

# Norris Electric News

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

## HomE energy assessment program

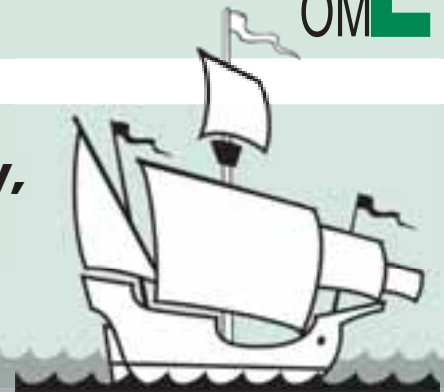
The Chairman of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) annually recognizes cooperative directors or staff for outstanding effort in the rural electric program. This year's winners were the local cooperative staff that promoted and administered HomE, the energy assessment program that helped many of their cooperatives' member-owners reduce their electric bills by making their homes more energy efficient. The \$2.5 million federal stimulus grant received by the AIEC, allowed cooperative staff to perform 3,441 heating and cooling, insulation and weatherization home assessments in just 16 months. This effort resulted in the reduction of 397,622 therms of natural gas; 889,426 gallons of propane gas; 1,628,462 kwh of electricity; and eliminated nearly 7,000 metric tons of CO2. The economic impact of the project resulted in \$24 million of completed projects. Locally, 235 energy assessments were performed by Norris Electric resulting in over \$166,000 in rebates to members.



*Tim Bohnhoff, Norris Electric Cooperative's Member Services Coordinator was recognized for his hard work and dedication for participating in the HomE energy efficiency program.*



**In observance of Columbus Day,  
the office will be CLOSED  
on Monday, October 8**



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# Farmers urged to be aware of electrical hazards

**F**armers and farm family members face dangers every day. Although tragedies such as tractor rollovers and grain bin suffocation receive the most attention, electrocution and electrical burn accidents are frequent on farms.

The simple movement of a portable grain auger from one bin to another can have tragic results if the individuals involved are not extremely careful. The use of tractors with large cabs and antennas and oversized grain wagons can also result in preventable electrocution incidents.

Electrical equipment around fields, such as power lines in the end rows may get overlooked during such a hectic time of year as harvest. However failure to notice overhead power lines can be a deadly oversight.

Most farmsteads could use a very careful overhead visual inspection of electric lines. The service may no

longer meet the proper height codes because of age and/or damage to poles and pole guy wires. The sag may have increased over the years, while the height of the machinery being used today may be much higher.

However, today's farm equipment has a long reach when extended; and even when collapsed for roadway transport, many pieces of equipment may exceed the height of power lines. A daily check should be made of where equipment will be moving to ensure that it will clear power lines. But don't take matters into your own hands. They may not be as high as they look. Always use a spotter, someone with a broad vantage point, when working in the vicinity of power lines.

Maintain a 10 foot separation from a power line completely around it, whether you are driving underneath or passing a grain auger near it.

A 53 year old Michigan truck driver who was cleaning sugar beets out of his truck unknowingly raised the bed into a 4,800 volt overhead power line. As he stood in the wet field and touched the energized truck bed, he was fatally burned.

In addition to conducting a field survey of power lines to locate potential hazards, employers should obtain safety information from utility companies for the benefit of their workers, if the lines are to remain energized.

Where possible, install electrical safety warning signage to prevent equipment and personnel contact with power lines. This will also be beneficial to your suppliers who may be making deliveries to your farm. Always keep in mind that electricity doesn't allow mistakes. And neither should you.

## YOU have the POWER to CONTROL Your Electric Bill!

### Prepay Electricity Option

**A**ll the information you need to control your electric bill is available when you enroll in Norris Electric's Prepay Electricity Program. Our Prepay Electricity Program allows you to pay for electricity when you choose, the same way you buy groceries and gasoline. For example, if you only have \$20 to put gas in your car, you pay \$20. The same goes for prepaid electricity. You are able to pay for your electricity on your schedule!

