Norris Electric News

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

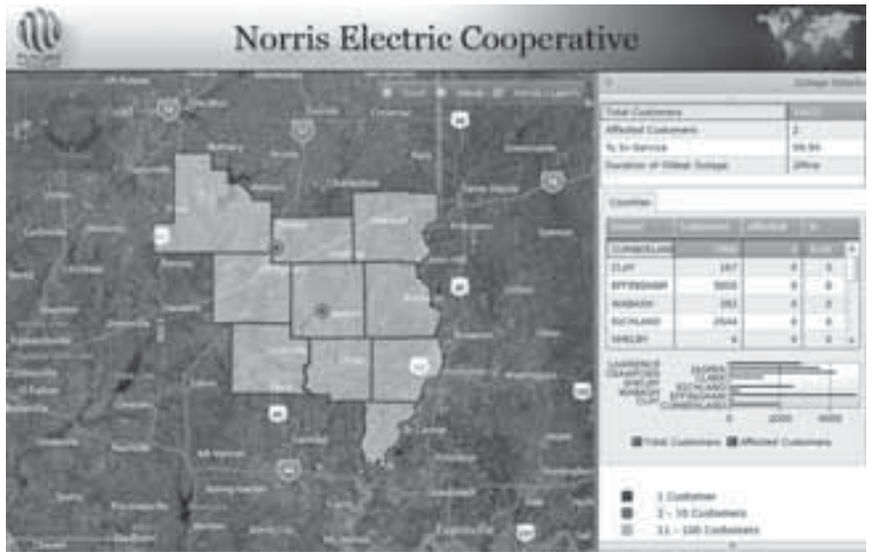
Online outage map now available

Picture this – You're getting ready to end your workday when the storm that has been threatening to show up all day hits, and it hits hard. As you see tree branches outside your window bend and sway with powerful blasts of wind, you begin to wonder if you'll be coming home to a house without power.

Finding out this information is easy with the help of Norris Electric's new online outage map. The aerial map shows the number of outages by county with distinctive color-coded flashing lights in the areas affected. You can zoom in to see the outage area affected in more detail but not so much as to invade the privacy of our members.

Outage details are also shown on the right hand side of the screen revealing the number of outages by county and the total number of consumers out of power. The map updates every few minutes so you can be sure of the most up-to-date information.

"We are excited about this new addition to our website. Our members can see if outages are in their area and where progress is being made on restoring outages, and they can check to see how widespread the outages are," said Keith McKinney, Manager of Norris Electric Cooperative. "The addition of this map is one more way Norris is demonstrating its commitment to improve service to our member-owners."



To view the map, go to www.norriselectric.com and click on the quick link 'Outage Map'.

You may report an outage either by calling our 24 hour outage number at 877-783-3221 or you can text your outage from your mobile phone. One time setup is required for outage texting but after the initial setup it is as easy as sending a text. You may setup outage texting on our website by going to 'Outages' then click on 'Outage Texting' and follow the instructions.

Swimming in savings

By Brian Sloboda
Cooperative Research Network

Swimming pools and hot tubs are fun toys, but accompanying high electric bills are not inevitable. A number of relatively simple changes can cut operating costs by half or more.

At about $400 per year, the typical residential in-ground pool can account for one-quarter of a household's annual utility bill. Hot tubs cost just a bit less to operate—about $300 per year. Electricity for above-ground pools runs about $100 per year.

Most pool energy goes to power the circulating pump, with much smaller amounts needed for cleaning and water treatment. In heated pools (which make up only 10 percent to 20 percent of all residential pools), energy use varies widely depending on climate and use patterns. The most common heat source is natural gas, followed by propane and electric resistance systems. Solar heating and electric heat pumps are gaining ground as high-efficiency options but are still not widely used.

Pumps are the heart and soul of any pool. Most pools rely on a single-speed, 1.5- to 2-hp pump that runs at full speed for eight hours a day or more. More efficient pool pump options include:

- **Replace an existing single-speed pump with a high-efficiency single-speed pump.** High-efficiency pumps use 8 percent to 10 percent less energy and are only marginally more expensive than standard pool pumps—about $10 to $20 above the normal pump cost of $350.
- **Replace an existing single-speed pump with a two-speed pump.** As the name suggests, two-speed pumps can run at two speeds and are more efficient because they don't go "full throttle" all of the time. By running at a lower speed for 16 hours per day, you can save 60 percent to 70 percent on electric bills. A two-speed pump will cost an extra $100 to $150.
- **Replace an existing pump with a variable-speed pump.** The most efficient pumps can vary speed—and therefore electricity consumption—with the required workload. Although a variable speed pump will cost about $650 more than a basic pump, it saves the most energy by far—nearly 90 percent—and offers the greatest operational flexibility. Price and availability should improve over the next few years as more pool owners adopt this technology.

In addition to replacing an inefficient circulating pump, other measures to consider are:
Use a bigger filter. An oversized filter will result in less pressure loss on the pumping system, enabling greater water flow with less energy. The larger filter will also last longer between replacements.

