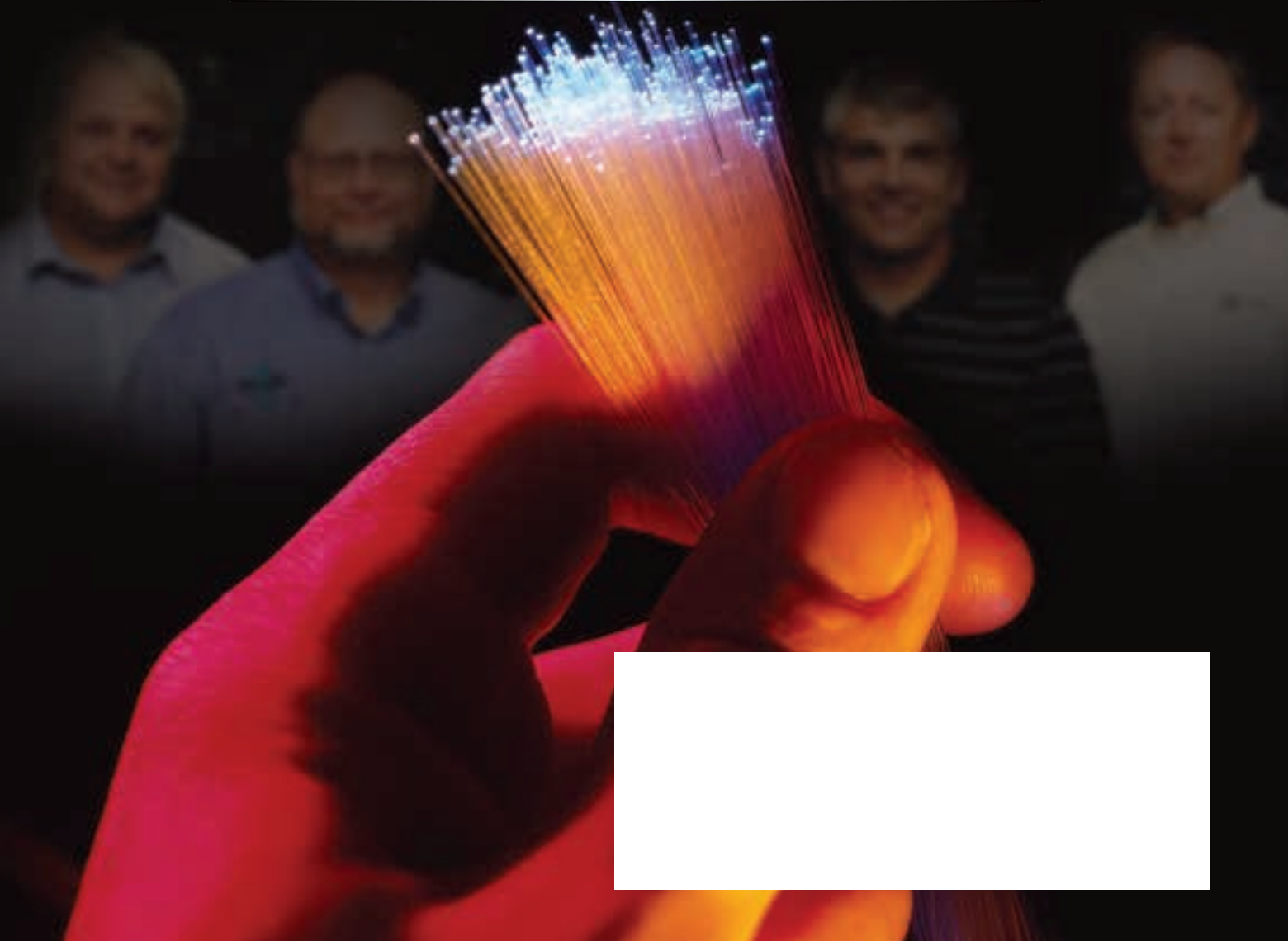


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**COOPERATION
INNOVATION**



Enjoy A Bath Again... Safely and Affordably



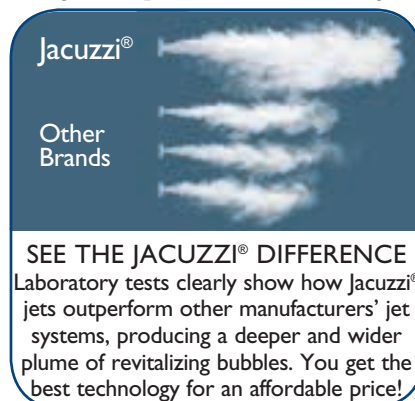
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800-593-2432 • aieinfo@aiec.coop

**For address changes contact your
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President/CEO

Duane Noland

Chairman of the Board

Larry Kraft

Editor

John Lowrey

Assistant Editor

Valerie Cheatham

Contributing Editors

Ed VanHoose

Public Relations/ Business Development Manager

Lisa Rigoni

Advertising Coordinator/ Graphic Designer

Sandy Wolske

Graphic Designers

Jennifer Danzinger, Kathy Feraris,
Chris Reynolds

Circulation Coordinator

Connie Newenham

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Cooperatives prepared for the long term

Prices moving up and some warn of rolling blackouts

A year ago I wrote that we were seeing historic lows for the electricity commodity and that they couldn't last forever. Predicting prices would rise wasn't tough. The question was how much and how fast?

We're already seeing some early signs of price instability and rising rates. We are also seeing drastic cuts to base load capacity due to generation plant retirements.

Due to a poor economy, we've had plenty of reserve generating capacity mainly because of a decrease in industrial demand. Although we currently have about eight gigawatts (GW) of over capacity in our region, very soon plant retirements could drastically reduce our supply. We all understand that a reduction in supply means there will normally be an increase in price.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) is our state's regional transmission organization and it helps determine if we have enough reserve generating capacity across multiple states for the hottest day of summer. MISO generators have indicated the prospect for 11.2 GW of capacity retiring by 2016 for both economic and environmental regulatory reasons.

Assuming there isn't an uptick in the economy and therefore no growth in demand, MISO could be 3,000 megawatts (MW) short of the generation needed to meet its minimum 14.2 percent planning reserve margin by 2016.

What does that mean? It could mean we are at the lowest levels since the 1960s, that emergency operations procedures would be needed, and as a last resort those procedures could mean curtailing load across the grid to avoid brownouts or blackouts. It already happened in September

in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Power reliability is essential to our economic health. The good news is I think that Illinois is probably, based on its transmission infrastructure, able to survive without blackouts or brownouts. My concern, however, is on consumer pricing and what that does to the cost. There is always the price of power and then there is a premium that is paid for volatility.

Right now we are also exporting power from the MISO market in this region to the PJM market in the east, where they can quadruple their value.

So how much will prices increase? Here's my prediction. If you take all of the expected plant retirements and exports of capacity out of the MISO market, we could see the cost go from \$32 to \$42 a MWH, almost a 25 percent increase. That kind of increase could happen between 2017 and 2019.

But what about natural gas? Natural gas and fracking have had an impact, a very positive one. We've seen an incredible increase in supply and prices have dropped. That has been the big news in the energy business for the past several years. What hasn't been such a big story has been the recent recovery of natural gas prices. I'd say we've seen the bottom of natural gas prices and it goes up from here.

Natural gas has traditionally had more price volatility than coal. Therefore it has normally been used for peak load generation instead of year-round base load generation. A JP Morgan executive in September, at the LDC Gas Forum Mid-Continent in Chicago, said domestic natural gas prices will rise and volatility will return in the next three to five years.

So what does all this mean to cooperative members? Cooperatives and

municipal utilities in Illinois haven't put all their eggs in one basket. They have a mix of power options that includes Prairie State, a new coal-fired plant in southern Illinois that is one of the cleanest and safest plants I've ever seen. I believe that although the short-term power market price looks very good right now, the co-ops' ownership of this very efficient plant is going to provide increased value over time.

It's like the decision we all face — do I buy a home or rent a house?

In the near-term, renting may look cheaper. But if the rent goes up, and it likely will, you may have to move. A mortgage is a long-term commitment, but you are locking in a dependable monthly payment. I think the cooperatives have done the prudent thing and protected the long-term interests of their members.

Electric co-ops have also invested in smart grid efficiency, another long-term benefit. You could call it home improvements, and co-ops are ahead of other utilities in installing this smart grid technology.

