



Annual Meeting highlights



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

Members of Monroe County Electric Co-Operative were updated on the organization's financial condition, money saving programs, commitment to safety and maintenance progress during their Annual Meeting of Members held Monday, March 21, at the Hecker Community Center.

In 2010 Monroe County Electric spent considerable time and resources to improve system reliability and reduce the number and length of outages and blinks. They included changing out line, inspecting/replacing poles and transformers, keeping on top of tree trimming and spraying foliage. Because of these efforts, the reliability rate for the co-op was 99.96 percent for the year.

"Our required design of lines during storm conditions is to withstand one-half inch of ice accumulation and up to 25 mph winds," said co-op President CEO Alan Wattles. "We feel it is prudent to continue to maintain our system so that you the member have reliable service at all times."

While the cooperative is showing good stewardship in its efforts to provide the most reliable power possible, worker safety is a top priority. Wattles stated that the co-op reported no work-



L to R, re-elected Board Members, George Obernagel and Ross Mueller; new Board Member, Richard Neff, and President/CEO Alan Wattles.



Larry Kraft presenting retiring Board Member, Terry Grommet with recognition plaque.

related injuries in 2010, and that the co-op has been nationally accredited since 2004. He added, "By working at having a safer work environment the co-op has been able to reduce out workers compensation premium by over \$30,000 since 2009."

Treasurer Joel Harres reported that the co-op is in sound financial shape. More typical winter and summer temperatures in 2010 resulted in higher kilowatt-hour (kWh) sales. The co-op had margins of \$493,469. No rate increases are expected in 2011, but members should expect an increase in 2012 due to costs of the Prairie State Generating facility construction, environmental compliance and possibly those involving issues occurring overseas. The Prairie State facility is set to come on line in late 2011.

Because of more stable kWh sales, the co-op was able to show margins of \$493,469. At the end of 2010, the co-op had returned a total of \$3,518,722 overall in capital credits. Capital credits are funds remaining after a member-owned co-op's financial obligations are made for the year. This is a differentiating factor between member-owned co-ops and investor-owned utilities.

Monroe County Electric is not just in business to sell electricity. It also offers a host of other programs and services needed by its members. Energy efficiency has become increasingly important as the price of electricity continues to increase due to higher coal prices and more stringent regulatory compliance. According to Board Chairman Larry Kraft, the co-op has offered energy audits for members through the Home program. "The program has rebated \$62,000 thus far to help our member/owners pay for energy saving home improvements ranging anywhere from caulking to installing geothermal heat pumps." Members can also save money on more than 20,000 products and



Alan Wattles giving CEO report.

services as well as prescriptions by using their Touchstone Energy Co-op Connections Card, which was provided free by the cooperative. In addition members can log on at www.togetherwesave.com and see how making simple changes can result in big energy savings.

Access to quality water service is a primary rural concern. Monroe County Electric has begun signing up Concordia Water Cooperative water service members. A preliminary engineering report has been approved and the next steps will be to acquire easements for infrastructure and add more members. Kraft said if the project goes as planned, pipe should be in the ground next spring.

Kraft explained that the earthquake/tsunami tragedy that has unfolded in Japan will undoubtedly change how this country views future power supply. He said construction on any new nuclear plants will be years away, if at all. That could increase demand for coal. Coal already represents 80 percent of the power generated in the Midwest and all of the power purchased by Monroe County Electric. The increased demand, coupled

with the proposed EPA regulation of carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired generating plants and carbon and coal ash, could drive the cost of power bills even higher.

Because of these concerns, the cooperative continues to ask for member support for the "Our Energy Our Future" campaign. This grass roots campaign through the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association is asking Congress to make the environmental legislation they enact regarding coal to be fair, achievable and affordable. While one cooperative member's voice may not be heard, 42 million cooperative members united in a post card or e-mail writing campaign make quite a statement. So far the campaign has made quite an impact. Kraft challenged attendees to participate by saying, "If not now, when? And if not you, who?"

During the meeting George Obernagel of Waterloo and Ross Mueller of Fults were re-elected to the co-op's board of directors. Richard Neff of Belleville was elected to replace long-time Director Terry Grommet who retired from the board after 27 years of service.

