

# PowerLines

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

April 2014

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## SmartHub

The power of data is in your hands with convenient account management, detailed bill and kWh use information, and simple bill payment features.

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Why climate regs matter

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is getting ready to release new rules to limit carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions at existing power plants. These rules, set to come out in June, could lead to more expensive electricity for you.

That's why we're asking everyone to send comments to the EPA through [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop). This easy-to-use online tool sends your thoughts directly to Washington so regulators understand the potential harm of these rules.

We're concerned because the EPA has chosen to write regulations that rely on technology for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that has not been proven at commercial power plants. This "carbon capture and storage" method might look good on paper or in the lab, but unlike Washington, we're not willing to take the risk with your electric bills.

According to an official from the U.S. Department of Energy, this technology may raise our wholesale costs by 70-80 percent. If that happens, we will have no choice but to pass those increases to you.

In case you're wondering whether the EPA actually will read these comments, consider this: by law the EPA is required to ask the American public how a proposed rule would affect costs to consumers, the quality of life and the economic future of their communities. That's why electric cooperatives are leading the charge with the 42 million members nationwide to raise our voices collectively so we'll be heard loud and clear.

Already, tens of thousands of folks from across the country have shared their

concerns. The country has not fully climbed out of the recession; many Americans are still struggling financially. We need to tell the EPA that cost matters.

No matter where our energy

comes from, we all have a responsibility to keep electricity reliable and affordable. Like the energy policy itself, the regulations proposed by the EPA are technical, but an increase in your electric bill is personal. That's why we need you to speak up.

We care about the price of electricity because we're a cooperative and we look out for you, our member/owners. We think about you with every decision we make. And we're concerned that the EPA is making a decision that will force an increase in what you have to pay for power.

This is a big deal for us because we invested in our state-of-the-art coal-fired power plant to provide you with long pricing stability. These potential regulations could harm that.

Please visit [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop). Just as important, get out and talk to people about what we're doing and why we care about electricity prices.

Sincerely,

*Bob Hunzinger*



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

# Winter weather causes havoc

## Exploding gas prices and record low temperatures raised energy bills all winter long.

Besides the bad road conditions and school/event cancellations, the onslaught of cold weather this winter has brought another negative consequence...higher energy bills.

“It’s amazing how closely our member/owners’ electric bills are aligned with weather patterns,” noted Eastern Illini’s northern area energy specialist Mike Carroll. “Even people that heat their home with natural gas or propane can see a big jump in their electric bills. The blower system on a gas heating system is still electric and it’s been so cold that many people are using supplement electric heat (space heaters) to keep their homes warm.”

### Space heater facts

And seemingly small space heaters can use a lot of energy if they are not managed properly. A simple 1,500-watt plug-in heater will use over 1,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity if

left running for the whole month. That could cost you well over \$100!

Even if you only ran the space heater for eight hours a day, you would still use almost 400 kWh - which would cost you around \$50.

### Just how cold was it?

Another issue this winter is there were several days when the HIGH temperature barely got above zero – if at all. That makes heating systems operate longer since they are not cycling on and off as often.

Degree days are a way to measure how cold or hot it is. They are based on comparing the actual temperature to a standard of 65 degrees – where there shouldn’t be any heating or cooling required to keep your home comfortable.

We track degree days each month on our website ([www.eiec.org/efficiency/degree-days/](http://www.eiec.org/efficiency/degree-days/)). Carroll noted, “This January we had 1,413 heating degree days. Last January we had only

1,133. That means that this January was about 25 percent colder than last year. That obviously makes all of our energy bills go up.”

February was even worse compared to last year, unfortunately. This February was 31 percent colder than last year, and a whopping 54 percent colder than 2012. In fact, you have to go all the way back to 1979 to find a February with more heating degree days!

Degree Day Data			
	2014	2013	2012
January	1,413	1,133	1,031
February	1,287	986	837

### What can you do?

Tim Frick, Eastern Illini’s energy specialist in our southern area, recommends insulation as a critical step to lowering energy bills in general. “The key to keeping your home comfortable during extreme weather is to do everything you can to stop the flow of air into your home in the winter, and out of your home

## Electric heat can provide great value

Now more than ever you could save money with an electric heating system. The chart below shows the “break-even” price of other heating options compared to electric heating on our special electric heat rate.