- **Use bigger pipes (typically, 2 inches in diameter instead of 1.5 inches) and large-radius elbows.** Making the flow path smoother and wider reduces pressure loss and pumping power.
- **Downsize the pump.** Most pools are designed with an unnecessarily large pump. Going from a 1.5-hp or 2-hp down to a 0.75-hp or 1-hp model can reduce pumping energy by half or more, often with no loss of performance.
- **Control pump run time.** Depending on the effectiveness of your filtering system and the amount of use the pool gets, it may be possible to save a significant fraction of pumping energy just by running the pump less. The normal target is to cycle the pool's volume through the filter one or two times per day. But you could try fewer hours and see if the pool still is acceptably clean. Although this no-cost measure is appealing, it will not save as much money and energy in the long run as replacing an inefficient pump with an efficient, two-speed or variable-speed pump.

For hot tubs

Because above-ground hot tubs are packaged appliances, they generally cannot can be upgraded or modified for energy efficiency. But you can try to minimize energy use by:

- **Keeping the cover on.** Hot tub covers have gotten easier to handle.
- **Reducing water temperature.** Especially if you are not going to be using the tub for several days, decreasing the temperature will reduce the heater run time.
- **Reducing the circulation pump run time depending on the level of use.** Programmability of the pump varies with manufacturer.

Brian Sloboda is senior program manager specializing in distribution operations and energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Costs for consumer goods climb

Popular demand and short supply drives the cost of everyday necessities higher. Some price tag changes—like the cost to fill your car's gas tank—are obvious to anyone driving down the road. Other increases at the grocery store are more subtle but still impact your family's bottom line. Compare the average price increase of a few household expenses to see how the rising cost of electricity stacks up.

The cost for a gallon of unleaded gasoline shot up 11.1 percent on average every year between 2002 and 2012, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Eggs don't go over easy—the cost for a dozen eggs increased 7.8 percent. Bakers watched the price of flour rise 5.7 percent, and apples felt the crunch with a jump of 4.8 percent—every year.

The cost of electricity grew at a slower pace—3.2 percent a year, on average. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports homeowners across the nation pay an average of 11.7 cents per kWh.

Unlike eggs or apples, electricity is a 24-hour-a-day commodity. Despite energy efficiency advancements, the average household uses more electronoic gadgets—and needs more power to operate them—every year.

In the past 30 years, the amount of residential electricity used by appliances and electronics has increased from 17 percent to 31 percent according to the Residential Energy Consumption Survey by EIA. More homes than ever have major appliances and central air conditioning. Digital video recorders (DVRs), computers, and multiple televisions are common.

Your local electric cooperative works hard to keep your electricity safe, reliable, and affordable. But you play a role in the price of your power. Just as you might cut back on eggs if your budget is tight, we can work with you to cut your monthly electric bill. See how little changes add up at www.TogetherWeSave.com.

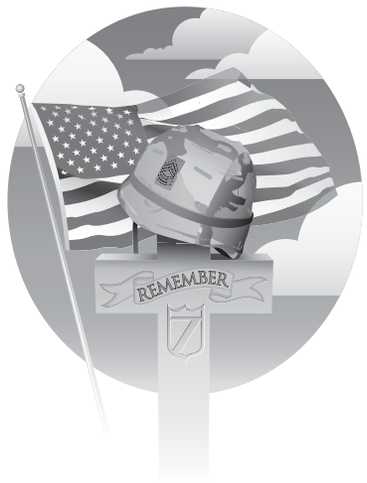
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Energy Information Administration

Budget billing accounts recalculate in May

Members with budget billing for their electric accounts will have their budget amounts recalculated in May. The new budget amount is based on an average of the previous 12 months' actual charges. The May recalculation could result in a higher or lower monthly budget amount than what you pay now due to increases or decreases in your usage over the prior year. If a change results from the recalculation, a message will be printed at the bottom of your May bill indicating this new amount. If you do not see a message on your bill, your budget amount has remained the same. Your first new budget bill amount will be on your June bill.

Budget billing can help you manage your energy costs by allowing you to allocate the same amount each month. Monthly utility bills can vary significantly throughout the year due to variations in your usage through heating and cooling seasons. With Norris Electric's budget billing plan you eliminate the month-to-month fluctuations caused by changing weather and usage patterns. It is imperative that members on budget billing still watch their monthly use and outstanding balances to ensure a large increase does not occur during a recalculation month.

If you have any questions regarding budget billing contact the Norris Electric billing department at 877-783-8765.



Office closed in observance of Memorial Day, Monday, May 27th.

Illinois State Representative David Reis (right) presents House Resolution 0042 congratulating Norris Electric on 75 years of dedicated service to its members to Board President Larry Seals (center) and Manager Keith McKinney (left) at the Annual Meeting held earlier this year.

Outage texting – a new way to report your electric outage afterhours

Currently when your power goes out and our office is closed, we ask that you call 1-877-783-3221 to report your outage to our after-hours answering service, Cooperative Response Center (CRC). Last November a new option to alert CRC to your outage became available. With the rise in the use of cell phones and the popularity of texting, you now have the option to text your outage to CRC.

To utilize outage texting, members will need to:

- Have your cell phone number on file at Norris Electric Cooperative. Please contact us at 877-783-8765 to make sure we have it.
- Complete a short registration process on our website, www.norriselectric.com.

CRC is based in Austin, Minn. and specializes in handling outage calls and dispatching crews in the electric cooperative industry. Texting outages will provide a quick, effective and convenient option to report your outage for anyone who prefers "texting" over "talking" on the phone.

Norris Electric Cooperative • 8543 N. State Highway 130 • Newton, Illinois 62448 • 618-783-8765
Office hours: Monday — Thursday
7:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m