

Menard Electric Cooperative's

Connect to MEC



inside

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Wise Investments in Energy Efficiency

The economic uncertainty we're facing these days has many of us putting money into something we feel comfortable with: our homes. Making a few upgrades around the house generally pays big dividends. And when boosting energy efficiency is one of them, the decision becomes a no-brainer. For energy efficiency work made at your residence during the coming year, Uncle Sam could foot 30 percent of the bill — not a bad deal! Through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — better known as the stimulus bill — the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers a personal tax credit of up to \$1,500 for energy efficiency improvements made to existing homes during 2009 and 2010.

The credit covers 30 percent of the cost of adding insulation materials and exterior doors, windows, and roofs designed to help reduce a home's heat loss or gain. It also includes efficient central air conditioners, air-source heat pumps, hot water boilers, and biomass stoves.

For weatherization-related work the credit covers only the cost of materials. With heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems as well as biomass stoves installation costs also count toward the credit.

So how does the math work out? Say you spend \$1,000 on new insulation. You would get, in the form of a tax credit, \$300 back. If you spend \$3,000 to purchase a new HVAC system and have it installed, you'd have a \$900 tax credit to show for it.

To take advantage of the program, a home improvement must have taken place after Feb. 17, 2009 (the day the stimulus bill was signed into law), and products must meet specific energy efficiency criteria. A

few rules of thumb will help you determine those criteria.

For exterior windows and skylights, rely on the Energy Star label. For other efficiency upgrades, request what's called a "Manufacturer Certification Statement" that the product or component qualifies for the tax credit. Many manufacturers post these on their Web sites, but be sure to verify that the product does qualify before making a purchase. You can also visit www.irs.gov/recovery to review guidelines for eligible purchases.



Energy tax credits reduce taxes owed, dollar for dollar, and can be carried forward to following years. While they can help boost any refund you receive, you won't receive a check directly for the credit amount. You can file for energy tax credits using IRS Form 5695, with a total maximum value of \$1,500 for improvements made in 2009 and 2010.



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P.O. Box 200
Petersburg, IL 62675

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

Billing Schedule to Change

Your bill will arrive a week later

Menard Electric will implement a new meter reading and billing schedule with your March bill (containing February's usage). Basically, everything moves a week later; you'll receive your bill a week later and it will be due a week later.

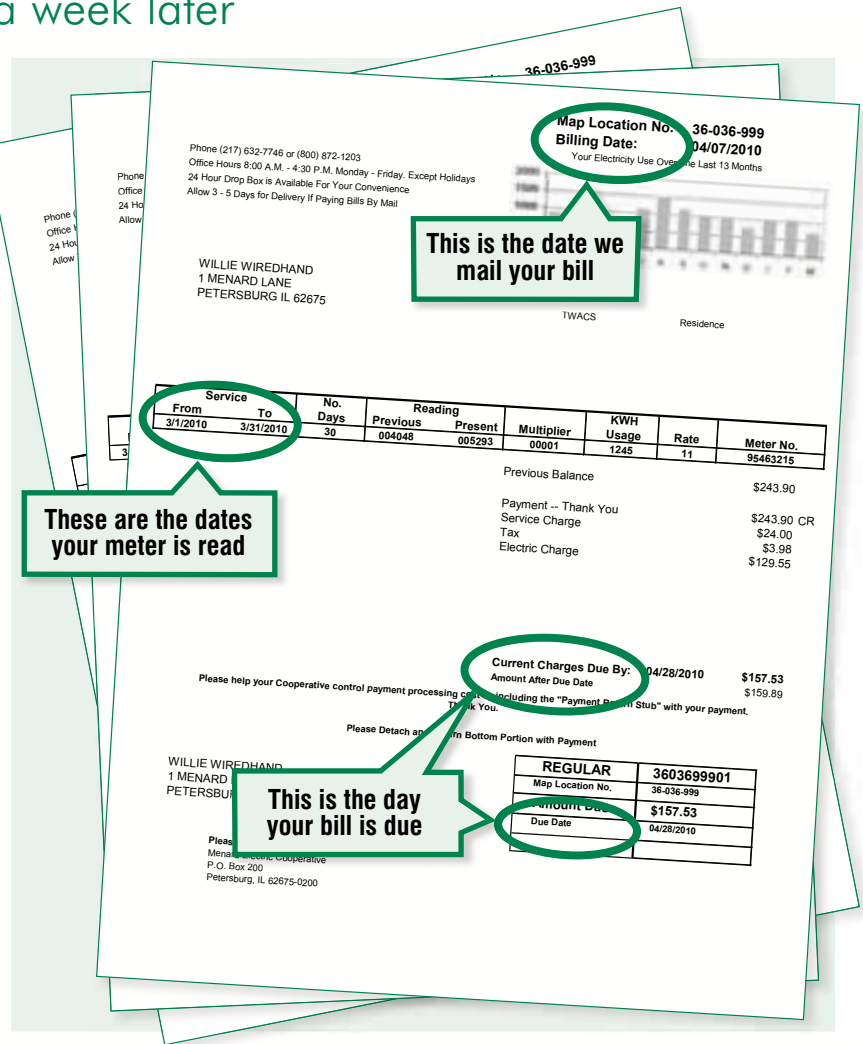
Traditionally, our meters have been read sometime around the 22nd of each month, and members received their bills on or about the first day of the next month. Members then have had until the 21st of that month to pay the bill.

