to create an affordable recreational activity facility," he said. "Except for renting an RV space, all of our amenities are free. Everything is based on our mission: affordable. That's caused our level of usage to go way up."

Wilder Park also serves as one of the major outdoor classrooms in the state of Iowa. The park features more than 100 different tree species and is home to an uncommon species arboretum.

Dr. North says it's all about giving back to



## Loan closes for new Spirit Lake housing

Corn Belt Power, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative (ILEC) and Northwest Bank closed Aug. 2 on loans to The Dwellings at Indian Hills, LLC for their new Spirit Lake housing development.

The \$250,000 loan from Corn Belt Power's revolving loan fund and \$500,000 from ILEC's fund will go to construct housing and install development infrastructure.

The 80-plus condo unit development will consist of 30 triplex/duplex buildings. Units will consist of 1,588 square feet of living space featuring three bedrooms, two baths and an open floor plan. They will have attached garages, covered patios and be on a slab with no basement.

This future housing is located next to the Indian Hills Golf Club in Spirit Lake and will have access to the golf course. ■



### New housing

**Above** | Brittany Dickey, business development finance director, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, left; Brad Jungers, Northwest Bank, right; and Jed Skogerboe, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, second from right, present loan funds to Jason Stevens, Marc Steffes and Duane Mueske, The Dwellings at Indian Hills, LLC for the new Spirit Lake housing development currently underway.

Jaylen Heinz, accountant II, Corn Belt Power, practices extinguishing a simulated fire during an Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives safety training offered to all employees Aug. 13.

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**August Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Jim Mertz**, electrical maintenance foreman, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, donated his \$100 prize drawing to the Two Rivers Junior Pistol Club.



Jim Mertz

## The power of human connections

Jim Mertz, electrical maintenance foreman, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, demonstrates the Touchstone Energy value of commitment to community by volunteering as an instructor at the Two Rivers Junior Pistol Club.

Among many other volunteer efforts in Humboldt, Jim also serves on the Humboldt school board.

## Iowa Governor visits State Fair booth

Each year, the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa sponsor the Bruce L. Rastetter 4-H Exhibit Building at the Iowa State Fair. Cooperative employees from across the state helped visitors learn about safety, co-op careers and youth programs. Visitors were welcome to suit up in lineman gear and snap a safety selfie.

Thanks to all of those who stopped and to Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds who made a special visit and handed out plastic hard hats until they ran out.



Corn Belt Power Cooperative

# Watts Watt

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