Ultimately what cooperatives are trying to do is improve the quality of life. That has financial and non-financial aspects. I believe that the municipal and cooperative structure allows for greater responsiveness, greater responsibility and greater transparency than the other regulatory models. At the end of the day investing for the long term is a prudent decision. ■

Mark Pruitt, former Director of the Illinois Power Agency, currently is the Principal of the Power Bureau, LLC, an energy consulting firm.



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Galena, Illinois named as one of the friendliest cities in the world

The city of Galena, Illinois – always considered a “town that time forgot” – has stepped back into the lime-light as a city that no one can forget about. Condé Nast Traveler recently published the results of their annual Readers’ Choice Survey and declared Galena as not only one of the friendliest cities in the United States, but in the world.

Galena, coming in second on the domestic list and fourteenth on the

global list with a score of 87.9 out of 100, was praised as being a relaxing destination with plenty to do and a place that can be spiritually and emotionally uplifting. The historic, idyllic city was one of only four from the United States to make the top 20 internationally.

To learn more call the Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau 877-464-2536 or explore www.galena.org. ■



Galena's historic Main Street curves past more than 100 shops, restaurants and attractions. Photo courtesy of the Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

USDA projects median farm will lose \$2,300 in 2013

In its 2013 Farm Income Sector Forecast, the Department of Agriculture forecasts that while net farm income is expected to rise 6 percent to \$120.6 billion, the median farm income will fall from a deficit of \$1,435 in 2012 to a deficit of \$2,300 for this year.

The USDA said farm households “will make up the balance by taking

nonfarm jobs,” with the median off-farm income “projected to increase by 1.8 percent in 2013, to \$60,659.” However, USDA also projects farm asset values will increase, exceeding debt and debt-to-asset and debt-to-equity ratios “at historic lows.” ■

Source: Electric Co-op Today

How to communicate with your family during a disaster

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Complete a contact card for each adult family member. Have them keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse or briefcase, etc. Additionally, complete contact cards for each child in your family. Put the cards in their backpacks or book bags.

Identify a contact such as a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify they are safe. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, the relative may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Be sure every family member knows the phone number and has a cell phone, coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as “ICE” (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know.

Teach family members how to use text messaging (also known as SMS or Short Message Service). Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.

Find more information at www.ready.gov, <http://www.redcross.org>, or www.fema.gov. ■



Built on pride and patriotism

Sarah Locke represented Shelby Electric Cooperative on the 2013 Youth to Washington trip, sponsored by the Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives. She was also elected by her peers to represent Illinois on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. At the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives annual meeting in August, Locke told the co-op leaders what the trip meant to her.

"I'm French, and that day we all felt like American citizens." As I read this anonymous quote, goose bumps crept over my skin. The longer I stared at the words, the more they sank in. I fumbled for my camera before the words faded off the wall and the slideshow transitioned to another quote. Little

did I know, I didn't need a picture, a month later the words still have not faded out of my memory. This took place when

I was standing in the 9/11 portion of the Newseum. I realized that other countries really do care about us. It gave me a sense of patriotism for being an American. And what better place to feel patriotism than in our nation's capital of Washington D.C!

The 2013 Youth Tour gave me a better understanding of my country. I



now have a better understanding for the way the government works today and the way that the United States was built — and that was on pride and patriotism for our country. Standing in Washington D.C. for the first time was a patriotic

feeling and made me understand how people can fight for our country and devote their lives to the United States. So if you ask me what better understanding for our country that the Youth to Washington trip gave me, it is that for once in my life I felt like a true American citizen and it is a good feeling. ■

Illinois utilities cooperate on State Fair Energy Zone

At this year's Illinois State Fair the Illinois Energy Zone packed a powerful punch with interactive activities, renewable



energy displays, youth activities, and giveaways - more than two dozen attractions. Next year's display will be even bigger and better. The multi-faceted energy experience was provided by the Energy Education Council (EEC) in cooperation with the state of Illinois, utilities and organizations across the state.

With increasing interest in energy efficiency and clean energy, the energy education showcase gave consumers a convenient one-stop area to learn more about the latest in energy efficiency and technology. Fairgoers were invited to power up light bulbs with

the energy bike, get free Illinois popcorn popped using solar and wind energy, check out the Kids Activity Center and learn about geothermal, solar, wind and

other renewable energy.

The electric co-op's 18-foot energy efficiency wall allowed visitors to see what's inside walls to better understand air and energy leaks, insulation and sealing. Electric and hybrid vehicles on display helped show the differences between the types and models of energy efficient vehicles now on the market.

The University of Illinois College of Engineering with its Smart Grid research demonstrated the latest in power grid technology and how renewable energy and customers will benefit. ■

Illinois coal exports set record in 2012; now in 5th place

A new report forecasts continued major export growth for the Illinois coal industry due to the state's large volumes of coal, competitive prices and access to prime water and land transportation routes. Illinois is now the fifth largest coal producing state in the U.S., up from ninth in 2009. The industry supports more than 4,000 jobs in Illinois. The report and its recommendations support Governor Quinn's five-year plan to double exports by 2014 and to continue providing an export-friendly business climate in Illinois. ■



Hitzhusens Win 2013 Governor's Conservation Farm Family

Tom and Margaret Hitzhusen, from Geneseo, were recently named the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts' "Governor's Conservation Farm Family" for 2013. Tom is a former director of Farmers Mutual Electric Company, prior to the merger with Jo-Carroll Energy.

When the Hitzhusens moved to their current farm, the land was in very poor condition. The previous owner left no crop residue on the soil surface and had not utilized conservation practices. Due to the lack of good stewardship practices, massive amounts of erosion had been taking place for many years.

Prior to the Hitzhusen's ownership, the creek running through the farm had been left to erode. Trash dumped

into the gullies had been used to try to slow down their encroachment into the fields, but only ended up escalating the problem.

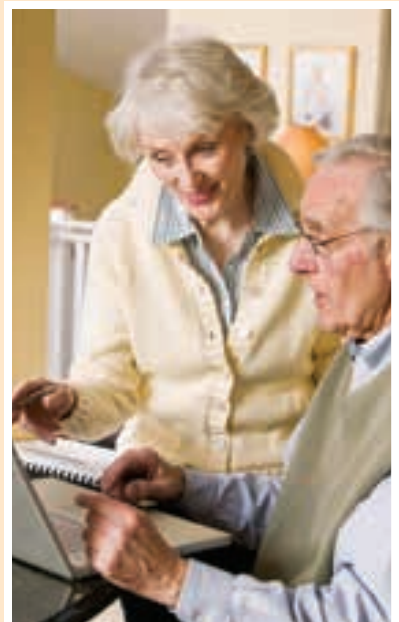
Upon taking over the farm, the Hitzhusen family took action to reclaim their fields from the gullies and creek.

As good stewards of the land and their community, the Hitzhusens have always been involved in their community and in educating people about conservation on the farm. The family hosts numerous tours with a number of stops along the way to explain and show the different methods that have been used to conserve the environment around the farm. Besides tours, demonstrations of new conservation practices have been hosted by the Hitzhusens. ■

More senior co-op members using social media

Co-op members over the age of 65 are increasingly using social media, according to the new Touchstone Energy® 2012 National Survey on the Cooperative Difference.

Over a three-year period, social media use in that demographic rose from 20 percent to 30 percent. Similarly, among members between 55 to 64, the rate of social media participation has risen from 30 percent in 2009 to 40 percent. Of members who use social media, 60 percent of those between 18-44 and 46 percent of those 65 or older said they would "be interested in liking their co-op's Facebook page, if one were offered." Members expressed interest in saving electricity, reducing bills and information on outages. ■





Little witches, goblins and things that go bump in the night aren't nearly

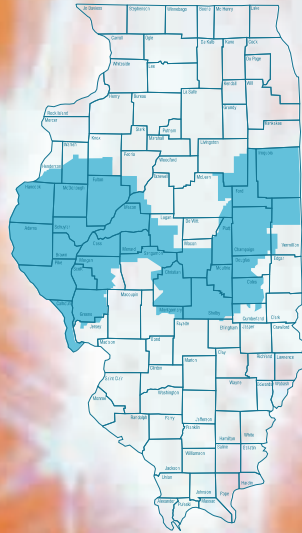
as scary as the things that end up costing you money. To make sure “Boo!” doesn't turn into “Boohoo!” when you get your electric bill, have your furnace checked before winter arrives to ensure it's working properly, and while you're at it change out the filter. Check the seal on your doors and windows and maybe donate that spare refrigerator that's in your basement. For more energy efficiency tips and suggestions, log on at www.togetherwesave.com.



