



# Oneida-Madison Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## COOPERATIVE NEWS

### A Letter from CEO, Brian Bell

It's hard to miss the conversation right now. Energy costs are being blamed on everything and everyone. People pick their villain and start arguing. If you tune out the noise, the reality is plain to see. All you have to do is open your mail, and then open your checkbook. There's no hiding from it, and I'm not going to sugarcoat it. In the pages that follow, I'll lay out the facts— the numbers, the charts, and the pressures behind what we're seeing. But lets be honest: a pie chart doesn't make the bill any easier to pay, and a spreadsheet doesn't lower the cost of electricity.

When members say the bill feels expensive lately, they're not imagining it. The increase is real, and how we respond matters. I'm not here to point fingers— I'm here to speak plainly, take responsibility for the bills we send, and focus on what we can do about it. Before I get into the data, I want to start with a story. Not to avoid the facts, but to put them in the right place.

About 20 years ago, I learned this lesson the hard way on storm duty. It was October, colder than it had any right to be, and the weather just wouldn't let up. I had been going for 24 hours or more, and we were trying to get one more line back on before calling it and grabbing a few hours of sleep. The trouble spot was off-road, between Spencer Road and Glenn Road in Augusta. Trees took wires down in the brush. The ground crew fought to free the wire in the dark while I geared up and climbed the pole, waiting for them to get it to me. It was a job I'd done 100 times. It should have been routine.

Then the rain started; a cold rain that cuts through everything to your very bones. Now when you're 40 feet in the air on hooks, wet and worn down, your mind starts bargaining with you. The reasons to quit arrive first. The reasons why this is harder than it should be, the reasons why tomorrow would be better. I've never liked being bundled up at the top of a pole; it's restrictive and you need to move. But my foreman could see what I didn't want to admit. He went to the truck, grabbed a heavy jacket and sent it up on the handline. I draped it over my shoulders, pulled the hood up, and waited.

*Continued on page 4.....*



### Notes & Information

Normal Office Hours are as follows: **7:30am-4pm**

**Monday-Friday**  
Office Location:  
**6630 State Rt 20**  
**Bouckville, NY 13310**

Call **(315) 893-1851** 24 hours a day for assistance with power outages and/or emergencies

### Your Board of Directors

**Rudy Brouillette**,  
President  
**John Lehr**  
Vice President  
**Dan Saulsgiver**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
**Scott Bugbee**  
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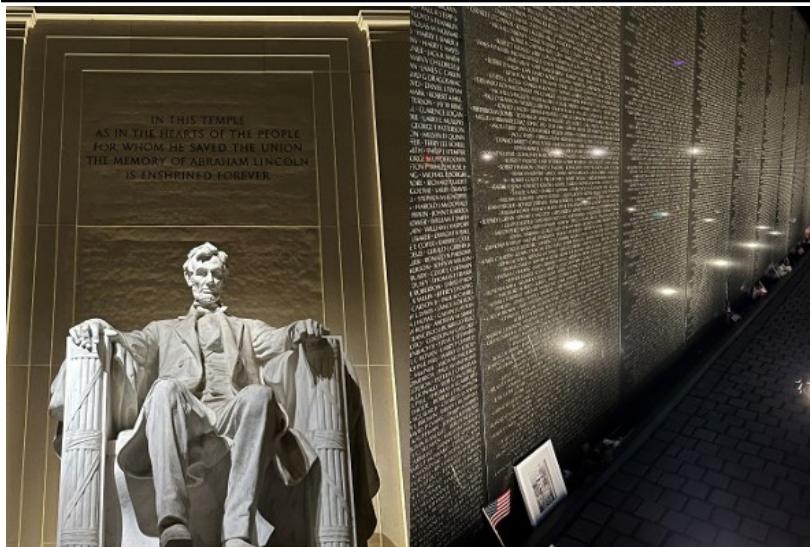
- ♦ Deadline for applications due by **March 31, 2026**
- ♦ Must be available to travel to Washington, D.C. **April 26-30, 2026**
- ♦ Join students from other NY cooperatives to meet legislators at the Capitol, sight-see throughout the city, attend an MLB game
- ♦ Win up to \$1,000 cash scholarship!
- ♦ Room, board, and travel expenses are **COVERED!**
- ♦ **Questions?** Contact Kyla at 315-893-1851 or [kyla@oneidamadison.com](mailto:kyla@oneidamadison.com).



