


MONROE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

Look up for hazards during harvest

After working in a field on a neighbor's farm, Jim Flach parked his equipment and stepped out of the vehicle. Sadly, Jim did not realize his equipment was touching an overhead power line, and he became a path for the electrical current as he placed his foot onto the ground. Jim received a severe electric shock that ultimately resulted in his death a few months later. Safe Electricity urges farmers to take the proper precautions when working around power lines.

"The rush to harvest can lead to farmers working long days with little sleep," cautions Kyla Kruse, communications director of the Energy Education Council and its Safe Electricity program. "It is important to take time for safety. Before starting work, make sure to note the location of overhead power lines."

To stay safe around overhead power lines, Safe Electricity urges farm operators and workers to:

- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.

- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines — at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call our office at 939-7171.

If contact is made with a power line, stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away, and call 911. Do not leave until the utility crew says it is safe to do so. The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to

safety as you leave the area.

Some additional safety tips from Safe Electricity include:

- Do not use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside and around grain bins.
- Always hire qualified electricians for any electrical issues.
- Do not use equipment with frayed cables.

"You need to double check, even triple check, to see what is above you," says Marilyn Flach, Jim's widow. His son Brett adds, "Be conscious of your surroundings. You need to keep your eyes open and beware of overhead lines."

For more electrical safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Safe Electricity is the safety outreach program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization with more than 400 electric cooperative members and many others who share the mission of educating the public about electrical safety and energy efficiency.



Prepaid Electric Service (PES) – helping members take control of their electric service

Last year, Monroe County Electric Co-Operative (MCEC) began offering its new **Prepaid Electric program (PES)**, a “pay as you go” electric service.

Would it be easier for you to make weekly or biweekly payments rather than one larger payment each month? If so, our **Prepaid Electric Service (PES)** program may be for you.

Our PES program accounts never pay a late charge and avoid paying higher deposits. The initial installation fee is \$50. The member decides how much money should be kept in the PES account so the program fits YOUR budget. You can buy enough energy to last until payday, or you can buy enough to last several months. The choice is yours!

There are several convenient payment options for PES accounts. You can pay online using MCEC's Smart-Hub e-bill system on your computer or your smart phone, or call our interactive payment system at **1-855-874-5350**. You can also stop by our office at 6132 State Route 3, Waterloo, IL

62298 or mail your payment to P.O. Box 128, Waterloo, IL 62298.

Members can receive three different types of low-balance notifications to alert them if funds are low in the PES account (below \$20). The member on our PES program can get an email and/or text alert if they have a computer/ text capable phone and they can also receive an automated phone call. Should the PES account run out of money and service is disconnected, members can simply make a payment to their PES account and push a button on the meter to reactivate the service. It's easy to do.

Your electric service will be no different when on a PES program. You will have the same reliable electric service you have always had. Since you receive low balance and pending disconnect notifications prior to disconnect, you will know if you are experiencing a power outage or have just run out of funds in your PES account. And, if you have a power outage, MCEC crews will still be on standby, ready to assist you. To report power

outages, call us at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433.

MCEC members, especially those with an increased meter deposit, can easily convert to a PrePaid Account. If the account is at a zero balance, the existing deposit can be applied to the account, often covering the minimum PES program initial funds required of \$25. Any remaining deposit will then be used to cover your existing electric account balance.

If your current balance due exceeds your original deposit amount, you can still switch to our PES program. We will use your deposit to pay down your bill, and then work out a payment plan for the remainder.

Rest assured that our member services representatives will work with you to provide a smooth transition to the PES program. The program works best for members who want to take control of their electric account and energy use. By monitoring your consumption on a regular basis, you will begin to notice

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MCEC line outages - July 2015

Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
07/01/15	0:48	79	Deer Hill Rd	Installation	Waterloo
07/07/15	2:40	240	Fountain	Power Supplier	Fountain
07/08/15	0:59	4	LL Rd	Conductor Sag	Poe
07/08/15	2:08	88	Steppig Rd	Trees, Other	Columbia
07/09/15	0:42	19	Forest Hill Lake Ln	Maintenance	East Carondelet
07/14/15	2:01	36	Clover Leaf School Rd	Vehicles Or Machinery	East Carondelet
07/19/15	2:37	19	Arbor Ridge/Timber View Sudv	Corrosion	Millstadt
07/23/15	0:40	4	LL Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	Poe
07/24/15	0:30	171	Smithton Area	Electrical Overload	New Athens
07/25/15	2:10	59	Saeger Rd	Trees, Other	Millstadt
07/26/15	1:56	60	Imbs Station Rd	Trees, Other	East Carondelet
07/27/15	1:14	13	Apple Blossom Ln	Small Animals Or Birds	East Carondelet
07/27/15	1:33	76	Millstadt Area	Decay	Millstadt
07/27/15	1:08	88	Steppig Rd	Trees, Other	Columbia
07/27/15	1:15	6	Bushy Prairie Rd	Unknown	Waterloo

Continued from 16c

patterns in your day-to-day use. Any variation from this pattern, such as a house guest, or a vacation, will become evident. Also, monitoring and controlling daily use can help keep your power costs down. Statistics show that prepay

electricity programs help lower electric consumption due to member awareness of usage patterns. It is another benefit of the program and you might just save some of your energy dollars!

Call Monroe County Electric Co-Operative today at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433 so we can get you more information about switching to our PrePaid Electric Service program!

Q & A

Prepaid Electric Service

The Prepaid Electric Service (PES) is a pay-as-you-go plan that offers the opportunity to pay when you want, in the amounts you want. Instead of receiving a traditional paper bill that is generated once each month, your electric use is calculated daily. PES members never pay a late charge, and avoid paying large deposits.

What is the PES electric rate?

The rate on PES is identical to the rate you are currently on.

Is PES the correct payment option for me?

Would it be easier for you to make weekly or biweekly payments rather than one larger payment each month? If so, PES may be for you. Also, statistics indicate that prepay electricity programs help lower electric consumption due to member awareness of usage patterns. So, any member interested in monitoring his or her electric use may benefit from PES.

What if I have already paid a deposit...can I get it back immediately?

Your deposit will be used to pay any existing balances with the cooperative first, then any remaining deposit amount will be credited to your new PES account.

If your existing balance due exceeds your deposit amount, you can still switch to PES. Your deposit will pay down any existing balances, and the remaining balance due to the cooperative will be rolled into a payment plan through PES.

Rest assured, our member service

representatives will work with you to provide a smooth transition to PES.

How do I make a payment or purchase credits?

Credits can be purchased in several convenient ways. You can purchase credits 24x7 via our SmartHub App, mcec.org, or by calling our interactive payment system at (855) 874-5350. Credits can also be purchased by calling or visiting our office (6132 State Route 3, Waterloo, IL 62298) or by mail.

How much money should I keep in my PES account?

That is entirely up to you! The beauty of PES is that it fits YOUR budget. You can buy enough credits to last until payday, or you can buy enough to last several months. The choice is yours!

Will my electric service be different if I utilize PES?

No. You will have the same reliable electric service you have always had. Since you will receive low balance and pending disconnect notifications prior to disconnect, you will know if you are experiencing a power outage or have just run out of credits on your PES account. And, if you have a power outage, our crews will still be on standby, ready to assist you. To report power outages, call us at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433.

What if my PES account balance runs low?

PES is a self-managed program. You will receive a low balance notice by e-mail, text or telephone (or any

combination thereof). This will give you time to purchase credits before the meter actually stops. If you do not purchase more credits, the meter will stop, and the power will turn off. Once more credits are purchased, your power will be reconnected automatically.

How do I make PES work for me?

PES works best for people who want to take control of their electric account and energy use. By monitoring your consumption on a regular basis, you will begin to notice patterns in your day-to-day use. Any variation from this pattern, such as a house guest, or a vacation, will become evident as you monitor your account. Monitoring and controlling daily use can help keep your power costs down.

What if I want to know my energy use on an hourly basis rather than on a daily basis?

From our SmartHub App or website (mcec.org) you can see how much energy you use down to the hour.

How long must I stay on the PES program once I sign up?

There is no minimum period to stay on PES after you signup. However once you request to be taken off PES and put on a traditional postpaid rate you may not return to PES for a year.

Call us at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433 for more information. You can also email us at amasterson@mcec.org.

