

# Pipelines deliver natural gas safely

Learn how to prevent damage, recognize potential problems

Rock Energy Cooperative operates 173 miles of natural gas main in northern Illinois with nearly 9,000 natural gas services.

Pipelines are the safest and most economical method of transporting natural gas, according to the National Transportation Safety Board. Federal pipeline safety code mandates that Rock Energy and other distribution systems comply with tough requirements for design, construction, testing, inspection, operation, and maintenance from the point of connection to the meter on your house.

Natural gas is completely safe when used properly. The following information will help you and your families stay safe around natural gas.

## How can I recognize a natural gas leak?

- **By smell:** Natural gas is colorless and odorless, but gas providers add a chemical that makes it smell like rotten eggs so any leaks can be easily detected. It is extremely important that you call us as soon as you smell the gas and not wait several hours or days before calling.
- **By sound:** A hissing or roaring sound coming from a natural gas line might be a sign of a leak.
- **By sight:** If you see unexplained dead grass, natural gas might be leaking. Dirt or debris blowing in the air and water bubbling in a puddle, pond, or creek are other signs.



## What should I do if I suspect a leak?

### If you smell a faint gas odor:

- Make sure all gas appliances and burners on your stove are turned off completely.
- Open one or more windows and wait a few minutes for the gas odor to dissipate before investigating further.
- Check the pilot lights on your gas furnace, water heater, stove, and oven.
- Don't try to relight a gas appliance while you can still smell gas.
- If you need assistance relighting the pilot light, call a heating or plumbing contractor.

### If you smell a strong odor:

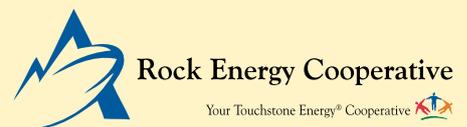
- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not use the telephone or cell phone until you reach a safe location away from the suspected leak. Then call Rock Energy at 866-752-4550 to report the location.
- Do not light a match or turn on or off any switches, flashlights, garage door openers, or other appliances because an electric arc might ignite the gas.

## How can I prevent pipeline damage?

- Call 811 before you dig or excavate to avoid hitting a natural gas pipeline or other buried utility line. State law requires people to call at least two days before any digging project. Utilities then will send a representative to the site so all underground lines can be marked. The call and service are free.
- Remember that Rock Energy maintains buried gas pipes up to your meter. All pipes beyond that are the member's responsibility and should be periodically inspected for corrosion and leaks.

## How can I get additional information?

- If you have any questions about natural gas safety, we would be happy to provide you with further information. Just call us at 866-752-4550. You also can visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop), [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) or [www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com).





# More Power to You OLD MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE LINKS CO-OP'S PAST TO ITS FUTURE

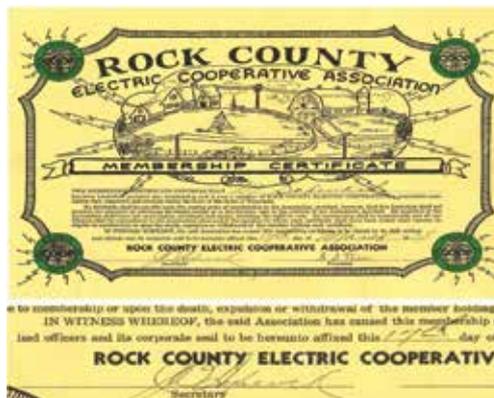


Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

For more than eight decades, Rock Energy Cooperative members have gathered on an annual basis to participate in the governance of their co-op. About 550 members, employees, and guests attended the co-op's 82nd annual meeting at the Eclipse Center on March 26 to enjoy an evening of food and fellowship while learning more about the co-op.

My remarks had a Back to the Future feel as I recalled Steven Spielberg's 1985 hit movie about Marty McFly traveling back in time 30 years in Doc Brown's DeLorean time machine. Marty desperately wanted to get back to his life in 1985, but while in 1955, he gets a glimpse of the past that determines his future.

An old co-op membership certificate found by the family of Meinardus Schenkel helped us travel back 80 years to take a look at how the co-op of 1938 peered into the future of today. A special thanks goes to Schenkel's grandson, Rick Butke and his wife, Kay, for sending the certificate to us. That piece of Rock history is now framed and hanging in our boardroom.



Meinardus  
Schenkel

This membership certificate is a part of Rock's history. Meinardus Schenkel became a member on March 17, 1938. To put the age of this certificate in perspective, the co-op was founded only two years before on April 22, 1936.

We no longer print membership certificates, but all new members are voted into cooperative membership at each monthly board of directors meeting. Like the certificate, the vote symbolizes becoming a member of Rock Energy.