### DEADLINE EXTENDED!

If the 11th grader in your life didn't have the chance to apply for our youth scholarship—GREAT NEWS! We extended the deadline to the end of March. Don't sleep on this opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., meet with legislators, learn about the lobbying process as well as the history of cooperatives, sight-see all the monuments and museums, attend a Major League Baseball game, and more!

Additionally, this trip comes along with up to \$1,000 scholarship and further opportunities to return to D.C. as well as the potential to earn another trip to San Diego, California in February 2027! To apply please visit [www.oneida-madison.coop/2026-youth-scholarship](http://www.oneida-madison.coop/2026-youth-scholarship), visit your school's guidance office, email [kyla@oneidamadison.com](mailto:kyla@oneidamadison.com), or call 315-893-1851.



## Life's a Garden, Dig It

Spring is just around the corner, and with the warmer weather comes all those projects you've been dreaming about all winter long. Whether you're planning to plant a new garden or finally replace that old deck, there's one important step you should take before lifting a shovel: **call 811.**

Dialing 811 can save you time, money, and a whole lot of frustration. It also ensures you stay on good terms with your neighbors by preventing accidental disruptions to their power, cable, internet, and other essential services.

To the right you'll find the standardized color code used to mark underground utility lines so you'll know exactly what's beneath the surface when you begin your digging project.



We don't want to trample your flowers, so please maintain the right-of-way required by padmount transformers. These pieces of equipment are not meant to be played near, sat on, or utilized in your landscaping.

Be sure to keep your children and pets away as well!

## **Save the Date**

The office will be closed for the following holidays:

**Good Friday**

Friday, April 3rd

**Memorial Day**

Monday, May 25th

For the most up-to-date information regarding news, outages, contests, and more, like and follow us on Facebook!



**Don't have social media?  
You can still see our newsfeed on our website!**

*Continued from front page....*

That night felt different. Like it would never end. Like they were never going to get that damn wire untangled. After a while, the jacket did it's job. I warmed up. The rain eased. The wire finally freed up. We got it up, made the repair, and got the lights back on before we went to bed. I think about that night now because, just like energy prices, storms don't ask permission. They show up. You don't get to choose the conditions, but you do get to choose the response.

And the response is built on support, the kind that shows up at the right moment, and helps you press on. That's what a cooperative is supposed to be. When things get hard, we don't waste time picking villains. We tighten our boots, look out for each other, and do the work that has to be done.

That's also how we're approaching electric bills right now. The increase is real. I'm not asking anyone to like it. I'm saying I'm not interested in finger-pointing— I'm interested in fixes. Controlling what we can control. Protecting reliability. Limiting the impact on the bills we send as much as possible.

If you look at pages 5 and 6, I'll show you the facts: what's driving costs, what's changed, what it means in plain dollars, and what we're doing about it.

*Brian Bell  
CEO/General Manager*

## Electric Co-ops Go the Extra Mile for You



# Why Energy Prices Have People on Edge

What's really driving costs, and how it shows up on your bill

Energy prices have become a constant headline. While every utility has different cost pressures, I can share the realities that apply to OMEC, what is driving wholesale costs right now, and how those costs work their way to your bill.

