

POWERLINE

A monthly newsletter for co-op members of Corn Belt Energy

February 2016



WEATHERING THE FINAL STORM OF 2015

High winds, ice, sleet and extremely wet conditions throughout the Corn Belt Energy service territory on December 28, 2015, resulted in damage to several substations, over 170 broken poles, downed lines, broken cross arms and downed trees leaving thousands of Corn Belt Energy members without power.

Corn Belt Energy crews were immediately dispatched to begin restoring power to members. Simultaneously, Corn Belt Energy dispatched personnel to begin assessing the damage to structures and electrical equipment to determine the estimated number of crews and materials needed for restoration.

As soon as we were able to determine the bearing of the storm damage, Corn Belt Energy reached out to the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives to activate the Illinois Electric Cooperative Emergency Work Plan and help Corn Belt Energy bring in crews from sister cooperatives to assist in the restoration process. The emergency work plan is designed to expeditiously provide personnel, equipment and materials to cooperatives in Illinois that needs assistance during an emergency. "We are grateful to have the assistance of Adams Electric Cooperative, Clay Electric Co-operative,

Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, EnerStar Electric Cooperative, Jo-Carroll Energy, and Menard Electric Cooperative, the City of Geneseo and the City of Princeton," remarked Don Taylor, President and CEO of Corn Belt Energy.

Corn Belt Energy also appreciates the assistance of members who alerted us to downed lines, poles and other damage in their area as well as the assistance of township commissioners and law enforcement for providing information and traffic management during the outage.

During an outage of this scale, Corn Belt Energy employees work extended hours in order to better serve our membership.





We greatly appreciate the ongoing patience of our members. Time estimates were difficult to provide in this particular outage as a lot of damage occurred in flooded areas and private right-of-ways.

When asked about the storm damage, Ryan Campbell, Manager of Construction & Maintenance said, “We were continually finding broken poles, wires down and tree damage. One of the most frustrating things about this particular outage was arriving on scene and expecting to replace one pole and

finding four other poles that need to be replaced.”

Saturated ground conditions also caused delays when setting poles or gaining access to damaged areas. In many instances, trucks had to remain on roadways while crews walked through brush and wooded areas to locate damage and carry in equipment to make repairs.

Damage not only occurred with Corn Belt Energy owned equipment but members also experienced damage on their end.

please be sure to follow proper safety precautions. Portable generators can also prove fatal to line workers and your neighbors when used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules. For more information on generator safety, refer to our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com.

If someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life sustaining equipment, remember to include backup power in your emergency preparedness plan. Always be prepared and put together an emergency preparedness kit including: bottled water, food, flashlights, hand-crank or battery powered radios, first aid kit, medications and medical items, and cell phone device chargers.

For a list of radio stations providing outage updates and emergency information for your local area during an outage, visit our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com or contact us at 800-879-0339 for the most up-to-date information.

Our goal is to provide you with constant, reliable electricity; however, severe weather and storm damage often cause less than desirable conditions. We appreciate your constant support and patience as we strive to provide reliable electricity especially when mother nature has other plans.



When you report an outage, Corn Belt Energy member account representatives will ask you to check your circuit breakers or fuses. The conditions that cause outages on Corn Belt Energy’s system can simultaneously or separately cause problems on the member’s side of the meter. Members may also need to have their own electrician fix damages on their side of the meter.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines. First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized, and that proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system.

As our line crews work to protect the safety and well-being of themselves and others, we encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. If you have a portable generator,



Youth Day and Youth to Washington Tour

Your child or grandchild could go on the trip of a lifetime!

High school sophomores and juniors with a passion for leadership and government are encouraged to apply for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. in June!

Parents or grandparents who currently receive electricity from Corn Belt Energy are welcome to nominate their student to attend the electric cooperative Youth to Washington Tour. Up to ten applicants will be selected by an impartial panel of judges to attend Illinois Cooperative Youth Day in Springfield on April 13, 2016.

From that group, up to two students will be chosen to represent Corn Belt Energy by attending the Youth to Washington Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. June 10-17, 2016, with other statewide winners.

The Youth to Washington Tour has been bringing high school students to Washington D.C. for over 50 years. On the tour, students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as an American citizen. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their representative and senators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital.

Applications can be found on our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community." Applications must be received or postmarked by February 19, 2016.

Pictured above: Jyotsna Bitra and She Dougherty, 2015 Youth to Washington Tour participants.

education GRANTS program

Corn Belt Energy is now accepting applications for our 2016 Education Grants Program. Five schools that serve children of Corn Belt electric members will each be awarded a \$1,500 grant and one school will be awarded the \$2,000 Jeff Reeves Memorial Education Grant to fund innovative programs that enrich students' education.

Teachers and administrators of public or private K-12 schools may apply; the facility does not need to receive electricity from Corn Belt Energy, but must serve families within our footprint in Central Illinois. Multiple projects within the same school can be combined to a total of the awarded grant amount. Applications and further details can be found online at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community." The application deadline is Monday, February 6, 2016, and the grants will be awarded in late February/early March.



Contact Us

1-800-879-0339

Call this number to report an outage and call from a phone associated with your account if possible.

LOCATION

1 Energy Way
Bloomington, IL 61705

OFFICE HOURS

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Monday - Friday

cbec@cornbeltenergy.com
www.cornbeltenergy.com



When temperatures drop, energy costs rise

You don't need to be a meteorologist to know that winter can be blustery and fierce. This winter sub-zero temperatures and wind chills have become the norm. Many of us will feel an extra chill when we receive our winter energy bills since most of a home's energy use is related to heating during the winter.

The extremely cold weather means our heating systems have been running a lot harder to keep us warm. Chances are you've been stuck at home more often than usual, too. Staying home using lights, TV's, and appliances will also add to your electric bill.

To view your own electric usage compared to previous months, log in to your SmartHub account at cornbeltenergy.com. You can also overlay temperature data with your usage to see how the weather plays a significant role in your energy use.



<< To access SmartHub from your desktop, simply click "Account Log-in" at cornbeltenergy.com and log in with your email address and password.

Levelized Billing Option

Levelized Billing gives you a way to guard against large fluctuations in your monthly electric bill, without ever having to play "catch-up" at the end of the year. The program is designed to keep your electric bills consistent every month of the year, as long as you remain on the plan. It's the ideal way to accurately anticipate your monthly electric bill, which makes budgeting your expenses even easier.

With Levelized Billing, your monthly electric bill becomes a "rolling average" of your electric usage for the most recent 12 months. By averaging your changes in usage over a 12-month period, your bill will remain fairly consistent every month, even in very cold or hot months when usage may be significantly higher. Our Levelized Billing program is completely free for members with accounts in good standing and with at least 6 months of service history.

Members can deactivate the Levelized Billing program at any time by contacting our Billing Department. If a member on Levelized Billing becomes delinquent or enters into a delayed payment agreement, they will be removed from the program.

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