

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

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ERIN SMITH



Tree-Trimming Program Helps Prevent Outages

Lineworkers David Deloach and Bill Newman have worked every street and road in Ripley Power and Light's electric system since September, looking for trees and limbs that have grown too close to power lines and equipment.

Their mission is to trim or cut down trees and vegetation that are a threat to power lines—"to cut down the tree before it can tear down the power lines," David said.

The ultimate goal is to keep customer lights on at all times and maintain the highest level of service reliability possible.

To proactively protect its power lines, Ripley Power and Light has a crew dedicated to trimming and cutting down trees and vegetation year-round.

David has worked for Ripley Power and Light 33 years, and Bill has been with the company 28 years. Together, they do 99%

of the cutting and trimming. Four groundsmen—Matthew Bell, Caleb Wright, Ty Buckner and Aston Land—alternate weeks, working in pairs to assist the tree-trimming crew.

"One of the best decisions we made was to put David Deloach in charge of clearing our electric lines of trees that could cause outages," said President and CEO of Ripley Power and Light Mike Allmand. "As a result, outages due to



Mike Allmand
President and CEO
Ripley Power and Light

Lineworkers David Deloach, left, and Bill Newman trim trees on Highland Extended in Ripley.

PHOTOS BY ERIN SMITH



From left, Caleb Wright and Ty Buckner put sawed branches through the tree chipper, while David Deloach and Bill Newman cut down a tree branch.

tree issues have decreased substantially over the past five-plus years. It is an art of taking, in many cases, massive trees down without damaging our electric lines or our customers' property. David and his team are masters at what they do."

"The No. 1 cause of outages is weather," David said.

"Trees do not like wind or ice. Strong winds from a pop-up, severe thunderstorm can be a significant issue in the summer, and ice buildup on trees could potentially create outages in the winter. A combination of wind and ice on the trees is a serious threat to the system."

Ice Storm of '94

"For those that remember the Ice Storm of '94, I am sure you share the same thoughts as we do," David said. "We never want to experience that again. It was bad for our customers and our linemen.

"At the time, we spent time each winter trimming trees, but we learned in 1994 that we weren't doing enough. We were concentrating on limbs that were near the high voltage lines and not the limbs above. These high limbs taught us a very valuable lesson."

Each year, the crew has a route it follows through the entire system from September to the end of March.

"At this time, we are not only tree trimming, but proactively looking for



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— Lineworker David Deloach

trees that may need to be removed and structural repairs that need to be done to the power lines," David said.

Talking to Property Owners

"Before cutting down a tree, we talk to the customer who owns the property and get a signed contract that gives us permission to cut the tree down," David said.

In the summer, David and Bill focus on the company's rights-of-way lines that may be off the beaten path or hard to reach.

"We also go back to address the trees that were marked during the winter trimming season and work through the contracts to see which trees could be justifiably cut down," David said.

Customers concerned that tree branches are too close to power lines should contact Ripley Power and Light.

Fewer Outages

"After several years of this aggressive approach, there is no doubt that it has paid off," David said.

"There are significantly fewer outages for our customers due to weather, which means you stay warm, and our men spend more time in the safety of their own homes with their families."

Some trees can be skipped a year or two because of low growth. Some trees must be

trimmed every year.

As they work, David and Bill try to maintain the integrity of the trees and keep customers happy.

Customer Satisfaction

"We try not to go into someone's yard and just take one side of the tree," David said. "Most of the time, we're able to round out the tree.

"When we leave that yard, we want to make sure it's in good shape. We want the customer to be satisfied. We ask, 'if that was my tree, how would I want it to look?'"

They also make sure the yard is cleaned of debris caused by the trimming.

After decades of working the system, David said it's rare that someone can ask about a tree that he doesn't know about.

"We love trees," he said. "We just don't like trees that are going to interfere with power lines." ■

More from Ripley Power and Light, pages 20-21

Henning Resident Achieves Dream as a Professional Bull Rider

By Grace White,
Union University student

Reid Arnold, a Henning resident, turned his dream of becoming a professional bull rider into reality by being named the International Professional Rodeo Association Rookie of the Year for the 2022 season.

A rider's place in the standings is determined by how much money they make rodeoing. Reid bought his rodeo card (a permit that allows him to officially compete) about two months into the year, giving his opponents a \$7,000 to \$8,000 advantage over him by the time he entered the race.