When we had meter readers, we needed quite a few days to read meters, enter readings into our computer, calculate and then print the bills. Now, we read all meters simultaneously through our automated meter reading system.

Essentially that means we can now choose to read all meters on the last day of the month.

But why make this change? Two reasons. The first is that we thought it would be easier for you, our members, to figure out your usage each month. Instead of having part of your usage in one month and part in another, your usage will be measured to coincide with the first and last days of the month.

Secondly, the change will help us to better calculate line loss. Line loss is a term used to describe the difference between the amount of power we purchased from our power supplier and the amount of power we sold to our members. Our power supplier reads our substation meters on the last business day of the month. By reading our members' meters on approximately the same day each month, we'll be able to accurately calculate if we are losing kilowatt-hours because of an unusual problem with our system.



The date change shouldn't have a large impact on your bill amount. We've slowly moved our reading date a few days later in the month, so we're now reading meters on the last day each month. Your February bill will contain 31 days, like an average month.

You should have just received your bill for this month, for electricity you used from November 27th to December 28th approximately. Here's a breakdown of how the next few bills should read:

Approx. Dates of Usage	Bill mail date	Due date of Bill
Dec. 29 through Jan. 26	Jan. 29	Feb. 21
Jan. 27 through Feb. 28	Mar. 7	Mar. 28
Mar. 1 through Mar. 31	Apr. 7	Apr. 28

Questions? Just call our office and we'll be glad to help you.

Notice for Automatic Draft Participants

For those members who have signed up to have their electric bill automatically withdrawn from their bank accounts, please note a date change. The date we withdraw funds from your account will move from the 10th of the month to the 17th of the month, effective in March. Please call Trish Michels at the cooperative with any questions about this draft date change.

Facility Charge

While we're talking about our bills, we thought we'd describe a widely misunderstood portion of your bill — the facility charge.

Basically, this charge covers the cost of providing you service. Even if you don't use any electricity, Menard Electric still has costs of providing you with the opportunity to use electricity. Just look around you at the meters, poles, transformer and lines stretching away from your house. Then look on down the road to the substation serving your area. And those are just the things you see. All of these facilities and more need to be maintained to provide you with electricity whenever you need it.

It's like paying your basic cell phone bill each month even if you never make or

answer a call. You pay to have the service when you need it.

We did a comprehensive cost of service study to determine the amount of our facility charge. Keep in mind that it costs more for an electric cooperative to provide power to each member than an investor-owned utility. For many investor-owned utilities, 40 customers could receive power from one mile of line, and all 40 would divide the cost of maintaining that line. Menard Electric only serves four members per mile of line, and so the facility charge is a little higher.

Considering the fact that Menard Electric Cooperative has invested millions of dollars in its utility plant, the facility charge on your bill each month is very reasonable.

3 Ways to Pay Your Bill

Automatic Payment

The net amount of your electric bill will be withdrawn from your checking or savings account on the 17th of each month. You'll never have to worry about paying your bill late again! See the application on page 16g or visit our Web site at www.menard.com.

Pay Online

If your bank allows you to pay bills online, you can pay your MEC bill as well. Please put your account number (found in

bold face on your bill stub above your map location number) in the appropriate location on your financial institution's form.

Credit Card

You can make Visa or Mastercard payments on a one-time or automatic monthly basis. Transaction fees are: \$3 for amounts up to \$200; amounts over \$200 are charged 3 percent of the payment amount. Come into the office, call, or mail in the application found on our Web site to sign up.