Shield your home from energy loss with adequate insulation

By Anne Prince

Walls. Floors. Ceilings. Attic. These are some of the prime areas of a home that need insulation in order for you to maximize energy efficiency. According to the Department of Energy (DOE), adding insulation to your home is a sound investment that is likely to quickly pay for itself in reduced utility bills. In fact, DOE estimates that you can reduce your heating and cooling needs up to 30 percent by properly insulating and weatherizing your home.

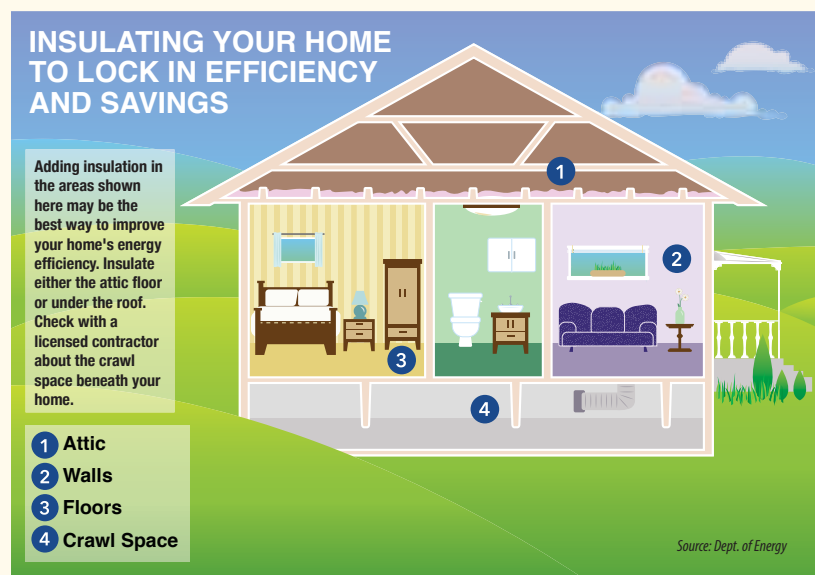
If your home is more than 20 years old and was not specifically constructed for energy efficiency, additional insulation can likely reduce your energy bills and increase the comfort level of your home. The actual amount of savings for each home depends upon several factors—the current level of insulation, your climate, efficiency of your heating/cooling system and your utility rates. On average, older homes have less insulation than homes built today, but even adding insulation to a newer home can pay for itself within a few years.

So, where do you start?

You first need to determine how much insulation you already have in your home and where it is located. If you need assistance, Allan Masterson, Director of Member Services, conducts energy efficiency audits for the home and will check insulation as a routine part of the assessment. For those with the DIY spirit, you can conduct an insulation audit yourself. Here is what you will should be looking for:

- Where your home is, isn't, and/or should be insulated
- The type of insulation in your home
- The R-value and the thickness or depth (inches) of the insulation

A prime area that is chronically under-insulated is the attic. Whether you live in a cool or warm climate, attic insulation is essential to help keep warm air inside in



the winter and prevent hot attic air from heating your living spaces in the summer. If you have R-19 or less insulation in your attic, consider bringing it up to R-38 in moderate climates and R-49 in cold climates. For flooring in cold climates, if you have R-11 or less insulation, consider bringing it up to R-25.

How does insulation work?

Heat flows naturally from a warmer space to a cooler space. During winter months, this means heat moves directly from heated living spaces to adjacent unheated attics, garages, basements and even outdoors. It can also travel indirectly through interior ceilings, walls and floors—wherever there is a difference in temperature. During summer months, the opposite happens—heat flows from the exterior to the interior of a home. Proper installation of insulation creates resistance to heat flow. Heat flow resistance is measured or rated in terms of its R-value—the higher the R-value, the greater the insulation's effectiveness. The more heat flow resistance your insulation provides, the lower your heating and cooling costs will be.

Save green by going green

Today, you have choices when it comes to selecting insulation for the home, including an environmentally-friendly option made of recycled materials, such as scrap blue jeans. It looks similar to chopped up blue jeans and is treated for fire safety. With an insulating R-value similar to fiberglass insulation, this blue-jean insulation is a great option.

Get started and get saving

While an older home will never be as efficient as a new home, an insulation upgrade will make a noticeable difference in your energy use and wallet. A well-insulated home is one of the most cost-effective means of saving energy and decreasing heating and cooling bills. For more information, contact the energy experts at Monroe County Electric Co-Operative at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433.

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc.

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