



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Hi-Lites

Coles-Moultrie now offering rural Internet service *Energy Co-op expands offerings*

Coles-Moultrie Energy Co-op has added internet to the list of services it offers to rural customers.

After two years of beta testing, the co-op began officially offering its rural Internet service, CMEC Connect, this past March.

“It’s rare to be able to provide something like this in rural areas, but we’re excited about having our own Internet Protocol Addresses,” said Coles-Moultrie CEO and President Kim Leftwich. “Rural Internet, if you can get it, is really pricey and has largely been available via only satellite. What we can offer are different level programs for whatever the individual needs are. Even for someone who operates a business from home, we offer sufficient speed where they are able to readily work from home, so we’re pleased to provide it.”

CMEC Connect came as a result of the co-op listening to feedback received from a statewide survey that asked co-op members, among other things, what he or she wished their co-op offered. According to CMEC Connect representative Sam Adair, Internet was at the top of the list of desired services.

“We heard the members who all came and spoke, so we listened to the survey and since then, it’s been going very well,” Adair said.

The service promises a reliable and consistent connection to the Web for a variety of needs including streaming movies, playing games, and working from home, and across multiple devices and operating systems.



Coles-Moultrie Connect customer Amanda Repp casually browses the Internet at her rural Cumberland County home Wednesday. Repp and her family have not only found CMEC’s Internet service reliable for their casual surfing habits, but she has been able to work from home thanks to its secure and consistent connection

That has certainly been the case for Amanda Repp, a rural Cumberland County CMEC Connect member who was a part of the beta testing group in January 2014 and continues to enjoy the service.

“I work in insurance, so I have to have a very secure line,” said Repp. “Because the service goes straight to a tower and not out to a satellite, I can work from home.”

But CMEC Connect hasn’t just been a secure connection for Repp—it’s been reliable and more than fast enough for her and her family’s various needs.

“The service they provide is amazing,” said Repp, who has the highest tiered package, called Platinum, which offers a 4Mbps service. “My family loves it too, because not only do I use it for working from home, but when I get off work, they can work on it from any of their devices. It’s not limited. We have internet service on phones and iPads, and computers—it’s fast.”

Repp and her family were even able to stream her daughter’s collegiate softball games when unable to attend in person.

(Continued on page 16c)



A publication of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

P.O. Box 709 (104 Dewitt Ave., East)
Mattoon, Illinois 61938

Phone: 217/235-0341 or
Toll-Free: 1-888-661-CMEC (2632)
Office hours:
Monday-Friday
7:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

Chairman

Jeffery D. Hudson..... Charleston

Vice Chairperson

Debbie Albin.....Mattoon

Secretary

John Bowers Lovington

Treasurer

Philip Meyer..... Sullivan

Director

Dean Robison..... Windsor
Steve Shrader..... Westfield
Scott Uphoff..... Mattoon

President/CEO

Kim Leftwich

To report an outage

- First check your fuses or circuit breakers and see if your neighbors have power.
- If the problem appears to be with the cooperative's lines, call the office at the toll free number (888-661-2632), give the name the service is listed under, and report any hazardous conditions.

Board Report

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative was held at the Cooperative office at 104 Dewitt Avenue, East, Mattoon, Illinois at 7pm September 24, 2015, pursuant to notice duly given. The meeting was called to order by Jeff Hudson, Chairman. After calling the roll, the following directors were present: Scott Uphoff, Philip Meyer, Jeff Hudson, Steve Shrader, Debbie Albin, Dean Robison, and John Bowers. Also present were Kim Leftwich - President/CEO, Amy Borntrager - Chief Financial Officer, Darla Powell - Director of Human Resources/Office Manager, and Bill Tapella - Eberspacher & Tapella.

The agenda was approved as amended as well as the Consent Calendar as submitted including the New Members, the August Safety & Training report, and the 08/27/15 Regular Board meeting minutes.

Bill Tapella gave the legal report. The motion to approve the 2016 Capital Budget as submitted and presented by Staff was carried.

The CMEC building remodel was accepted as presented by Staff.

Amy Borntrager gave the financial report.

