

Menard Electric Cooperative's

Connect to MEC



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



75th Anniversary

Running the lines

On February 26, 1937, the first Menard Electric Cooperative pole was set near the Tipton School near Sherman. The pole carried an American Flag and a sign reading Menard Electric Co-op. Leaders from Springfield and Washington, D.C. came to view the pole raising. Menard Electric was the first co-op in the Illinois Farm Bureau's program of rural electrification. The effort was called a "Pioneer project."

Poles of course were dug and set by hand. It was a job requiring a crew of men and a great deal of physical exertion. Putting up those first miles of line was a tiresome job.

It took five months from that first pole to the day 116 miles of line were first energized on Aug. 11, 1937. That day 348 members in Cass, Logan, Menard and Sangamon counties received the electricity they had waited so long for. Longtime co-op lineman Al Hinrichs said, "I'm not even sure whose house was the first to be energized. We were so busily at work fusing the transformers and installing the meters that we didn't take time off for a special program," he said.

Progress continued until the war and began again in 1944. Each pole had to be dug and set by hand. In 1948, Glenn Squires joined the co-op as a lineman. "In those days we were digging holes by hand and a lot of them. We were in hog heaven when we got that digger truck," he says of

the co-op's first A-frame boom truck with an electric drill and auger.

Crews received their first hydraulic digger truck in 1962, the same year a two-way radio system was installed.

The forestry crew was just as elated when power saws were invented and they didn't have to rely on hand saws and double bit axes. Four or five men were on the original forestry crew to clear the way for the new lines being built. Now we hire a tree crew to keep right-of-ways clear and improve reliability.

Things have certainly changed of course. Bucket and digger trucks aid linemen in digging and setting poles and stringing and repairing lines. The work is much safer and more efficient now.

But much of the 2,580 miles of line we use now is either original or 40-50 years old. Replacing that with current crew limitations could take some time, but is necessary to ensure reliability. If we started now and replaced 50 miles of infrastructure a year, no easy or inexpensive task, it would take 50 years to complete the project.

It's something that Bob Burris, our General Foreman, has a plan for. Crews are working on replacing areas while also fixing problems and putting in new services.

Many things have changed since 1937, one that hasn't is your linemen's dedication to providing you with reliable electricity.

The first lighted Christmas

A Menard Electric Cooperative employee Fred Darr had an idea on how to celebrate Christmas in 1939. He urged local farmers to turn on all the lights in their homes at 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Hundreds of Menard Electric members did just that, turning on their lights and running outside to see the effect.

An unnamed farmer is quoted as saying, "My wife and I stepped out on the front porch. Down below was our valley and for miles we could see those friendly lights twinkling a cheerful message of hope and peace. It made an impression upon me I shall never forget. It seemed to emphasize the importance of cooperation and hard work which made our electric lights possible."



Facility charge increase

At the Menard Electric Cooperative September 27 board meeting your Board of Directors carefully analyzed the co-op's current financial margins, the cost of service study and our facility charges. They voted to increase the facility charges for all residential and small commercial rate classes as well as increase the security light charge.

See the chart here for the amount of increase by rate class. The increase is effective January 1, 2012, and you'll notice it on your February 7th bill.

Future articles will discuss why our rates from PPI have been increasing, the estimated cost of energy in the next few years and what that means for our rates.

Last month's article discussed the facility rates in detail, visit past newsletters at www.menard.com to see that article.

Facility charge by rate class

Rate <i>(can be found on your bill)</i>	Current Charge	New Charge
10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 40	\$24	\$29
20, 21	\$55	\$65
30, 31	\$80	\$95
52	\$35	\$50
60, 61, 62	\$30	\$35
70	\$100	\$125
Security light	\$7.00	\$8.00
100Watt HPS		

Little reasons your electric bill may rise in winter



Even if you don't have electric heating, your bill will probably increase this winter from what it was in early fall. There are many variables of course but here are some small, common reasons for the change.

Even non-electric heating systems require electricity to power blowers or pumps. As temperatures continue to decrease, these circulation devices could run almost constantly.

Darker days and shorter daylight hours mean more lighting that stays on longer.

Electric fireplaces or space heaters are turned on in living areas,

garages or workshops. Electric blankets and heating pads are also used.

Engine heaters for cars, trucks and tractors are used. And don't forget about livestock tank heaters.

Over the holidays family visits and uses more hot water for showers, dishes and laundry. Clothes dryers may also run more often and for longer periods of time.

That outdoor lighting display contributes its share, along with extra holiday baking and cooking.

