

Menard Electric Cooperative's

# Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## You should come

*Why we want you at our annual meeting*

**Annual Meeting Sat., June 1**



**W**e have a group of loyal members that wouldn't dream of missing our annual meeting each year. They come for many reasons—the food, a bill credit, prizes, a chance to visit with neighbors, and of course to participate in the co-op.

That last one is important. We aren't just the company who sells you electricity. We're a co-op, and in order to best benefit our membership, we need that membership to be involved. That means you.

Our bylaws state we must hold an annual meeting of members each year, and we must have a quorum of members attend that meeting. We know how busy your weekends can be and that's why we've tried to create an evening containing a variety of elements we think your family will enjoy.

Mark the date 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! 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.

## Nominating petitions due

**P**etitions are available for directors in districts 1, 3, 4 and 6 on the Board of Directors of Menard Electric Cooperative. Petitions must be signed by no less than 10 members and must be submitted to the co-op's office by 4:30 p.m. on April 17.

One co-op member will be elected from three districts to serve a three-year term. Seeking re-election are incumbent directors Roy Seaney of Tallula, Dist. 1; Jerry Brooks of Oakford, Dist. 4; and Steve Worner of Manito, Dist. 6.

Members will also vote whether to elect Jodie Tate of Virginia to finish the remaining one-year term of retired director Michael Carls, Dist. 3.

## Outlet sealer giveaway

**S**top in the office and pick up two packages of outlet and switch sealing kits. Available to each member as supplies last.

We hope this simple step toward energy efficiency prompts you to take more steps to save energy this year. Visit [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com) for ideas.



# Spring landscaping 101

Planning any landscaping or tree planting projects? Whether it's to celebrate Earth Day or Arbor Day, or to provide wind breaks and shading, reduce carbon in the environment, or beautify your property, keep this information in mind while planning your project.

## Plant safely

Call JULIE at 811 at least 48 hours before digging. The depth of utility lines can vary for many reasons, and striking a line can cause injury, repair costs and service interruptions.

## Choose the right place

Take the time to research tree selections by consulting your local arborist, tree nursery or U of I Extension office experts.

Keep areas around meters and transformers free of vegetation that can limit access.

Don't plant trees near underground utilities—roots can grow to interfere with underground pipes, cables and wires.

Don't plant trees near power lines. Power outages and blinks occur when branches come into contact with overhead lines. There are also considerable safety risks if children climb trees near lines.

Menard Electric has a tree trimming plan in place to reduce service disruptions from trees; see our website



for more information and contact us if you have a tree that needs trimmed.

## Plant for efficiency

The U.S. Department of Energy says the right trees planted in the right places can save you up to 25 percent of your heating and cooling energy consumption by blocking summer sun and winter winds. They offer these tips:

Planting deciduous trees with high leaves and branches on the south side of your home can shade your roof

during the hottest part of a summer day. Trees with low branches placed on the west side can block the late afternoon sun. And shading your air conditioner can help it work more efficiently.

Planting evergreen trees and shrubs close together on the north/northwest side can provide a great winter wind-break. Don't plant evergreens on the south side—they'll block the winter sun from warming your home.

## Farmers: Spring planting safety

It's easy to get so used to seeing power lines along rural roads and field edges that you no longer are aware of them. Take time this spring to notice all the wires around your fields.

SafeElectricity recommends always maintaining a 10 foot minimum distance between equipment and lines—that's below, to the side, and above lines.

Field cultivators, sprayer booms, and even tractor antennas, can be higher than 10 feet.

Inspect entrances to fields to ensure there is adequate clearance for equipment. If there isn't, contact us. If clearance seems adequate, still always use a spotter to help verify from a better vantage point. Visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org) for more safe planting tips.

## Spring storm safety

April through July are the most active months for severe storms, lightning strikes and tornadoes. Check out these tips to stay safe.

### Before the Storm

Prepare yourself ahead of time by assembling a kit of essentials such as flashlights, radios, lists of emergency numbers, water bottles and non-perishable food.

When lightning is forecast, unplug sensitive electronics and appliances and turn off your air conditioner.

If you're interested in surge protection give us a call or check out our website—we offer two packages to help protect your home from lightning damage.

### During the Storm

Stay inside and away from doors, windows, corded phones, water, pipes, electrical outlets, appliances, electronics, and concrete basement walls and garage floors (due to metal mesh or rebar).

If an outage occurs, switch off lights and appliances to prevent overloading circuits and damaging appliances when power is restored. Leave on one lamp as a signal that power is restored.