Kim Leftwich gave the President/CEO report.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Scholarship deadline approaching

Ten \$2,000 academic scholarships are being awarded through the Illinois Electric Cooperative (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program to high school seniors. Five of the scholarships will be awarded to the child of an Illinois electric cooperative member. A sixth award will go to the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative director or employee. Three additional scholarships will be reserved for use at a two-year Illinois community college. Deadline for applications to be returned to the cooperative is December 31, 2015.

Candidates are judged on the basis of grade point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay that demonstrates their knowledge of electric cooperatives.

The tenth annual scholarship, the "LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship," was awarded for the first time in 2011.



This \$2,000 scholarship will 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, Springfield, Ill. LaVern McEntire served as a lineman for McDonough Power Electric Cooperative from 1949 until 1991. He and his wife, Nola, helped to endow and establish the scholarship to financially assist deserving individuals in becoming trained lineworkers. Relatives of co-op employees or directors are eligible for the lineworker's scholarship, as are individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard. The deadline for this application is April 1, 2016.

For further information on the IEC Memorial Scholarship Program, contact Kelsey Hawkins at Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative at 235-0341, toll-free 1-888-661-2632, khawkins@cmeccoop.com or ask your high school guidance counselor.

Rural Internet service *(Continued from page 16a)*

"We had our device plugged into the TV, which was hooked into the Internet, and we didn't miss a beat," said Repp. "We are very pleased with the service we have received."

Another member, Tim Kastl, feels much the same.

"We usually have up to five people on it, so we do just about everything," he said. "My son does gaming on it; my daughter watches movies, and of course Facebook. Pretty much everything."

And Kastl, too, also touts the service's reliability since first signing up a year ago.

"It's more consistent than the other services we've had, and just as fast too," he said. "It stays connected better than others."

CMEC Connect, unlike many satellite Internet providers, does not throttle the data nor does it charge or cap data. Instead it offers four packages beginning at bronze with speeds up to 1Mbps, followed by silver (1.5Mbps), gold (2Mbps), and platinum (4Mbps); the service also has higher speeds available for businesses upon request.

"Living out in the country, you are very limited on what you can and cannot have as far as an Internet service provider," said Repp. "So when they made this service available, I was extremely excited because otherwise I couldn't work from home. Other companies charge by the gigabit versus upload/download speed."

While the co-op makes no claims to the service being the fastest on the market, it not only currently offers 4Mbps, with other higher bandwidths available upon request, but is also currently in the beginning stages of upgrading to a 20Mbps service with the Lake Mattoon area expected to be the first updated.

"Right now our standard service is between 4-6Mbps, but the new equipment that has recently come out

goes up to 20Mbps, so that's a vast improvement in terms of speed," said Leftwich. "But even at 4-6 Mbps, you can stream Netflix or play games. Once it's at 20Mbps, they will be getting virtually as good a service as many in urban areas."

CMEC's coverage territory includes most rural areas in Coles and Moultrie counties as well as parts of Clark, Cumberland, Edgar, Piatt, Shelby, and Douglas. However,

CMEC Connect is not restricted to just its typical territory members, but anyone who is within

12 miles of a CMEC tower, of which there are 11 across the area.

CMEC does offer a test experience of the Internet service at its office located at East, 104 Dewitt

Ave, Mattoon. Individuals are asked to bring in a device to test the connection.

"I would recommend it for those living in rural areas," added Kastl. "I'm sure those living in cities have better options, but for the rural areas, I would recommend it."

"Everyone who asks me who I have for Internet, I recommend them," said Repp. "And knowing that I work from home, if I have any kind of issues, Sam and Carla [Bradbury] are immediately on it. I'm just very pleased with everything and super ecstatic they came out with it."

For more information about CMEC Connect or to sign-up, call 235-0341 to speak with a service rep. You may also visit the website at [www.http://www.cmec.coop/](http://www.cmec.coop/).

CMEC is a not-for-profit cooperative that has more than 9,500 members and an electrical distribution system stretching more than 1,900 miles.



The Cooperative office will be closed
Thursday, December 24th, Friday, December 25th,
Thursday, December 31st and Friday, January 1st
in observance of the holidays.

Tips for a safe and happy holiday season

By Justin LaBerge

The holidays are upon us. For many, that means more celebrations with friends and family, travel, decorations, cooking and shopping. Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative 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 Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative.

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.

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.