

Menard Electric Cooperative's

# Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## 75th Anniversary

### New ways to serve the same purpose

It's the start of a new year, and for many a time of new beginnings and new resolutions. Some individuals look at this time of year as an opportunity to completely reinvent themselves and change their lives. But for others it is merely time to change the calendar and reflect on where they've been and where they're going.

For Menard Electric Cooperative it's easy to see where we've been and it's easy to know where we're going. Why? Because the important things have not and will not change. We were created by a group of members to accomplish a common goal - to improve the lives of those members. Seventy-five years later our purpose remains the same.

Ever heard the phrase, "the more things change, the more they stay the same?" That could apply to us. In 75 years the way we do things has changed, but not why we do them.

Last month we discussed all the changes the linemen have seen in 75 years. They are the "face" so to speak of the co-op. But many people work behind the scenes in our office to keep the power on. And the office area employees have certainly seen their share of changes.

For starters, in the beginning there were just a couple office workers. And of course they typed documents on typewriters, making carbon copies or typing again when needed. File cabinets lined the walls to hold all the



1964 Office Workers

necessary documents. Technology such as copy machines was a grand thing in its day to improve efficiency.

Your co-op has never been afraid to embrace technologies that will improve how we do things. We were one of the first co-ops in Illinois to install a mainframe computer in the 1960s. That move greatly improved how we did our billing and the information we could have on hand.

Additional computers were added over time of course, and now we have them in the area service trucks as well to help streamline work orders and give our linemen more information about member accounts.

Some of that information is available because of the technology of automatic

meters. In the beginning, members self-read their meters each month. Many of our members greatly appreciated the convenience offered when in 1996 we hired meter readers to read each meter. A few years ago we took this one step further and installed automatic meters. Now we can read every member's meter from our office at the same time each month - 12:01 a.m. on the first day of the month to be exact.

At a member's request we can also view usage history to help investigate when a member is using the most electricity and possibly discover how they can reduce that usage. We can also check for low voltage or other electrical issues.


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But don't think we've gone too far towards technology. When you call our office you'll still talk to a live person, not a recording asking you to press several buttons to get to the person you need to speak with. Isn't that refreshing? If you call after hours you'll speak to someone at our call center where you can report an outage and receive updates on restoration efforts.

And of course, you can always drop by our office, because we have always been locally located. A few years ago we moved one mile south of New Salem after having spent many, many years right on the square in Petersburg. We had outgrown the office facilities there and in fact had six locations scattered about town. Moving to our present spot enabled us to have all of our office personnel and equipment in one location. It was another change enabling us to improve how we do business.

So as this new year begins, we'll keep our focus the same. We'll reflect on how some things have changed, but the most important thing - the reason we are in business - has not. Our focus will remain on how we can continue to improve the lives of the members we serve.



**Office Closed**  
Our offices will be closed  
Monday, Jan. 2 for New Year's.

**Connect**  
A Truist Energy Company **to MEC**

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# 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](http://www.togetherwesave.coop).*

## Move the air

Set your ceiling fan on reverse and use it on the lowest setting this winter to draw warm air down from the ceiling.

## Space heaters could cost you more

If you find yourself continually turning up the thermostat every evening and heating your whole house when you are sitting in one room a space heater might be right for you. If one keeps you from turning up the thermostat, or allows you turn it down that is. On the other hand, using several space heaters instead of turning up the thermostat could actually cost you more.

If several rooms in your home feel cooler than others, it would be a much wiser investment to solve the problem. It could be as simple as sealing a window or door with weatherstripping. Using a space heater in a room with considerable air leaks will likely cost you more than you planned.

Even a fairly small space heater can consume 1500 watts of electricity, the same as 20 standard 75-watt light bulbs. A good general formula for cal-

culating cost is this: kilowatts (divide watts by 1,000 to get kilowatts) x cost of electricity per kilowatt x amount of time running = cost of heating. A 1,500 watt space heater running for 10 hours at a rate of \$.10 per kilowatt hour will cost \$1.50 per day, which could add \$45 to your monthly bill!



# Monthly Safety Tip

## Space Heaters


Keep all space heaters 3 ft. from flammable items, use a UL listed unit with a tip-over shut-off feature, don't leave it unattended and keep pets and kids away.

# 10 New Year's Energy Resolutions

*Stop the bad habits that are costing you money!*

Are you making any New Year's resolutions? Many people do. It's a time to reflect on what areas of your life need change, and make a commitment to make those changes in order to improve your life.

Though I realize energy efficiency probably isn't on your mind at this time of year, why not make some resolutions that can save you money all year long? It's not a change others will see, but it could improve your life by improving your comfort and adding money back in your pocket. Take a look at the simple energy efficiency resolutions below, and commit now to saving energy all year long.

