How will electric utility deregulation affect my electric co-op?

The legislation approved by the Illinois General Assembly guarantees the right of co-op members to choose the future course of their locally owned, not-for-profit utility through their member-elected boards of directors.

The language embodied principles developed from a series of meetings of electric cooperative leaders from across the state. There were three basic principles:

- regulation of electric cooperatives should remain in the hands of the local members;
- no unnecessary duplication of electric lines, and
- participation in deregulation should be at the discretion of each cooperative.

We get our power from you.

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois
Good for all Illinois

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Clay Electric to implement new answering, outage reporting system

Clay Electric Co-operative is pleased to announce its new, enhanced answering and outage reporting system. The enhanced system, scheduled for service starting on Jan. 6, 1998, is a key component of Clay Electric Co-operative's dispatch center, Cooperative Response Center (CRC). CRC, who has been answering the cooperative's calls for two years, is owned collectively by 91 individual electric cooperatives throughout the United States.

"In order to increase the member's capability of reaching the cooperative to report an outage and add the desired 24-hour access to information on the cooperative's services, it is essential to work with our CRC partners. Together, we have the expertise and resources to build a system powerful enough to handle the majority and diversity of calls that attempt to reach our cooperative after the business office is closed. With enhanced system your cooperative will be capable of answering more calls than ever before. Our goal is to provide you, our member-owner, with the highest level of response possible," says Alan Wattles, manager of Clay Electric Co-operative.

Here are some important tips to remember when calling us:

- Your phone number is critical to the operation of the system. The new call answering equipment can read your phone number as you call us (similar to caller I.D.). This helps quicken the outage reporting process by matching your phone number to your cooperative account record. To assure fast and accurate outage response, we need your current phone number and service address — either write it on your monthly bill statement or call us.
- Our service representatives will handle most calls during non-outage periods. If your phone number matches our records, your account will be displayed to a service representative's computer screen.
- During peak calling periods or large outages, your call may be automatically linked to our voice response system for enhanced outage reporting without service representative intervention, the voice response system will report your outage to our dispatcher.
- The voice response system will play a message indicating any known outages, the affected area, and expected duration of the outage.
- You can request a call-back when outage has been restored.
- If you reach our voice response system and have critical information or an emergency you can dial "0" and speak with a service representative.
- Information on our member service programs is available through our service representatives. They will also take a message and send it to our member service director for follow-up.

To report outages after hours, weekends and holidays, call (800) 582-9012

Board meeting report

All trustees were present, except for trustee Cammon. Also present were general manager Wattles and cooperative attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Sept. 22.

Accepted 30 new members for service.

Canceled 11 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of September 1997, presented by manager Wattles.

Approved the list of work orders for the month of August 1997 in the amount of $17,719.63 and authorized manager Wattles to present the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meetings and AIEC meetings from manager Wattles.

Approved refunds of capital credits to the estates of deceased members Nihle S. Oliver and Carl Hemrich pursuant to cooperative policy.

Approved one contract for purchase of power in the form presented.

Accepted disbursement list for September 1997.

Approved participation in a joint marketing effort with other cooperatives for electric utility deregulation.

Reviewed AIEC continuing education schedule.

Advised by manager Wattles that the cooperative had recently replaced the sidewalk at the rear of the office and had made repairs to the system's two-way radios to enhance communication.

Resolved that Policy Bulletin No. 800-5 by amended to read as set forth in the proposed form presented to this meeting, amendment was concerning physicals for employees and CDL licenses.

Adjournment.

All electric home rate

As stated, at the Clay Electric Annual Meeting, an all new all electric home rate is being introduced for 1998. This rate has two components to it, a winter and summer rate. The winter rate will run from October through May, for usage in those months, and the summer rate will be for usage during June through September. The rates are as follows:

	WINTER RATE	SUMMER RATE
Facility Charge	$20.00	$20.00
Energy Charge first 1,000 kwh	.0900 per kwh	.0900 per kwh
Over 1,000 kwh	.0450 per kwh	.0876 per kwh

Bill comparisons, (WPCA and taxes not included), for the current rates versus the all electric home rate are as follows:

WINTER RATE

Total kwh	Current Rate	Electric Heat Rate	New All Electric Rate	% Savings New vs. Current	% Savings New vs Electric heat
2000	206.20	168.60	155.00	24.8	8.1
2500	250.00	193.60	177.50	29.0	8.3
3000	293.80	218.60	200.00	31.9	8.5
3500	337.60	243.60	222.50	33.1	8.7
4000	381.40	268.60	245.00	35.8	8.8

SUMMER RATE

Total kwh	Current Rate	New All Electric Rate	% Savings New vs. Current
1500	162.40	153.80	5.3
2000	206.20	197.60	4.2
2500	250.00	241.40	3.4
3000	293.80	285.20	2.9
3500	337.60	329.00	2.5

This rate will be in effect starting Jan. 1, 1998. The first bill will reflect the rate in February of 1998. The home should be all electric, from the heating service to the water heater and range.

Sign-up is now underway for the all electric home rate. Call (618) 662-2171 to get your name on the list.

Storms damage more than just poles, lines

As winter settles in, we begin to think of storms, ice and snow, and, possibly, long outages when roads are blocked and days are short. Many times when a storm blows into a co-op's service area and wreaks havoc, you hear a lot about material damage and replacement costs. You read about the number of poles broken, the miles of line down, and how many cross arms had to be replaced.

But while we tend to dwell on the material costs, they actually represent a small portion of the total expense such disasters bring.

The real expense is in labor and machinery. If a widespread storm hits and does a lot of damage, the people at your co-op understand that you want your power restored quickly, and they call for help. Other co-ops—and sometimes investor-owned utilities and municipals—will send crews to pitch in and restore power. Your co-op does the same, when it's okay and others are in trouble.

But from the time those "borrowed" crews are rousted out of their beds until they wheel back into their home office, the damaged co-op pays.

The trucks they bring are expensive to buy and operate, and your co-op pays for every minute.

The crews work hard, and they work up a hearty appetite while doing it. The receiving co-op pays for their meals. And in the few hours each night when they rest, the co-op also pays for that. It's all part of getting your power back on as quickly as possible.

One of the bigger expenses, though, is outright labor. Co-op linemen normally work a 40-hour week. The job is often strenuous and sometimes dangerous, and requires a lot of training. They're paid well, as they deserve to be. When you need to have your power back on as quickly as possible, they work a lot of overtime, and they're paid extra for that.

Lost revenues are another factor. Your co-op budgets for an income based on steady, day-in and day-out operation. A week of lost sales results in about a 25 percent reduction in the monthly money flow, and nobody likes that. Think of it as a week without pay, while you're working harder than ever and your expenses are far more than usual.

With all that adversity and expense, your co-op wants you to know what's going on, and how much it's going to cost, so it talks to you about damage.

And that's as it should be. You own your co-op. Area leaders built it some 60 years ago when the power companies wouldn't, and your predecessors—early members—paid to have it built. Some co-ops are still paying off their construction or rebuilding loans. The whole rural electrification program was an exercise in self-help. And the costs were borne by the member-owners, who borrowed money from the federal government at low interest.

Co-ops were organized as not-for-profit organizations so it would cost less to build the system, without dividends being siphoned off to pay stockholders. It was the not-for-profit nature that made the whole venture affordable.

You still bear the costs, and you deserve to know where the money goes. And that's why your co-op talks of broken poles and downed lines after storms.

So the next time you read about 250 poles being torn down by a storm, and so many miles of line, and a couple hundred cross arms being destroyed, please remember that the cost of replacing them isn't what hurts. What really hurts is the cost of having them put back in place.

It's all part of getting your power back on as quickly as possible. And your co-op (you) will wind up paying for it.

A deregulated electricity market means choice.

You can help choose the future of your electric co-op.

Yes, you. Electric cooperatives were formed by individuals to serve their own needs, not profit-seeking investors. They are run by folks just like you—men and women who care about the future of their communities, and who want high quality service and competitive rates. Your cooperative will be making many important decisions in the next few years that will affect you, your family, and your hometown. That's why it's more important than ever for you to attend your cooperative's annual meeting, learn more about this issue, and cast your vote.

We get our power from you

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CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Governor signs deregulation bill

The Illinois State Legislature approved an Electric Utility Deregulation bill during the fall veto session in November. House Bill 362 was approved by a large margin by both the House and Senate.