If your actual costs for your heating fuel are HIGHER than what you see here, you could save money with the electric heating option. This winter, we saw very volatile propane costs - as high as \$6/gallon in some areas!

### Geothermal Heating & Cooling system:

Propane equivalent is \$0.58/gallon

Natural gas equivalent is \$0.64/therm

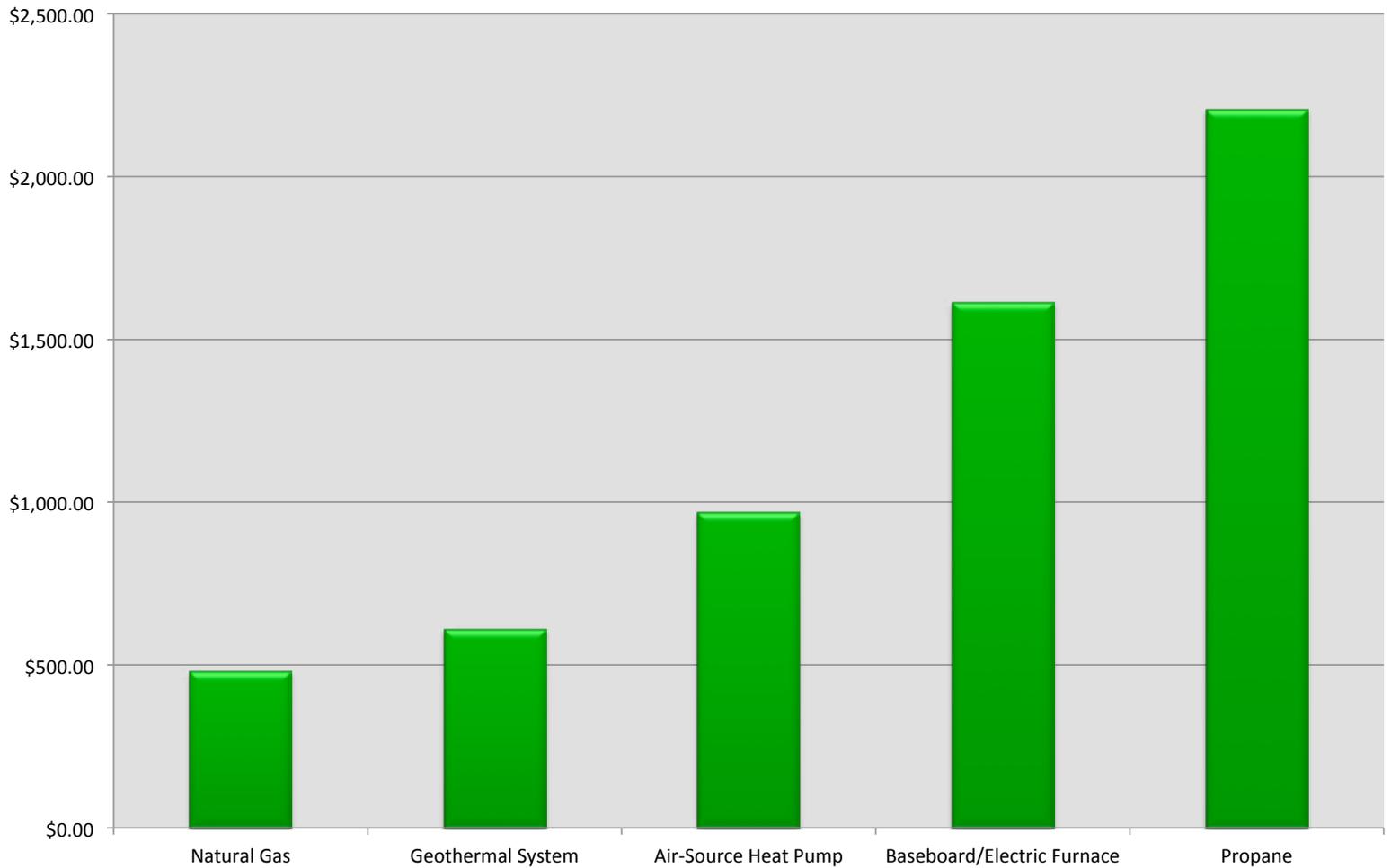
### Air-source heat pump, w/ electric resistance backup:

Propane equivalent is \$0.99/gallon

### Baseboard/electric resistance/electric furnace:

Propane equivalent is \$1.90/gallon

## Heating Cost Comparison for an Average Home



*This comparison shows the estimated annual costs for several types of heating systems. It assumes a total heating load of 75,000,000 BTUs. The electric cost is Eastern Illini's electric heat rate after 1,000 kWh (\$0.07346/kWh). The natural gas cost is \$0.59/therm, and propane is \$2.49/gallon.*

during the summer.” He notes that the best ways to do that are through properly insulating your entire home (especially walls, crawl spaces, basements and attics) and then follow that with caulking around all of the remaining cracks and crevices.

You can also visit the energy efficiency section of our website ([www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)). It has many tips, tricks and ideas to save you money on all of your energy bills.

### SmartHub can help

Our online (and smartphone) portal, SmartHub, also offers many tools to help you manage your electric use. You can use it to check your daily kWh use, and even view charts that show your use along with

temperatures. That type of information offers a great visual indicator of how closely your electric use matches up with extreme weather patterns.

Of course you can also use SmartHub to pay your bill each month. To make things even easier, SmartHub can send you emails and text messages to alert you when your bill is available. SmartHub is available online and as a FREE app for both iOS and Android smartphones and tablets.

### Special electric heating rate

As you can see from the chart above, there are many electric heating options available that are very competitive with other heating options - especially propane. We have a special rate for homes that use electricity for both

space and water heating. We call it Rate 20, and after using your first 1,000 kWh, the electric rate drops to \$0.07346/kWh. View the chart above to get an idea on annual heating costs for an average home.

### Energy Wise Home Loan

Investing in a new heating system can seem daunting, so we've developed an Energy Wise Home Loan program to help. We can offer suggestions on types of systems to consider (we like geothermal systems especially), and even provide a comprehensive list of dealers in your area to consider. Then, when you are ready, we can help you pay for the system with up to a \$10,000 loan.

Please call us at 800-824-5102 for more information on our loan program.

# The life of a lineman

**Linemen have one of the most dangerous jobs in the country.**

It's challenging work, but also important work. That in itself is very rewarding. Although all 12,000 Eastern Illini member/owners - and their families and employees - depend on their electric service each and every day, very few actually consider how the electricity even got to them to begin with.

Before you switch on the lights, Eastern Illini linemen have already put up the poles, connected miles of wire and flipped more than a few switches of their own. All to make sure your life is always powered.

Linemen have always been the unsung heroes who labor without regard to their own comfort in order to ensure our member/owners have electricity. These men (and women at some co-ops) are committed to helping you

weather any storm - before, during and after. Because between the rain, sleet, snow and wind, it is still the human element that differentiates electric cooperatives from other power companies.

Our lineworkers form a solid team with one job: to deliver safe, reliable electricity. But that job can change in a million ways when rough weather steps in.

Power restoration takes precedence on a lineworker's to-do list. These brave men are always on call. We have four crews standing by to serve you 24 hours a day, in the middle of the night or wee hours of the morning, weekends and holidays.

Can you imagine getting a call at 3 a.m. telling you to work outside during bad weather? Not many people are willing to face storms. Our linemen face harsh elements daily, all to serve you.

Linemen also focus on safety; the lives of their coworkers are on the line. Job safety is important to everyone, no matter your occupation. But for linemen, there can be no slip ups or careless actions. Mistakes can cost a limb or life. That's one of the reasons linemen form a brotherhood. When you put your life in the hands of co-workers every day, they become more than colleagues. They're family.

That sense of family extends to electric co-ops across the nation. One of our principles is cooperation among cooperatives. We help other co-ops in their time of need, and they extend that service to us, too. It's reassuring to know if a severe storm strikes, a national team of lineworkers stand ready to answer the call.