The old certificate mentions "patronage dividends," which we now call capital credits. Last year Rock paid out nearly \$1.3 million to current and former members, and since 1936, we have paid nearly \$17 million. We handle this patronage capital the same today as we did in 1938, except the numbers are much larger.

The certificate also references members' privileges and duties, including the right to vote, which members exercise at each annual meeting. Your right to govern the co-op is as relevant today as it was in 1938 and distinguishes co-ops from other utilities.

Looking to the future, our objectives will be the same as they have always been. We want our members to be glad they're a part of Rock Energy as we provide safe, reliable energy at an affordable cost. In 2018, we will deploy a new

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## 82nd Annual Meeting Election Results at a Glance



Barbara Miller,  
Re-elected  
District 1 Director



Darrel Weber,  
Re-elected  
District 3 Director



Bill Fischer,  
Re-elected  
District 5 Director



About 550 co-op members, employees, and special guests filled the Eclipse Center in Beloit.

MY CO-OP



# MEMBERS ARE MOST REWARDING PART OF JOB

## Director of utility operations heads for retirement

When Denny Schultz looks back on his four decades at Rock Energy Cooperative, his fondest memories focus on co-op members.

“I think the most memorable thing that comes to mind when I think about all the jobs and all the storms and all the services and everything, the most memorable things are about the members,” he said.

He remembers the Orfordville woman who made chocolate chip cookies for line crews whenever they worked near her house.

Then there’s the Bradford Township family that invited workers into their home when a truck got stuck in the ditch during a terrible winter storm. The family didn’t have power but treated the guys to hot chocolate and hot dogs cooked on their fireplace.

And the woman who brought hot soup in thermos bottles when crews were working on Rockton Road and the wind chill was 35 below zero. She didn’t have power at her house, but somehow managed to deliver hot soup to workers.

“By far, the compassion and niceness of people are my best memories,” Schultz said.

When Schultz applied for a job at Rock County Electric Cooperative Association shortly after high school, he didn’t know that he was starting a career that would last almost 45 years. He still remembers his first day on the job—setting up electric service at a house on Six Corners Road.

“The lineman was up the pole, and I was his groundman,” Schultz recalled. “He was asking for equipment that I had no idea what he was talking about. I just went to the truck and found something that looks like what he might use. I’d run it up to him, and he would throw it down until I got the right stuff.”

After a few months, he started his



Denny Schultz will retire from Rock Energy on May 4 to spend more time with his grandkids and at his cabin up north.

four-year lineman apprenticeship and then became a journeyman. He continued to be promoted, working as a foreman, line superintendent, operations manager, and eventually director of utility operations where he supervises the electric and natural gas departments at Rock Energy Cooperative.

Schultz has seen plenty of changes during his time at the co-op. When he first started, the co-op had only one

**“By far, the compassion and nicenesses of people are my best memories.”**

**—Denny Schultz**

bucket truck, so linemen had to climb the poles to do most of their work. That was great for Schultz, who loved to climb.

“To this day, I still love to climb,” he said. “I climb trees up to my property all the time—trimming trees, cutting branches. I thought climbing was the best part of the job.”

Technology has brought the biggest changes, Schultz said, making a lineman’s job safer and more efficient.

He remembers when members called directors at home to report outages and directors called the on-duty lineman. If another outage came in while he was responding, his wife, Terri, would take the call and write down the information. When he finished with one outage, he’d have to find a pay phone and call home to see if there were other outages.

Schultz said he appreciated that his family was so supportive and understanding when he would miss holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions because he was responding to power outages. His wife threw a surprise birthday party for him once, and the surprise was that he missed most of it because he was working.

He especially remembers the ice storm in early March of 1976. Electric poles and wires were covered with up to six inches of ice, and winds were gusting to 60 mph. The storm knocked out all but one of the co-op’s substations, and more than 90 percent of members lost power.

“It was the longest, hardest storm I ever worked,” he said. “Back then, they didn’t let you go home just because you were tired. People wouldn’t believe the hours that we put in.”

He estimated that crews worked

for three to four days straight during that storm. It was especially frustrating because one line on Kemp Road between Highway 14 and County MM was repaired twice. His crew had just finished putting the line up when a big gust of wind came and knocked it down again.

“When you’re a lineman, you really know how important your job is when you go out at night in an outage in the boonies someplace and get out of your truck and it’s completely dark,” he said. “There’s no yard lights. There’s no lights in the windows because everyone’s lights are out. In our profession, you get a feeling of real satisfaction when you know it’s your responsibility to get all these lights on in this very dark area. Once those lights pop on, you just kind of go ‘I did that.’ Those are satisfying moments.”