Televisions are watched more, or left on for background noise. Get a new flat screen? Some models use more electricity than others.

14300 State Hwy 97
P.O. Box 200
Petersburg, IL 62675

1-800-872-1203
217-632-7746
www.menard.com

Office Closing

Our office will be closed Friday, Dec. 23rd and Monday, Dec. 26th for Christmas. We will also be closed Monday, January 2 for New Year's.



College scholarships available

2012 Thomas H. Moore IEC Memorial Scholarship Program

Seven scholarships of \$1,250 are available for high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric cooperative member.

Four scholarships are reserved for students attending a two- or four-year accredited college or university in the United States (includes vocational and technical schools).

Two scholarships are for students enrolling full-time at an Illinois community college.

The last scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative employee.

See your high school guidance counselor, download information and an application from our website at www.menard.com or call the office.

Deadline is December 31.



LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship

One \$1,250 scholarship is available for the lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College.

Applicants can be the son or daughter of a co-op member, relatives of a co-op employee, or someone who has served, or is serving, in the armed forces or National Guard.

For more information and an application visit www.menard.com or call the office.

Deadline is April 30.

Together We Serve & Together We Save

Help us serve others and we'll help you save!

Bring in a non-perishable food item to our office and we'll donate it to the Menard County Food Pantry. Our office is located at 14300 State Hwy 97 in Petersburg, just one mile south of New Salem State Park. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 pm., Monday through Friday.

In return we'll give you a free LED light strand. The LED lights will help you save on your holiday bills this year. The strands feature 70 multi-colored lights (they are the same light strings given last year and can connect to those strings). LED lights provide thousands of hours of illumination, won't fade and can save 75-95 percent over the costs of traditional strings.

While supplies last, limit one string per Menard Electric Cooperative membership.

Monthly Safety Tip

Plan ahead for winter storms

Keep a flashlight, radio, blankets, water, food and batteries on hand.

Install a transfer safety switch to your generator or cut off power at breaker box before operating to protect others from backfed power on the lines.

Remember to never touch a fallen line and assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged; beware of lines covered by snow.

Don't use a gas or charcoal grill indoors due to carbon monoxide.



Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at www.menard.com or contact our office.

Present were Manager Lynn Frasco, Attorney Charles Smith and Directors Gary Martin, Jerry Brooks, Michael Carls, Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney and Steven Worner. Director Donald McMillan was absent.

Manager Frasco and Chris Hinton, Manager of Accounting & Information Systems, discussed refinancing a portion of the RUS Hardship Loans.

Frasco advised he had made the decision to refinance two loans that presented greatest savings for the shortest time period. He advised net effective interest rate and savings as a result of the refinancing of the loans.

Manager Frasco asked for recommendations of Board in event that interest rates, in the future, should present the scenario where it would be beneficial to refinance additional RUS debt with CoBank.

Motion granted to give Manager Frasco discretion to refinance additional RUS debt so long as the CoBank loan interest rate reached 4.7% or lower.

Frasco and Chris Hinton reviewed possible rate adjustments as a result of the recommendations set forth in the Cost of Service Study. Manager Frasco reviewed the 2011 Rate Design Summary and the Board discussed such in detail.

Motion carried to raise facility charge as presented by the board with the exception that the security light facility charge be increased by \$1 instead of \$1.25 and effective date on facility charge increase be January 1, 2012.

Discussed costs and savings regarding iPads and voted to purchase for directors to comply with Prairie Power policy.

Six new irrigation installations booked for the coming year.

Year to date margins were \$477,968 compared to \$1,144,174 a year earlier. Equity as of the end of August was 33.00% and the number of members served was 10,528 compared to 10,514 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at the end of August was \$36,370,823 compared to \$35,306,401 last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Approved adjustments made to the CoBank Master Loan Agreement.

Adopted recommendation by Manager and cooperative staff to continue with ATS software and implement software update.

Reviewed Capital Credit Estate Refunds Report.

Make One Change

We encourage you to make one small, no-cost change each month to save energy. To find out how all the little changes add up visit www.togetherwesave.coop.



Open drapes and shades on south-facing windows of your home to allow the sunlight to enter and warm your home. Close them at night to reduce the chill of cold windows.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Safe decorating tips

- Keep your Christmas tree watered.
- Connect no more than three light strands together (unless package specifically says can use more).
- Make sure all cords and lights are in good shape.
- Don't use nails or staples to attach cords.
- Use GFCI extension cords or outlets on outdoor decorations.
- Turn off all decorations before going to bed or leaving the house.