

PowerLines

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

September 2012

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A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

Preparing for the future

The energy landscape is changing, but we continue to look out for you - our members.

Our primary goal is simple - to provide you, our member/owners, with safe and reliable electric service at the lowest possible cost.

Since we are a not-for-profit, cooperatively-owned business, our focus is always on how we can better serve you instead of worrying about far away shareholders.

There are several things we have recently done - and are continuing to do - to ensure that we can provide you quality service and reasonable rates for the long-term.

Power Supply

Several years ago, your board of directors authorized our involvement in the Prairie State Energy Campus. This state-of-the-art power plant is located right here in Illinois and is among the cleanest coal plants in the world. It has just recently started producing electricity and should be at full capacity by the end of this year.

The electricity generated from Prairie State will allow us to provide you with a power solution that will stabilize electric rates over the long-term. This is especially critical now because federal EPA regulations are forcing the closure of many power plants in 2013. These closures will probably result in higher - and much more volatile - energy prices.

Unbundled Bills

Our current electric rates are made up of three main components: a facility charge, an energy charge, and taxes. In reality, though, there are many individual pieces that make up the cost of delivering electricity to your home.

We are working to restructure our rates and develop a fully unbundled bill that will allow you to easily see and understand each of those components so you are more informed about where your electric dollars are being spent.

The goal of this process is to have rates that better match up with the current energy landscape and reflect the actual costs of each component of providing you with reliable electric service.

The good news is that this rate restructuring will be revenue neutral. In fact, many of you will actually see a decrease in your monthly electric bill. This rate restructuring will probably go in effect in early 2013.

We will continue to keep you updated as we go through this process.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dave Champion

Stay safe during the harvest season

Simple steps can help you stay safe when farming near power lines.

Harvest season can yield higher numbers of electrocution, shock and burn injuries on the farm. Nationwide, an average of 64 agricultural workers are electrocuted and hundreds more injured in electrical accidents each year. Safe Electricity and Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative urge farm workers to avoid tragic accidents by taking note of activities that take place around power lines.

“Equipment contacting overhead power lines is the leading cause of farm electrocution accidents in the Midwest,” says Eastern Illini’s President/CEO Wm. David Champion, Jr. “Many of these accidents occur near grain bins when augers make contact with power lines.”

“Everyone who works on the farm should know the location of power lines and keep farm equipment at least 10 feet away from them – below, to the side and above,” says Molly Hall, Director of Safe Electricity.

Here are some safety considerations for farm workers:

- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level - under 14 feet - before moving or transporting.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting larger modern tractors with higher antennas.



Grain augers coming into contact with overhead power lines is a major hazard during harvest season. Always know your surroundings when farming!

- Always use a spotter to help make certain that contact is not made with a line when moving large equipment.
- As in any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay may also conduct electricity under certain conditions.

Always use a spotter to help make certain that contact is not made with an overhead line when moving large equipment.

- Inspect farm equipment for transport height and determine clearance with any power lines under which the equipment must pass.

- Consider the possibility of underground utility equipment for new or replacement power lines.
- Train all employees to be aware of risks for potential electrical shock on the farm.

“It’s almost always best to stay in the cab and call for help if you come into contact with a power line. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off,” says Hall.

“If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to ground and electrocution is the result,” Hall noted. “Even if a power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there’s fire or an imminent risk of fire.”

In that case, the proper action is to jump with both feet hitting the ground at the same time, and to hop away as far as possible. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Choosing an HVAC contractor

It's no secret that replacing your heating and cooling can be a headache.

When is the right time? What kind of system is best? Where can I find a reliable contractor?

Because the right contractor remains the critical cog in this process—for determining the type and size of the unit needed, explaining your options, and proper installation—consider these tips before making a selection.

Ask around

What are the contractor's licensing and qualifications? Is the contractor a member of state and national contractor associations, such as Air Conditioning Contractors of America? Is he or she adequately insured?

"Most people don't realize that almost 50 percent of their energy bill comes from an HVAC [heating, ventilation, and air conditioning] system," explains Bob Dickey, Eastern Illini's Marketing Manager. "It's important to have the right person install and maintain the equipment."