Safety Accredited

Once again, Menard Electric Cooperative has achieved a 3-year safety accreditation through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The accreditation helps ensure a safe environment for all employees as well as lowering the co-op's insurance rates.

Get Out Your Calendars

Just hung up your 2010 calendar? Mark the date now for Menard Electric Cooperative's 73rd Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 5, 2010, with the pork chop dinner beginning at 5 p.m.



New Year Hitting Your Wallet Hard?

LIHEAP could help you pay your electric bill

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides a one-time lump sum payment paid directly to Menard Electric Cooperative on behalf of a consumer. Payments are based on the number of people in a household and the gross monthly income of everyone in that household. The eligibility process can take approximately 30 days once an application is completed.

The LIHEAP program can help with other utilities as well, including gas, propane and heating oil. In some cases if the utility service is shut off, a consumer may be required to make a good faith payment to the utility before LIHEAP can make any promise of payment.

Check the requirements above to see if you may be eligible for assistance.

If you think you may be eligible, please contact an agent in your area.

Number of people living in household	Gross income for 30 days prior to application date:
1	\$1,300
2	\$1,750
3	\$2,200
4	\$2,650
5	\$3,100

Please call your local office for additional amounts

CAPCIL (Logan County)

1800 5th St.
Lincoln, IL 62656
217-732-2159, Ext. 251

CAPCIL (Mason County)

532 S. Schrader
Havana, IL 62644
309-543-2594

CAPCIL (Menard County)

809 Old Salem Rd
Petersburg, IL 62675
217-632-3878

Decatur-Macon County

Opportunity Corp.
1122 E. Marietta St.
Decatur, IL 62521
217-428-2193

MCS Community Services (Cass & Morgan County)

345 W. State St.
Jacksonville, IL 62650
888-288-4413

Sangamon County Dept. of Community Resources

200 S. 9th St., Room 311
Springfield, IL 62701
217-535-3120

Tazwood Community Service, Inc. (Tazewell County)

2005 S. Main St.
Morton, IL 61550
309-266-9941

Rebates

If you're making home repairs for energy efficiency this year to take advantage of the federal tax credit (see page 16a), don't forget about Menard Electric Cooperative's rebates as well. They can help reduce your costs even further. In addition, installing a geothermal heating system, a heat pump, or an electric water heater could help qualify you for a cheaper electric rate. Call our office or visit our Web site at www.menard.com for more information on rates and for a rebate application.

Geothermal Rebate

One-time rebate of \$600 for any size system installed in a new or existing home.

Heat Pump Rebate

One-time rebate of \$200 for any size system installed in a new or existing home.

Electric Water Heater Rebates

All are one-time rebates. Member must sign up for co-op's load management program. Tankless or on-demand water heaters do not qualify for rebates or load control programs.

- \$100 rebate if replacing an existing fossil-fuel fired water heater with an electric water heater that has at least a 40-gallon capacity.
- \$100 rebate if electric water heater is installed in a new structure.
- \$75 rebate if a new electric water heater replaces an existing electric water heater.

Certified Comfort Home Rebate

One-time \$100 rebate if new home is built to the energy-efficient standards described in the Certified Comfort Home booklet. Call our office and we'll mail you a booklet.

Keep Out the Cold with Weather Stripping

No mistaking it: winter has arrived. Any drafts around doors and windows that went unnoticed during fall are now downright uncomfortable — and adding to your energy bills.

Weather stripping offers a relatively quick fix for drafty doors. To determine if a door leading out of your house needs new weather stripping look for daylight. If even a sliver of daylight remains visible between the door and its frame or the floor, add weather stripping.

Next, shut the door or window on a piece of paper. If you can pull the paper out without tearing it, you're losing energy.

There are a variety of weather stripping materials available, each good for fitting different types of door and window frames. Most are made of rubber, foam, metal, vinyl, or a combination of materials. To determine the right item for the job, check the area: If any old, worn material has been previously installed, take a sample to your local hardware store or expert like a contractor. If no material exists as a guide, make detailed notes about the type of gap and how the door or window is installed — someone at the hardware store or your expert should be able to make a recommendation for you.

Once you have the proper materials for the job, consult any instructions that may be on the weather stripping package. Installation techniques range from simple to techni-

cal, depending on the type of material being used. If replacing old, worn weather stripping, be sure to note how it was installed as you remove it.

Here are a few basic guidelines:

- Weather stripping should be applied to clean, dry surfaces in temperatures above 20 F.
- Measure the area to be weather stripped twice before you cut anything.
- Apply weather stripping snugly against both surfaces. The material should compress when the window or door is shut.