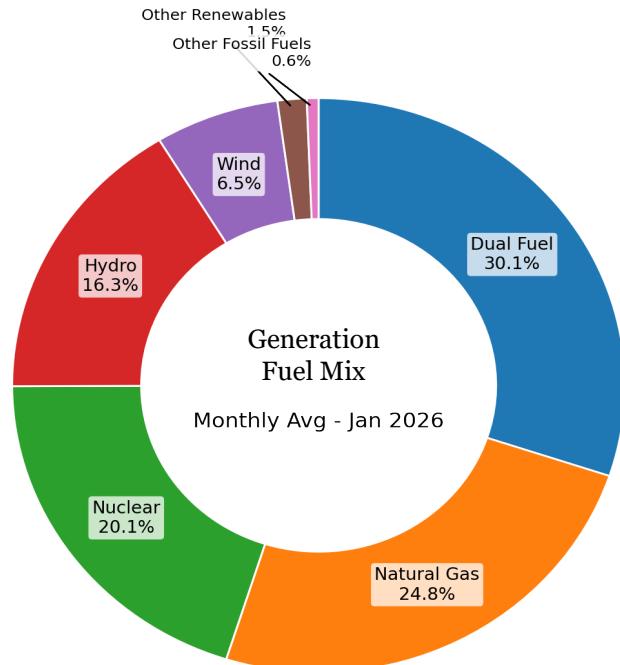
## Natural gas is a major driver

Across our region, a large share of electricity is produced by generators that burn natural gas, or units that can run on either natural gas or fuel oil. When natural gas prices rise, or when gas delivery becomes constrained during extreme cold, those units cost more to run. Because they often set the marginal price, that higher fuel cost can push wholesale electricity prices up for everyone buying from the market during that time window.

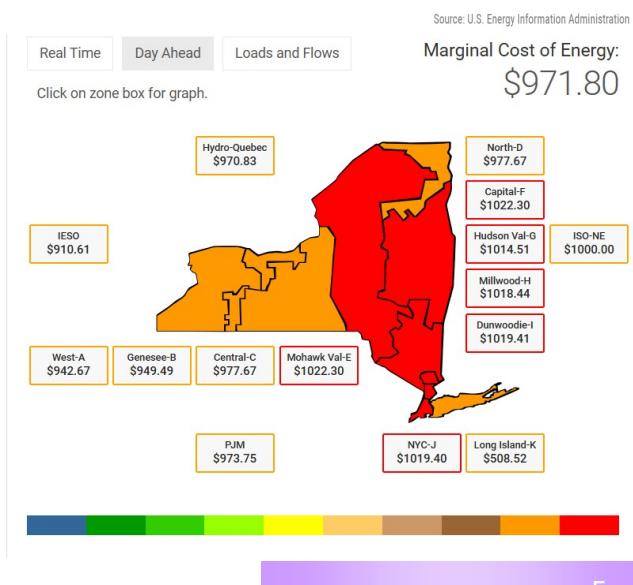
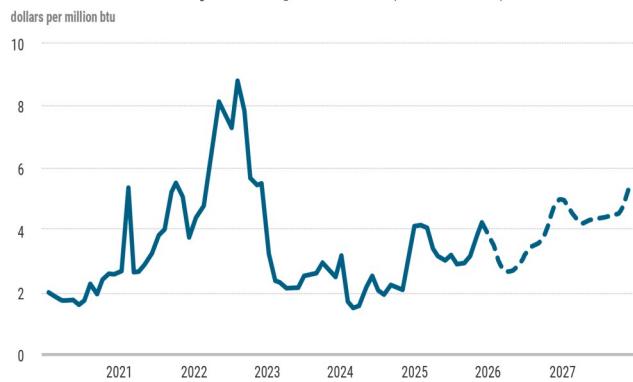
**New York Independent System Operator**  
NYISO runs New York's electric grid and wholesale power markets, balancing supply and demand in real time and setting market prices. Power is bought and sold in two main timeframes. The day-ahead market is the "schedule and commit" market. The real-time market is the "minute by minute" balancing market, where prices adjust as actual conditions, including weather swings, generator outages, and transmission constraints. In calm conditions, day-ahead and real-time prices are often similar. In stressed conditions, real-time prices can jump quickly.

## Transmission Line Congestion

Transmission congestion is basically a grid bottleneck. Every part of the transmission system has a safe limit on how much power it can carry. When those limits are reached, lower-cost electricity that might be available elsewhere cannot flow into a specific area in the amounts needed. To keep the system reliable, higher-cost generators in or near that area have to run instead. The "cost of congestion" is the extra cost created by those bottlenecks, and it often shows up as higher wholesale prices in the locations affected during those periods.