Never use a charcoal or gas grill to cook inside.

Install a transfer switch on portable generators or connect appliances directly. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, known as “back feed,” which is dangerous for crews working to restore power.

Wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike before going outside.

### After the Storm

Stay away from downed power lines. Be cautious of tree limbs or debris possibly hiding an electrical hazard. Assume any dangling wires are electrical; treat downed or hanging power lines as if they are energized and contact us immediately.

Before re-entering storm-damaged buildings or rooms, be sure all electric and gas services are turned off. If you can't reach your breaker box safely, call us to shut off power at the meter.

Never step into a flooded area if water is covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Be alert to any electrical equipment that could be energized and in contact with water. Never touch electrical appliances, cords, wires or electric yard tools while you are wet or standing in water. Keep all electric tools and



equipment at least 10 feet from wet surfaces.

Never drive over a downed power line. A downed line can cause things around it to become energized.

If your car has come in contact with a downed power line, stay in your vehicle. If you must leave jump free keeping both feet together and shuffle or hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out in a pool and the action of running or striding allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. Your body then becomes the path for the electricity and electrocution is the tragic result.

*Information from [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org). Visit their website and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for tips on preparing an emergency kit and staying safe during storms.*

## Beyond the BULB

A monthly tip to help you use electricity safely and efficiently. See [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org) and [togetherwe-save.com](http://togetherwe-save.com) for more ways to go “beyond the bulb” to keep your family using energy wisely every day.

## Hang it out

Save money and wear and tear on your dryer while enjoying the fresh scents of spring by hanging your laundry to dry.

If you're running a 5,000 watt electric clothes dryer one hour every day, it could run up an \$18 tab on your monthly bill. And don't forget gas dryers use electricity too. Ask us to borrow our Kill-A-Watt meter to find your true cost per load.

Of course, you'll need your dryer on rainy days; be sure hoses are tightly connected and don't contain kinks, and the outside vent isn't blocked. And remember to clean the lint trap each load to reduce the potential fire hazard and improve efficiency.

# Board Meeting Report

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

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

Frasco reported that Mark Bradley planned to retire and Wayne Jones announced his retirement effective in May.

He reviewed 2013 irrigation systems: currently, there would be 123 new irrigation systems resulting in approximately 15 miles of new construction. The co-op has completed 13 with four presently in construction.

Frasco discussed power cost

adjustment and advised co-op staff was studying issue and would report when had further recommendations.

Frasco reviewed LIHEAP.

Co-op hired Michael Justice as a Groundman/Mechanic, David Groth as an Engineering Tech on a part-time basis and Sebastian Hild as an Apprentice Lineman.

2013 Line Construction Labor and Equipment Contract with L. E. Myers approved.

2013 Line Clearance Labor and Equipment Contract with Poor Boy Tree Service approved.

Goetsch reported on the Policy Committee's review of Section VII and Section VIII of Cooperative Policies.

Resolution approved to retire capital credits in 2013 for a portion of 1986, and estates, for a total not to exceed \$370,000.

Board Conflict of Interest Certification and Disclosure Forms were filled out and returned to Frasco.

Year to date margins were \$1,198,514 compared to \$1,114,818 a year earlier. Equity as of end of Dec. was 34.82% and members served was 10,536 compared to 10,531 a year ago. End of Dec. Net Utility Plant was \$38,642,879 compared to \$36,842,089 last year. Co-op continues to meet requirements of RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

## Mark Bradley Retires

Area Serviceman Mark Bradley retires this month after more than 40 years of service with Menard Electric.

In 1972 Mark came to the co-op as "unskilled labor," meaning he did what he calls, "a little bit of everything." He worked his way up through the ranks over the years, beginning with the Apprentice Lineman program, then working as a Journeyman Lineman for about 15 years before becoming a Crew Leader and then moving to Area Serviceman, serving the southeast area of our territory (Sherman, Riverton, Mechanicsburg, Niantic)

for more than 20 years.

What's the secret to staying at one place so long? "I liked my job and I liked the people. I always enjoyed meeting new people and going out to get the job done," Mark says.

From hand-written to computerized, pole climbing to bucket trucks, Mark has seen a lot of changes, including having worked under three General Managers.

"It's a big loss to the co-op when a man with Mark's experience and knowledge retires. He will be missed by his fellow employees as well as by the members he took care of over the



*Mark in 1988 and today.*

years," says Operations Manager Bob Burris.

Mark plans to spend more time with his wife, family and four grandchildren, and is considering taking up golf again. We wish Mark well in his retirement.