

# Clay News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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As the year draws to a close, it's not only time to reflect, but also time to plan for 2016. Rest assured, your cooperative continues to push forward with innovation in order to provide you with the best, most reliable, service possible.

This year, we completed a major technology upgrade with the new GIS systems powered by Futura. With the new system, we were able to integrate our work flow directly into our billing system, thus saving time by making our processes much simpler. As an added benefit, the system now removes unnecessary duplication of effort. We no longer hand-write staking sheets and then pass them around. Now, everything is entered into a centralized database so everyone at CECI is always on the same page.

And, that's just the beginning. We have plans to continue to improve upon this system. First though, we must spend some time getting our database of poles and lines, and everything attached to them, absolutely correct. Once that is done, we will then be able to roll out an Outage Management System (OMS) which will allow you, the CECI

member, to receive specific outage information without even needing to call in!

We aren't there yet, but I hope one day we can "beat the call." That means, we will know about your outage and have crews dispatched before you even get a chance to call in.

CECI also added three new positions in 2015. We welcomed Luke Johnson to his role as Operations Manager. Luke has been doing a great job coordinating the efforts of the crews, while playing a primary role in the GIS rollout. He is also responsible for the work plan, which allows CECI to keep our lines up-to-date.

Prior to this year, we utilized a contract crew on an eight month basis in order to keep the lines clear of trees and brush. Now, we have our own two man inside crew working 12 months of the year. In the short time they have been here, both Eric and Layton have done a great job at getting caught up with past tickets. In the future, they will increase our response time to your calls, and enable CECI to keep its lines clear of trees.

By keeping the lines clear, system

reliability should definitely be positively impacted.

Finally, we have begun work on our capital credit retirements. Part of being a cooperative member/owner means you receive an allocated portion of each year's margins. Both the board and I take very seriously the idea that members should receive their portion of capital credits and we are working on a plan to get them out as soon as possible.

My hope is to get funds to you in 2016, with a plan in place to retire capital credits every year, assuming the cooperative remains in strong financial condition.

You can rest assured we are constantly on the lookout for better ways in which to serve you. Until next month, be safe.



Ed VanHoose  
Manager



Clay Electric Co-operative office will be closed on Thursday and Friday December 24 & 25, 2015 so that the employees can spend time with their families and celebrate Christmas. The office will also be closed Friday January 1, 2016 for New Years Day. The Board of Directors and Employees want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

# Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting

## Regular meeting September 28, 2015

**T**rustees present were: Frank Czyzewski, Bill Croy, Neil Gould, Frank Herman, Kevin Logan, Bob Pierson, Richard Rudolphi, Danny Schnepfer and Greg Smith. Also present were Executive Vice President/ General Manager Ed VanHoose, Cooperative Attorney Melanie Pearce, USDA Rural Development Business Programs Specialist Mary Warren, Member Services Director Doug Hockman, and Operations Manager Luke Johnson. The invocation was given by Frank Czyzewski.

**Approved** the agenda as presented by Gen. Mgr. VanHoose.

Gen. Mgr. VanHoose **introduced** Mary Warren who explained the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant programs. Thereafter Warren, Hockman, and Johnson left the meeting.

**Approved** the minutes of the regular meeting held August 31, 2015, with amendments made concerning new and former memberships.

**Accepted** 12 new members for service.

**Canceled** 12 members no longer

receiving service.

**Reviewed and approved** work orders in the amount of \$40,915.25 for the month of August.

**Accepted** the disbursement list for the month of August 2015.

**Heard** a report from Frank Herman concerning the recent Region 5 meeting.

**Heard** a report from Gen. Mgr. VanHoose on the condition of NRECA CEO Jo Ann Emerson.

**Heard** a report from Gen. Mgr. VanHoose as to "Waters of the US" (WOTUS) EPA rule.

**Heard** a report by Trustee Herman concerning the recent SIPC Board meeting specifically financial information, and regulatory issues. Reviewed SIPC "Administration and Finance Department Summary" for August 2015.

