



RuralHIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

RURAL HIGHLIGHTS



Co-op Connections Card savings are growing!

Did you know RECC has a program to help you save on a variety of goods and services, from hotel discounts to local restaurant specials? The Co-op Connections® Card is a free program that saves Rural Electric members money on everyday expenses.

Local businesses in several towns have offered Co-op Connections discounts to our members, and we've added more businesses to the program this spring! Ready to tackle a landscaping project? Check out Designer Landscapes in Farmersville, to get a free tree with your purchase. Looking for a great piece of jewelry for a Mother's Day gift? Get a 20 percent discount at Jamie's The Diamond Mine in Virden.

These are just two of the many offers available with the Co-op Connections Card. The program was created to help promote local businesses while providing savings for electric cooperative members. It's a great example of the "Shop Local" movement that is taking hold in our rural communities.

In addition to local offers, your Co-op Connections Card gives you access to discounts from thousands of retailers because it taps into a national business community. You can find large chain stores and online outlets, but you can also tap into deals that 500 other electric co-ops have arranged in their areas across



Designer Landscapes in Farmersville introduced a Co-op Connections offer this spring - spend \$5,000 in one season and get a free 1½" caliper tree from stock!

the country. You can search for deals online by name, location, or business type at www.connections.coop.

Another popular feature of the Co-op Connections Card program is the prescription discount benefit. The card will help you save up to 85 percent on your medications at more than 60,000 pharmacies across the country. You can save money on purchases that aren't covered by insurance.

The most recent addition to the Co-op Connections program is the Healthy Savings discounts

on vision, dental, chiropractic and other needs. You can find participating providers and details at www.HealthySavings.coop.

The Co-op Connections card is another way to see the value of being an electric cooperative member. If you've lost your card, you can ask us for a free replacement, or print out a card at the website www.connections.coop. You can also download the free Co-op Connections mobile app, and have both your card image and all the savings offers at your fingertips.

The well-connected lineworker

And the cool technologies they use in the field

When electric cooperatives were formed in the 1930s, their technology was primitive by today's standards - digging holes for the utility poles by hand, walking them up into those holes, using ladders to reach equipment needing service. And if you had to get in touch with the line crew, face-to-face communication was the only option.

Today, the lineworker rivals any other worker when it comes to having the necessary technology to get the job done safely, quickly and more accurately. Let's take a look at a few of the devices behind this evolution, starting with the tablet.

Many electric co-ops are sending their crews into the field with ruggedized tablets, and RECC linemen have been using iPad tablets since 2011. These durable devices have detailed system maps, integrated with Google maps and GPS information. They no longer use cumbersome map books or a printed list of accounts in their trucks, since they have remote access to Rural Electric's member billing and engineering systems.

While our line crews generally carry their own smart phones, they can also take and send photos with their iPads, which is invaluable in documenting any hazardous conditions, equipment installations, construction work details, and any other on-site information that may be useful for the cooperative.

One modern tool that has become more valuable is the forward-looking infrared camera, also known as FLIR. With an infrared camera, crews can rapidly scan power lines, transformers, connection points and other equipment to search for hot spots. A piece of distribution equipment about to fail will often get hotter than normal. While not visible to the naked eye, it shows up clear as day on an infrared camera display. Scanning system components



Journeyman Linemen Bill Hart (foreground) and Shane Norris check their iPad tablets for member and system information before heading out on a service call.

with an infrared camera is a fast and accurate means of spotting and fixing a problem before it becomes an outage. Cooperatives are laser focused on

providing the best reliability possible at the lowest possible price. A major aspect of reliability is getting the
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Lineman Appreciation Day is April 10



Every year, we take the time to thank our extraordinary lineworkers who dedicate their lives to keeping the lights on in our local communities. RECC's 10 linemen maintain 1,371 miles of line across parts of five counties, and without them, our world would be dark.

We will honor our entire staff on April 10 for keeping Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative running smoothly, but it's the linemen who often find themselves in dangerous and challenging situations, so our lives may be a little bit brighter and safer every day. These brave men repair damaged lines and maintain critical infrastructure for our communities. Without their hard work and commitment to the job, our co-op would not thrive. No matter the time - day or night, weekday or weekend - if the lights go out, so do they.