To be ready to respond no matter the situation or weather conditions, linemen are highly trained. At Eastern Illini, our linemen go through special training to ensure they can work safely

with various kinds of equipment. The equipment gets tested regularly too.

These highly skilled men light our homes and businesses every day. They endure harsh weather and long hours, all to make our lives better.

Today (and every day), please take a moment to thank them. Eastern Illini's 22 linemen are the heart of Co-op Nation. They are all proud and strong, and are dedicated to serving you.



# Spring forward for energy savings

## Plan now for summer savings.

Adding a few items to your list of spring chores can help make your home more energy efficient and deliver electric bills that won't make you sweat when temperatures soar.

### Start with your air conditioner

Spring or early summer is a good time to make sure that your air conditioning unit is ready to work when you flip the switch. You can perform some basic maintenance by performing a do-it-yourself cleaning. Shut the unit off, and clear away leaves and yard debris from around it.

Inside the unit, clean or replace filters that can restrict air flow and reduce overall efficiency by making the air conditioner work harder on hot summer days. Dust the fan blades if you can do so safely. Make sure air can flow freely over the inside and outside coils. Vacuum registers to remove any dust buildup.

We also recommend you have your air conditioner serviced by a professional every few years.

### Check weather stripping

When using window units, ensure that weather stripping is in place. Placement



*Changing your furnace filter at least twice a year is a great way to keep your system running as it should, and save on your energy bills. You can even get a furnace filter "whistle" that will give you an audible reminder when the filter is ready to be changed.*

should be between the middle of the top window pane and the bottom pane.

### Check out your roof

See how well your roof has weathered the winter. Few things can shorten the life of your home faster than a roof leak, even a minor one can damage your attic insulation before you know it. A roofing professional can assess and repair

things like loose or missing shingles, repair leaks, and clear gutters.

### Make Eastern Illini a resource

The energy specialists here at Eastern Illini can help you determine the right steps for your home, including whether an energy audit will help find more savings. Our two energy advisors are available for a free site visit and a basic walkthrough of your home.

Visit our website ([www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)) for more energy saving tips. You can also visit [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com) to find out how little measures around the house can add up to big energy savings as temperatures outside climb.



## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Consider this energy-saving and maintenance regimen to keep your refrigerator in shape. Set the refrigerator temperature above 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Make sure door seals are in place and are snug when closed. And keep outside coils unobstructed and clean; dirty ones could overwork the unit's compressor.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

April Showers  
 Cleaning Spring  
 Easter Eggs  
 Chirping  
 Kite Chasing  
 March Madness  
 Baseball  
 Fresh Grass  
 Rain  
 Butterfly  
 Bloom  
 Camping  
 Chick  
 Flowers  
 Bunny  
 April  
 Showers  
 Blossom  
 Bud  
 Warming  
 Spring  
 Sunshine  
 Thaw  
 Daffodils  
 Easter Eggs  
 Renewal  
 Grow  
 Sprout  
 Chirping  
 May  
 Buzzing  
 Garden  
 Drizzle  
 Kite  
 Cherry  
 Blossom  
 Fawn  
 Petals  
 Pigeons  
 March  
 Madness  
 Robin  
 Flowers  
 Sports  
 Baseball  
 Fresh  
 Grass  
 Rain  
 Butterfly  
 Camping  
 Chick  
 Flowers  
 Bunny  
 April  
 Showers  
 Blossom  
 Bud  
 Warming  
 Spring  
 Clean

Grass Rain Butterfly Bloom Camping Chick Flowers  
 Bunny April Showers Blossom Bud Warming  
 Spring Cleaning Spring Break Sunshine Thaw Daffodils  
 Easter Eggs Renewal Grow Sprout Chirping  
 May Buzzing Garden Drizzle Kite Cherry Blossom  
 Fawn Petals Pigeons March Madness Robin Flowers  
 Sports Baseball Fresh Grass Rain Butterfly  
 Camping Chick Flowers Bunny April Showers  
 Blossom Bud Warming Spring Clean

Watch your savings grow  
this spring.

This spring, let Eastern Illini's Co-op Connections Card help you cover everything, from gardening and farming tools, to home improvement and energy efficiency projects.

Find all the ways to save at

**Connections.coop**