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COOPERATION INNOVATION

By Ed VanHoose



We teach our children to share, encouraging them to work together while playing, at school, and even at home. We ask them to cooperate in order to make their worlds more peaceful, better places to live. Yet all too often as adults, we find ourselves struggling to hold on to those same values. So, when a story embodying the cooperative spirit comes to light, it's easy to get excited.

Well, if you're a citizen of rural Illinois, you should feel excited about this one.



(l-r) Bill Buchanan, McDonough Telephone; Jim Broemmer of Adams Telephone/Mid Century Telephone; Tom Allen of Cass Communications; and Jay Bartlett of Prairie Power, Inc.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Three telephone cooperatives, Mid Century Telephone of Fairview (MCTC), Adams Telephone of Golden (ATC) and McDonough Telephone (MCDTC) of Colchester have joined forces with Jacksonville-based Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI) and Cass Communications of Virginia in order to share resources with the goal of building fiber optics deeper into rural Illinois, with a primary goal of increasing reliability of electric service to members.

Jay Bartlett, CEO of PPI says, "Several participants, including PPI, have decided to work together to utilize each others' communications assets to their fullest. By doing so, we have driven costs lower while simultaneously increasing our coverage area. The goal of the system is to increase reliability and lower cost of electric service, and to provide high bandwidth connections to potential local providers."

The other parties all echo that sentiment.

"The basis of what we're trying to do is not duplicate the network where we don't have to," says Bill Buchanan, CEO of MCDTC. "Especially when it comes to cooperatives who share members. The common network seems

to make a lot of sense for all of us."

Jim Broemmer, CEO of both ATC and MCTC agrees, "For Adams and Mid Century, the exciting part of this project is being able to work with people who are trying to improve the services to our rural communities and do it the right way. We're partnering with neighboring cooperatives and leveraging resources we've built. We'll continue to evolve and provide the latest in services and technology utilizing the capability in each other's networks. That's the crux of the whole thing. We're not duplicating investment."

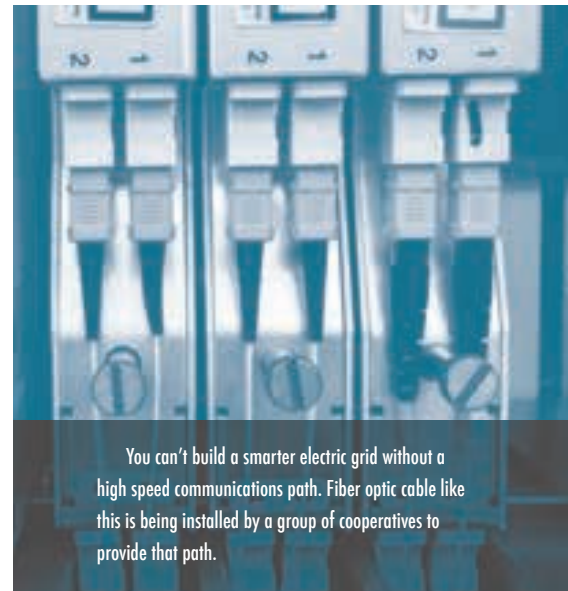
This sharing of resources with a common goal is exceptional, and comes at a time when many in parts of rural Illinois struggle to find solutions to the ever-growing need for access to high speed Internet connectivity. High-speed broadband service is critical for education, health care, business and everyone's quality of life.

Tom Allen, Vice President and COO of Cass Communications says, "I remember a conversation I recently had with the principal of a local school. He was distressed because he had discovered that far more students have no Internet connection than he imagined. This partnership will allow us to serve more students and allow them to take advantage of online programs schools are investing so much

time and money into."

You should keep in mind though, it may take some time to get this network fully deployed, and the first goal is to increase the reliability of electric service. PPI provides wholesale power to 10 electric distribution cooperatives serving 79,000 members in 44 counties across central Illinois. This area is nearly one-third of the state, but very rural and sparsely populated with only 3.8 meters per mile of line.

Eventually the fiber optic network will reach each of the generation and transmission co-op's 68 substations.

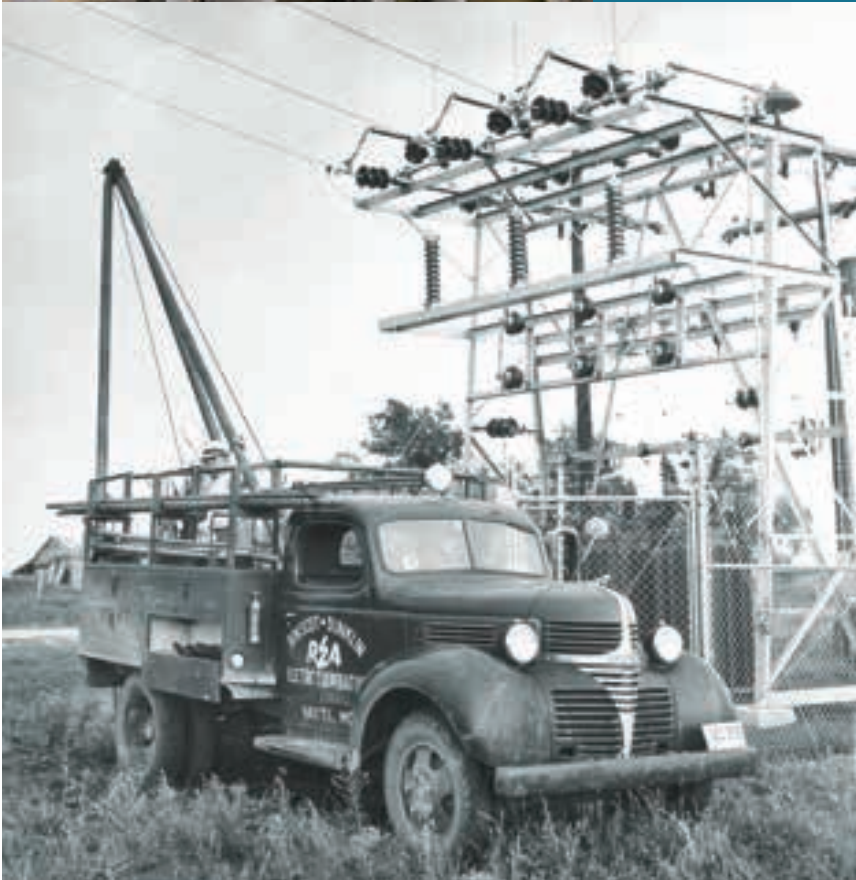


You can't build a smarter electric grid without a high speed communications path. Fiber optic cable like this is being installed by a group of cooperatives to provide that path.



A new fiber optic communications system is being installed to provide better communications to co-op substation equipment like these voltage regulators.

For the past 75 years the only way to check on a substation was to drive to it. Today fiber optic communications and a supervisory control and data acquisition system (SCADA) can check and control substation equipment in microseconds not hours.



Robert Reynolds, PPI's Vice President of Member Cooperative Services says, "Beyond reaching each of our member cooperative headquarters, we will build out in phases with a three- to five-year long-term goal for completion."

Some of the benefits to electric service will be seen quickly though.

"The first innovation PPI will see

is high-speed communications to the components of the electric system," says Bartlett. "We believe it's an essential element in reducing cost and increasing reliability. From there, it's our hope that by driving fiber optics deeper into rural areas it will allow for new opportunities to improve medical care, education and economic development."

"The immediate need is the power

piece: a smarter grid," agrees Broemmer. "For the telecommunications companies, however, it's also an opportunity to reach out to communities to provide services they don't have today."

"The electric cooperatives have been very progressive in their early adoption of AMR and/or AMI technology, what most refer to as smart grid technology. It makes the co-ops very innovative within their industry segment. Likewise, telephone cooperatives in rural areas have also been aggressive with service offerings to our members. When I look at the two entities working together in our region, I think it's easy to see a good collaboration of networks best used to serve the members needs today and in the future," says Buchanan.