**Heard** reports by Trustee Logan, as to the NRECA Meeting covering MISO update, No AIEC regular meeting, and AIEC International Program. Approved participation in program if there is full participation in program by AIEC Member Cooperatives, amount not to exceed \$3,000.

**Heard** a Building and Grounds Committee report by Greg Smith as to attendance of Rural Electric Facility Conference.

**Heard** a report by Gen. Mgr. VanHoose as to Illini Builders opinion of roof which they declined to quote a new roof system until a Structural Evaluation was performed. Discussed placing the cost of a Structural Evaluation in the 2016 budget.

**Heard** an update on the expenses of lightning damage claim.

**Heard** a report by Gen. Mgr. VanHoose as to the following;

**Reviewed** Form 7/Operations Report.

**Reviewed** cash flow report.

**Reviewed** financial trend analysis.

**Reviewed** SIPC power bill.

**Reviewed** power factor.

**Reviewed** power cost adder.

**Report** on Retirement Security Plan.

**Report** on increase in NRECA Health insurance.

**Reviewed** recent safety meeting, September 9, 2015, and the Monday morning safety meetings held in September.

**Informed** of new hire as Line Clearance Foreman Eric Moyer.

**Report** on Federated Cyberliability coverage.

**Report** on Irrigation Rate billing versus Grain Bin Rate billing.

**Report** on Communications platforms specifically Facebook communications and WNOI radio.

**Report** on Classroom Empowerment Grant Program requesting item to be included in 2016 budget.

**Report** on Capital Credit disbursements received from Cooperative Response Center (CRC) and United Utility Supply Cooperative.

**Discussed** position of Executive Vice President in Organizational Meeting opting not to address the position in future organizational meetings.

Thereafter **approved** Managers report, except for financial information which will be approved at Audit Review, as presented.

**Scheduled** Clay Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members for August 25, 2016 to be held at Oil Belt Christian Service Camp.

**Reviewed** information from Loren and Patty Pilcher regarding input for 75th Anniversary video.

**Discussed and scheduled** a Christmas Party for Directors and Employees and their families.

**Scheduled** the December monthly Board meeting for December 21, 2015.

**Adjournment.**

### Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc.

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# Tips for a safe and happy holiday season

By Justin LaBerge

**T**he holidays are upon us. For many, that means more celebrations with friends and family, travel, decorations, cooking and shopping. Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. wants you to stay safe during the holidays, so here are a few tips to consider as you gear up for the season.

We can't guarantee that the hustle and bustle of the season won't leave you with a few frayed nerves, but we can certainly help you avoid frayed wires.

## Inspect your seasonal items

Many of us have treasured holiday mementos that we bring out of storage and proudly display every year. The holidays are also a time when we dust off specialized cooking gadgets that allow us to prepare our favorite seasonal treats. These items are often handed down through generations and might lack modern safety features.

Take a few moments to carefully inspect all your holiday items to ensure everything is in safe, working order. A few things to look out for include:

- Brittle insulation on wires
- Rodent damage to wires
- Chafed or frayed wires, especially at stress points
- Worn switches with the potential to short circuit
- Corroded metal parts
- Broken legs, unstable bases and other tip-over hazards

## Extension cords are temporary

When you asked your teacher for an extension on your term paper, it was a one-time thing, right? The same holds true for extension cords. They are designed for temporary use and should never be used as a permanent or long-term solution.

## Never defeat safety devices

There are reasons why some

devices have fuses, some plugs have three prongs instead of two and one prong is wider than the other on two-prong outlets. When those safety features get in the way of your grand holiday décor plans, you might be tempted to tamper with or defeat those features. Don't do it! If your plugs won't fit together, that means they're not designed to work together. Rather than tampering with a safety feature, find a safe solution.

## Look up and live

When working outside with a ladder, be mindful of the location of overhead power lines. Always carry your ladder so that it is parallel to the ground. Before placing your ladder in an upright position, look around to ensure you are a safe distance from any power lines.

