

Norris Electric *News*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



Above and Beyond

Electric co-op membership offers value far beyond affordable, reliable electricity

Here at Norris Electric Cooperative, we work hard to deliver safe, affordable, and reliable electricity to over 18,000 members every day. But we don't stop there. Because we're a cooperative, we strive to do much more, to find ways of providing real value to you and the communities we serve.

So what exactly does real value mean? Well, in some ways it's basic, like connecting with a real, local person when you call our office, rather than just a recording. It could be finding a copy of Illinois Country Living magazine in your mailbox, which keeps you informed about co-op business and goings-on in Illinois. Or it's getting the lights back on more quickly after a major thunderstorm

or winter ice storm, thanks to mutual-aid agreements that bring line crews in from other co-ops to help us restore power.

Using your Co-op Connections Card to get discounts at local businesses and national retailers is a tangible benefit of being a Norris Electric member.

October marks National Cooperative Month, when we take time to celebrate co-ops and talk about why our not-for-profit, consumer-owned business model is special. Offering our members real value—and working to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve—is just one way we set ourselves apart. To learn more about cooperatives, visit <http://usa2012.coop/about-co-ops>.

Office Closing:

Our office will be closed Monday, October 14 for Columbus Day.

How We're Special

The cooperative principles guide co-ops to be stewards of their communities

By Magen Howard

Every October since 1930, not-for-profit cooperatives of all kinds have recognized National Cooperative Month as a way to educate the public about how co-ops work and to appreciate their many members.

This year, Norris Electric Cooperative highlights the notions that guide all co-ops: the seven cooperative principles. These notions lead electric cooperatives like Norris Electric to do business in a better way every single day. Here are real-life examples of how the principles affect your cooperative.

No. 1: Voluntary and Open Membership/

No. 2: Democratic Member Control

Co-ops are open to anyone who is able to use its services, which means any person who moves onto Norris Electric lines is allowed membership. Annual meetings serve as a way for members to get to know the people who run their co-op, and it's where members are updated on business matters. Every year in February, Norris Electric convenes for its annual membership meeting.

"Democratic member control" means members vote for a director who represents them on a board, which governs the cooperative. Annual meetings also serve as the forum for electing directors.

No. 3: Members' Economic Participation

Because electric cooperatives are owned by its members, they do not create profits for distant shareholders. Any excess revenue—called "margins"—is allocated back to the membership in the form of capital credits, or patronage capital. Capital credits are "retired" and then paid back to members based on their purchases (in the case of electric cooperatives, elec-

tricity) from the cooperative. Margins are used by the co-op as working capital for a period of time, then paid back to individual members.

"Allocating and retiring excess revenue to members helps distinguish cooperatives," points out Manager Keith McKinney. "We're proud to support our communities by putting money back into the local economy—and into the pockets of those we serve. It makes our business model special."

Nationally, electric cooperatives have retired \$11 billion in capital credits since 1988--\$768 million in 2012 alone.

No. 4: Autonomy and Independence

Electric cooperatives form a vast network across America. They're found in 47 states, and cooperative-owned electric lines cover 42 percent of the nation's land mass. But what's unique is that each cooperative is an autonomous, independent business.

"We work with our co-op neighbors, but Norris Electric Cooperative members are the sole governors of Norris Electric," McKinney explains. "Our member-elected board of directors approves policies and resolutions that inform the way we do business."

No. 5: Education, Training, and Information

Cooperatives have a charge to keep their members informed—not just about cooperative business, but also about topics like energy efficiency, safety, and community contribution. For example, the Illinois Country Living magazine is one way Norris Electric keeps its members up on relevant news.

You can also stay informed via our website, Facebook, and Twitter.

No. 6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Even though co-ops are independent entities, they still rely on one another to share resources, information, and, in some cases, manpower.

Electric co-ops have long relied on one another to get power restored more quickly after severe weather emergencies. Called "mutual-aid agreements," it works just as it sounds: When Norris Electric needs extra hands after a tornado or ice storm, co-ops from neighboring towns and states help out. And when neighboring co-ops need help, Norris Electric sends crews to them.

"Mutual-aid assistance gets power back on so much faster than we could with just our crews," McKinney says.

No. 7: Concern for Community

Possibly the most visible of all the cooperative principles, the last is what drives electric co-ops to be good stewards of the communities they serve.

Norris Electric undertakes a variety of projects, from food drives to school safety presentations and scholarships.

"While our first priority is delivering safe, affordable, reliable electricity to those we serve, we also feel strongly about supporting and contributing to the development of our communities," Manager McKinney stresses. "Even if there were no 'concern for community' principle, every person who works at Norris Electric lives here, too. We're friends and neighbors first."

Sources: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation

Magen Howard 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.



YOU have the POWER to CONTROL Your Electric Bill!

Prepay Electricity Option

All 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 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.

2014 Rate Adjustment

Norris Electric is committed to delivering quality, reliable power at the lowest possible cost. To maintain the quality, reliability and integrity of the services we provide it is necessary for us to adjust our pricing structure. In the first part of 2014, the third of a three year rate increase will take effect to maintain financial stability of your electric cooperative.

Norris Electric's rates remain very competitive with other utilities on an average basis, generally lower than those of other utilities serving Illinois residents. This increase is based on numerous factors, the largest of which is purchased power.

While rate adjustments are never easy, we must ask you as members of the Co-op to share in these costs. Maintaining dependable service at the most affordable price possible remains the cornerstone of our business. To accomplish the goal, we must also protect the integrity and financial stability of the cooperative.

Look for more details in the coming months. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the implementation of this rate adjustment, we encourage you to call our office at 877-783-8765.

TOGETHER**WESAVE**.COM

THESE POLES HAVE ROOTS.

These poles stand for something. They bring us reliable, affordable electricity.

They also carry a vision that began back before the 2nd world war. These poles rose above the dust of the Great Depression, through blood, sweat, and tears. Cooperatives brought light to darkness, and electrified this country.

Power would no longer be confined to the big city limits. Lines stretched out to farms, ranches and schoolhouses. Appliances came to life. Factories sprouted up.

America spread her wings.

But these poles didn't just appear out of thin air.


These poles are pillars that were founded on principle by people with principles. Neighbors banded together, and communities came together to share ownership of the electricity that would advance everyone.

Today, these poles are yours. They come to you with a history. And they come to you with a responsibility.

It's up to all of us to take care of what we have and use only what we need. It's the cooperative way. It also happens to be the right thing to do.

By using electricity wisely, we can continue to build on a dream that started decades ago. And we can ensure that the spirit on which it was built continues for generations to come. Reliable, affordable electricity, for all.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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Office hours: Monday — Thursday 7:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m