The technology Buchanan refers to is the basis of modern electrical grid communications. AMR (Automatic Meter Reading) is exactly what it sounds like: the ability to automatically collect a reading from a meter. Most of those readings are done remotely, so having a better, more reliable connection obviously improves on the accuracy of the reading.

AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure), on the other hand, can be utilized for even greater things. The Federal Energy Regulatory Committee (FERC) defines AMI as "a metering system that records customer consumption hourly or more frequently and that provides for daily or more frequent transmittal of measurements over a communication network to a central collection point."

Why is that important?

If an electric service provider, like a cooperative, has the ability to collect data remotely, then that means they are made aware much faster when an outage takes place, when a peak load hits, or when voltage drops too low. It means the cooperative can act faster to help get members' power back on, or to prevent outages in the first place. And, with the kind of network discussed here, there is even the possibility for real-time reporting of data. That

means cooperative personnel will be aware almost instantaneously of problems on the grid.

“Power cooperative management of the grid is already excellent,” says Buchanan. “By applying our extended network capabilities in a long-term relationship, things can only get better.”

Concern for Community

Although it's not a cooperative, Cass Communications has played a significant role in getting the ball rolling. A family-owned business, Cass was formed in 1898 as Virginia and Little Indian Telephone Company.

“Cass isn't the typical for-profit telephone company,” Broemmer says. “The key thing to remember is that they're homegrown too. Their investments and what they've done with their telephone and cable company operation is making investments in rural communities.”

“As independent telephone companies, we share many of the same issues and concerns whether a cooperative or family owned,” explains Buchanan. “The common thread is that we live and work among our members and customers. Cass, like the cooperatives, has made investments in the communities they serve to the benefit of their customers. By working with them, we are able to realize a shared cost reduction to both their customers and our members. In the big picture of what we're doing, their network looks just as cooperative as ours does.”

Allen sums it up saying, “We are very involved in our community. Our employees serve on school boards, are active in their churches and participate in other community-based organizations. When I become aware of their activities in the community, I let them know how much it's appreciated because I think it's important. It's not just a telecommunications company. We live here too.”

So, what does the future hold for this project?

Bartlett hopes a better future lies at

the core of PPI's motivation in pursuing this project, “PPI adheres closely to the cooperative principles. One of those is that cooperative's cooperate with one another. Another is a commitment to the communities that make up our memberships. It's PPI's mission to improve the quality of life of rural Illinois residents. In order to accomplish that task, we need to provide our young people with good jobs and level the playing field with urban residents. That need is especially great with respect to the emerging needs in fields like education and healthcare. By actively engaging alongside other cooperatives, we have found an opportunity to both improve electric service and reduce costs to our members.”

Cass Communications sees this project as a way to not only extend their services, but also to improve reliability through redundancy.

Think of redundancy like this: If you have a wire going from point A to point B, and someone cuts a point in that wire, then service can't continue along that path. Within a redundant network point A and point B are instead points on a circle, so both sides of the circle would have to be cut in order to cause an interruption.

That's the kind of network we're talking about here. Only, the circle holds many points and stretches nearly from the eastern to the western border of the state.

“This project will enable us to expand our service offerings. By being able to share the fiber, it will definitely take us into areas we've looked at that were not economically feasible to build out. We'll be able to tie in with the other contributors to reach areas that are very much underserved,” says Allen. “But in the end, the reliability provided by the redundancy of the network holds a great appeal for us. Getting redundancy is huge. To the customer, redundancy translates directly into reliability. It makes the network rock solid.”

MCDTC plans to utilize the network to extend its service offerings.

Buchanan says, “For me, one of the benefits I see is the value of the network that PPI brings to the table. Many communities outside of our area are either underserved, or completely unserved. But, if you did a survey of the community, there's not enough people there to cost justify the build-out of a broadband network. It might take miles of fiber to get there, which makes a business model unworkable. But, now with these new relationships, we will have a new ability to use each other's networks to reach communities that no one can reach today.”

The first goal is to increase the reliability of electric service.

“We all recognize there are still areas throughout the state where there is a need for upgraded or improved communications services,” says Broemmer. “Utilizing each other's networks allows traditional communications providers to help put together potential solutions for those communities. But keep in mind, for now this will be a middle-mile infrastructure that allows organizations like telephone cooperatives to truly make the opportunity for future broadband expansion possible in other communities.”

One of the keys to all of this cooperation and innovation is that many telephone cooperative members are also electric cooperative members. In a sense, it's a shared sandbox.

And, like our children, cooperatives are doing what they do best, cooperating, in order to make rural Illinois a better, more technologically advanced place to live. ■

The fire that almost destroyed Chicago

Carelessness today still costs too many lives

October is National Fire Prevention Month. Its origin goes back to October of 1871 and the Great Chicago Fire.

On Sunday, October 8, 1871 just after nine o'clock in the evening, a fire broke out in the barn behind the home of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary on the west side of Chicago. The O'Leary milk cow kicking over a lantern was originally blamed for the fire, but the exact cause of the fire is still unproven.

An extremely dry summer that year, along with houses and businesses constructed of wood, wood-paved streets and sidewalks left plenty of fuel for the fire to consume. After the barn caught fire it was fed by strong winds coming off of Lake Michigan. The devastation wiped out the entire central business district of Chicago, burned more than 3 square miles, including more than 18,000 buildings, claimed more than 300 lives and left 100,000 people homeless.

Nearly 142 years later, carelessness and a lack of fire safety continue to cause many thousands of residential fires each year. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), during a typical year electrical problems in the home cause more than 28,000 fires and \$1 billion dollars in damages.

"Safe Electricity wants everyone to be aware of electrical hazards, and know there are simple steps that can be taken to prevent electrical fires," says Molly Hall, director of the Safe Electricity program. "For example, a routine check of electrical cords and outlets can save lives."

Many avoidable fires can be traced to poor maintenance and misuse of electrical appliances and electric cords. Don't place cords underneath rugs and furniture and do not run cords behind baseboards, curtains and in high-traffic areas. Damaged, abused or worn extension cords can pose a major fire hazard.



"This October, begin a habit of regularly inspecting all appliances, cords and plugs," suggests Hall. "If you discover a frayed cord or loose prongs on a plug, discontinue use until replaced or repairs can be made."

Some suggested home appliance safety checks and measures to prevent shocks, burns and fires include:

- If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never remove the grounding pin or force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Replace any appliance or tool if it causes even small electrical shocks, overheats, shorts out or gives off smoke or sparks.
- Do not use light bulbs with wattage that is too high for the fixture.
- Be sure all electrical equipment bears the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.

Additionally, to prevent electrical overloading, avoid using extension cords on a permanent basis and never plug more than two home appliances into an outlet at once. Give special consideration to appliances that use 1,000 or more watts, such as refrigerators, hot plates, irons, microwave ovens, dishwashers, heaters and air conditioners. Do not exceed 1,500 watts for each outlet or

circuit. If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows frequently, immediately cut down on the number of appliances on that line.

Electrical wiring defects are a major cause of residential blazes. Check periodically for loose wall receptacles, loose wires or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. Immediately shut off, then have a professional replace light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that spark and flicker.

The majority of fires caused by electrical wiring flaws occur in the bedroom. For this reason, Safe Electricity encourages homeowners to have Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) professionally installed in bedrooms. AFCI is a relatively new technology to address electrical fire hazards and the National Electric Code now requires AFCIs for bedroom circuits in new residential construction.

In many older homes, the capacity of the wiring system has not kept pace with today's increase in modern appliances and electrical usage. Call a qualified electrician to get expert help.

Finally, a functioning smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. Replace the batteries twice a year, purchase fire extinguishers for the kitchen, garage and near fireplaces, and remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

For more fire prevention information, visit the Web site www.SafeElectricity.org. ■

Molly Hall is Director of Safe Electricity. E-mail molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council. www.EnergyEdCouncil.org





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October is apple picking time

How to pick through the bounty of diverse flavors for the perfect apple

Sometime this month we are bound to get a frost that will spell the end of most plants. There will be some that will soldier on until a strong freeze actually finishes the job.

October, though, is also the month for the apples, which come into their prime during these 31 days.

Granted, some apples started ripening in July. Those early apples are great for the 48 hours they sit on the counter before the skin starts popping and the flesh turns to mush. They might last a week in the refrigerator, but don't expect them to keep. These are perfect for making summer applesauce and for saying to your neighbors "Hey, I have apples. What do you have?" Early Harvest and Lodi are the two most common varieties.