The Prepay Program offers a good solution for members who move frequently, own rental properties, are in college or are facing financial difficulties. For starters, it eliminates the need for large deposits that are based on credit checks. It also eliminates late fees, and disconnect and reconnect fees. In addition, members who prepay generally use less energy than folks on traditional billing plans because

they're more aware of how much power they are consuming.

With our Prepay Program, members can pay a certain amount upfront. You can always check your balance on our website or by calling the office. When your balance is almost "out" of electricity, you will receive a text or email. You can then make another payment – over the phone, online, or even in person – and your electric service automatically continues. You can pay how much you want, whenever you want.

Just log onto your account at [www.norriselectric.com](http://www.norriselectric.com) at any time to find out your prepaid balance, your most recent payment amount and date, your average daily energy charge, the cost of the electricity you used last month, along with a graph showing usage.

Call or visit our office to learn more or to sign up. (877)783-8765.

## Shorter showers = more savings for you

**Y**ou can save money and help the environment by being just a little quicker with your daily shower. According to an article in the Christian Science Monitor, a typical shower head can produce two gallons of water per minute. In a 12-minute shower, you're using 24 gallons, which adds up to over 8,700 gallons yearly.

Cutting your shower time down to four minutes can save you anywhere from \$10 to \$100 per year, depending on your local water rates. It'll also save on utility costs associated with heating the water for your shower.

So try to get in and out quicker, and you'll do yourself and the world a favor in the long run.

## “Smart” Meters

There have been some news articles, mainly from California, that criticize Smart Meters. Their two big claims are that Smart Meters are detrimental to your health and that they “spy” on the consumer. There are even websites that offer to sell you a meter replacement kit for \$69 plus \$15 shipping. It is interesting they are selling a \$10-\$12 meter for \$69. And interesting enough, there are Illinois statutes that prohibit any tampering at all with “utility” meters which would prohibit someone from changing their own meter. Although I may not agree with the claims touted on these websites regarding health hazards, a huge question would be, “What is a smart meter?” Most of the “news” articles on this topic refer to meters that transmit their signals over radio waves, similar to cell phones. Norris Electric automated meters use technology called Power Line Carrier communications. Our meters transmit the meter readings to us over the power line in much the same way as your landline telephone transmits voice and data over the phone line. There are not any radio waves transmitted from our meters! I cannot find anyone claiming that power line carrier technology is a danger.

It is a stretch of the imagination that your cooperative is spying on you with our meters. Our meters are able to capture one hour increments of usage. It is available for our members on our website after you obtain

a password. You can look at your hourly or daily usage along with corresponding temperatures. It has been a great tool for our members to try to reduce their usage, and has proved valuable in the office when a member calls and wonders how their bill could be so high. We have been able to tell them in a lot of cases that we can see an increase in consumption over a weekend (maybe weekend guests) or we can tell them that on a particular day their usage went up and stayed up. That has enabled some members to find such things as faulty water heaters. Norris Electric has almost 19,000 meters. We do not have the desire or the time to look at the usage of our members unless a member has a question.

These meters have benefits other than providing meter readings. When we have widespread outages we sometimes think we have service restored to everyone. However, we send a signal out to all the meters and ask for them to respond. We sometimes find that there are individual outages that may not have been reported and we still need to send a lineman to restore service. There might be a tree that fell through the line and inter-

rupted service to most of a circuit or several homes.

On that same circuit there may have also been a smaller limb in someone’s yard that effect just that member. When we clear the large tree we may think we are done unless we contact all the meters! During the day our staff can also send a

signal to a meter to see if there is voltage at the meter when a member says they are out of power. If there is voltage then the member needs to check his own equipment or call an electrician. This saves our members the expense of sending a lineman to look for a problem when the cooperative does not have a problem! However, if there is not voltage then we know that it is a cooperative problem and we send a lineman. At those times we can also look at nearby meters and depending what meters do not have voltage we may be able to have a good idea of the location of the problem. The list of benefits goes on and on.