## Beware of power lines through trees

Over time, tree branches can grow around power lines running along the street and to your home. If those branches come in contact with power lines, they can become energized, too. If your holiday plans call for stringing lights through trees, this can create a safety hazard. If you notice tree limbs that are too close to electric lines, contact Clay Electric.

## Stay away from your service connection

The overhead wire bringing power from the utility pole to your house is dangerous. You should treat this line the same way you'd treat any other power line on our system. Maintain a safe distance – even if that means a small gap in the perfect gingerbread house outline of lights. If you must perform work close to your service entrance, contact Clay Electric for advise on minimum approach distances, or just stay completely away from them.

## Read the fine print

If you take a few minutes to read and understand the specifications and limitations of your lights and other electrified holiday decorations, you can save yourself a great deal of work and frustration in the long run. For example, the tag at the end of an extension cord will tell you if it's rated for outdoor use, whether it will remain flexible in cold temperatures and how much energy it can safely handle. Similarly, holiday lights will tell you how many strings can be safely linked together.



## Don't forget about the kids... and pets

If you have small children, you've probably spent a great deal of time making sure every square inch of your home is childproof. Every cabinet is locked and every outlet is covered. But sometimes the joy of celebrating the holidays with our little ones makes us a little less vigilant about electrical safety. Make sure your holiday décor receives the same level of safety scrutiny you apply to all of the permanent items in your home. Curious and mischievous pets can present similar challenges. Make sure Fluffy isn't nibbling on all those extra wires or using your tree as her personal back scratcher or jungle gym.

*Justin LaBerge writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*



# Ten 2016 IEC Memorial Scholarships available

**C**lay Electric Co-operative Executive V.P. / General Manager Ed VanHoose has announced that the Illinois electric cooperatives will again in 2016 award nine academic scholarships to high school seniors through a memorial scholarship fund designed to financially assist deserving students in the “electric cooperative family.” In addition, a tenth scholarship – to assist with costs in attending an electric lineworker school – will also be offered.

The nine academic scholarships of \$2,000 each will be awarded in 2016 through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Five scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the cooperative. A sixth 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 or director. Three additional scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college who are the sons or daughters of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

The tenth annual \$2,000 scholarship, the “LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker’s Scholarship,” was created in 2011 to help pay for costs to attend the lineworker’s school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC), Springfield, Ill. LaVern McEntire served as a lineman for McDonough Power Electric Cooperative from 1949 until 1991. He and his wife, Nola, endowed the scholarship to financially assist deserving individuals in becoming



trained lineworkers. Sons and daughters of co-op members; relatives of co-op employees or directors; individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard; and individuals participating in the LLCC lineworker’s program are all eligible for the lineworker’s scholarship.

“We hope to assist electric cooperative youth while honoring past rural electric leaders with these scholarships,” says Gen. Mgr. VanHoose. “Clay Electric and the other Illinois electric cooperatives are always seeking ways to make a difference in our communities. One of the best ways we can do that is by helping our youth through programs like this one. In addition, we

are very pleased to offer the electric lineworker’s scholarship. It will benefit not only electric cooperative youth but also those fine men and women who have served their country through their military service and may now be wanting to become a trained lineworker.”

Clay Electric has been fortunate to have had 3 winners of these scholarships. Those winners include 2011 Morgan Healy North Clay H.S., 2010 Kate Henderson Flora H.S., and 2009 Kaylee McCollum North Clay H.S.

For more information regarding the scholarships, check out the Clay Electric website at [www.cec.coop](http://www.cec.coop). All necessary paperwork has also been sent to area high school guidance counselors and is also available for download at the cooperative’s website [www.cec.coop](http://www.cec.coop) or at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative’s website [www.aiec.coop](http://www.aiec.coop). For any questions please call Member Services Director Doug Hockman at Clay Electric Cooperative at 662-2171, or toll free 1-800-582-9012.

