

# KENERGY

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APRIL 2025

## Protecting the power line system from the power of nature

Wild landscapes are a defining feature of Kentucky's natural beauty. Dense woods surround river lowlands and rolling hills, blanketing the commonwealth in a diverse array of colors and plant species. Power lines delivering electricity to homes and businesses traverse these wooded areas and coexist with nature. However, severe weather with ice or strong winds can quickly transform these trees and lines into a tangled mess.

"During storms, vegetation is often the culprit behind power outages," says Reece O'Nan, vegetation management supervisor for Big Rivers Electric Corporation. "Trees or plants growing near power lines can come into contact with the wires, causing power service interruptions, outages, or even fires."

Big Rivers Electric Corporation is your electric cooperative's generation and transmission partner, delivering electricity to your area through more than 1,300 miles of high-voltage power lines. Maintaining this vast power system and keeping trees away from critical lines is a year-round effort. If trees damage the system, power cannot reach your cooperative's substation, and you experience an outage.

"Vegetation management is vital to providing reliable power," says O'Nan. "Big Rivers uses a three-step practice that includes trimming with bucket trucks and tree climbers, removing all vegetation over six feet tall in the power line easements and applying herbicides to treat all trees and woody plants in the right-of-way to keep vegetation at a safe distance from power lines. Public safety is always a major concern. If vegetation comes into contact with high-voltage power lines, the fallout and contact risk can extend up to 200 feet away."

January's winter weather tested efforts to protect the power system. During the first two weeks of the year, storms covered western Kentucky with layers of sleet, snow and ice. Powerful winds and heavy coatings of ice tore down branches and snapped poles. The power system between Henderson and Morganfield experienced the worst storm damage, but ice also affected communication equipment in Livingston County.



The January ice storm took down tall trees in Morganfield, nearly coming in contact with the high-voltage power line system. Big Rivers is working to clear more space around the high-voltage power lines, widening 250 miles in the past three years. Photo: Big Rivers Forester Jerry Patterson

"Vegetation came into contact with power lines, de-energizing a critical communication tower for emergency medical services, as well as Big Rivers," says O'Nan. "As a utility, Big Rivers also has microwave towers and substations

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Vice President of Admin Services Keith Ellis—25 years



Member Service Representative Haleigh Emerson—10 years

## Trees and power lines

### Striking the right balance

As we head into spring, many of us are excited about beautifying our properties with new landscaping. At Kenergy, we understand the essential role that trees play in our environment and community. They provide shade, beauty and cleaner air—but when it comes to planting near power lines, safety must always be a top priority.

Trees that grow too close to power lines can lead to serious hazards. In addition to the obvious risk of power outages, overgrown branches can pose significant dangers. They create potential shock and fire hazards, not just for the utility lines, but also for those working around them. One of the most concerning risks is for children who might unknowingly climb trees that have grown too close to power lines, putting them at great risk of electric shock.

If you're thinking about trimming trees or planting new ones and have concerns about proximity to power lines, we encourage you to take action. If you hire a professional for tree maintenance, please call Kenergy at (800) 844-4832 to arrange an inspection to ensure your property is safe.

The key to a safe, beautiful landscape is planting the right tree in the right place. As you begin your landscaping this spring, here are some essential tips to keep in mind:

- Cooperate with Kenergy: Help us maintain easement areas by planting trees a safe distance from power lines.
- Know the size of the tree: Be aware of how large your tree will grow at maturity. Understanding the tree's spread and height will help you select the right tree for the right space.
- Get expert advice: For specific tree size information, visit [ArborDay.org](http://ArborDay.org), your local cooperative extension office, or a nearby nursery.
- Avoid planting too close to power lines: Never plant trees or vegetation under or near power lines or poles.
- Report potential risks: If you spot any trees that could threaten our service lines, please notify us.
- Call before digging: Remember to call 811 before planting or digging to ensure you're not disrupting any underground utilities.

Together, we can ensure that trees and power lines can safely coexist. By planning ahead and planting thoughtfully, we all contribute to a safer and more beautiful community. Thank you for your ongoing partnership in helping Kenergy keep our electric service reliable and safe.

By Matt Moffitt  
Vice President Operations



# Meet your director



**Brent Wigginton**  
District 9



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Toll Free:** For information or to report an outage  
(800) 844-4832

**Henderson:** 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
6402 Old Corydon Road

**Owensboro:** 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
3111 Fairview Drive

**Hanson:** 9 a.m. – Noon, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
2620 Brown Badgett Loop

**Hawesville:** 9 a.m. – Noon, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
315 Hawes Blvd

**Marion:** Tuesday and Friday, 9 a.m. – Noon,  
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., 3000 Mott City Road

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Three incumbents face no opposition in 2025 Board Election

The three incumbent directors whose seats are up for election this year will face no opposition and will retain their board seats for another three years without an election.

Craig Roberts of Princeton in District 1, Ryan Hammack of Providence in District 3, and

Mike Hazelwood of Henderson in District 5, are the only candidates who submitted petitions to have their names placed on the ballot.

Kenergy's bylaws stipulate that any uncontested candidate will be declared the winner of the board seat without an election.

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that enable communication between personnel in the field, dispatchers and critical power components. This allows our power grid to operate efficiently and provide reliable electricity to the cooperatives—Jackson Purchase Energy, Kenergy and Meade County RECC. To restore power to the communication tower, we worked in unison with Jackson Purchase Energy to clear downed trees and restore the power as quickly as possible.”

Big Rivers is actively expanding the area around the high-voltage power lines to prevent future damage, completing more than 250 miles of widening in the past three years. A new satellite imagery program is also helping Big Rivers survey potential problem areas with dead and dying trees. New rubber-tracked equipment gives crews better access to wet areas year-round and lessens the impact on land used for agriculture.

“Another technology that Big Rivers will begin utilizing in 2025 is

helicopter trimming of dead trees,” says O’Nan. “The use of helicopters allows us to keep ground crews safe and clear of dead trees while protecting the power lines from trees that may break and come into contact with them.”

The public also plays a key role in protecting the power system. Homeowners should carefully consider the tree type, size and location when planting to avoid future contact with power system lines or equipment. Contact your power cooperative or local extension office for guidance when in doubt.

“It will save you time and money in the long run by planting the right tree in the right area,” says O’Nan. “Furthermore, if you have a tree near a power line on your property, stay away from it. Contact your power cooperative and allow them to consult with you on how to manage the issue. Do not attempt to address the problem yourself without first consulting the professionals.”