Word of mouth provides a valuable resource, so ask neighbors and friends if they can recommend a good



Choosing the correct HVAC contractor is critical when upgrading your heating and cooling system. Eastern Illini offers assistance in making the choice.

contractor—or if there's someone you should avoid. And remember to check on what a prospective contractor guarantees and whether any follow-up services, such as a maintenance agreement, are offered.

"It's important to have these conversations before work begins," Dickey stresses. "That way, if there are any surprises after installation, you know what to expect."

What the contractor and you should do

After you ask these questions, a good contractor should start by inspecting your home and old system and then he or she should explain all of your options.

Be sure to get the estimated annual operating cost of the proposed HVAC system at different efficiency levels, as recommended by

the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR program. Air conditioners are measured by Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) and Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER). The higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. EER helps if you want to know how a system operates at a specific temperature.

Dickey advises asking for three written estimates of the work: what is being done, what equipment is being provided, and when installation will begin and be completed.

"A contractor should explain what is included—the best value may not come from whoever offers the lowest price," Dickey warns.

NATE certification

Finally, consider looking for someone who is NATE (North American Technician Excellence) certified. Remember, though, because NATE is a voluntary process, a contractor isn't necessarily a bad installer if she or he doesn't have this credential.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Using compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) in outdoor lights can save money and energy because these lights stay on the longest. ENERGY STAR-qualified CFLs use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. To save even more, look for fixtures designed for outdoor use that have automatic daylight shutoff and motion sensors. Learn more at www.energysavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Educational Resources

Youth to Washington trip highlights Eastern Illini's wide array of youth programs.

Keri DePatis of Donovan and Matthew Neumann of St. Joseph joined more than 1,500 students from electric cooperatives in 43 states, as they visited the nation's capital in June as part of Eastern Illini's Youth to Washington Scholarship Program.

The students took part in NRECA's 48th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour of Washington. They visited with members of Congress and their staff to discuss issues important to their states and local communities.

The object of the tour is to introduce the young leaders to our democratic form of government. During the tour, they visited many of our nation's most historic sites, including Gettysburg, the National Cathedral, and the many memorials, monuments and museums.

According to Matthew, "D.C. was a great way to experience things that I would not be able to experience by any other means. The wide variety of places we visited also gave me greater curiosity as to what the city has to offer, and I hope to return to explore even more."

Keri said, "The Washington, D.C. trip was amazing! I met so many awesome people from Illinois and all across the country. Some of my favorites from the trip were the Holocaust Museum, Iwo Jima and Marine Parade, and the Potomac River Night Cruise. This trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I am very grateful for!"

As winners of Eastern Illini's 2012 "Youth to Washington" Scholarships,



Youth to Washington Scholarship winners Matthew Neumann (left) and Keri DePatis (right) visit with U.S. Representative Tim Johnson during their recent trip to our nation's capitol.

Matthew and Keri, each received a \$1,000 scholarship and the all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C.

The two students competed for the scholarships with other students, who are the sons and daughters of Eastern Illini member/owners. The applicants were judged on academic achievement, work and volunteer experience, school and community activities, goals and knowledge of electric cooperatives.

For more information about the 2013 Eastern Illini Youth to Washington \$1,000 scholarship, visit our website at eiec.coop.

OTHER PROGRAMS

In addition to the Youth to Washington Scholarship Program, Eastern Illini also offers many other programs and activities for students of all ages. All of the programs are offered free of charge for the participating schools.

Super Energy Saver Program - This engaging program from Touchstone Energy features CFL Charlie. It is designed to teach children grades K-5 about energy, electrical safety and energy savings.

Electrical Safety Program - best suited for grades 4-6, this program offers students an interactive look at how electricity is produced, how it gets to our homes, and how dangerous it can be if not respected.

Get Charged! - This classroom kit offers teachers a complete curriculum unit with coordinated tools designed to energize your electricity unit. It is best suited for junior high grades.

IEC Scholarships - This scholarship program compliments the Youth to Washington Scholarship Program and is open to the children of Illinois electric cooperative families.

Contact our office at 800-824-5102 or info@eiec.coop for more information about any of youth programs.