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- 1) **I will pull the plug**  
I will unplug electronics like my television, DVR, computer and video game console when not in use. I'll save even more by unplugging battery chargers and items with digital clocks. I could save more than \$175 a year.
  - 2) **I will dress warmly**  
I'll throw on a sweater and maybe a blanket and lower the thermostat. Just turning it from 70 to 68 degrees could save me more than \$184 a year. I'll lower the temperature even more at night or when I'm gone to save even more.
  - 3) **I will use my ceiling fans**  
I used the ceiling fans this summer to stay cool. Now I'll wipe off the dust and run them on reverse to bring the warm air down from the ceiling.
  - 4) **I won't waste money on laundry**  
I will only wash full loads of laundry and use cold water whenever I can. I'll use the drying sensor setting on my dryer and clean the lint trap before each load.
  - 5) **I will wash dishes for less**  
I will only wash full loads, I won't use pot scrubbing or high heat unless I really need it, and will shut off heat dry and crack open the door to finish drying.
  - 6) **I will buy sensible lighting**  
When a bulb burns out, I will review all the light bulbs in the store aisle and buy the compact fluorescent or LED that meets my needs and saves me money.
  - 7) **I will change my air filters**  
I will buy a few filters at a time to keep on hand at home and I will make a note on my calendar each month to look at the air filter on my furnace or air conditioner.
  - 8) **I will buy smart**  
If I make new purchases on appliances, televisions or other electronics this year, I will look for the energy star label and compare energy usage of several models before I buy.
  - 9) **I will become aware of my home's needs**  
I will check my home for leaky windows and doors or leaks around pipe penetrations. I will crawl into the dusty attic and look at the insulation. I will enter the crawl space to look for air leaks and examine the duct work.
  - 10) **I will budget for improvements**  
I will budget to make one or more energy efficiency improvements to my home this year. It could be something as simple as adding a water heater blanket, a low flow showerhead or using a couple tubes of caulk or cans of foam to seal my home. Or if money allows, I may add extra insulation, have a blower door energy audit conducted or make improvements to my heating and cooling system.

# Trivia

WIN  
\$75!

Every few months we'll have a trivia question concerning our history (you'll have read the answer in past issues). Please mail us your answer by the 28th. We'll put all the correct answers in a drawing each month and one lucky winner will receive a \$75 credit on their next month's bill.

### Fill in the blanks.

The cooperative first energized lines in 1937. The first lines stretched approximately \_\_\_\_\_ miles. Today, we have approximately \_\_\_\_\_ miles of line.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Congratulations!

**Kim and Travis Pollitt** of Athens are the winners of the November Trivia Question. Their entry was drawn from all submitted. The correct answer for the date the first meeting was held concerning the formation of Menard Electric was June 13, 1936. Kim and Travis will receive a \$75 bill credit this month. Thanks to all who entered.

# Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) or contact our office.

**P**resent were Manager Lynn Frasco, Attorney Charles Smith and Directors Gary Martin, Jerry Brooks, Michael Carls, Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney and Steven Worner. Director Donald McMillan was absent.

Staff presented 2012 budgets.

Discussed 2011 Rate Design Study results and took home to review for further discussion at next meeting.

Bill for construction of ICG transmission line received from Prairie Power was substantially higher than estimate; Frasco will investigate reasons.

Payment received from FEMA.

Eight new irrigation systems

planned in 2012. Staff estimates 30 systems for year.

Two RUS loans refinanced with CoBank for reduction in interest rates. President authorized to execute the loan refinance documents with CoBank.

Frasco advised approximately \$10,000 left for 2011 estate retirements. Board approved an additional \$10,000 to complete estate retirements already in process for 2011.

ByLaw and Policy Committee met Oct. 18, and is now in process of going through all co-op policies for review and possible changes.

Goetsch, Chairman of ByLaw and Policy Committee, reviewed

change to Policy Section II, entitled Policy Development - Policy Origin and Approval. Change would allow removal of first and second reading provision to approve changes on one reading. Proposed change moved to second reading.

Year to date margins were \$517,404 compared to \$1,284,225 a year earlier. Equity as of end of Sept. was 33.49% and number of members served was 10,528 compared to 10,527 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at end of Sept. was \$36,424,361 compared to \$35,418,416 last year. Co-op continues to meet requirements of RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

## 2012 tree trimming plan

**W**e strive to provide safe, reliable service for all our members.

One way we do that is to trim trees that could interfere with our 2,580 miles of distribution lines. MEC contract crews attempt to trim each area once every four years. This year they will trim circuits emanating from the Poplar City, Topeka, Bluff Springs, Salisbury and Mason City substations (see maps).

Trees are pruned back eight to 10 feet from lines. All trimming meets American National Standards Institute requirements to assure continued health of trees. Smaller trees and brush are removed to allow access and eliminate future problems. Small branches and brush will be chipped and removed while larger wood will be cut into manageable lengths for disposal by the member or other local parties.

Because of the size of our electric system, we ask that members keep trees trimmed around service wires from the home to the utility pole. Please notify us if you wish to temporarily discon-

nect power while you or a contractor trims these trees.

For more information or to notify us of a tree that needs trimmed, visit our website at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) or call System Engineer Jim Rechner at 800-872-1203.