He had already won upwards of \$10,000 in rodeos at the beginning of the year. However, since he didn't have his card, none of these earnings counted toward his total, and he started from scratch. This could have been seen as a daunting task to make up all that ground, but he wasn't intimidated.

"I just told myself to ride bull for bull," the 23-year-old said. "It didn't really matter as long as I keep my hand shut and they pay me. I'm going to win it."

During the 2022 season, Reid competed in Michigan, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee. He rodeoed just about every weekend, sometimes in one state one day and another state the next. The traveling is one of his favorite parts of bull riding.

"I like traveling," Reid said. "It does get old towards the end of the year. You're tired of going. You're sore, and you want a break, but you know you can't take a break because there's another guy out there that wants it just as bad as you. But at the end of the day, traveling and riding bulls, I mean, that's the best part of it all."

Reid was in first place in the world standings for bull riding when he entered the International Finals Rodeo this past January in Guthrie, Oklahoma, but over the course of the four-day event, another rider made up ground and pushed Reid into second place. He finished second in the world in the overall standings



Reid, 23 and a Ripley High School graduate, is a professional bull rider.

and won 2022 Rookie of the Year, meaning that he earned more money than all of the other rookies.

From the time he was young, the Ripley High School graduate wanted to be a bull rider. His uncle, Shawn Turner, rode in the Professional Bull Riders organization, so bull riding was in his blood.

"The first bull I ever got on, I was like 9 or 10," said Reid, the son of Shannon Turner and Chris Arnold. "I loved it, but I was scared. I ended up quitting. I was scared I was going to get hurt. Mom didn't really want me doing it."

By the time he was about 15, Reid knew that bull riding was what he wanted to do. His friend, Colton Ozment, died, and there was a memorial rodeo held in his honor. Reid entered that rodeo and won. From there, his bull riding career took off.

For several years, he went to open and amateur rodeos and learned how to ride.

"I started to ride well late in the 2021 season," Reid said.

Since a rider is classified as a rookie the first season they have their card, Reid decided to wait until the 2022 season to purchase his. He competed in several rodeos in early 2022 to earn money so he could buy his card. The move paid off with his



Reid lives his dream as a professional bull rider. PHOTOS BY 870SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY



Reid, who celebrates another successful ride, above, earned enough money riding bulls to be named the 2022 Rookie of the Year by the International Professional Rodeo Association.

winning the 2022 Rookie of the Year Award.

However, even after being named the best among the rookies, Reid isn't satisfied.

"It's a big accomplishment," he said, "but at the end of the day, it's not a world title."

Reid lives and breathes bull riding. He is dedicated to his sport and won't let anyone outwork him in the arena.

He hardly takes any time off unless he's nursing an injury. Last spring, for example, a shattered radial head in his left arm slowed him down a little.

If somebody beats him, it won't be because he didn't give it his all.

"I'm excited," Reid said. "I'm happy. I mean, all my hard work paid off, and I'm ready to do it again this year." ■





RIPLEY POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY

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7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday

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 - Through bank draft.
- At our Ripley & Halls offices.
- In office night deposit boxes.
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If you have not been receiving your bills, call our office immediately so we can verify your mailing address.

Ripley Power and Light offices are closed:

Friday, April 7, for Good Friday

Monday, May 29,
for Memorial Day

Tuesday, July 4, for
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Ripley Power and Light's Mobile App enables you to manage your account right from your smart device—anytime, anywhere. The app is secure, easy to get and simple to use.

The app is available on Google Play or Apple's App Store, or you can scan the QR code at right.

Once the app is downloaded and installed on your device, you will see a welcome screen that allows you to sign up or log in to the customer portal.



Mobile App

The Customer Portal

You can access the new customer portal through the new mobile app on your smart device; by scanning the QR code, at right; or through the customer portal link at



Customer Portal

the top of our website, www.ripleypower.com.

The first time you access the customer portal, you need your 12-digit account number. This is found in a box on the top left of your bill.

Select "Sign Up" on the customer portal, enter your account number and work through the prompts. You will receive an email saying your account is activated.

You are now ready to pay your bill, review your statements and monitor your utility use.

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You can be assured that transactions through the customer portal adhere to the latest payment card industry data security standard. Your information is secure and your identity protected.

Online Payments

The customer portal is the only way to pay your electric bill online, whether you are accessing it through the mobile app or our website. ■