But like zucchini, the early apples are more about texture instead of flavor. They aren't great eating apples unless you sprinkle them with cinnamon or dip them in caramel.

The great thing about apples is the diversity of their flavors. No other fruit probably runs the gamut from puckering tartness to a sweetness that recalls the ripest peach, from a crispness like autumn air to the mushiness of melting snow. Find a great apple, and you'll remember it forever.

We've come about 180 degrees in the last 40 years regarding apples, which from this point of view, is great.

I've made no bones about the fact Red Delicious apples are one of the most picture perfect apples that look great sitting on the counter. But what the apple makes up in beauty is only on the surface. Underneath, it's like eating cardboard sprinkled with a pinch of sugar. There is no flavor.

Consumers, probably with help from plant breeders, have revolted and now want apples with some flavor.

Sadly, Red Delicious will still stick



around since it looks great, just like that movie star who has great looks but couldn't act herself/himself out of the proverbial paper bag. Keep the apple for those who've lost any sense of taste and like biting into something with crunch.

Some of the newer varieties including the Gala family, Fuji and Honeycrisp have made a name for themselves with flavor and texture, though they may not have the staying power in the refrigerator as Red Delicious, especially the Honeycrisp. But the goal is to keep eating them, isn't it?

Likewise, there is a resurgence in the old time or heirloom varieties such as Rome, (technically Rome Beauty) Arkansas Black and any of the Winesaps, which may not have the perfect shape, but do have great flavor and longevity in the refrigerator. And, you can't beat the tart sweetness of a good Jonathan apple. They're great apples for the winter and some

think a light frost makes their flavor more intense.

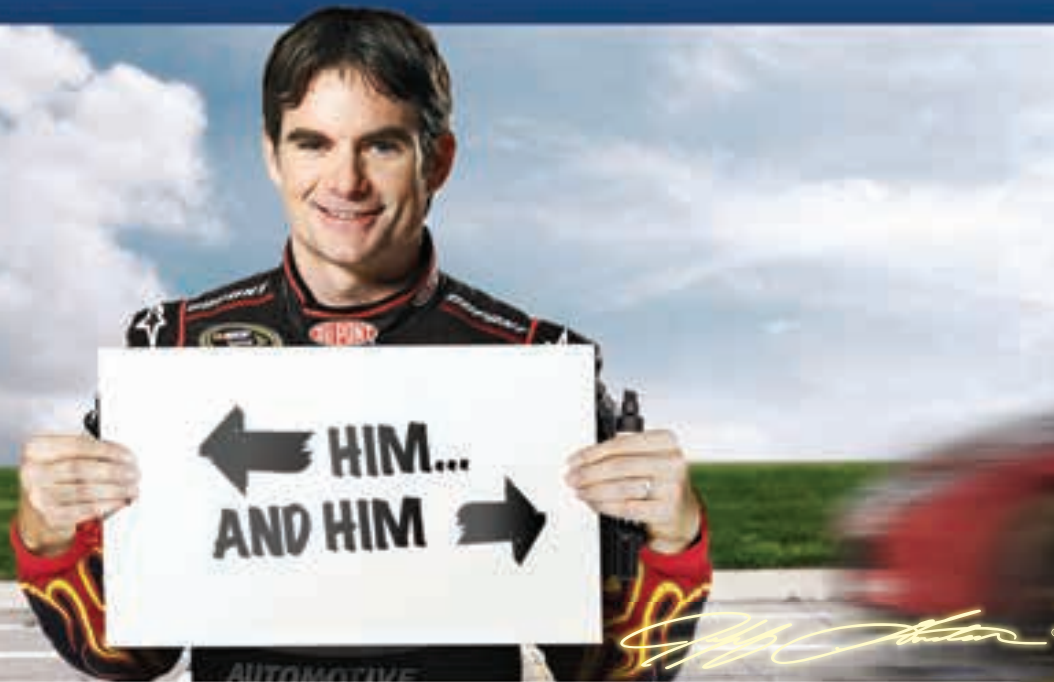
There are lots of farmers markets throughout Illinois where you can find a multitude of varieties of apples. Many of the stalls are run by hobby orchardists who want to rightly perpetuate the older, tastier varieties.

Many orchards may have several trees of the old heirloom types for sale. Get there early!

You might be lucky to find a selection in the grocery store. The ideal thing to do is conduct your own blind taste test, buying several types and having family and friends decide which one they prefer. ■

David Robson is Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety for the University of Illinois. drobson@illinois.edu





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From hot attics to frost

Now is the time for an energy audit

Yippee. It is fall, school is in full swing, football is being played, the leaves are changing to beautiful colors and attics are no longer super-hot. And, yes, the utility bills will be lower because little, if any, heating or cooling is needed in October.

If you want to know about what it costs to cool your house on one of those hot summer months like August, simply subtract a low fall bill, like October's, from the August bill. For example: August \$275 minus October \$165 = \$110 for August cooling. This is just an estimate but works fairly well for most houses because the lowest usage in the fall or the lowest usage in the spring is the amount that we consider the base usage of the house. Additional usage would usually be related to heating or cooling.

It is amazing to me that we are still receiving calls from folks that read the previous three hot attic columns. I am convinced that we have helped many of you find the solution to the problems that a hot attic can cause. And may I remind you that helping you, the readers, is what this column is all about.

A gentleman recently called me and was very concerned about his high summer electric bills. I asked him all of my usual questions about his house and, based on his answers, agreed that he needed help.

Because no two existing houses are exactly the same when considering energy efficiency, I suggested he have a qualified energy auditor perform a detailed energy assessment of his house. Much to my surprise, he told me that he had an audit performed in 1996. Let's see now, 2013 - 1996 = 17 years ago. Yes, that's 17 years ago.

I asked him if he still had a copy of the audit. He told me that he had it right at his fingertips. I asked him lots



of questions about the audit. I learned the audit was performed by a company I considered to be totally qualified to test a house. I learned that the house, when tested, had an air leakage rating of .77 natural air changes per hour. Oh my lands, I thought. This house is what we call a 77 percent leaker. For those of you that read this column regularly, you know that 77 percent leakage is not good. A house built to our suggested standards has a leakage rate of about 20 percent, which has proven through the years to be about perfect.

Based on the audit report, the air infiltration was coming from many sources, such as recessed lights, wood trim, lack of door weather-stripping, attic access panels and serious ductwork problems, such as panned floor joists for the return air system. The report also mentioned a serious lack of attic insulation.

Folks, while this may sound terrible, this is fairly typical for many older houses.

At one point during our conversation, he said to me, "The problems are probably about the same as they were then, because we have not made any of the suggested improvements."

I actually felt sad for this family at that moment because I was certain they had been paying higher than necessary utility bills for at least 17 years. The reason I tell you this story is because the audit report also gave the family a price quote to fix all of the problems.

I am fairly certain the family had sufficient funds to make those improvements but, for whatever reason, chose not to do so. The quoted price for the improvements in 1996 was far less than the cost to make the improvements in 2013.

Although they wished they had made the improvements many years ago, they bit the bullet and hired a company to make the improvements. The extra money they spent on higher utility bills in 17 years would have more than paid for those improvements and their house would have been far more comfortable. So, I always say, the sooner you fix the problems, the better.

If your utility bills are higher than they should be, I suggest that you also obtain a comprehensive energy audit from a credentialed expert. If you are a member of an electric co-op, you can call the member services department for assistance. For dozens of energy saving tips and solutions, visit www.SmartEnergyTips.org or your local electric co-op's website.

See you in November when there just might be frost on the pumpkins. ■

Doug Rye can be heard on several different Illinois radio stations. You can go to Doug Rye's Web site at www.dougrye.com, e-mail him at info@philliprye.com, or call 501-653-7931.



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FIRE

sparks volunteers

Co-op emergency responders have fire in their blood

by Valerie Cheatham



The call comes requiring immediate action. You hop in your truck and rush to the firehouse, quickly throw on 70 pounds of equipment and head out to the emergency. Time is of the essence and others are depending on your quick action.

That is the life of an emergency responder, never knowing when that call will come, day or night, but being willing to drop everything and go. Helping others gives many a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Knowing that the willingness to act has a real impact on others' lives keeps the "fire burning" in volunteer firefighters. That concern for community is one of seven cooperative principles on which electric cooperatives are based.

