

PowerLines

A monthly publication for member/owners of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

August 2012

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Electric cars - are we ready?

PLUS:

Let us help you save money

A new online and mobile portal

Capital Credit Allocation

Check your electric bill included in this mailing for your 2011 capital credit allocation.

Allocations are made each year for all Eastern Illini member/owners based on two things: the amount of electricity you purchased the previous year; and our overall financial condition.

Allocations cannot be applied to your electric bill, or used as payment for any other services.



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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

More than electricity

What does it truly mean to be a member/owner of Eastern Illini?

On a fundamental level, providing electricity to you each month should be a pretty simple two-step process.

When you flip a switch, the lights should come on. When you open your bill each month you should know generally what to expect, and you should feel like you are getting value for the money you are spending.

We recently held our Annual Meeting where we celebrated (with record attendance) our 75th anniversary. Back in 1937, the big power companies of the day did not want to provide rural residents with electricity. It was too expensive to run poles and wires to just a few people.

With the assistance of the Rural Electrification Administration, local farmers and businessmen decided that they DID need electricity and they could make it happen themselves. That is how member-owned electric cooperatives began.

And just like 75 years ago, everyone who receives electricity from Eastern Illini today is much more than just a customer. You are all still member/owners of *your* electric cooperative.

Seventy-five years ago the primary focus of electric cooperatives was to provide a critically needed basic service to rural residents. These days, though, electric service is taken for granted - even in the rural areas.

While the poles and wires are still very important, being a member/owner of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative is about much more than the two-step process I mentioned earlier.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

You have a say in how things are run. Each year, you elect fellow member/owners to represent you on our Board of Directors. The board then sets the policies and guidelines from which we operate on a daily basis.

You benefit from member-only services like the return of capital credits (last year we returned over \$600,000 to member/owners and this year we will return about \$1.7 million), and the Co-op Connections Card (a discount program that can save you hundreds of dollars each year).

You also have quick and easy access to our full team of local employees. We can help you add electric service or show you how to make your home more energy efficient (see page 3).

You are able to enjoy all this - and our safe and reliable service - because you are much more than a customer. *You* are a member/owner.

Dave Champion

Electric cars...are we ready?

One member/owner from Eastern Illini has embraced electric car technology.

Much buzz surrounded the 2011 release of electric vehicles by two prominent automakers. The Chevrolet Volt and the Nissan Leaf were hailed as “the future is now” cars that would usher in a new era of energy independence and technological innovation for the United States.

It is not quite the flying DeLorean that Doc Brown and Marty McFly promised us by 2015 in “Back to the Future,” but even though the technology behind electric cars has been around for years, it is still relatively unusual to see an electric car out and about, especially in our part of the state.

One question often asked about electric cars is their affect on the environment. Because you plug them in just like any other appliance, they are using electricity, which results in carbon emissions. Does that increase in electric use offset the savings realized from not running the gas powered combustion engine?

According to the Electric Power Research Institute, a Palo Alto, CA based consortium, the short answer is yes. Despite the extra load, various airborne emissions will decline with the onset of electric cars. Each region of the country will see reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over several decades, thanks in part to technologies that decrease carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

In addition, electric cars could actually help Eastern Illini in the near future if member/owners plug them



Eastern Illini member/owners John and Nancy Reep have owned a Chevy Volt for several months. Here, John plugs in his car to recharge the battery.

in at night. That helps our system run more efficiently because power costs and demand can be lower at night.

Eastern Illini member/owners John and Nancy Reep of Loda purchased a Chevy Volt in early 2012. John noted, “We had a Toyota Prius for several years, and really enjoyed it. We were looking for something newer, a bit more stylish, and comfortable. We found that with the Chevy Volt.”

The Volt batteries hold about 13 kW of charge and the car can travel up to about 60 miles per charge - without ever using gasoline. Once the gasoline engine does have to kick in, it is still very economical. The Reep’s get almost 40 miles/gallon in that driving mode.

According to John, his operating costs with the battery system are about 4.5 cents/mile and on the gasoline side it is about 10 cents/mile. Since they use their battery system about two-thirds of the time, they are paying about 6 cents/mile driven. According to AAA,

an average midsize vehicle owner pays over 14 cents/mile driven.

