

# PowerLines

January 2018

## Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2018! I hope your resolutions for the year are successful and your wishes come true. *(I am hoping for a return to the playoffs for the St. Louis Cardinals after a two-year hiatus).*

What happened to 2017? Our youngest son who is 25 recently commented on how quickly time passes. Our advice to him was to wisely utilize his time because when he reached our age it seemingly speeds up even more! Although I cannot answer why time seems to go by so quickly as we age, I can provide a brief review of the year from the EIEC vantage point.

Your cooperative's results were good this year. Electric usage will likely end the year below the budgeted sales level by approximately 3% *(through November the year to date kwh sales level was 3.6% below)*. Despite the below budget sales, the net operating margin at year end is expected to be nearly \$450,000 better than expected in the initial budget. There are many factors that contributed to this result, with reduced staffing levels a large positive contribution, along with other expenses coming in below budget.

We were fortunate to meet most of our corporate goals with the lone exception of missing our goal of no lost time safety related incidents. Our system reliability and customer satisfaction results were very good in 2017.

Your Board of Directors have authorized staff to apply the surplus net operating

margins to provide financial flexibility help decrease future energy purchase costs from our wholesale electric supplier, Prairie Power Inc. (PPI). The balance of the 2017 operating margins will be allocated as capital credits to be returned to you at a future date. Speaking of capital credits, your Board of Directors voted to return to members approximately \$1.6 million of member patronage capital from all or portions of the years 1986, 1987, and 1988. These checks were distributed in November and December.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

We have been advised by PPI of a budgeted increase in their power costs for 2018. Although we are hopeful their results will be better than expected, this wholesale power increase will be reflected in our power cost adjustment (PCA) on your monthly billing statements. Please note the EIEC portion of your rates remain unchanged, and has remained stable since the last rate adjustment in 2013.

Please take time to review the other articles featured in this newsletter, especially related to winter preparation, our employee feature, and the support of the Youth to Washington program.

On behalf of your cooperative employees and Directors, we thank you, and wish you a happy, safe, and successful 2018.

Happy New Year!

*Bob Hunzinger*

## In this issue:

- Preparing for winter weather
- Winter weather terms
- 10 quick tips to avoid high bills
- People to know: Susan Brown
- 2018 Youth to Washington trip

## How do you want to save today?

Co-op Connections® Card



Pharmacy discounts  
Cash Back Mall  
Healthy Savings  
Coupons.com  
Appliance rebates

Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) to get your card and start saving.

### Attention: Sophomores & Juniors

Applications are now being taken for the 2018 Youth to Washington trip. Recipients will travel to D.C. in June for an all expenses-paid trip to our nation's capital. January 31st is the application deadline. See page 6 for more information.

Your Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative

# Preparing for winter weather

Every year, Illinois averages at least five major winter storms that impact millions of people. The best time to prepare for winter's snow, cold and ice is before such weather hits.

Being prepared for winter doesn't have to cost a lot of money or take a lot of time. It could be as simple as making sure your vehicle is in good winter driving condition, adding a winter survival kit to your car, changing your furnace filter and stocking a home emergency supply kit. Preparing for winter also means adjusting your driving habits. Snowy or ice-coated roads and reduced visibility due to fog or blowing snow result in thousands of vehicle crashes in Illinois every year.

Many of these can be avoided by simply slowing down on city streets, rural roads and highways. Recent traffic studies have shown that many times, minor accumulations of snow or ice on roads can be just as dangerous for motorists as major snowstorms.

## COLD TEMPERATURES

- 194 people have died from exposure to cold temperatures in Illinois since 1995.
- The coldest temperature on record occurred on January 5, 1999, when the mercury dipped to minus 36 degrees near Congerville in Woodford County.

## WINTER STORMS

- On average, Illinois experiences five severe winter storms each year. Nine winter storms happened in 2014-15, compared to four in 2015-16 and only two in 2016-17.
- Winter driving conditions contribute to an average of 27,879 vehicle crashes, 4,338 injuries and 49 fatalities in Illinois each year.

## SNOWFALL

- Average annual snowfall ranges from 37 inches of snow in Chicago, to as little as 6-10 inches in southern Illinois.

• The greatest snowfall on record from a single storm occurred near the town of Astoria in Fulton County, where 37.8 inches was recorded on February 27-28, 1900. More recently, 27.9 inches of snow was measured near Waukegan in Lake County, from January 3-5, 2015.

## ICE STORMS

- On average, locations from just south of Quincy, through Lincoln, to Watseka experience more freezing rain and ice storms than any other part of the state.