The well-connected lineworker

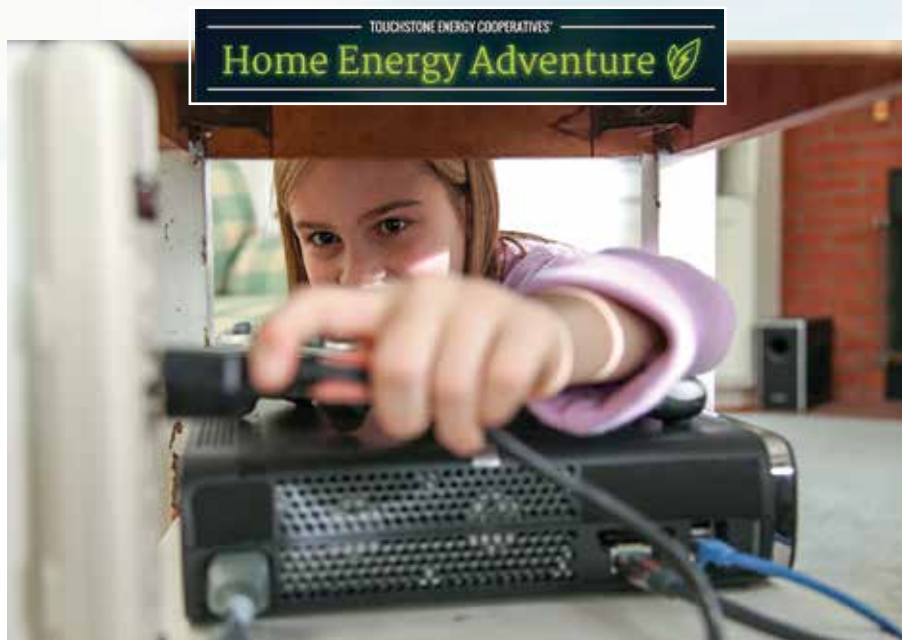
(continued from p18B)

lights back on as soon as possible after an outage. Key in this is the outage management system, or OMS. This system builds on geo-tagged system maps, sophisticated engineering models of the distribution system, and an advanced metering system. When an outage occurs, the system uses models and databases to determine the circuits affected, the protected devices that may be involved, and the estimated number of members who may be out of power.

Crews can then be sent to the right spot to correct the problem. Their iPad tablets show the locations, can provide the best route to the scene using GPS mapping, and have the details on any poles, switches, transformers and meters in the area as well as the member accounts affected. (Our members can also see an online outage map from the OMS system, showing the area where power is out and the number of accounts involved.)

While modern tools like aerial basket trucks, hydraulic drills and battery-powered crimpers have made our line workers' jobs easier and safer than ever before, they are still working in a dangerous and sometimes brutal environment. No amount of technology makes it easy to get up in the middle of the night to respond to an outage, or to step out of the truck into a raging snowstorm to replace a broken pole.

Our linemen are a special part of the co-op team that carries on the tradition of working for the benefit of our members. Combining their dedication with the latest technology has allowed your electric co-op to constantly improve your service.



Home Energy Adventure launched

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have introduced the new online Home Energy Adventure, a fun way to explore energy efficiency around your home. Through interactive quizzes, you can test your energy efficiency skills and learn how to improve your home's energy efficiency, and ultimately save money. After each question, users receive energy savings tips that are customized specifically to their lifestyle and energy habits.

You can choose to find efficiency information for your kitchen, living room, bathroom or bedroom, or you can look at energy systems like heating/cooling, water heating, lighting, appliances or electronics.

Whether you're already an Expert Saver or can learn from the many energy tips in Home Energy Adventure, you'll be ready to make wise equipment purchases and daily use decisions that will save you money! You can find the Home Energy Adventure at our website (www.recc.coop), or go directly to adventure.touchstoneenergy.com.

Did you know?

The Home Energy Adventure tests your knowledge on energy efficiency, and tells you whether you've picked a pretty good answer, or a great one! It also adds tips on using your appliances and equipment wisely, like this one:



Turn off bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans 15 minutes after the job is complete or install 15-minute timers on bathroom ventilator fans.



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Convenience Cooperative

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Board meeting reports.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Protect your home from surges

Spring storms can bring an increased threat of power surges, which are sudden, short-lived increases in voltage. Surges may come either from lightning strikes or power lines being damaged by ice or falling tree limbs.

Your cooperative can help protect your home from the threat of power surges which could damage your valuable appliances and electronics. We offer a two-stage surge protection program for the different threats to your home equipment.

Whole-house surge protection can reduce or stop voltage surges that travel through the power lines, including indirect lightning strikes. Under our whole-house lease program, we install a meter base adapter at your electric



meter or main electrical panel. The monthly lease fee is just \$4.95, with no installation charge.

Your sensitive electronic devices need protection at the point of use, which can be provided by quality plug-in strips. RECC has a selection of plug-in protectors for your home, from single-plug cubes for your garage door opener to satellite system strips with electrical, phone and cable connections. One standard six-plug strip is included in your lease program, with others

available for purchase.

Protect your equipment now with RECC's easy lease program! Call our office at (217) 438-6197 for more details or to schedule an installation. Or e-mail us at recc@recc.coop.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

