

Menard Electric Cooperative's

Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



75th Anniversary

Irrigation and load management

Each county of Illinois offers up something a little different. Two of the counties we serve are Mason and Tazewell County. This area along the Illinois River offers up some unique characteristics.

The soil is very sandy and doesn't retain water well (you also don't have flooded basements like you do in other parts of Illinois). The area also sits over an aquifer, a large body of underground water (you don't hear a lot about wells going dry either). Tornadoes seem to gravitate to the area,

known as tornado alley; and the land features sandburs and even some cacti (visit Sand Ridge State Park if you get the chance).

In the 1950s a prolonged drought hit this area and farmers were struggling. Then a new technology began making its ways into the fields in the 1960s — irrigation. The systems offered a way to water crops without relying solely on Mother Nature. Irrigation suddenly allowed this area to utilize the aquifer to support crops, increase yields and improve grain

quality.

Irrigation systems can be powered by diesel or electricity and Menard Electric started powering systems in the 1960s. In the 70s, as crop prices increased, the systems snowballed and the co-op soon served more than 390 in Mason, Tazewell and Cass counties.

John Whitehurst, Staking Engineer at Menard Electric for the area, says, "You can't put a value on the economic impact that irrigation has had on this area, not just on farmers, but on

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1966



2012

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the entire community. The area was revitalized and became much more prosperous because of irrigation. It completely changed the lives of the people in that area.”

Our crews then needed to rebuild some line in the Mason County area, adding a heavy backbone of three-phase service.

Now one of the leading agricultural areas of the Midwest, the area boasts traditional crops such as corn and soybeans, as well as specialty vegetables such as tomatoes, peas, cabbage, potatoes, green beans and cucumbers. There are also pumpkins, melons and popcorn, all of which thrive in the sandy soil. We currently serve more than 1,000 irrigation systems in this area.

In the hot, dry days of summer, the land is covered with spraying irrigation systems. And they are running at the same time members are turning on their air conditioners. When the temperature soars and electric

usage levels rise it can cause what we call peak usage. When our power supplier notifies us of a peak usage period (when they are running low on our previously-purchased power and would have to buy it on the system at much higher costs) we can perform load management to help diminish the impact of a high peak time.

That means we shut off the irrigation systems for a few hours during the hottest days of the year. Some of you may have similar load controls on your electric water heaters — where we will shut off the water heater for a few hours if needed. This load management system saves the cooperative, and all its members, from buying power at much higher costs.

Looking toward the future we now have technology to help us meet the needs of this segment of our system more efficiently — controlled capacitors.

Some of our lines have electricity-using motors along them, such as areas

with irrigation systems, grain dryers, or even large subdivisions containing lots of air conditioners. When this equipment is switched on, our system operates more efficiently by switching on capacitors on our system.

Capacitors help to maintain adequate voltage and decrease line loss, allowing our distribution system to run more efficiently. When the loads are not running, the capacitors need turned off to give us optimal energy efficiency on our system and avoid over-voltage.

Historically, a serviceman has had to switch capacitors on and off manually. This year we are installing 49 automatically controlled capacitor banks. They will run independently and switch on and off as needed by self-monitoring the voltage and amperage at the site. The capacitors are being installed as part of the \$417,000 Department Of Energy Smart Grid Regional Development Grant we received last year.

Office Closed

Our offices will be closed
Good Friday-April 6



14300 State Hwy 97
P.O. Box 200
Petersburg, IL 62675

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

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.

Spring cleaning

Add your dryer to your spring cleaning list. Check for lint build-up in the trap and inside the tube leading outdoors; and make sure the tube is straight and the flap outside is closing correctly.

Monthly Safety Tip

Dig safely

Earth Day is April 22. If you're planting a tree this month, call JULIE at 811 first. Always call before you dig - it could save your life.



You should come

Why we want you at our annual meeting



We have a group of loyal members that wouldn't dream of missing our Annual Meeting each year. They come for many reasons, some of which include: the pork chop dinner, the bill credit and/or free gift, winning prizes, visiting with neighbors and friends, and of course the recognition of the importance of being involved in their co-op.

That last one is the biggie, and is something not all our members agree upon. After all, we're simply the company you had to receive power from when you moved into your home right? And you don't need to have any involvement with us other than paying your bill each month, right?

Wrong. In order for us to remain a cooperative that best benefits our membership, we need that membership to

be involved. And that means you. Our bylaws state we must hold an annual meeting of members each year, and we must have a certain percentage of members attend that meeting.

