

What the well-dressed lineman is wearing this winter

BY LE SPEARMAN

Local electric cooperatives train and prepare their linemen to work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in all types of weather. During this time of year, many of Iowa's winter storms are capable of disrupting electrical service, so it's essential that these workers have the right tools and clothing to help them restore any outages that might occur.

The tools and safety equipment used by the linemen are pretty much the

same for year-round work, but they wear different clothing to protect themselves from hazardous working conditions during blizzards, ice and sub-zero cold.

Mitchell McKeever is line foreman for Sac County Rural Electric Cooperative in Sac City. "When we have a bad-weather call come over the pager, our equipment is at the shop and ready to go—and hopefully dry from the day's work before," explains McKeever.

He adds that he likes to wear insulated bib overalls, a coat, insulated boots and leather gloves while working during winter storms.

"It's kind of an oath that all linemen feel that when you became a lineman you took the job because you are in the field to help people," says McKeever. "Working in an ice storm or bad weather, we keep safety in mind—but we are working to get our customers back on-line." ■



Dressed for the cold weather, Mitchell McKeever, line foreman at Sac County Rural Electric Cooperative in Sac City, replaces a broken tie wire on a three-phase feeder line.

A fair price for safety: \$1,294.03

Ear Protection: \$20.43

Mounts into hardhat slots and has replaceable foam cushions. Different types have different Noise Reduction Ratings—usually a 20-30 decibel reduction.

Safety Glasses: \$5.35

Nylon, one-piece frame with side panels for added protection. Sunglasses are a necessity against hazardous glare from both sun and snow, particularly when working on energized lines.

Rubber Glove Protectors: \$28.40

Leather gloves with Velcro tightening strap and attached orange vinyl cuff. Worn over insulated rubber gloves to reduce chance of puncture or tearing from sharp objects.

Rubber Liner Gloves: \$104.90

Dielectric-tested, rubber liner insulated gloves for electrical protection. Glove thickness dictates the level of voltage line personnel may work.

Safety Harness: \$109.90

Full body harness for working in elevated bucket. Harness attaches to bucket truck boom with locking snap hook.

Lanyard: \$54.15

Nylon strap with locking snap hooks connects lineman's safety harness to truck boom to prevent falling.

Work Boots: \$165.10

Lace-to-toe, steel- or ceramic-toe leather boots with extra arch support for climbing.

Hinged Hot Stick (not shown): \$300.00

Insulated, dielectric-tested fiberglass tool for moving or adjusting live electrical equipment.



Photos by Le Spearman

Hard Hat: \$10.92

Made from hard plastic with inner web suspension system; has universal slots to attach accessories such as ear muffs. Extended brim protects face from falling debris.

Hard Hat Liner: \$7.35

Tricot fabric laminated to flame-retardant sponge outer shell, with red fleece lining for warmth and comfort. Velcro closure.

Arm Protector Sleeves: \$282.93

Dielectric-tested, seamless, vulcanized molded rubber that protects wearer's arms from unintentional contact with energized power source.

Shirt: \$31.40

Long-sleeved, 100% cotton fabric and stitching with nonmetallic buttons. Requires industrial wash with no soap or chlorine bleach to maintain flame-retardant finish.

Bib Overalls: \$90.30

Made from 12-ounce, 100% cotton duck fabric that is water-repellent. Lined with quilted nylon, brass-plated rivets at stress points, high back with elastic in suspenders and reinforced back pockets. Tool pockets and hammer loops with heavy-duty leg zipper to knee with protective flap.

Arctic Coat: \$82.90

Made from 12-ounce, 100% cotton duck fabric that is water-repellent. Lined with nylon quilted to polyester. Heavy-duty zipper has protective windproof flap with hook and loop closure. Waist drawstring, recessed knit storm cuffs, extra-large front combination pockets and hook-and-loop closure on breast pockets.

Good equipment is only half the equation

According to Dennis Corcoran, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a lineman's job classification and potential for career advancement is based primarily on job skills and continual training. In fact, a lineman's work is restricted to exactly what he is qualified to do. For example, a lower-level lineman is not allowed to work on energized lines; he works only on the ground.

A lineman advances in his position by showing mastery of various job skills and, in some cases, taking written tests.



On the pole position

Additional special equipment is necessary for jobs that include climbing electrical poles. A leather/synthetic belt holds tools in a leather pouch and a strap set with added tops that adjust to different pole sizes. Permanent gaff climbers attach to the strap set and have triangular points that jab into a pole as the lineman climbs. Belt: \$163.70. Tool pouch: \$29.75. Pole strap: \$90.50. Gaff climbers: \$90.72.