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Remember Mom on Mother's Day May 8th

Appointment time-savers

You got places to go and people to see. And you can't afford to hang around waiting for an appointment to show up. Here are some tips for saving time:

- **Confirm your appointments the day before.** Let people know you're conscientious; they'll likely follow suit.
- **Don't arrive too early.** More than 10 minutes early is wasting time.
- **Bring some work with you.** If you must wait, it cuts down the wasted time if you bring something else you can work on in the meantime.
- **Set the appointment for an odd time.** Instead of 8 or 8:30, try 8:15 or 8:45. People will most likely do their best to make it on the dot.

Take care when cleaning up broken CFLs

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) are more energy efficient than standard incandescent bulbs, which is important in these days of mounting concern about the environment. But they contain mercury (though incandescent bulbs contain more), and that mercury can be a health hazard if the bulb breaks. Take care cleaning up. Here's what to do:

- **Clear the room.** Get everyone out of the room immediately, especially children, pregnant women, and pets.
- **Ventilate the area.** Turn off any fans, air conditioning, or forced-air heating. Open the windows to let fresh air circulate in the room.
- **Wait before cleaning.** Stay out of the room for at least 15 minutes before beginning to clean up the area. Gather the supplies you'll need: disposable gloves, plastic zip-lock bags, a flashlight, duct tape, and some damp paper towels.
- **Gather debris carefully.** Wearing your disposable gloves, pick up all the larger pieces you can find and place them in a zip-lock bag. Push tiny bits of glass or powder into piles using a piece of cardboard or stiff paper and place them into bags.
- **Be thorough.** Use a flashlight to locate tiny bits of glass or mercury. Pat the entire area with duct tape to pick up small traces of debris. Then use a damp paper towel to pat down the area once again.
- **Dispose of the material.** Put everything, including your



gloves, into zip-lock plastic bags for immediate disposal. Check community regulations on disposing of CFLs.

- **Wash up.** Thoroughly wash your face and hands after you've finished cleaning.
- **Keep the air flowing.** Continue to ventilate the area for several hours. Use a portable fan to push air outside.
- **Vacuum with care.** When you do your next normal cleaning and vacuuming, keep children, pets, and pregnant women out of the area. Ventilate the room before and after cleaning. If you vacuum, remove and dispose of the vacuum bag immediately. (If you use a bag-free vacuum, empty it out immediately into a plastic zip-lock bag, clean the interior surface with a damp cloth, and discard the cloth in the bag before disposal.)

Saving money



How to cut down on gasoline use this summer

Summer vacations are on the horizon, and chances are you'll be doing a lot more driving than usual. Save money, and help the environment, by reducing your gas consumption with these tips gathered from around the Web:

- **Use the right oil.** Check your owner's manual, or the manufacturer, for the recommended grade of motor oil. The wrong oil can negatively affect your vehicle's efficiency.
- **Lighten your load.** Remove unnecessary items from your trunk. The more weight you carry, the more fuel you'll burn.
- **Get rid of your roof rack.** If your vehicle sports a roof rack that you're not using, take it

down. It increases wind resistance and cuts your efficiency.

- **Buy gas at the right time.** Evenings are better than hot afternoons for filling your tank. Gasoline is denser when temperatures are cool, so you'll get more for the same price.
- **Use your A/C wisely.** At highway speeds, you're better off running your air conditioning than opening your windows and increasing drag. But when driving around town, keep your windows down and the air conditioner off to conserve fuel.

Tips for water conservation

Water covers the Earth, yet using it efficiently is more important than ever. You'll avoid wasting water (and energy) by following these simple tips:

- **Check your toilet.** Toilet leaks can waste a ridiculous amount of water. Place a few drops of food coloring in your tank, then check the bowl a half-hour later. If you see any color, you've got a leak that should be fixed.
- **Shut off your hose.** When watering your lawn or washing your car, use a nozzle you can shut off when you don't need it. Better yet, fill a bucket of water instead of running the hose constantly and you'll use less water.
- **Keep a pitcher of water in your fridge.** Don't run the faucet when you need a drink. A pitcher or bottle of water in the refrigerator will ensure that less water goes down the drain. If possible, try to use the same glass or cup all day long to cut down on the number of dishes that need washing.
- **Shorten your showers.** The average eight-minute shower can use up to 17 gallons of water. Trim your shower time to three or four minutes; some experts suggest turning water off while you lather up.

MCEC Line Outages - March 2011

Time Off	Duration	# Out	Location	Cause Desc	Sub
03/11/11	1:20	111	Columbia Bottoms	Equipment	Columbia
03/22/11	0:52	4	Cement Hollow Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	East Carondelet
03/24/11	1:48	22	Alscheid's Subdivision	Other, Deterioration	N. Waterloo