

Menard Electric Cooperative's

Connect to MEC



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

75th Anniversary

The big ones – storms we remember

In the course of 75 years, our area has experienced some pretty bad weather events. Ice storms and tornadoes have left quite a bit of devastation in their wake over the years.

The ice storm that members seem to remember best is the one that came on Good Friday 1978. It is not a memory easily forgotten. The ice that came fell heavy and took out miles of poles and lines.

Employees didn't leave the office for days at a time, and worked 16-hour days continuously until all repairs were made. It took three weeks to restore power to all of our members. It's our longest outage time to date.

The manager at the time was John Root and he says, "The ice caused the lines to gallop so much they pulled the poles right out of the ground and laid them over. It must have been 10 degrees or less and our linemen were up on the poles stringing wire. I felt sorry for them but the job had to be done and they were there, doing it."

More than 90 linemen also came from other co-ops and utilities to help. It's part of the co-op way, to help one another through our emergency work plan, administered by our statewide association. We've had help during many storms over the years. And we've returned the favor to other co-ops when they've been hit by bad storms.

Members were very supportive and

chipped in all they could. They hauled materials with farm trucks, pulled out stuck trucks and made coffee and food for the line crews among other things.

The most recent big snowstorm we had was this time last year. High winds, some ice and lots of snow caused about 175 outages on February 1st, all of which were quickly restored once the winds quieted and the roads were cleared

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1968 tornado-Mason City Junior Womens Club serve drinks to the line crews



2006 Tornado damage



Heavy ice accumulations can cause poles and lines to snap.



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the next day. Other parts of the state received a lot more ice and destructive winds and once power was restored to all of our members, we sent a crew to aid another co-op.

But ice and snow aren't the only things to take down lines of course. In the spring, storms sprouting tornadoes can cause a great deal of damage to our system. The tornado freshest in many members' minds occurred March 12, 2006, in southern Logan and eastern Sangamon counties.

Two twisters broke more than 100 poles and destroyed miles of line that night. Transmission lines feeding our Lanesville substation were also destroyed and we had about 5,500 members, about half of our system, out of power. Our crews worked hard and had power restored to nearly everyone in just two days.

This article is being written on an unseasonably warm, rainy day in early January, before we've had any snow or ice accumulations. Though we hope it comes to you during similarly mild conditions, we know it's possible we'll have experienced weather-related outages before this was printed.

We hope this article gives you an idea of how our focus during storms has not changed over the years. Your co-op's employees give their all to get power restored quickly and safely. Another thing we know hasn't changed is the appreciation and help that many members provide to us during those times.

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Rebate Program

Geothermal Rebate

Members who install a geothermal system will receive a one-time rebate of \$300. In addition, members who use a geothermal heating system and participate in our Water Heater Load Management Program are eligible for Geothermal Rate 19. This rate provides our members with savings for the billing months October through May. All kWh currently used between 1000 kWh and 6000 kWh in each of these billing months will be billed under Rate 19.

Heat pumps and add-on heat pumps

Members who install an add-on electric heat pump or an electric heat pump will receive a one-time \$200 rebate. This rebate will apply to a heat pump installed as part of a whole house central heating and cooling system. In addition, members who use electric heat as the primary source of heat in their home are eligible for our Electric Heat Rate 17. Under this rate all kWh currently used between 1000 kWh and 6000 kWh in each billing

month October through May will be billed under Rate 17.

Electric water heaters

Members who install a new electric water heater with a 40-gallon storage capacity or larger and enroll in the cooperative's water heater load management program are eligible to receive a one-time rebate of \$100. The new water heater must replace a fossil-fired unit or be installed in a new structure.

The water heater load management program allows the co-op to control the heating elements of a water heater for periods of no longer than five hours in any given day. Members will receive a 2.50 cent per kWh rate reduction for kWh used between 700 kWh and 1000 kWh for each month of the year. This could mean a savings of up to \$90 a year.

Combined total of all rebates is limited to \$600 per member per service location. Rebates must be requested within one year of purchase date of equipment. Rebates effective March 1, 2012.

Need help paying your bill?

If you qualify, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) would provide a one-time lump sum payment directly to us on your behalf. The payment is based upon the number of people in your household and their combined 30-day gross monthly income. Call your local office for information.

Community Action Partnership of Central Illinois Logan County 217-732-2159; Mason County 309-543-2594; Menard County 217-632-3878

Decatur-Macon County Opportunity Corp. 217-428-0155 ext. 219

MCS Community Services 217-243-9404

Sangamon County Dept. of Community Resources 217-535-3120

Tazwood Community Service, Inc. 309-266-9941

Monthly Safety Tip

Cooking a special Valentine's Day dinner? Follow these tips to let the fires of love be the only thing igniting this Valentine's Day: Check appliance cords for fraying, plug only one high-wattage appliance into an outlet (like a microwave or toaster oven), stay focused on your cooking, know the location of a working fire extinguisher.