When weather stripping doors:

- Choose the appropriate door sweeps and thresholds.
- Weatherstrip the entire door jamb.
- Apply one continuous strip along each side.
- Make sure the weather stripping meets tightly at the corners.
- Use a thickness that causes the weather stripping to tightly press between the door and the door jamb, without making it difficult to shut.

When weather stripping windows:

- Apply weather stripping between the sash and frame.
- The weather stripping shouldn't interfere with the operation of the window.

2009 Weatherization Program Eligibility

The federal Weatherization Assistance Program began in 1976, and in 2009 the stimulus package expanded eligibility for the program to households whose income falls below 200 percent of the national poverty level. Each state has unique eligibility guidelines. To learn about your state's guidelines, visit www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization.

Persons in family	Poverty Income Level	x 200 percent
1	\$10,830	\$21,660
2	\$14,570	\$29,140
3	\$18,310	\$36,620
4	\$22,050	\$44,100
5	\$25,790	\$51,580
6	\$29,530	\$59,060
7	\$33,270	\$66,540
8	\$37,010	\$74,020

For families with more than 8 persons, add \$7,480 for each additional person.



Source: 2009 Poverty Levels for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Energy

Restoring Outages

When ice and snow storms cause outages, our crews work around the clock, often braving terrible weather conditions, to restore your power as soon as possible. Here are the four basic steps.

1. We have 17 substations that provide power to approximately 10,500 services. We'll check these substations first to make sure they aren't damaged. If they are, we'll need to repair them before working on clearing our lines. If the substations aren't receiving electricity from our power supplier, we won't be able to provide power to our
2. We'll check our large three-phase lines leading out of our substations that provide power to a large number of members. Winter storms often cause tree limbs to fall into lines, ice to weigh down lines, or melting ice and snow to cause lines to "gallop" up and down. The tree trimming we do through the year helps prevent outages caused by these issues.
3. We'll check the rest of our distribution lines. If you see one of

our trucks pass by your house, we aren't ignoring you. Our crews are trying to restore power to the highest number of members at one time.



4. We'll check individual lines and services as soon as possible to restore power to individuals.

And remember, if you're on life support, please let us know so we can place you on our priority list. However, as we cannot guarantee uninterrupted power, you may want to consider adding a generator in case of a large outage due to storm damage.



WHO KNEW A FRESH LAYER OF INSULATION WOULD HELP ME WEATHER THE ECONOMY?

There was money hiding in my attic. Not anymore. I'm saving \$240 a year just by adding insulation. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.

 **Menard Electric Cooperative**
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

5 Tips to Stay Safe During a Winter Power Outage

1. Avoid going outside if possible. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice and be difficult to identify. When outside, treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized electric lines.
2. Keep a flashlight, battery-powered radio, extra batteries and blankets, drinking water and non-perishable food items on hand.
3. Never use charcoal grills or gas ovens to heat your home; this could lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
4. Loss of body heat or hypothermia can be life threatening. Stay inside and dress in warm, layered clothing. Close off unneeded rooms. Maintain a regular diet and drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Food provides the body with energy for creating its own energy. You may want to stay with friends, relatives or in a shelter if you can't keep your home warm.
5. If you use a standby generator, make sure it has a transfer safety switch or that your power is cut off at the breaker box before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, creating danger for anyone near power lines, particularly crews working to restore power.

Save Time and Money with Automatic Payment

Our Automatic Payment Plan allows you to have your electric bill automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the 10th of each month. It's always on time and you don't need checks, envelopes or stamps! We will deduct the net amount shown on your bill, and proof of payment will appear on your monthly statement. This form must be received in the co-op office by the 20th of the month prior to the month you wish payments to begin.

Mail with a voided check to Menard Electric Cooperative, PO Box 200, Petersburg, IL 62675.

Name: _____ SS# _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone#: _____ Map Location # _____

Bank Name: _____

Bank Account # _____

Checking acct. Savings acct.

I, _____, authorize Menard Electric Cooperative (MEC) to draw monthly bank drafts through the automatic plan (ACH) on the account shown above for the payment of my electric bill in full and any other services I authorize. I understand that I may discontinue my participation at any time by notifying MEC in writing. Both Menard Electric Cooperative and the bank may terminate this agreement with 10 days written notice. I understand that MEC reserves the right to limit participation in this program to customers whose accounts are in good standing. I understand that the amount of my bill each month will be drafted on the 10th or next business day after. I understand that if funds are not available in my account for the draft to clear, there will be a charge posted to my MEC account, for NSF, and I will still be required to make full payment before the due date of the bill.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Board Meeting Report

Menard Electric Cooperative
From the Board Room
October 27, 2009

The monthly Board Meeting of the Board of Directors of Menard Electric Cooperative was called to order by President Gary L. Martin at 6 p.m. at the headquarters of the Cooperative, 14300 State Highway 97, Petersburg, County of Menard and State of Illinois.