## WIND CHILL

- Most of the time, cold is judged in terms of a thermometer reading. With people and other living things though, both temperature and wind speed are needed to produce a "wind chill factor." The wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the combined effects of the wind speed and cold temperatures. As the wind increases, heat is carried away from the body at an accelerated rate, driving down the body temperature. The wind chill shows how cold the wind makes exposed flesh feel and is a good way to determine the potential for frostbite or hypothermia.

Remember, wind chill only applies to people. The effects of wind chill are different for animals. If the temperature is 35 degrees and the wind chill is 10 degrees, objects such as pipes or cars will only cool to 35. The wind chill factor does not apply to non-living objects.

Take time now to prepare your family, home, vehicles and driving habits for everything from a dusting of snow to a major winter storm!

*Winter Weather Preparedness Guide  
provided by the Illinois Emergency  
Management Agency  
[www.illinois.gov/iema](http://www.illinois.gov/iema)*



## BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM STRIKES

In the event of a power outage, be prepared by keeping the following items in an easy-to-find emergency supply kit.



### ■ WATER

Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.



### ■ TOOLS

Flashlight, extra batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.



### ■ FIRST AID KIT AND PRESCRIPTIONS

First aid supplies, hand sanitizer and at least one week's supply of prescriptions and medications for the family.

Learn more at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)



*Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency.*

# Winter weather terms

The National Weather Service uses the terms below to convey the weather threat to the public.

## WATCHES, WARNINGS, ADVISORIES

- **Winter Storm Watch:** Issued for potentially significant winter weather, including heavy snow, ice, sleet, and/or blowing snow within the next day or two. Now is the time to prepare!

- **Winter Storm Warning:** Indicates heavy snow, blowing snow, sleet or a combination of winter weather hazards are expected to cause a significant impact to life or property. Stay indoors and adjust travel plans.

- **Blizzard Warning:** Strong winds (35 mph or greater) will produce blinding snow and near zero visibility, resulting in potentially life-threatening conditions— particularly for travelers. Blizzards can occur with minimal accumulations of snow.

- **Ice Storm Warning:** Heavy accumulations of ice are expected to cause a significant impact to life or property, resulting in hazardous travel conditions, tree damage and extended power outages.

- **Winter Weather Advisory:** Snow, blowing snow, ice or sleet is expected to produce potentially dangerous travel conditions in the next 12 to 36 hours.

- **Wind Chill Warning:** Life-threatening wind chills of minus 25 degrees or colder.

- **Wind Chill Advisory:** Dangerous wind chills of minus 15 degrees to minus 24 degrees.



## WINTER WEATHER TERMS

- **Freezing Rain:** Precipitation that falls from the clouds as rain, but freezes into a glaze of ice on ground based objects like trees and power lines.

- **Sleet:** Small pellets of ice created by frozen raindrops. Sleet bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects.

- **Wind Chill:** A calculation of how cold it feels outside when the effects of temperature and wind speed are combined. Wind chill ONLY applies to bare, human skin.

During winter storms and extreme cold, follow these guidelines when at home or venturing outside.

## WHEN AT HOME

- Stay indoors in a heated room.

- Hang blankets over windows at night, but let the sun shine in during the day. Cover cracks around doors with rugs, newspapers, towels or other such material.

- When using alternative heat from a fireplace, wood stove, or space heater, use safeguards and ensure proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

- If your water pipes freeze: Shut off water at the main source. Call a plumber and

contact your insurance agent.

Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame or torch. Be aware of the potential for electric shock near standing water.

## WHEN OUTSIDE

Avoid overexertion, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow. These situations could cause a heart attack – a major cause of death in the winter. If you become stranded outdoors, seek shelter to stay dry. Cover all exposed body parts.

Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. **Frostbite** is a severe reaction to cold exposure of the skin that can permanently damage fingers, toes, and the nose. Symptoms are numbness and a pale appearance to the skin. Seek medical help immediately.

**Hypothermia**, or low body temperature, is a life-threatening condition brought on when the body temperature falls below 95 degrees. Symptoms include slow or slurred speech, incoherence, memory loss, disorientation, and drowsiness. Seek help.

# 10 Quick Tips to Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.



Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.



Reduce waste heat by installing a programmable thermostat.



Turn off lights when not in use.



Lower your water heater temperature. The Dept. of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.



Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.



Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.



Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.



Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.



Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.



Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

# People to know at Eastern Illini: Susan Brown

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative employee Susan Brown understands she works for a unique organization because the owners of the business are EIEC members. She very often communicates to member/owners what a cooperative is and explains that the cooperative principles are the foundation of the organization. Her 19 years of delivering quality service gives her a level of expertise second to none.