Illinois Electric cooperatives have been actively involved in the consideration of this issue. Our primary concerns were that residential consumers, both urban and rural, would see savings similar to the large commercial and industrial consumers.

Electric cooperatives support the right to engage in competition. But this decision should be controlled at the local level, with the board of directors and the membership, not mandated by the Illinois legislature.

The cooperatives fought hard for the continuation of the Electric Suppliers Act, which prevents duplication of electric utility lines. This has been, and continues to be, a valid and valuable statute, which should not be changed.

House Bill 362, as approved, contains all the provisions that Illinois Electric cooperatives have felt were very important. The new legislation does not directly control cooperatives or municipal utilities. Your board of directors is going to be sensitive to the feelings of the membership, and will strive to meet the challenge of competition.

I'm sure you will read more detail of H.B. 362 in future issues of Illinois Country Living and your newspapers. Governor Edgar signed H.B. 362 on Dec. 16, at a special ceremony in Chicago.

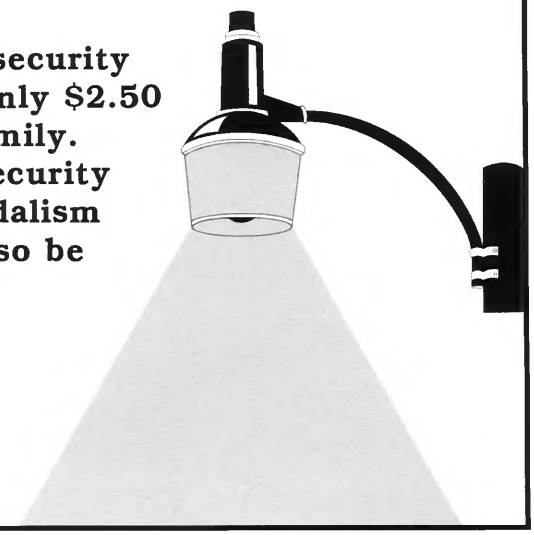
The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative's employees, Earl Struck, Don Woods, and Michael Hastings deserve a big thank you for their efforts and tireless hours protecting the interest of the cooperative members during the 1997 session. Our success in this legislation comes from this great team, that is known for their positive and honest relationship with all the legislators in Illinois.

Rent a high-pressure sodium security light

Rent a high-pressure sodium, 150-watt security light from Clay Electric Co-operative for only $2.50 per month, and protect your home and family.

Proper lighting at night improves the security of your property and protects it from vandalism and thefts. Falls and other injuries can also be avoided by lighting dark areas.

For more information, call Clay Electric Co-operative at (618) 662-2171 during regular office hours.



Board meeting report

All Trustees were present. Also present were general manager Wattles and cooperative attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Oct. 27, 1997.

Accepted 16 new members for service.

Canceled 18 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of October 1997 presented by manager Wattles.

Approved the list of work orders for the month of September 1997 in the amount of $9,116.75 and authorized manager Wattles to present the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meetings from manager Wattles.

Received report of recent AIEC meetings from trustee Cammon.

Discussed a request for line relocation.

Approved refunds of capital credits to the estates of deceased members Wendell Keck and Ivan Ruckman pursuant to cooperative policy.

Approved two contracts for purchase of power in the form presented.

Approved one contract for interruptible rate in the form presented.

Accepted the disbursement list for October 1997.

Amended the NRECA Retirement and Security Benefit plan

Advised of upcoming education programs for the good of the board.

Adjournment

Sign up for our all electric home rate

Clay Electric has an all new all-electric home rate. This rate has two components to it, a winter and summer rate. The winter rate will deal with usage from October through May, and the summer rate will be for usage during June through September. The rates are as follows:

	WINTER RATE	SUMMER RATE
Facility Charge	$20.00	$20.00
Energy Charge first 1,000 kwh	.0900 per kwh	.0900 per kwh
Over 1,000 kwh	.0450 per kwh	.0876 per kwh

Bill comparisons, (WPCA and taxes not included), for the current rates versus the all electric home rate are as follows:

WINTER RATE

Total kwh	Current Rate	Electric Heat Rate	New All Electric Rate	% Savings New vs. Current	% Savings New vs Electric heat
2000	206.20	168.60	155.00	24.8	8.1
2500	250.00	193.60	177.50	29.0	8.3
3000	293.80	218.60	200.00	31.9	8.5
3500	337.60	243.60	222.50	33.1	8.7
4000	381.40	268.60	245.00	35.8	8.8

SUMMER RATE

Total kwh	Current Rate	New All Electric Rate	% Savings New vs. Current
1500	162.40	153.80	5.3
2000	206.20	197.60	4.2
2500	250.00	241.40	3.4
3000	293.80	285.20	2.9
3500	337.60	329.00	2.5

The home should be all electric, from the heating service to the water heater and range.

Sign-up is now underway for the all electric home rate. Call (618) 662-2171 to get your name on the list.

Five free quick and easy ways to save energy in your home. . .

You could probably save a lot on your power bill every year, if you fixed all the energy wasters in your home. Every home is different, but imagine the impact a 5 or 10 percent savings could have! Best of all, none of these ideas will cost you anything but a little time, so why not get started right away?

1. Use your thermostat like the cruise control in your car.

When you're driving your car, you know what happens when you speed up and slow down, or drive fast. You waste gas. That's what happens when you frequently change the temperature setting on your thermostat: You waste electricity. Set your thermostat once in the morning and once in the evening, and resist the temptation to monkey with it at other times. Or install an automatic setback unit to do the job for you.

2. Take advantage of the sun.

You don't need a solar heating system to take advantage of the sun's warmth during winter. Just watch the sun's movement across your home to see which windows get plenty of sunlight, and open their blinds, shades and drapes to let the sun shine in. Close them when the sun's gone, to keep the heat in.

3. Turn off exhaust fans as soon as you're done.

Exhaust fans are handy in a kitchen or bathroom. But as soon as the fan's job is finished, shut it off. Otherwise, you'll pump heated air outside, and your heating system will have to work to catch up.

4. Close the door on wasted energy.

Are you heating a room you don't use? If so, close all registers, doors and windows, and check to make sure none of the items you've stored there need to be kept at normal room temperature.

5. Close your fireplace damper.

Up to eight percent of the warm air from your heat pump or furnace will go right up the chimney every day you leave your fireplace damper open. When there's no fire, close the damper. And even when a fire is burning, it's a good idea to use glass doors to conserve heat.

. . .and five easy ways to make it safer

1. Use safety covers.

Put safety covers on unused wall outlets so kids won't explore them with tiny fingers. Replace broken wall plates.

2.Take care of cords.

Replace frayed or cracked extension cords. Never nail or staple them to the wall or floor. And keep furniture off the cords, even if they're under a rug.

