

JAMUP

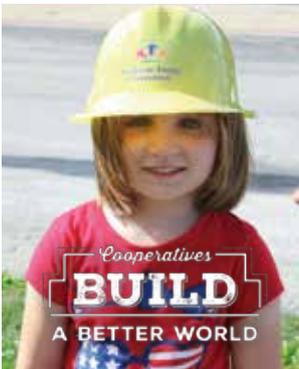
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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

What's an electric co-op?



By Cathleen Belcher,
Director of HR and
Administrative Services



When I first moved to the area in 1974 I had no clue as to what an electric co-op was. Many times, I would hear family and friends talking about the electric coop and wondered how it was different from Ameren. One day I finally learned that the building north of Dongola, at the top of the hill, was Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, THE electric co-op. I would hear that it was a great place to work, the people who work there are great, and their annual meeting is one of the biggest events of the year. So, one day in 1985, I made the decision to submit a job application with the hope of getting an interview. Then in the summer of 1986 I received a phone call asking me if I was interested in working at the co-op. Me, work at the coop, “Yes, I sure would like to work at the coop,” I replied! I knew I wanted to be part of that great organization. So, for the next 30 years the electric co-op has been the career that I have loved the most of all the places I've ever worked.

At the end of this month, I will retire with just over 30 years of service to SIEC. I have looked forward to coming to work almost every day of those 30 years. When I first started, I was hired as a Clerk and then moved on to become the Payroll and Capital Credits Clerk. Next, I became a Staff Assistant then an Administrative Assistant, and lastly, my current position as Director of HR & Administrative Services. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with many wonderful employees,

board members and their families—those that are currently here, those who have retired and those who have passed away. I have learned over the years that co-op employees and board members want to help, they don't ignore you. They seem to go that extra mile in serving the needs of our members. This becomes apparent each time an employee goes out in the middle of the night in all types of weather to get your power back on. It doesn't matter to them the time of day, the day of the week, weekend, holiday, family functions, etc. they are headed your way to help.

I have also enjoyed meeting the members of Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, whether it was at an annual meeting, working with them on capital credits, trying to resolve a problem or just talking to them in the lobby when they pay their bill. As I make that drive to work every day, I remind myself how thankful I am for all that I have, and that I will always be grateful to those who made the decision to hire me. **Kathleen L. Grove**

Oh, and I now know what an electric co-op is, THIS electric coop, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative. It is the members it serves and the people who work there. Its purpose back in 1938 when it was formed was to improve the quality of life for people living in the rural areas by providing electricity when no other entity would do so. That same premise held true in 1986, and remains the same in 2017.



Member prize

In this issue of the JAMUP, we printed the names of three SIEC members who are eligible to receive a \$10 credit toward their utility bill. If you find your name printed in this center section and it's not part of the story, call Bree with your account number at **800-762-1400** to claim your prize.

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Life as a Lineman

So, you are an electrician? I get this question all the time as do many of my lineman friends. Electricians and linemen are both in the business of delivering safe and reliable electric service, but there are several differences between these two job classifications.

Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SIEC) does not employ ANY electricians. But, we do employ 18 linemen, three tree trimmers and one mechanic, who are referred to as our “outside” employees. Of course, we are “outsiders” because that’s where we spend our days. I enjoy working outside a great deal and couldn’t imagine spending my days trapped inside a building. Maybe if it’s 99 degrees or single digits outside, I would give it a try! I do have a “pat” answer to the “so you’re an electrician” question. Linemen are responsible for the construction and maintenance of all lines originating from the power plant all the way to the meter at your house. An electrician is responsible for what is being metered. Simple enough isn’t it?

Currently, SIEC has two apprentice linemen, both in different steps of their apprenticeship. All linemen are required to complete a formal apprenticeship through an approved training program. SIEC linemen are all members of the International Brotherhood



By Dale Gueterslob

of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 702, and our apprentices are trained to IBEW standards.

Although it has been over 25 years since I started my apprenticeship, much has changed while much has stayed the same. SIEC lineman apprentices serve a three-year apprenticeship that consists of four-nine month steps. On average, 1,500 working hours make up that nine-month period. Apprentices must also successfully complete a two-to three-week climbing school prior to embarking on a career as a lineman. This class covers a great deal about electrical theory and safety, but its main purpose is an introduction to the art of pole climbing; a skill that all linemen must have. It goes without saying that pole climbing is not exactly everyone’s cup of tea, so a certain percentage of prospective linemen’s careers end at climbing school. There is an old saying I have heard for years, and it goes like this: “There are only two can’ts in line work. Can’t cut it, can’t stay!” Obviously, if one is unable to climb competently in a controlled environment such as climbing school, how would they perform on a pole at night during the middle of a storm? I can tell you firsthand that situations like these separate real linemen from the rest.