The transition from a bucket truck to a desk job was difficult for Schultz because he enjoyed the outdoors so much. During storms, he wanted to be where the action was and would rather be putting up line than directing others. “But I knew that someday in my career I wouldn’t want to be on top of a 40-foot pole in an ice storm,” he said.

Schultz said his philosophy as a manager was to always surround himself with good workers. That was especially important in 2007 when the co-op acquired electric and natural gas territory

in Illinois, increasing the number of members by 10,000.

“Literally overnight, it switched from Alliant to Rock Energy,” he said. “It was a daunting task.”

The switch might have happened overnight, but preparation for it took years. Schultz was instrumental in meeting with engineers, inspecting lines, and building a team, said Shane Larson, chief executive officer.

“Denny is a lot like this co-op,” Larson said. “Both have strong foundations and a history of doing things fundamentally right. So when it came to making big changes, he stepped right up. I am extremely pleased and proud of the work he’s done.”

Schultz was a little out of his comfort zone with the new territory. He had worked in Rock County for more than 30 years and was familiar with the area. He remembers driving down I-90 toward Illinois one day before the sale and wondering how he would ever get service restored to this area after a storm. “I don’t know where anything is,” he said. “But the key to all that is you hire good people. We were lucky enough to get some people that had already worked this area from Alliant.”

Schultz’s last day at the co-op is May 4. His retirement plans include spending time at his cabin near Marshfield and

more importantly, with his five grandkids.

“This industry’s been really good to me,” he said. “The people, the work, everything. The environment has been really good for me for my whole adult career. Now I want to enjoy my grandkids.”



Denny started working for the co-op right out of high school and has held positions ranging from apprentice lineman to director of utility operations.



## HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY!

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 29. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call 866-752-4550.



Mark Your Calendar

## Rock Energy FAMILY NIGHT AT THE BALLPARK

**Saturday, June 16**

**Beloit Snappers vs. Clinton TimberRattlers**

7 p.m. Pohlman Field at Telfer Park in Beloit

**Special food prices!  
Player autographs!  
Spectacular fireworks!**

Purchase vouchers in advance at Rock Energy offices for \$2 (a \$8 value). They’re good for any home game this season.



## More Power to You

(Continued from page 20A)

advanced metering infrastructure that will replace our old system that's no longer supported by the manufacturer. The new system will greatly enhance our meter-reading capabilities while providing more information to members and the co-op. More details about the new AMI system will be provided in future articles.

I also told the membership that Rock has become a small owner in Alliant Energy's new West Riverside Energy Center. The highly efficient natural gas power plant is being built between Janesville and Beloit just off Highway 51. When the plant goes online in 2020, your co-op will benefit financially with a reduction in monthly demand costs equivalent to our 25-megawatt ownership share. We're confident that the financial impact of this program will benefit the co-op well into the future.

At the end of my remarks, I recognized a longtime employee who will retire in early May. (See story on page



Seven students who were awarded \$500 college scholarships at the annual meeting are, from left, back row: Clyde Jacob Hollister, Boylan Catholic High School; Bryan Bartlett, Evansville; Samuel Fisher, South Beloit; front row: Holly Black, Hononegah; Noelle Buggs, Craig; Megan Kreier, Milton; Keegan Thiele, Parker. Three scholarship winners were unable to attend the meeting: Kenneth Ballmer, Clinton; Zachary Currie, Craig; Jared Lee, Dakota.

20B.) After nearly 45 years of outstanding service to the co-op, Denny Schultz will be retiring to spend more time with his family and at his cottage up north.

From apprentice lineman to our director of utility operations, Denny has

seen it all here at Rock. We will miss his expertise, but most of all, we will miss having him be a part of our daily lives. We wish Denny and his wife, Terri, nothing but the best.

During the business meeting, members approved a change to the bylaws that allows the co-op to avoid the time and expense of written ballots in uncontested director elections. Then the membership re-elected three directors in a voice vote: Barbara Miller, District 1; Darrel Weber, District 3; and Bill Fischer, District 5.

At its March reorganizational meeting, the board re-elected officers for the coming year. Continuing in their roles are Bill Dietsch, chairman; Ron Richards, vice chairman; Marian Trescher, secretary; and Jim Quade, treasurer.

Thanks to everyone who made our 82nd annual meeting a success. It was terrific to see so many familiar faces as well as meet some new members. The evening is always a highlight of the year for the co-op's directors and employees. We are proud to be your energy provider. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to improve our service to you. ☺



The kids room was filled with painted faces and balloon creations. Funny Faces Family Entertainment from the Madison area kept kids busy during the annual meeting.

**Shane Larson, CEO**

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**Barbara Uebelacker, Editor**



**ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE**  
Empowering Members Since 1936