Volunteer firefighters come from all walks of life and that includes many members and employees of rural electric cooperatives. The vast majority of disasters such as tornados, car or train accidents, etc. occur in small town America. In fact, 70 percent of fire departments in Illinois consist of volunteers, which number between 42,000 and 46,000, but are dwindling.

Volunteerism is a natural fit in the co-op world. They may be from your family, neighborhood or co-op and are familiar faces at local businesses, churches and schools. It is not at all uncommon for firefighting to be a family legacy of sorts. Grandfathers, fathers and sons may all be volunteers at your local department, as is the case with Denny Kingren of Paxton, a warehouseman for Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative; Craig Benhoff, a lineman for Clinton County Electric Cooperative and Russ Camp, a journeyman lineman for EnerStar Electric Cooperative.

Kingren is Chief of the Paxton Fire Department and has been a volunteer firefighter for 40 years. His father, brother and sons have all been part of the department and one son is now a professional firefighter in Urbana. Benhoff is a third generation firefighter, and his brother is currently on the department with him and Camp followed in his father's footsteps as well.

There is very little money in being a volunteer firefighter; payment comes in the satisfaction of knowing your willingness to help had an

impact. According to Kingren, Paxton firefighters only make between \$200-\$600 per year, which doesn't come close to compensating them for the number of hours they spend in weekly training and going on calls.

"You might get a little bored because of the lack of activity in a smaller department," says Kingren, "but once you go out, whether it be an accident on the interstate, someone having a problem at home or a medical incident, it revives your energy. You realize it's a big deal!"

While there isn't a standard that must be followed, training at the Paxton Fire Department is based on the standards of Illinois Firefighter II as set up by the Illinois Fire Service in Champaign. Even though it's not mandated, Kingren believes there will be a requirement in the future for volunteers to achieve Firefighter II within two years. Paxton is fortunate to have had professional firefighters living in the community who have been willing to come to training meetings and pass on information.

Kingren believes the biggest challenges facing volunteer departments

today are recruitment and money to operate. “The bigger you are as a volunteer system, the easier it is to keep people,” says Kingren. “If they are being regularly trained by the department, are using that info, and it is staying fresh, they are more excited about it. We don’t want people’s homes to burn down, but once it happens, and you’re involved, you stop and say, ‘Hey, I was able to use this knowledge!’”

Smaller departments have trouble because of the population of the community. If it’s a very small department it’s harder to keep people. He has even heard of volunteer departments using announcements on television and radio in an attempt to recruit.

Having an age span in the department is important as well. It’s easy to overheat with all the gear strapped on and the heat from the fire. “It’s hard on the body, especially when it’s hot



outside. It’s good to be able to rotate guys in and out,” Kingren says. “That’s where having youngsters in the department really helps.”

Benhoff, one of those “youngsters”, says the biggest challenges for him are being on-call 24/7 and some of the things he has to see and do to help those in need, but always doing his best.

Operating capital is tight and equipment is expensive for fire departments. As more mandates are placed on the fire industry and engines, the prices have risen sharply. When Kingren joined the department in 1973, a fire engine was purchased for \$27,000. They are in the process of buying a new one in the next year and it will probably cost in excess of \$400,000. Paxton typically runs its engines until they are 30 years old.

Most departments depend on tax base and fundraising to make ends meet. Paxton has an annual Harley Davidson community fundraiser that is popular and brings the community together for an afternoon of fun.

Volunteer fire departments across the state of Illinois are actively recruiting more firefighters and are always looking for dedicated staff who are willing to answer the call. According to John Swan, President of the Illinois Firefighters Association and Chief of the Colona Fire

Department, “Most fire departments are made up of 30 or more members, but that is disappearing rapidly. The biggest problem today is time restraints for volunteers,” says Swan. “If the firefighters are married, most households need two incomes. The majority of firefighters are not working in the small towns as they were in the past, which leaves daytime very short on available personnel. There are also family commitments and lack of time it takes to be properly trained.

“The volunteer fire service in Illinois could cost residences in the billions of dollars if not properly maintained, which would lead to longer response times and costs in terms of life and property,” Swan explains.

According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, half of all Americans live in communities served by fire departments that are either volunteer or a combination of volunteer and career (full-time and paid). Volunteer departments save communities a significant amount of money. It is estimated it would cost U.S. taxpayers \$128 billion every year if all the volunteer first responders were replaced with career staff.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering, contact your local department or go to www.illinoisfirefighters.org.

“It gives me a strong sense of self-pride – doing things for people. I feel like we do that here at the co-op. It’s for the people more than any other business out there. And, I think the volunteer fire department seems to fall right in there with that category. I think the good Lord put me here to help people.”

– Denny Kingren





● Caramel Pecan Rolls

● Caramel Pecan Rolls (above)

5-1/2 to 6-1/2 c. sifted flour, divided
 2 (1/4 oz.) pkg. dry active yeast
 1-3/4 c. milk
 1/2 c. water
 2 T. granulated sugar
 1 T. salt
 3 T. shortening

1 c. firmly packed brown sugar
 1/2 c. melted butter
 2 T. light or dark corn syrup
 1 c. chopped pecans
 4 T. butter, softened
 1 T. cinnamon
 1/2 c. granulated sugar

Combine 2-1/2 cups of flour with the yeast in a large mixing bowl of electric mixer. Combine milk, water, 2 T. granulated sugar, salt and shortening in a saucepan and heat until lukewarm, stirring to melt shortening. Add to dry ingredients in mixer bowl. Beat at low speed for 30 seconds, scrape side of bowl constantly. Beat at high speed for 3 minutes. By hand, stir in enough of the remaining flour to make a soft dough. Turn out on to lightly floured surface; knead 10 minutes or until dough is smooth and elastic. Cover; let rise 20 minutes. Meanwhile, combine brown sugar, melted butter and corn syrup in saucepan over low heat just until blended. Distribute evenly in bottom of 36 well-greased muffin cups or three 9 inch round pans. Sprinkle mixture with pecans. Punch down dough and divide in half; roll each half into a 20 x 6 inch rectangle. Spread the softened butter on the dough. Mix together the cinnamon and 1/2 c. sugar and sprinkle over the buttered dough. Roll up, lengthwise, seal edges. Cut into 1 inch slices and place rolls, cut side down in prepared pans. Cover and refrigerate 2 to 24 hours. Remove from refrigerator; let stand 20 minutes before baking. Bake at 425 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Invert on racks.

Shrimp Boil

4 gal. water
 3 lemons, quartered
 3 garlic cloves, broken apart
 1-1/2 lbs. small onions, peeled
 1/2 c. salt

1 bag shrimp boil seasoning
 5 lbs. small potatoes, washed
 3 lbs. Kielbasa sausage, cut into 2-3" pieces
 9 ears fresh corn, broken in half
 2-3 lbs. shrimp

Heat the water in a large pot. Add next 5 ingredients to water and bring to a boil. Add the Kielbasa and potatoes. Cook for 20 minutes. Next add the corn and cook 10 more minutes. Lastly, add the shrimp. Bring to a boil and cook 3 minutes. You can lay several layers of newspapers on the table and dump the strained shrimp boil on the papers, or if you have plenty of platters they can be used instead.

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 4 C. sugar (more or less depending on tartness of apples)
 4 tsp. cinnamon
 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
 1/4 tsp. salt

Fill crockpot heaping full of chopped apples. Lid may not fit at first. Sprinkle sugar over apples. Add spices and salt. Cover and cook on high one hour, lower heat and cook until thick and dark. Stir occasionally. Place in small containers and freeze.

Chicken & Dumplings

2 whole chickens
 1 T. salt
 1 large onion, cut into quarters
 2 stalks celery

The day before, or early in the day, cook two chickens whole in a soup pot by covering the chickens with water, add salt, onion and celery. Bring to a boil and simmer for one hour. Cool. Remove chicken, debone, remove skin and chill. Chill broth separately overnight. When ready to prepare, skim most of the fat from the surface of the broth before heating.

Dumplings:

1-1/2 c. sifted flour
 3/4 tsp. salt
 3 tsp. Beau Monde seasoning (Spice Island brand)
 1/2 tsp. baking powder
 3 T. shortening
 1/2 c. cold broth

Mix all together well and knead until elastic, about 5 minutes. Roll on floured surface to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into 1-1/2 inch diamonds using a pizza cutter. Brush with flour. Bring broth to a slow rolling boil and drop in one at a time. Cover, simmer 7 minutes. Add chicken pieces. Heat through, carefully stirring in chicken so as not to break apart the dumplings. Serve.