Having grown up the son of a lineman, I was fully aware of what would be required of me when I chose this occupation. I remember as a kid being scared to death when the weather got bad and watching my dad leave to go to work in it. Sometimes, I can see that same fear in my children’s eyes when I leave now. I thought my dad was nuts

for choosing such a dangerous job and didn’t understand why he would choose this line of work. Well, I do now. For me, the sense of duty to keep the power on is electrifying. We work in the heat, cold, rain, and every other weather condition one can imagine, keeping your power on. If it is out for an extended period, please be assured we are doing everything possible to restore it. The co-op understands our members are why we are here. We are local people just like you who live on the lines and have family and friends that do, too. We have a vested interest in keeping the current flowing.

Lastly, just a quick safety reminder! We take every precaution to ensure a line is safe to work on during an outage. Generators can make power outages less uncomfortable, but they can also be quite dangerous to linemen. An improperly installed generator is a death sentence for the linemen working to get your power back on. If you must run a generator, DO NOT hook it up directly to your electric service unless you have an approved by-pass switch. A generator that puts out 240 volts when fed into a transformer backward will step that voltage up to 7200! We have experienced many instances of improperly installed generators. Turning the breaker off below the meter is NOT ok. You MUST be able to physically see NO connection between any power source and our work area. We cannot stop at every house and check this. We are counting on our members to do the right thing. **Rebecca S. Rogers**

Line work is recognized as one of the top 10 most dangerous occupations. Our employees have recently achieved a safety goal that has not been seen in SIEC history. Currently, we have about 285,000 working hours without a lost-time accident, which is proof we have all made work safety a priority. Please help us continue to break more safety records and keep our employees returning home to their families each night!

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Energy savings for every season

While saving money through greater energy efficiency may be a year-round objective for many consumers, the way to achieve this goal will vary by season. There are a number of factors that impact energy efficiency, including weather, the age and condition of the home, and desired comfort levels. During fall and winter months, when the outdoor temperature is chilly, consumers desire a warm home and seek to keep the cold air out. Conversely, in the spring and summer, the focus is on keeping the hot air from infiltrating cool abodes.

Fall and winter: keeping heat in

To maintain a warm indoor environment in chillier weather, there are simple steps you can take to increase energy efficiency. Fall is a great time to examine seals on doors and windows to check for air leaks. Caulk and weather-strip as needed to seal in warm air and energy savings. Similarly, examine outlets for air leaks, and where necessary, install gaskets around the outlet to prevent drafts. During the day, open curtains or drapes on south-facing windows to enable sunlight to heat your home naturally. Close curtains or drapes at night for an added layer of window insulation.

As the temperature drops lower with the onset of winter, schedule a service appointment for your heating system to ensure it is operating at an optimal level. Low-cost or no-cost steps for energy savings include taping or affixing heavy, clear plastic to the inside of your window frames to create an additional barrier against cold air. Ensure that the plastic is tightly sealed to the

frame to help reduce infiltration. Use a programmable thermostat to set the temperature as low as is comfortable when you are home (ideally around 68 degrees). When you are asleep or away, turn the temperature down 10-15 degrees for eight hours.

According to the Department of Energy, this small adjustment can help you save approximately 10 percent a year on heating and cooling costs.

Spring and summer: keeping your cool

During warmer months, energy savings and efficiency will require different measures, many of which are inexpensive. If you live in a climate that is cool, open your windows in the evening and turn off your cooling system while sleeping. In the morning, shut the windows and blinds to hold in the cool air. Where practical, plant trees and shrubs that provide shade in warm months and sunlight in winter. In addition to the aesthetic value, well placed trees can take heat gain from the sun and provide needed shade by creating a canopy for the house.

In extremely hot weather, your cooling system works harder to close the gap between the high outdoor temperature and the cool indoor thermostat setting. To lessen the difference in temperature between the two, and to



lower cooling costs, set the thermostat as high as you can while maintaining your comfort level. Moreover, using a ceiling fan in conjunction with your air conditioning can allow you to increase the thermostat setting to approximately four degrees with no reduction in comfort levels.

During the hottest months, it's all the more critical to replace any remaining incandescent bulbs with LEDs. The waste heat from the old bulbs impacts energy use and creates wasteful and unwanted heat. Employ a programmable thermostat to adjust the settings a few degrees higher when no one is home or your family is sleeping.

To learn more about additional energy-saving tips and programs, contact Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative. **John B. Cubble**

Anne Prince writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



**Our office will be closed January 2
and January 16 for the holidays.**



2017 Energy Efficiency Calendar

Energy Explorers

Start the new year off by being more energy efficient!

Each month, try changing your energy use habits by using the tips below. Keep this calendar on your refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.



JANUARY

Turn off lights when you leave a room.

FEBRUARY

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.

MARCH

Turn off water while brushing your teeth.

APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

MAY

Clean or replace your air filter. You may need to ask an adult to help.

JUNE

Keep the thermostat at 78 degrees Fahrenheit during summer months.



JULY

Close curtains and blinds during the day to block the sun.

AUGUST

Keep all doors and windows closed while the AC is running.

SEPTEMBER

Dry clothes outdoors on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

OCTOBER

Only open the refrigerator door for short amounts of time when necessary.

NOVEMBER

Take short showers instead of a bath.

DECEMBER

Decorate your home for the holidays with energy-saving LED bulbs.