## Natural Gas Henry Hub Spot Price (\$/mmBtu)



# Your Cooperative's Power Costs

## What They Are and How We Manage Them

### How OMEC buys power:

**Layer 1 - NYPA hydropower.** We receive a fixed block of low-cost, renewable hydropower through the New York Power Authority. Our allocation is approximately **3.5 megawatts**. That allocation was set in **1989**, and your cooperative has grown significantly since then. We are grateful for this supply because it provides real savings every day, but in 2025 our daily peak demand exceeded that block about 61% of the time.

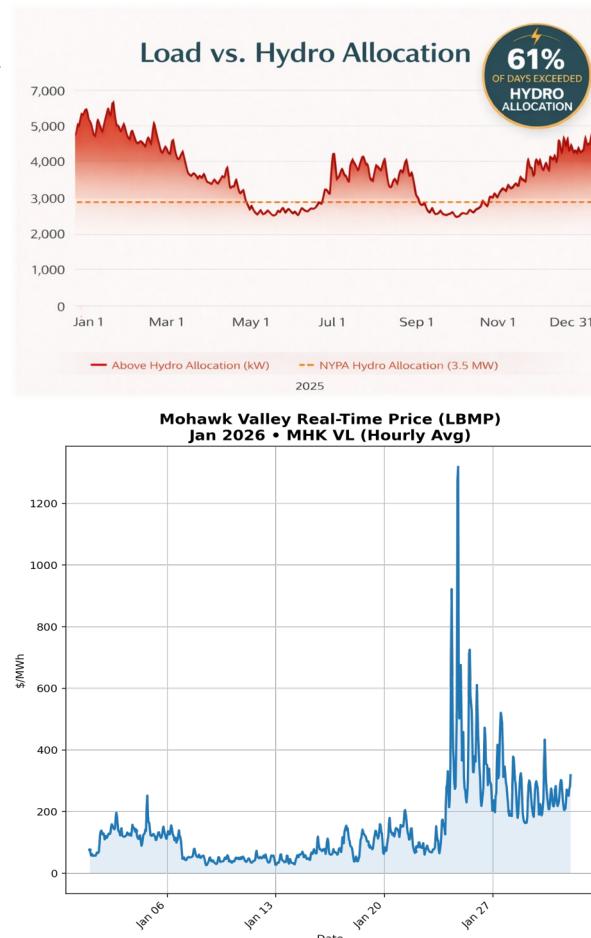
**Layer 2 - NYISO market purchases.** When our demand rises above that fixed hydro block, the remainder is purchased through the wholesale market. During mild conditions those purchases can be reasonably priced. During extreme cold, when demand is high market prices can become much more expensive. OMEC typically plans for market purchases in the \$35-40 per MWh range. This January, OMEC's market purchases were **\$183.83/MWh**, which equals 18.38 cents per kWh. By comparison, the all-in rate members pay is 11.5 cents per kWh. Mind you, that 11.5 cents includes everything: power supply, line maintenance, crews, poles and wires, tree work, billing, and running the cooperative.

### NYPA hydro rate change

After lengthy negotiations, NYPA approved a hydropower rate increase that will be phased in over several years beginning **April 1, 2026**. Even though hydropower accounts for the most kilowatt-hours we purchase it only represents about **19%** of OMEC's total power costs. We expect the immediate impact to be modest, but it is real. Because April usage is billed in May, members may notice small changes beginning with **May 2026**. OMEC is not implementing a rate increase to cover the NYPA hydro changes at this time. We believe we can manage those changes through methods already in place, while continuing to watch conditions closely.

**Do what you can, with what you have,  
where you are.**

6      *Theodore Roosevelt*



### The bottom line is this:

We cannot control the weather, and we cannot control wholesale markets. But we can control how well we run the cooperative. In 2025, OMEC elected to **not pass through nearly \$140,000** of power cost, saving members that money. Knowing the impact that additional passthrough would have on our members we managed operations carefully and came in about **10 percent under** our Operations & Maintenance and Administration & General budgets, while still maintaining safety and reliability. That is the part of the equation we can directly influence, even when the market is doing what markets do.