Many members recognize her caring voice over the phone and appreciate her encouraging, can do attitude when it comes to resolving issues. If you were to ask her peers and supervisor what sets Susan apart, it would be her professionalism. She is polite, positive, courteous, well educated, articulate and enthusiastic about the mission of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative.

Susan is a well-informed employee who knows how to handle member/owner questions in a way that satisfies them when they call in, click in or come into the office. It's what she does best.

According to Susan, EIEC cooperative member/owners want to be treated fairly and honestly. Over the years, Susan has gained the trust and respect of member/owners, as well as her peers, EIEC management and the Board of Directors.

Her role includes recommending payment options, suggesting electrical service alternatives, providing information on billing, capital credits, and transferring or adding service. Susan says her responsibilities vary every day and that's what makes the job interesting. She enjoys assisting member/owners and prides herself on providing quick response time and accurate and complete answers and believes her ability to respond gains loyal member/owners who value EIEC.

Susan has seen a great deal of change during her tenure at EIEC. She began as a cashier, spent time working for EIEC subsidiaries and most recently holds the position of Member Care Representative. She recalls days gone by when member/owners did self-reporting meter reading. They would write down their usage on a stub and send it in to the office.

Times have changed, and technological innovations have made her job easier. The ability to capture, document and store data that can be seen and used by multiple employees has given Brown the opportunity to provide the highest quality customer service to member/owners.

Susan is always there to lend a hand and help out. At the EIEC Annual Meeting, you'll find her greeting member/owners, answering questions and providing assistance. Susan encourages all EIEC member/owners to attend the Annual Meeting which will be held Thursday, June 7, 2018. She says the Annual Meeting is an excellent way to meet others, stay current on cooperative business and participate in all the activities provided. Susan likes getting to know the families of member/owners during the Annual Meeting.

In 2017, she volunteered to be a chaperone for the Youth to Washington trip, traveling with young adults from Illinois to D.C. While there she met with government officials, toured museums and visited historical sites. Her energy, enthusiasm, and experience was a welcome addition to the trip organizers who planned and implemented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a group of 75 young adults.



Susan wants all member/owners to know that she and everyone at EIEC are here to help and that employees really do care. She wants member/owners to know answers are only a phone call away and that EIEC employees work as a team to find the best solutions. Susan says some might call it corny, but co-op employees and member/owners are like family and that caring attitude is what sets EIEC apart from other utilities.

Susan is an avid traveler and has lived around the world. She has lived in Alaska twice - once near the North Pole. She loved the people she met in Alaska. She cultivated some strong and lasting friendships when she lived there. She has also lived in Germany, New Jersey, Virginia, and California.

Currently, her travels take her to Nebraska and Minnesota where she visits her two daughters, son-in-laws and her grandchildren. In her spare time, Susan enjoys gardening, sewing, music, baking, concerts, and spending time with friends.



Once-in-a-lifetime trip  
for Bridget McMullin

## Youth to Washington

*“Being able to be part of the 2017 Youth to Washington trip was an experience of a lifetime. I had such an amazing time and I met many great people from all over the country.”*

Bridget McMullin, PBL high school student, was one of the recipients of the Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. in 2017. She spent time learning more about cooperatives, participating in workshops, and group activities, and visiting landmarks, memorials and museums. Highlights of the trip included touring the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, seeing the Lincoln Memorial at night and spending time at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia.

Bridget enjoyed meeting so many new young adults, with similar interests, from across the country. She highly recommends applying. She says there’s something for everyone - history, politics, a chance to see the sites and leadership opportunities. Bridget suggests you take the time today to complete the application for the 2018 Youth to Washington trip. You’ll be glad you did!

### APPLY TODAY!

Enjoy an amazing trip to Washington D.C.  
Complete the application at: [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)

#### 2018 Youth to Washington

- Dates:** June 8 - 15, 2018
- Apply at:** [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) by 01.31.18
- Eligibility:** High school sophomore or junior who is the son or daughter of an Eastern Illini member/owner
- Contact:** Debbie Laird, 217-379-0447  
[debbie.laird@eiec.coop](mailto:debbie.laird@eiec.coop)



**2017 winners from left to right:** Claire Bossong, Watseka Community High School; Bridget McMullin, Paxton Buckley Loda High School; Jacob Rietz, Iroquois West High School; Renae Spannagel, Villa Grove High School; Miranda Fairbanks, Unity High School.