● Old-Fashioned Split Pea Soup

● Old-Fashioned Split Pea Soup (above)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 pkg. (1 lb.) dried, split green peas | 2 stalks celery, sliced |
| 6-1/2 c. water | 2 parsley sprigs, chopped (optional) |
| 1 ham hock or diced ham | 1 clove garlic, minced |
| 2 cans (14-1/2 oz.) chicken broth | 1 bay leaf |
| 1 med. onion, chopped | 1/8 tsp. dried thyme |
| 6 lg. carrots, peeled and sliced | 1/8 tsp. ground pepper |

In 5-quart Dutch oven or kettle over high heat, bring all ingredients to boiling. Reduce heat to low; simmer, covered for 1-1/2 hours adding more water if too thick. Discard bay leaf and remove ham hock from soup; cool. Cut off any meat and skin from bones. Chop meat and return to soup. Discard the bones. Over low heat, reheat soup, covered, 15 minutes or until hot. Makes 2-1/2 quarts or 10 – 1 cup servings.

Who: Lynnville Christian Church

Cost: \$21.50 includes shipping

Details: soft-backed, spiral bound

Pages of recipes: 248

Send checks to: Jack McNeely, Lynnville Christian Church, 32 Albion Street, Lynnville, IL 62650 or call 217-243-1687

Broken Glass Jello

- 4 small boxes Jello, different colors
- 1 can Eagle brand sweetened condensed milk
- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin

For each flavor, dissolve one box of Jello in 1 cup of boiling water. Pour into an 8 x 8 inch container and chill until firm. After chilling, cut into squares and toss into a 9 x 13 inch pan. In separate bowl, sprinkle 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin into 1/2 cup cold water. After gelatin blooms, add 1-1/2 cup boiling water and dissolve. Add the can of condensed milk. Stir and cool. Pour cooled milk mixture over Jello pieces and chill overnight. Very colorful.

● Kellie's Homemade Recipe for Pumpkin Mousse Parfait (left)

- 1 small container Cool Whip
- 1 small pkg. instant French Vanilla pudding
- Pumpkin Pie spice
- 1 small can pumpkin
- 1 bag Ginger Snap cookies
- Maple syrup

Mix together Cool Whip and pudding mix and divide into two parts. In one half of mixture add 1/2 to 3/4 can of pumpkin and pumpkin pie spices, to taste. In other half, add just pumpkin pie spices and maple syrup, to taste. Break and crumble some ginger snap cookies, but keep some whole to put on top. To assemble, layer into a dessert glass or parfait cup - Cool Whip mixture, crushed cookies, pumpkin pie spice/maple mixture, crushed cookies, and finally, Cool Whip mixture. Top with one whole cookie.



● Kellie's Homemade Recipe for Pumpkin Mousse Parfait

Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Valerie Cheatham. For more recipes and photos go to www.icl.coop. Questions? Email recipes@aiec.coop.



The tablet dilemma

Last month I received several responses from readers. Thank you so much for taking the time to write in. Several of you had the same question, so this column will try to answer those specifically.

Joseph from Jo-Carroll Energy asks, "I enjoy reading your column. Could you please give some advice on purchasing a new tablet?"

Definitely! In the world of computing, tablets are gaining more market share all the time. In fact, current trends suggest that tablets are outpacing PC sales at nearly two-to-one right now, with an even bigger expected increase in the next four years. And, all of that growth means one thing for sure: confusion.

When there are that many out there, how do you know which one to buy?

Basically, it boils down to three choices. I'm going to briefly touch on two of them below, and then continue the discussion on www.icl.coop.

The iPad

For many people, iPads have become that device people think about when they say the word "tablet." In fact, I personally

attribute much of the growth of the tablet market to the success of the iPad. And, the reason for it is ease-of-use. They are just so simple!

So, if you're looking for something with a low learning curve, you should definitely consider the iPad. There are a few things to know before getting one though.

First, they come in two varieties, standard and mini. For the most part, I usually tell people to go with the standard. It's already pretty small but, if you have a better use for the mini, there's certainly no problem getting one of those.

Second, you have to consider how much memory (storage capacity) you want in it. One of the drawbacks of the iPad is that you can't upgrade the memory later. So, buy what you need from the outset. There are several options, but for most people the 32gb or 64gb versions will suffice. The more memory, the higher the price.

Third, you have to know whether you want cellular Internet capability. All iPads have the ability to hook up to wifi connections, but if you pay a little more when you purchase it, you can get one that has the capability to connect via a cellular connection as well. Keep in mind, you will have to purchase a separate cellular plan for the iPad though.

Android

Ok, here's where it gets a little more confusing.

There are literally dozens of choices when it comes to Android tablets. (By the way, the Android portion of the name simply refers to the operating system loaded on the tablet.) So, you will find quite a few manufacturers selling some version of these tablets. Here are a few things to keep in

mind when shopping for one.

First, I have found them to be a little more difficult to master. Android is an open-source operating system, so you can customize it quite a bit. That also means you may find yourself looking things up a bit more. If you're not technically inclined, then you might want to try one of the other tablets. Of course, you may find Android fits you exactly if you use it specifically for a handful of purposes and don't branch out too much.

Second, just like iPads you need to consider the amount of memory you want in the tablet when purchasing. Although, many of these are upgradable, it may not be the easiest thing to do.

Third, make sure you have the most current operating system when buying one. That's not as easy as you think. Android uses some strange, almost silly, naming conventions for their OS.

Unfortunately, the Windows tablet portion of this discussion is simply too long to include in entirety here. You can visit www.icl.coop to see the rest of the conversation. If you don't make it there, then at least keep this in mind when visiting looking at Windows 8 tablets: make sure the hardware you choose (Processor, RAM, storage) are the best you can afford. It will serve you well when purchasing one of these tablets.

Reply Online

Have a technology issue and want some advice? Visit www.icl.coop and click on Powered Up to respond. Your response might even be included in a future column.

Ed VanHoose is the Digital Communications Administrator/IT Manager for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield.



evanhose@aiiec.coop

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Energizing our communities the co-op way

During October each year we celebrate Co-op Month along with all the other 29,000 member-owned cooperatives in the United States. But this year electric cooperatives are doing more than celebrating the co-op business model. After 75 years of providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to rural areas, the nation's electric cooperatives are taking a look in the mirror and asking a basic question — “What is our purpose?” If electric cooperatives did not exist would it matter?

Seventy-five years ago bringing electricity to a dark countryside made a huge impact both in the economy of rural America and the quality of life for its citizens. While nonfarm productivity increased 75 percent in the second half of the twentieth century, farm productivity increased 200 percent. Rural electric cooperatives helped energize that dramatic increase.

Today, providing safe, affordable and reliable electricity is just the price of admission, says Mike Williams, President/CEO of the Texas Electric Cooperatives and Chairman of the 21st Century Cooperative Committee that is helping co-ops take a look in the mirror and assess the cooperatives' future.

Williams says, “Cooperatives exist to add value and make members' lives better. We are in the life improvement business and we need to refocus and build on the success of 75 years of fueling our communities.”

Commitment to community and democratic ownership

One of the core principles of the cooperative business model is commitment to community and right now many rural communities are suffering. Rural businesses have had to close shop. Many rural areas can't attract workers because there aren't any jobs. Business can't locate in rural areas because there aren't enough qualified workers. It's a vicious, downward spiral.

Young people from rural areas have to leave to find work, and this isn't a new trend. In 1910 rural Americans represented 72 percent of the population. Now it is around 16 percent.

Building on the co-op model

“In our economy right now, the cooperative model makes it possible for communities to band together in ways that enrich the quality of life,” says Jo Ann Emerson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the organization that supports more than 900 electric co-ops across America.

Historically, electric cooperatives have fostered the concept of “self-help,” enabling commerce and employment by bringing wealth to the communities they serve via different types of “capital.” Electric cooperatives are perfectly positioned to do this because of their intimate knowledge of local assets and resources, as well as relationships with business, political and opinion leaders, Emerson explains.

“Personal relationships are at the core of the cooperative business model, and the ability to establish and build those relationships is the key to successful economic development efforts,” she says. “Electric co-ops, for example, work hand-in-hand with chambers of commerce, industrial parks, agricultural producers, manufacturers and small businesses. Economic development is essential not only to the prosperity of rural communities, but also to the cooperatives that serve them.”

