



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

Electric co-ops effectively respond to disasters

In the summer of 2012, the derecho that swept hurricane-force winds from the Great Plains to the Atlantic seaboard knocked out power to more than four million people. The damage caused by this devastating storm cost the nation \$2.9 billion.

Disasters, whether caused by nature, accidents or hostile acts, exact an enormous cost, both in economic and human terms. Electric cooperatives, like Monroe County Electric Co-Operative (MCEC), have a unique and effective approach to emergency management and disaster recovery - mutual assistance. Following a disaster, co-ops will rapidly deploy support staff and equipment to emergency and recovery zones to assist sister co-ops.

Because the national network of transmission and distribution infrastructure owned by electric cooperatives has been built to federal standards, line crews from any co-op in America can arrive on the scene ready to provide emergency support, secure in their knowledge of the system's engineering.

We work closely with other first responders, state and local government and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure an effective and coordinated response in the event of an emergency.

Since cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations, we are eligible for financial assistance from FEMA, which can fund a major portion of the cost of emergency work to restore power and the cost of repairing, restoring, rebuilding or replacing damaged facilities.

This system gives electric cooperatives the ability to respond effectively and quickly in times of crisis and protects the financial interests of the cooperative members as the same time.

Unfortunately, with tighter budgets, securing FEMA reimbursements after a disaster has become more difficult. Following Superstorm Sandy, Con-

gress changed the rules: FEMA now allocates funds for rebuilding based on an estimate of costs, not on the actual cost. If the estimate is higher than the actual cost, the excess funds must be used for FEMA-approved projects. But if the estimate is low,

the co-op must pay the difference.

Electric cooperatives across the country learn from disasters. We learn how to protect our systems better and we learn how to become more resilient. When it comes to resiliency, we have a good story to tell. We serve our member-consumers in the most rugged, remote terrain in the country. And we have learned how to restore power in extremely difficult circumstances.

While I know better than to make any predictions about what Mother Nature has in store for us, I believe these lessons will help us the next time disaster strikes.



Photo courtesy of Egyptian Electric Cooperative

How to plant trees to conserve energy for summer shade

Planting the right trees in the right places conserves energy and reduces your energy bills, while helping to fight climate change. See how properly placed trees save energy by providing summer shade, winter warmth, and winter wind-breaks.

- Plant on the west and north-west to provide mid-to-late afternoon shade in most locations.
- Shade east and west windows, but prune lower branches to prevent blocking view.
- Plant shade trees over patios, driveways, and air-conditioning units.
- Large deciduous trees planted on the east, west, and north-west sides of your home create soothing shade from the hot summer sun and reduce summer air conditioning costs by up to 35%.



- Plant trees to shade your air conditioner to help keep it cooler and running more efficiently.
- Use less energy for yourself and your utility company.
- Less fossil fuel is consumed by the utility to create the energy, which means less carbon dioxide emissions.
- Trees shade patios, sidewalks, and driveways, cool the concrete, the entire yard, and even the neighborhood.



USDA – Home repair loans and grants available for low income residents

Attention!! Low interest loan and grant program available through the USDA for low income members. Contact your area USDA representative: If you live in Monroe or Randolph County, contact the Marion office at 618-993-5396. If you live in St. Clair County, contact the Mt. Vernon office at 618-244-0773.

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Spring planting

Farmers should keep electrical hazards in mind

Planning season, with its long hours in the fields, is on its way. Safe-Electricity urges farmers to take time now to notice power lines.

They recommend a 10-foot minimum distance between equipment and lines—that's below, to the side and above lines. Keep in mind field cultivators, sprayer booms and even tractor antennas can be higher than 10 feet.

Avoid raising the arms of planters,

cultivators or truck beds near lines. Inspect entrances to fields to ensure there is adequate clearance for equipment. If there isn't, contact us.

Always use a spotter to help verify clearance from a better vantage point. Visit SafeElectricity.org for more safe planting tips.



Tip of the Month



Starting your landscape projects? You never know what underground utilities might be running through your yard. April is Safe Digging Month and we remind you it is a state law to call JULIE before you dig at 8-1-1, or visit www.illinois1call.com to submit a request and get more information. Call by Wednesday afternoon if you are planning a weekend project.

MCEC line outages - February 2015

Time Off	Duration	# Out	Location	Cause Desc	Substation
02/01/15	1:37	3	Schmidt Ln	Small animals or birds	Smithton
02/01/15	1:10	47	Maus Rd/Bushy Prairie Rd	Large animals	Waterloo
02/10/15	2:05	39	IL Rt 156 (Hecker Hwy)	Equipment	Waterloo
02/17/15	0:17	4	Country Club Ln	Unknown	N. Waterloo

Two longtime employees retire from cooperative

At the end of 2014, Debra Bergman and Ronald Birkner said goodbye to the cooperative, retiring after a combined 79 years of service.

Debra held the positions of Office Secretary and later, Administrative Assistant, and was employed by the cooperative for more than 44 years. Deb is married to John Bergman and they have two children, Nathan (wife - Stephanie) and Kelsey (husband-James), along with four grandchildren; Bryce, Kylan, & Jonathan (Nathan & Stephanie) and Avery, (Kelsey & James).

Ron has worked at the cooperative as Maintenance Warehouseman/Mechanic for the past 35 years and is married to Karen. They have two sons; Chris and Aaron, and live in New Athens. Ron and Karen plan to do some traveling and spend more time down at their vacation property in the Cloud 9 Ranch complex in Missouri.



Retirees Debra Bergman and Ronald Birkner.

Lineman Appreciation Day is April 13



These men work in a cold, hot, rainy, stormy, flooded environments, day or night, to make sure our lights stay on. So put a smile on the face of a lineman and tell them "thank you."