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**At Home with Hazel**  
*Triple. Decker. Mint. Brownies.*  
*Shamrock everyone's world with this mic-drop dessert after your*  
*St. Paddy's Day Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner.*

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**Ingredients:**

***Brownies***

$\frac{1}{2}$  C butter (1 stick)  
8 oz bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  C unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 C granulated sugar  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
2 large eggs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  C all-purpose flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp kosher salt

***Buttercream***

$\frac{1}{2}$  C butter (1 stick), at room temperature  
2 C powdered sugar  
2 oz cream cheese, at room temperature  
2 Tbsp green crème de menthe liquor  
1 tsp peppermint extract  
pinch kosher salt

***Ganache***

$\frac{1}{2}$  C heavy cream  
6 oz dark chocolate, finely chopped

**Instructions:**

***Make the Brownies***

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 350°. Line 8x8 baking pan with parchment paper so that it hangs over two sides of the pan. Lightly grease with cooking spray.
2. Melt butter and chocolate in medium saucepan over low, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and whisk in cocoa powder, sugar, & vanilla until no lumps remain. Let sit for 5 minutes, then whisk the eggs in one at a time, mixing well. Fold in flour and salt with rubber spatula.
3. Transfer to prepared baking pan and spread in an even layer. Bake until set (23-25 mins). Cool completely in the pan

***Make the Buttercream***

1. Cream together butter and cream cheese until smooth (about 2 mins). Beat in crème de menthe, peppermint extract, and salt.
2. Gradually add sugar and mix until smooth and fluffy
3. Spread in an even layer over the cooled brownies. Refrigerate for at least 30 mins.

***Make the Ganache***

1. Place chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl. Heat the cream in a small saucepan over low until bubbling around the edges, then pour it over the chocolate mixture. Let sit for about 10 mins, then stir with a spatula until completely smooth. Let cool for about 10 mins, then use as soon as it starts to thicken up.
2. Remove the brownies from refrigerator and spread ganache in an even layer over the buttercream with an offset spatula or knife. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before slicing and serving.

***Notes***

1. Brownies can be baked a day in advance, covered and stored at room temperature.
2. Use 2 tsp of peppermint extract and green food coloring in replacement of crème de menthe.



## **Wattson's Window**



We're on the edge of spring, friends. I can feel it in my whiskers. Will March come in like a lion and go out like a lamb? Around here in Central New York, the only thing you can count on is uncertainty. But just because we don't have a crystal ball doesn't mean we don't know how to survive.

Remember 1993? Well... *I* don't, exactly—but Kyla tells me there were 43 inches of snow in just two days. The power went out, schools shut down, and the snowbanks grew so tall that a game of King of the Mountain could end in a spectacular tumble if your brother shoved you just right. So what did everyone do? They prepared. They braced for impact. When the snow finally stopped, they checked on friends and neighbors and then they rolled up their sleeves and

cleaned up the mess.

I've seen St. Paddy's Days that were warm and sunny enough for lounging in a window, and others where the water in my dish froze solid before lunchtime. That's Central New York for you. We're made of hearty stock. We're resilient. We know that even if a blizzard shows up in March, July will come in hot soon enough.

When the road gets rocky, or the weather gets rough, we persevere. We work together. We lean on one another. We ask for help when we need it, because storms may come and go, but the relationships we build with our friends, families, and neighbors are what truly keep us going. And just like Brian said in his letter to the members a few pages back, we'll weather the storm of rising costs the same way we weather everything else: together.

So if you need help, don't be afraid to ask. We can help you navigate HEAP requirements or explore other payment assistance programs. If you need a helping paw with energy efficiency tips or lowering your usage, we're here to walk you through it. And when the sun finally sticks around for good, we'll stretch out in those warm rays—grateful to have made it through another Central New York winter.

Warm regards and well-wishes,

**Wattson**