To Parents of High School Juniors:

Has your teen ever seen the Washington Monument? Toured the Smithsonian museums? Visited face to face with a congressman? Well, here's an opportunity to send them, all expenses paid, to Washington D.C.

Each year Menard Electric Cooperative takes a group of high school juniors to the Capitol building in Springfield for the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperative Youth Day. Two students are selected (see criteria below) from among that group for an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Youth Day March 28, 2012

Students will visit with local legislators, hear from speakers and tour the Old State Capitol. It is a great way to see local government in action. Local schools choose students to attend this trip. In addition, interested students can fill out an application available online at www.menard.com.

Youth to Washington Tour June 15-22, 2012

Students whose parents are members of Menard Electric Cooperative are eligible to also apply for the Youth to Washington Tour. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a remarkable trip. Interested students need to fill out the short answer essay questions form. An employee from the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives will act as judge and review these questions, choose several students to conduct personal interviews with during the Youth Day activities, and announce the two winners that day.

This year marks the 53rd annual trip to the nation's capital and promises to be as exciting as ever. In addition to meeting with Congressmen from Illinois, students are treated to tours of historic sites, given the opportunity to make life-long friends and receive information to help determine career paths. Today, many "alumni" of these programs work in state or federal government or have gone on to serve as elected officials. Two retired members of the Illinois General Assembly are "alumni" of our programs.

For more...

For more details or an application visit our website at www.menard.com, contact our office or see your local high school guidance counselor. You and your teen can also view a video at www.youthtour.coop.



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.



Water temperature

120 degrees or less is the optimal water heater temperature setting for energy savings. Each 10 degree drop can save you 3-5% in energy costs you are currently sending down the drain.

Board Meeting Report

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

Present were Directors Gary Martin, Jerry Brooks, Michael Carls, Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney and Steven Worner; Manager Lynn Frasco, Attorney Charles Smith, Mgr of Accounting & Information Chris Hinton, and Dir. of Member Services Trish Michels.

Michels reviewed iPad setup and conducted a short training session. She will conduct further training at upcoming meetings.

Frasco and Hinton reviewed 2012 budget summary and rate design schedule adjustments.

Frasco advised there are 13 new irrigations planned for construction in 2012.

Frasco advised the co-op had given notice to Burton Tree Service that they would not be utilizing two of the three crews in December.

Frasco discussed revision to Agreement for Electric Service allowing a transfer of the agreement to a new member.

Approved addendum to the NRECA Adoption Agreement to include a Roth 401K option.

Approved adjustments to the rebate program effective March 1, 2012.

Policy Section II, Policy Development – Policy Origin and Approval revisions adopted. Goetsch reported that the policy committee finished policies under Section IV.

Year to date margins were \$948,322 compared to \$1,071,328 a year earlier. Equity as of end of Nov. was 34.29% and number of members served was 10,522 compared to 10,543 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at end of Sept. was \$36,120,282 compared to \$35,487,935 last year. Co-op continues to meet requirements of RUS, FFB and NRUCFC

Facility charge and Security light increase on recent bills

You will soon receive your Menard Electric bill for your January usage. This is the first bill to contain the facility charge increase we wrote about in November and December.

Your Board of Directors voted in September to increase this charge by \$5 for most residential rates (see chart for all rates).

As a reminder, you have two separate primary charges on your bill — the energy cost and the facility charge. The energy cost is the cost per kilowatt hour for the amount of energy you use.

The facility charge is the fixed cost of providing you with the option of using electricity. All electric utilities have this charge (sometimes it is named differently). MEC must have a complex system permanently in place to deliver to each member the power you need when you need it.

The facility cost pays for a por-

tion of the poles, wires, transformers, meters and more that are needed to provide you with power. These fixed costs remain the same no matter how much electricity you use.

In addition to the facility charge increase, the charge for security lights maintained by the cooperative has increased \$1 per month to \$8 for our standard 100W light.

We'd like to say that the facility charge and security light increases will take care of us for quite some time. But unfortunately we are facing a rate increase of our own, from our power supplier Prairie Power Inc. (PPI).

Future articles will discuss why our rates from PPI have been increasing and what your board has determined we need to do in order to meet this increase. Remember, as a co-op we exist not to make a profit that goes to shareholders, but to supply electric energy to our members and any mar-

gins we do make are turned back to our members in the form of capital credits.

Raising the facility charge is the first step to keeping us financially sound. As of now, the board anticipates an electric charge rate increase for the fall of 2012.

Facility charge by rate class

| Rate | Former 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 100Watt HPS | \$7.00 | \$8.00 |