The entire Norris Electric system has had automated meter reading since about 2006. We have not encountered any safety or security issues with any of these meters. We certainly welcome any questions involving automated meters; just call us at 877-783-8765.



## Connect with Us Online

### Facebook

[facebook.com/NorrisElectric](https://facebook.com/NorrisElectric)



Follow us on Facebook to keep up with what’s happening at Norris Electric Cooperative! Don’t worry; if you “like” us, we can’t view your profile info so your personal life is still personal!

### Twitter

[twitter.com/NorrisElectric](https://twitter.com/NorrisElectric)



If you’ve got a Twitter account or just want to subscribe to our RSS Twitter feed, check out our official Twitter page.



# Treats, Tricks and Safety Make Halloween a Scream



It's the time of year to stock up on sweet treats and fill the yard and home with decorations as ghosts, goblins and caped crusaders plan their invasion of your neighborhood. As part of the "Teach Learn Care" TLC campaign, Safe Electricity urges everyone to make sure your costumed visitors are kept safe by following some basic electrical safety guidelines.

"Electric displays with spooky sounds, flashing lights, and fog machines all add to the setting of your fall festivities and Halloween decorations, but used improperly, they can also create danger of electrical shocks, fires and burns," warns Safe Electricity Director Molly Hall. "Be sure to take a few precautions so that you don't have a real Halloween scare this year."

## To avoid potential safety hazards:

- Use only lights that have been safety tested and approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Look for the UL label on the box and on each string.
- Make sure extension cords are in good condition. Use only UL-approved cords rated to carry the electrical load you will connect to them.
- Before plugging in the lights, check each string for broken sockets, frayed cords, or faulty plugs. Replace damaged strings.
- Keep electric cords out of high-traffic areas.
- Don't staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold light strings in place, not nails or tacks.



- Do not attach cords or lights to metal objects.
- Outdoors, use only lights and cords rated for outdoor use.
- Cords should be plugged into outlets equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Use a portable GFCI if your outdoor outlets don't have them.
- Always unplug lights before going to bed or leaving your home.

"Make sure to keep electrical objects away from flammable objects, such as hay bales, cornstalks and fabric costumes. While adding to the ambiance, the heat from lights and other electrical decorations could potentially cause a fire," says Hall. "Also, don't allow children or pets to play with light strings or other electrical decorations that can shock or burn." says Hall.

Whether decorating or using extension cords in general, read the label on both the cord and the appliances that are plugged into it to make sure the cord can handle the load. If it can't, use a higher-rated cord or unplug some appliances. Remember that extension cords are meant for temporary, not permanent, use. With caution, learn what breakers protect each section of your home and label them. Don't overload your circuit breakers/fuses. Do not run electrical cords across sidewalks or other walkway areas that could trip or endanger trick-or-treaters. Indoors, avoid stretching cords across a room where people or pets can trip over them or become entangled. Also, don't hide cords under carpeting or rugs or run them behind curtains or blinds.

A safe celebration is the best celebration, and following basic electrical safety guidelines will help you avoid real scares and keep your memories of fall "bootiful" and fun.

## Dads invade the supermarket

The long-held stereotype of the grocery store as women's territory may be losing its grip. A study from Cone Communications reports that 52 percent of fathers are now the primary grocery shoppers in their family. And they're not just popping out for a six-pack, either.

### The study's findings include:

- **Shopping lists.** A majority of dads—63 percent—take a detailed shopping list to the store with them.
- **Coupons.** Another majority—56 percent—collect coupons and read advertising circulars when planning their shopping trips.
- **Meals.** Fifty-two percent of shopping dads plan meals for the week.
- **Research.** Twenty-four percent of fathers who shop check the background of the products they buy.



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