John continued, “This type of hybrid car is not for everyone. If you have a very long commute or drive for hours at a time, your efficiency will drop. My wife, Nancy, usually drives the Volt and she stays fairly local. There are many days where she never even has to use gasoline.”

The Reeps plug their Volt in every night. With their 120V charger, it takes about eight hours for a full charge. Each charge costs the couple less than two dollars.

Cities across the country are attempting to do their part—electric vehicle charging stations are springing up at various locations here and there. There are some locations in the Champaign/Urbana area that currently offer such charging stations. But barriers, including cost, limited driving range on a charge, and easy access to chargers, still inhibit the widespread use of electric cars.

Let us help you save money

Our energy experts can help you target specific areas around your home to help you save money.

When you have an Eastern Illini employee come to your home to perform an energy audit, you may be surprised by the big red screen he sets up in the open frame of your home's front door. But don't be alarmed - it's just a blower door.

Blower door tests are commonplace in energy audits because they uncover how much air leaks from your home. The "door" comes with a built-in fan and multiple gauges that measure air pressure. The fan sucks air out of your house, lowering the pressure inside. In turn, higher pressure outdoor air will work its way into your home through cracks and unsealed openings.

While it's important for your residence to remain well-ventilated, too much air exchange can be unhealthy, uncomfortable, and expensive in the form of higher bills.

"Blower door tests can be a vital part of a home energy audit," stresses Eastern Illini's licensed energy rater Tim Frick. "By identifying air leaks, we can identify ways for our member/

owners to save energy and money on all of their utility bills, not just their electric bill."

Sometimes, a blower door test is used in conjunction with an infrared scan. Infrared scanning, which is usually done in the winter, allows the energy advisor to find where insulation may need to be added or increased.

These special cameras produce images that, in varying shades from white to black, show where air or heat is leaking out. For example, cool air flowing around a leaky outlet would show up very dark, whereas a tightly sealed window would be closer to white.

"Infrared cameras are a great tool because they pinpoint exactly where air loss is occurring," Frick remarks. "The homeowner can get those areas sealed and start seeing savings right away."

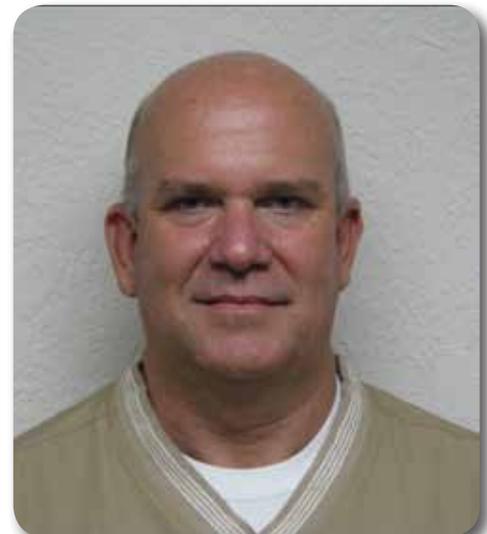
Eastern Illini's energy advisors can help you determine if a blower door test is needed at your home. Contact us at 800-824-5102 or info@eiec.coop for more information.

Because of the time invested in a home energy audit, there is a charge for this service based on the level of reporting and features required.



Eastern Illini's newest employee, Energy Advisor Mike Carroll, is a certified home energy rater and is responsible for helping our northern member/owners discover ways they can lower their energy bills.

Mike is available for site visits and can do everything from a basic walk-through to a full blower door test and complete energy audit.



Tim Frick, Eastern Illini's Marketing Representative, is responsible for working our member/owners in the southern portions of our territory.

Tim is also a licensed energy rater and can assist with all energy related testing, issues and questions.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Look to your windows for energy savings. Use weather stripping on old windows, and, if you can, add storm windows. In hot climates, add solar film screening to west-facing windows to catch heat. For new units, consider double-glazed panes; in cold climates, "low-e" coatings on glass can help reduce heat loss. Find more ways to save at TogetherWeSave.com.

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



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