Your employees and directors at Menard Electric know how busy your weekends can be — we are balancing work, activities, families and more as well. That's why we've tried to create an evening containing a variety of elements we think your family will enjoy.

Because it's our 75th Anniversary, we're planning some extra events for the whole family. It's a perfect year to come for the first time. You'll learn about how and why this cooperative was formed as

well as vote for your Board of Directors, vote on bylaw changes that affect the membership, learn about possible upcoming rate changes and more.

Mark Saturday, June 2, on your calendar now and make an effort to join us that evening. We know there are other ways to spend your Saturday night, but this is an important event that should be fun as well! You should come!

Check out next month's issue for more information about the meeting's highlights, and look for your official notice mailed to you in May.

Annual Meeting of Members June 2!

How to buy an energy-efficient appliance

You go shopping for a new refrigerator, and you're on a budget. The best buy is the fridge with the lowest sales price, right?

Not necessarily. If you buy the lowest-priced refrigerator, you may end up spending more than if you buy a more expensive one. The reason? The cost of owning a home appliance has three components: the initial purchase price, the cost of repairs and maintenance, and the cost to operate it.

The appliance with the lowest initial purchase price, or the one with the best repair record, isn't necessarily the one that costs the least to operate.

A small difference in annual operating costs might not seem like much. But remember that you will enjoy these savings year after year for the life of the appliance, while you must pay any difference in purchase price only once. As a result, you may actually save money by buying the more

expensive, more energy-efficient model.

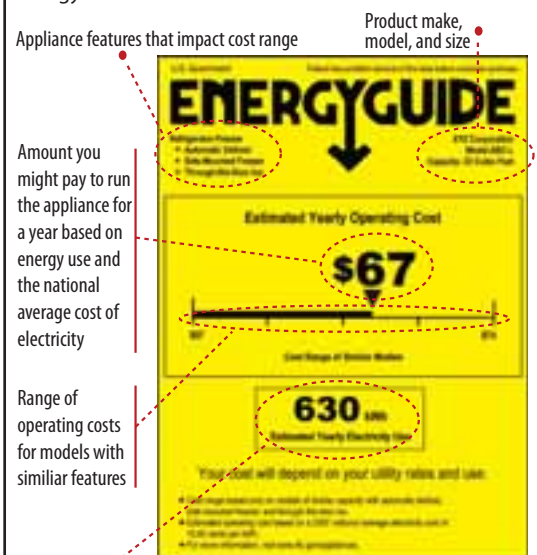
You can learn about the energy efficiency of an appliance that you're thinking about buying through the yellow-and-black EnergyGuide label, shown here.

Some appliances also may feature the ENERGY STAR logo, which means that the appliance is significantly more energy efficient than the average comparable model. To compare how updating appliances and making other changes around your home can impact your electric bill, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Source: Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Energy

How to Use the EnergyGuide Label

Appliance manufacturers are federally required to provide an EnergyGuide label so consumers can compare energy use between different brands and models.



Source: Federal Trade Commission, ftc.gov/appliances

Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at www.menard.com or contact our office.

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

Frasco discussed Jan. 12 accident between co-op line truck and Cass County snowplow; matter referred to co-op's insurance carrier, Federated.

Discussed schedule of software upgrade and status of upgraded co-op website.

Discussed successful resolution

of ICG Prairie Power bill dispute between Prairie Power, ICG and Menard Electric.

Year to date margins were \$1,122,469 compared to \$983,969 a year earlier. Equity end of Dec. was 34.03% and number of members served was 10,531 compared to 10,522 a year ago. Net Utility Plant end of Dec. was \$36,842,089 compared to \$35,640,839 last year. Co-op continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Approved Cass Cable TV pole use agreement.

Approved general retirement of capital credits for balance of 1985 and portion of 1986 not to exceed \$250,000 and retirement of estates up to \$100,000 during the calendar year 2012 for total retirement of \$350,000.

Goetsch and Smith presented proposed By-Law changes recommended by Policy and By-Law Committee. By-Law changes, for Board approval only, were adopted unanimously by Board. Changes to Article III and Article IV will be presented to membership for consideration and approval at the June 2, 2012, annual meeting.

Automatic Payment: One less thing to worry about!

You can have the net amount of your bill automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the 17th of each month. Just get us this form by the 28th of the month prior to when you wish payments to begin.

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

Name: _____ SS No. _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Map Location No. _____

Bank Name: _____ Bank Account No. _____

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 the amount of my bill each month will be drafted on the 17th 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: _____