

## Don't miss out on a trip of a lifetime!

WIEC is awarding a free trip to Washington DC to one son or daughter of WIEC members. By simply spending a few minutes on the computer, a student could win a trip of a lifetime.

But hurry, the Youth to Washington entries are due at the WIEC office by

**February 15th**

For additional information, see your high school guidance counselor, call the WIEC office, or go to the WIEC website at [www.wiec.net](http://www.wiec.net).



## Avoid the energy rush

### *Time of use matters*

**D**id you know that when you use electricity often matters as much as how much electricity you consume? It's no surprise that electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand, and electric co-ops must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy demands of their members during times of highest energy use, also known as "on-peak" hours. Early morning hours, when people often start their day, and evening hours when people return to their homes after work, are common times for on-peak hours. To reduce peak energy demand and save money, many electric co-ops encourage electricity use during off-peak hours—when

(7710-24) energy is less expensive to provide. Similar to saving money by attending a matinee, you can keep more money in your wallet simply by using electricity during an off-peak time period.

Using less on-peak power means lower costs for Western Illinois Electrical Coop. and ultimately, lower rates for members.

By performing some of your daily chores, like running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours, you can save on your utility bill. In a similar vein, plug electronic equipment, such as computers, printers, TVs and power tools into a power strip, then turn it off during peak hours.

Off-peak hours are from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. daily Monday through Friday, and all day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

You can also put technology to work for you. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings so your heating/cooling system syncs up with the off-peak periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way.

Saving energy can be simple. Remember, by shifting your energy use to off-peak times, you have the power to save the Cooperative money, which in turn reflects on your monthly energy bill.



524 North Madison | P.O. Box 338  
Carthage, IL 62321  
www.wiec.net | 800/576-3125

**OFFICE HOURS**

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Monday - Friday

**BUSINESS OFFICE**

217-357-3125

**TO REPORT AN OUTAGE**

800-576-3125

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**MAP LOCATION CONTEST**

Every month we are printing four members' map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

# Utilities are raising awareness about scams

By Tracy Warren

When a scammer called Florida pet clinic operator Cindy Evers last year and demanded immediate payment on an overdue electric bill, it sounded real.

"They knew my account number and gave me a figure that I owed that's close to what I usually pay on my electric bill," Evers said. She paid, even though, in the back of her mind, she knew her payment wasn't late.

"I have pets under sedation, and I'm taking care of animals. I think I just panicked, thinking they were going to shut my electricity off. I did what they told me to do."

Evers lost \$900 because the call was a scam.

The scam that duped Evers has been plaguing utility consumers across North America for several years, robbing them of millions.

Now, utilities are fighting back.

Electric co-ops have increased their communication efforts, sending information directly to members and encouraging local TV stations and newspapers to warn citizens about the scam, how it works and what people should do and not do, if they are ever targeted.

Even the wariest consumers can be duped, however. The scammers are developing new tactics every day.

The "past due" scam, similar to the one Florida customer Evers experienced, goes something like this: A customer gets a call from an 800-number that looks like a valid utility company phone number. Widely available spoofing software allows crooks to display what appears to be an official number on caller IDs. The caller threatens to cut off power if the customer doesn't pay.

But here's the giveaway: The (6810-56) crook will demand payment via a prepaid debit card or money order. And he'll ask for it within a specified time frame—often an hour or less.

The scammer may even quote an amount that sounds like your typical monthly bill. That way, the threat has even more credibility. Scammers might direct the customer to a specific store

nearby that sells the prepaid cards and instruct the customer to put money on the card and provide the card number to the scammer.

Some scammers have even been bold enough to contact potential victims in person, coming to the member's house.

*If you receive a call that sounds like a scam, hang up!*

**Here are some tips on how to protect yourself:**

- Do not assume the name and number on your caller ID are legitimate. Caller IDs can be spoofed.
- Never share your personal information, including date of birth, Social Security number or banking account information.
- Never wire money to someone you don't know.
- Do not click links or call numbers in unexpected emails or texts – especially those asking for your account information.
- WIEC would NOT require our members to purchase prepaid debit cards or money orders to avoid an immediate (8611-3) disconnection.
- If you receive a call that sounds like it may be a scam, or if you believe the call is a scam, hang up, call the police and report the incident to your local utility.



# Introducing Bright Options Solar

Purchasing clean energy just got easier! For as little as \$12 per month added to your electric bill, you can choose to have a portion of your home's energy come from environmentally-friendly solar power – and all without upfront expenses, maintenance costs and changes to your home.

Looking for your place in the sun? Contact WIEC and ask about Bright Options Solar.

# Welcome New Members

Monica & Willie Akers,  
Dallas City

Ryan Bell, Hamilton  
Dakota Access, LLC,  
Spokane, WA

Amanda Doss, Niota

Darlene Gooley, Carthage

Ashley Hornung, Hamilton

Jupiter Beach, LLC, Dallas  
City

Christine A. Moses,  
Carthage

Kelsie N. Torrance,  
Gladstone

Jamey Weinreich, Dallas  
City

James D. Whitaker,  
Carthage

Roy L. Zinn, Sutter

## Choose your payment option!

- At our office front counter, outside drop-box or drive-up box
- Mail to: PO Box 338, Carthage IL 62321.  
To be considered on time, the payment must reach the WIEC office by the due date. Postmarks will no longer be the determining factor when verifying if a payment is late or on-time.
- Set up recurring bank draft or credit card payments
- Pay via the payment portal at [www.wiec.net](http://www.wiec.net)
- Call our office to use your credit card



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

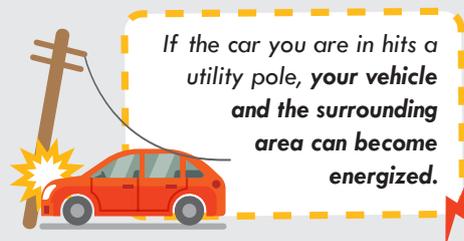
A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill! **(8517-49)** Caulk around the fireplace hearth and keep the damper closed when a fire is not burning.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

## KNOW WHAT TO DO



if in an Auto Accident  
with Power Lines



Even if you do not touch lines  
or equipment, you can still be  
killed or seriously injured.



**1. Do NOT leave the car,**  
and warn others to stay away.

**2. Call 911** to have  
the utility notified.



**3. Wait** until a utility professional  
has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason  
to exit the vehicle is  
**if it's on fire.**

If the car is on fire, jump clear  
of the vehicle: **with feet together,**  
**and without touching the car and**  
**the ground at the same time.**



Continue to **hop away**  
with your **feet together**  
as far as you can.



Learn more at

Safe  
Electricity.org