So what are co-ops doing today to energize communities?

One way is pretty simple. They volunteer. You can read about rural fire departments, for example, in this issue on page 20.

Funding for community organizations like rural volunteer fire departments is often stretched very thin. One way co-ops are helping is by

raising funds through programs called Operation Roundup or Penny Power, where members volunteer to let the co-op round up their bill to the nearest dollar. Those funds are then used to help out local community charities and organizations.

For example, Adams Electric Cooperative, Camp Point, has raised \$273,088 with the help of its members and the Penny Power program. Grants have gone to area schools, fire districts, food pantries, community centers and many other programs.

Build it and they will come

Infrastructure is basic to business and job development efforts. In the beginning it was about electricity. Next came telephone co-ops. More recently co-ops have been formed to provide safe, dependable drinking water, satellite TV and broadband services.

One example is SouthWater Inc., a not-for-profit regional wholesale and retail water supplier headquartered in Dongola, created by Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative. SouthWater provides water to residents and businesses in Alexander and Pulaski and portions of Union, Johnson and Massac counties. SouthWater provides water to almost 1,000 individual rural customers and seven municipalities and water districts who otherwise wouldn't have access to treated water. There are many other examples of electric cooperatives helping to start water co-ops in Illinois.

Today, the new infrastructure needed for business development and quality of life is rural broadband. Some compare the need for rural broadband to the early days of the REA cooperative movement, and the analogy is close. That subject is covered in this month's cover feature on page 10.

Show me the money

Nationally, electric cooperatives employ 70,000 people in the U.S. and



Personal relationships are at the core of what locally owned and operated cooperatives are all about, which makes them perfectly positioned to foster economic development projects. – Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

pay \$1.4 billion in state and local taxes annually. They also retire hundreds of millions of dollars every year in capital credits — margins credited to cooperative members each year based on their purchases (in the case of electric cooperatives, electricity). Capital credits are used by the co-op as working capital for a period of time and then paid back to individual members.

In 2012 alone, electric co-ops retired \$768 million in capital credits, for a total of \$11 billion since 1988.

Another example of infusing money back into the community is the Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Connections Card, a national and local discount card for co-op members that also helps local businesses market to co-op members. Total savings from the Connections Card, for just the prescription drug discount, has been more than \$1,642,133.95, representing an average savings of 33.39 percent.

Touchstone Energy is the national co-brand used by 750 electric co-ops. But it is more than a marketing

brand. By pooling resources it has also allowed co-ops to start programs like Sites Across America, a national database of available sites for business development in co-op territory. Other programs like the Touchstone Energy Home program help members with energy efficiency savings. Check it out at touchstoneenergy.com/homeprogram or togetherwesave.com.

Show me the jobs

Rural economic development efforts can range from building the relationships necessary to bring revenue-generating activities into a community to investing in partnerships with other businesses to create new jobs.

Electric co-ops in Illinois are partnering with the USDA Rural Development to create and save rural jobs through the Rural Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program.

Western Illinois Electrical Cooperative helped create 25 jobs and save 20 existing positions with a \$1 million loan and a \$300,000

grant to help construct a state-of-the-art medical clinic in Carthage. The co-op acts as a local intermediary and the REDLG program provides zero-interest loans and grants to local co-ops, which then, in turn, lend the funds to local businesses that create and retain jobs.

The program has helped establish more than 900 rural business and community projects and created or saved an estimated 25,000 jobs. In a case like the one in Carthage, the program also helped improve and save a basic need in the area — rural health care infrastructure.

Economic development doesn't just provide the community with monetary value, it creates trusted partnerships between the co-ops and their communities, says NRECA's Emerson. "The true value in economic development is the improvement to the co-op member's quality of life. That is the cooperative purpose, and it's what we're about."

1-2 & 8-9 Great Route 64/84 Holiday Shop Hop in Fulton, Thomson, Savanna, Mt. Carroll and Lanark. Enjoy small town hospitality on the Great Route 64/84 where more than 30 stops offer quality workmanship and customer service second-to-none. Shops within five communities work together to promote their one-of-a-kind items and offer a unique buying experience for holiday shoppers. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. www.cityoffulton.us or 815-589-4545.

1-3 Champaign-Urbana Folk & Roots Festival, throughout downtown Urbana. This festival will include dances, instructional sessions, jams, song-circles, storytelling and hands-on workshops and delights in presenting unique and cutting-edge forms of folk art and music. More than 80 free and low cost all-ages/abilities activities and high quality folk performances run continuously in businesses, cultural institutions and arts centers. www.folkandroots.org or 217-351-4133.

2 El Dia de los Muertos, Children's Discovery Museum, 101 E. Beaufort St., Normal. Museum visitors are introduced to El Dia de los Muertos or Day of the Dead, a joyful celebration observed in Mexico, parts of Central and South America, and by Latino families living in the U.S. It features hands-on arts and crafts activities, bilingual story time and traditional music from Noon-3 p.m. Free with paid Museum admission of \$6 per person ages 2 and above. www.conexionescmc.org or 309-433-3444.

2-3 36th Heritage Festival, Southeastern Illinois College, 3575 College Rd., Harrisburg.

Enjoy arts, crafts, food and entertainment. On Saturday, Heiken Puppets will perform at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Free admission. Open Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 618-252-5400 ext. 3213 for info.

9 Levee Footrace, Mississippi River Levee, Cairo. The oldest footrace in Southern Illinois is held the 2nd Saturday in November each year on the Mississippi River levee in Cairo. A long sleeved t-shirt is given to each participant in the 5,000 and 10,000 meter run and awards will be presented to winners. 618-734-4400.

9-10 Persimmon Party, 325 Abesway, Taylorville. The Christian County Historical Society will host its annual persimmon party on the east side of Taylorville where IL Route 29 and 48 meet. Persimmon pulp and baked goods will be on sale and available for sampling. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. www.chistoricalociety.blogspot.com or 217-824-6922.

9-10 John A. Logan College Autumn Fest, 700 Logan College Rd., Carterville. This annual event features more than 100 original arts and crafts, great food and music, children's activities, free admission and free parking. 800-851-4720.

20-23 Pope County Deer Festival, Main St., Golconda. A local tradition, this festival is held during the 1st shotgun deer season in Golconda, the 'Deer Capital' of Illinois. Held Thursday thru Saturday featuring vendors, food and music. Includes a Deer Queen coronation on Friday night, a parade on Saturday at 2 p.m. and a community breakfast on Sunday morning. www.popeco.net or 618-683-6723.

23 34th Annual Warren County HCE Holiday Craft & Home Show, three locations in Monmouth. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. For locations or more information 630-877-5036 or cdedorow@frontiernet.net.

23-24 31st Annual Country Christmas Craft Show, Gordyville USA, Rt. 136E, Gifford. Hosted by Gifford State Bank, this annual Christmas Craft Show brings together more than 500 vendors and offers two days of 'shop till ya drop' fun so you can find that perfect gift for everyone on your list. Parking is free. Admission - \$1 donation to Country Health Auxiliary. www.gordyvilleusa.com or 217-568-7117.

24 Wine Festival at Pere Marquette Lodge, 13653 Lodge Blvd., Grafton. The fourth annual wine festival is held from noon to 4 p.m. For only \$10, festival goers will receive a Pere Marquette wine glass along with tasting rights to all of the featured wines displayed throughout the lodge. Participants can enjoy wine, listen and dance to live music, munch on free appetizers and check out unique vendors. A portion of all proceeds go to the Friends of Pere Marquette State Park Foundation. Must be 21. www.pmlodge.net or 618-786-2331.

30 Great River Road Run, 424 E. Broadway St., Alton. Race your way to victory with the choice of a 2-mile or 10-mile route out and back on the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway, beginning in Alton. It's the most scenic run you'll ever make as you race to the finish along the Mississippi River and majestic limestone bluffs. 618-465-6676.

To be considered for inclusion, please submit events in the format used above. Preference is given to events sponsored by non-profit entities. Submitting an event is not a guarantee of publication. Photos are welcome, but will not be returned unless a self-addressed and stamped envelope is provided. Events are subject to change, so please contact the event sponsor for confirmation.

Deadline: October 15 for December events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. E-mail to: datebook@aiec.coop.



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