On roll call the following Directors were present: Jerry W. Brooks, Michael L. Carls, D. Jay Frye, Warren D. Goetsch, Gary L. Martin, Donald E. McMillan, Michael E. Patrick, Roy H. Seaney and Steven L. Worner. Also present were Manager Lynn A. Frasco and Attorney Charles K. Smith.

President Martin reviewed the Consensus Agenda. It was moved and seconded that the Consensus Agenda be approved. Motion carried.

Manager Frasco advised that staff members were present to present their 2010 budgets. He introduced Trish Michels, Director of Member Services, who presented the Member Services Budget and the Insurance Budget. James Rechner, System Engineer, presented the Engineering Department Budget and he also reviewed the proposed 2010 Work Plan Projects. Mr. Rechner demonstrated to the Board all of the features of the new design of the Menard Web site. Wayne Jones, Office Manager, presented the General Office Department Budget. Terry Entwistle, General Foreman, presented the Operations Department Budget. Chris Hinton, Manager of Accounting & Information Systems, presented the Accounting Department Budget. Mr. Hinton also reviewed the 2008 Form 990 with the Board and he also discussed a letter that had been sent to cooperative irrigation members on May 20, 2009. Manager Frasco presented the Manager's Budget and the Director's Fee and Expense Budget.

Manager Frasco presented the Manager's Report for the month of September 2009. He reviewed the

Balance Sheet, Budget, as well as the Outage Summary and Safety Report.

Under the Operations Report, Manager Frasco advised that Safety Accreditation Inspection has just been completed. He advised that he had received a letter from the U.S. Census Department asking for assistance in completing Census information. Manager Frasco advised that he sent a letter to the former cooperative meter readers, making them aware of the employment opportunity they might want to consider, to assist in collecting this information.

Attorney Smith reported on the status of the Claim by ICG Viper Mines. Manager Frasco discussed the costs for fire retardant clothing for cooperative employees and advised that he had developed a Policy on fire retardant clothing for review and consideration by the Union.

Aaron Johnson, RUS Field Representative, had discussed with him Menard's possible participation in the ERC Program, which was a Loan Program whereby Menard could obtain funds to lend to cooperative members for energy conservation projects.

He distributed materials to the Board Members as to Board Training and those classes that had been taken by Board Members and Attorney Smith with regard to training. It was moved and seconded the Manager's Report be approved as presented. Motion carried.

Manager Frasco presented the Financial Report for the month of September. Year to date margins were \$1,239,844 compared to \$1,660,301 a year earlier. Equity as of the end of September was 34.81% and the number of members served was 10,503 compared to 10,455 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at the end of September was \$35,366,958 compared to \$34,163,339 last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Director Goetsch reported on AIEC Activities.

Director Carls advised that there was no Prairie Power, Inc. monthly meeting in October. Manager Frasco discussed the September Energy Charge for Prairie Power, Inc. and he also discussed the deferred revenue calculations for the Fourth Quarter of 2009. He advised that Prairie Power had taken the position that the deferred revenue could be further deferred, that being the deferred revenue for October, November and December 2009. He advised that the cooperative could elect to not take back those credits at this point in time, but rather defer those monies to a subsequent year. After discussion, it was moved and seconded that the cooperative defer the revenue for the Fourth Quarter of 2009 and not to take that revenue now for those months. Motion carried.

The Board reviewed the revisions to Section VII-"Vacation" for second reading. It was moved and seconded that the Policy, as revised, be approved and accepted. Motion carried.

Manager Frasco reviewed with the Board for first reading, a new Policy entitled Section V- "Computer, Network, E-mail & Internet Use." It was the consensus of the Board to move this for second reading for approval at next month's meeting.

Manager Frasco reviewed the Capital Credit Estate Refunds Report.

President Martin advised that next month's Board Meeting was scheduled for November 24, 2009, at 6:00 p.m.

President Martin reminded the Board that the Menard Electric Christmas Party was scheduled for December 4, 2009, at Hill Prairie Winery, Oakford, Illinois.

There being no further business to come before the Board, it was moved and seconded the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried.