



Rural HILIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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RECC assists in Lineman Training

Like many other industries, electric cooperatives have an aging work force with many skilled and knowledgeable employees who are nearing retirement age. Within the next five years, 20 percent of America's electric cooperative employees will be eligible for retirement. Our critical concern is to have qualified line workers who can step up to keep the thousands of miles of electric lines owned by co-ops in good shape while introducing new technologies for improved reliability and efficiency.

One local effort to help meet that challenge is the Electrical Distribution Linemen Programs at Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) in Springfield, facilitated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). Students can earn an Electric Distribution Lineman Maintenance, Associate in Applied Science degree; or an Electric Distribution Lineman Maintenance, Certificate of Achievement from Lincoln Land.

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative assists in some of these classes to bring real-world experience to the students from experienced linemen. Most recently, RECC Journeyman Lineman Craig Costello served as an instructor for a Hot Line School in Springfield, covering topics such as rubber gloving techniques while working with energized high-voltage lines, proper grounding of vehicles, operation of aerial lift devices, and other skills.

We presently have two Journeyman Linemen who got their initial



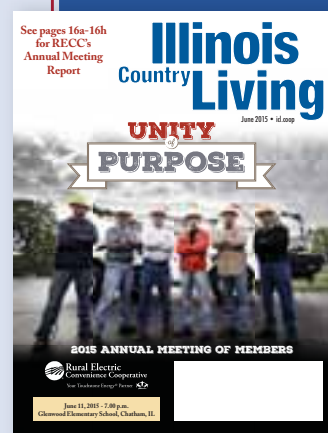
RECC journeyman Lineman Craig Costello (left) gives a group of students in-service instruction on line trucks and remote operation of a digger derrick.

training at LLCC – Travis Boylen and Shane Norris. RECC also participates in the LLCC Cooperative Work Exchange internship program and has

employed numerous part time LLCC students, which has been a starting point for many young workers to get into the trade.

RECC Annual Meeting report is online

This newsletter went to print before RECC's Annual Meeting on June 11, so we'll have the full meeting report in the Rural Hilights section of the August *Illinois Country Living* magazine. For news about the Annual Meeting, including election results for the Board of Directors position in District 9, visit our website at www.recc.coop.



Take a vacation from high power bills

Soaring temperatures and sultry summer nights can cause electric bills to skyrocket. This summer, take a vacation from high electric bills by making your home, and your family's habits, more energy efficient.

Beat the Heat

Air conditioning helps most Americans beat the sweltering summer heat. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), air conditioning accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average household electric bill. Proper maintenance and smart use of your home's cooling system will help keep your electric bill in check.

First, make sure your air conditioner's external unit is clean and free of debris. Clear away dead leaves or overgrown plants and weeds to enable the unit to perform as it should.

Second, change all of the air filters inside your home quarterly, or more often in homes with allergy sufferers or smokers. Fresh filters not only reduce the strain on your cooling system, but improve the air quality in your home.

Third, the DOE recommends that you set your home's thermostat as high as possible, while still maintaining a comfortable environment for your fam-

ily during the summer months.

Bumping the thermostat up at least two degrees can make a noticeable difference on your power bill. Investing in a programmable thermostat can lead to even greater savings by automatically adjusting it so that the cooling system runs more often when you are at home and less often when you are away.

Made in the Shade

Windows are not only great sources of natural light in your home, but also great sources of heat during the summer. Curtains, blinds, and shades are some of the most cost-effective ways to make your windows and home more energy efficient. These window coverings offer low cost, stylish solutions to shield the sun's rays and keep the interior of your home cool and comfortable. Proper weather stripping and caulking around window panes and casings will also improve the function of your windows by keeping the cool air in and the hot air out. Solar film applied to your home's existing windows will further repel the summer heat.

Daily Grind

Today's appliances are more energy efficient than ever, performing better

and using less electricity than they did in the past. But despite their functionality and efficiency, most major household appliances give off heat when in use. During peak daytime temperatures, the residual heat from appliances can put an unnecessary strain on your home's cooling system and send your power bill soaring. Cooler temperatures in the early morning or late evening make these ideal times for running the dishwasher or washing and drying clothes. When possible, turn off your dishwasher's dryer cycle. This prevents even more residual heat from warming your home and saves on your power bill. Washing your clothes in cold water and hanging them out to dry are also great strides in reducing your household energy consumption.

As your summer heats up, call on your friends at Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative for more ways to lower your power bill. You can also visit TogetherWeSave.com to find out how little changes around the house can add up to big energy savings.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, EnergySavers.gov, Together-WeSave.com

When do you use electricity?

A great tool to review your electric energy use is our online SmartHub site, where you can find graphs of your monthly, daily or hourly kilowatt hours used. These can help you find when you use the most electricity, or show when sudden changes may occur that could indicate a problem in your home.

You can sign up or log in to SmartHub from our co-op website, www.recc.coop. Just use your e-mail address and a password of your choice. After setting up your account on the web page, you can also download a free mobile app for Android or Apple devices. After downloading the SmartHub app, look for Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative in the co-op listing.



smart hub

Collection period to be shortened for Past-Due Accounts

Notifications by phone will be added

RECC will be changing its collection and disconnect procedures for unpaid accounts this fall, reducing the number of days after the Due Date before a service disconnection will be made if payment is not received.

"Under the existing procedure, some members let their payments slide, and when the disconnect deadline finally arrives, they're so far behind they just can't catch up," explains President/CEO David Stuva.

"Any business expects payment for the goods and services they provide, and letting accounts accumulate a large debt is not good for the user and not fair to other consumers who pay their bills on time," he adds. While the co-op's write-offs of debts for nonpayment are a fraction of one-percent of revenue, Stuva pointed out that office employees and sometimes linemen spend many hours a month and many extra dollars to mail or deliver Past Due notices and Disconnect notices.

Past-due notifications

Under the new procedure, members with an unpaid balance will receive a "courtesy call" or notification two days after the Due Date, or typically on the 28th of the month. When the next month's billing statements are printed on about the 6th of the month, a Past Due Notice will be included with the regular bill. (So in effect, the member will see a Past Due bill for electricity used two months ago, and a regular bill for the prior month's use.)

If no payment is received for the Past Due amount by the 15th of the month, a second courtesy call will go out to remind the member that the

CURRENT BILL INFORMATION		\$ AMOUNT
FACILITY CHARGE		35.00
ENERGY CHARGE	1080 @ 0.124000	133.92
*** TOTAL KWH CHG	1080	168.92
SECURITY LIGHT		9.00
POWER COST ADJ		8.10
ILL PUB UTIL REV TAX		3.60
*** TOTAL AMOUNT DUE		189.62
TOTAL DUE NOW / NET BILL		189.62
GROSS AMOUNT DUE AFTER 05/26/2015		199.10

Disconnect date is coming up. If no payment is received, then disconnection of electric service occurs approximately on the 20th.

That process will still allow members about 54 days after billing to pay for their electric service, but extra mailings and personal delivery of notices are eliminated. Members should receive

Anyone paying their bill before the Due Date will not see anything different in their statements or procedures.

three notifications that their bill is past due, however. Anyone paying their bill before the Due Date will not see anything different in their statements or procedures.

The new collections process is planned to begin in October, so accounts unpaid by October 28 would re-

ceive a courtesy reminder. This can be through automated phone calls, text messages or e-mails, depending on what contact information is provided to the cooperative.

"Most bills going past the Due Date are just because of a forgotten mailing or temporary delay," says David Stuva. "I think those people will appreciate a prompt reminder that we didn't receive a payment for some reason. For those members who may be having a hard time paying their bill, it's a reminder that they should be aware of their electric use and make reductions if needed to stay within their budget."

Another option offered by RECC for members who struggle with one large monthly bill is our Prepaid Electric Service, which helps consumers keep track of their use and pay for electricity only as they need it.



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Convenience Cooperative

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See our web page for monthly Board meeting reports.

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Summer helper at RECC

Andrew Boston began working part-time in RECC's Operations Department in May, assisting with the co-op's line and tree trimming crews. Andrew is from Virden, and is a graduate of the Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) Electrical Distribution Lineman Program. He is shown on his first day of work on May 11, with Manager of Operations and Maintenance Lou DeLaby.



"Capacity auction" in Illinois won't affect electric co-ops

Illinois residents may have seen headlines in April about increasing costs for electricity consumers, but those stories don't apply to the state's electric cooperatives or municipal utility systems.

The stories refer to the recent capacity auction held by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). MISO is a nonprofit organization that oversees the electric transmission grid and power markets across 13 states. It holds an auction annually to contract for the generation capacity it needs to ensure that the region is able to meet its electricity demands on a peak day, including events such as a plant or transmission line going down.

The annual auction conducted by MISO in April for this capacity resulted in higher costs than expected; costs that are nine times higher than those of the previous year. These costs will be passed along in some form to customers served by Ameren, which operates inside MISO. News articles mentioned potential double-digit cost increases

in power costs for some Ameren customers.

"IMEA is projecting stable wholesale power costs, which should provide rate stability for our member-owners."

Because electric co-ops and municipal systems own most of their own generating capacity, they self-supply their capacity and therefore are not subject to the increased cost that resulted from the auction. Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative buys its power in a long-term contract from the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency (IMEA), which has partial ownership in several power plants.

"IMEA is projecting stable wholesale power costs, which should provide rate stability for our member-owners," says President/CEO David Stuva. That stability has meant no significant cost increases for co-op members over the past seven years, he adds.



RECC office will be closed July 3

In observance of the Independence Day holiday, RECC's office will be closed on Friday, July 3. Remember to celebrate safely!

OFFICE Closing