3. Use extension cords wisely.

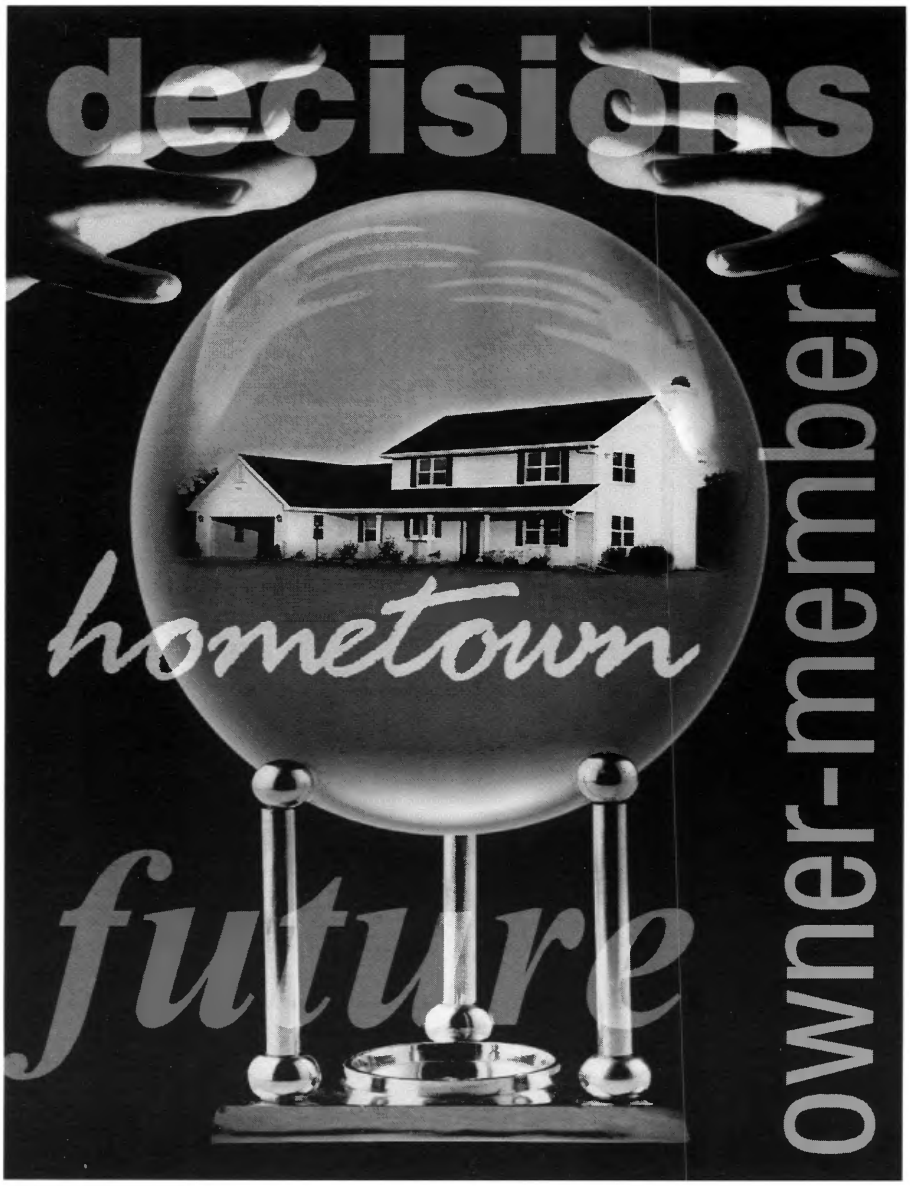
Extension cords are meant for temporary use. Don't use them as permanent household wiring.

4. Don't misuse plugs.

Use three-prong plugs on three-prong outlets. Never cut the third prong off to make it fit. And don't force plugs into outlets if they don't fit easily.

5. Use GFCIs.

Install ground-fault circuit interrupters in bathrooms and kitchens. They help prevent electrocutions where water and electricity might mix.



What's in the future of my cooperative in a deregulated electricity market?

As an owner-member of an electric cooperative, you have a special privilege — and responsibility. The future of the electricity industry is uncertain, but as sure as current finds a path to ground, you have a voice in your cooperative's future. Your cooperative will make many important decisions in the next few years that will affect you, your family, and your hometown. That's why it's more important than ever for you to attend your cooperative's annual meeting.

We get our power from you

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois
Good for All Illinois

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present except for Trustee Poehler. Also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd and Kenneth Kammeier of Soyland Power Cooperative who discussed the power supplier contract.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Nov. 24, 1997.

Accepted 16 new members for service.

Canceled 12 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of November 1997, presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved the list of work orders for the month of October 1997, in the amount of $14,803.64 and authorized Manager Wattles to present the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meetings from Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent AIEC meetings from President Henson.

Opened bids received for the sale of a line truck and **Approved** the bid of M & E Enterprises for $7,800; that bid being the highest and best bid received.

Received a presentation by Manager Wattles regarding the 1998 budget.

Accepted the disbursement list for November 1997.

Advised of upcoming education programs for the good of the board.

Entered into executive session to discuss an employee compensation package for 1998.

Adjournment.

If your home is total electric, please notify our office to see if you qualify for special all electric rate. Call (618) 662-2171.

Home-cooked meals still important to Americans

The traditional "Ozzie and Harriet-style" home-cooked evening meal is still important to Americans, according to a survey by *Good Housekeeping Magazine* conducted with the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. Call it dinner, call it supper, but the evening meal is cooked daily on the stove 42 percent of the time.

Some 92 percent of the 501 female magazine subscribers said they cook a traditional evening meal at least twice per week. Oven usage was reported at "two to three times weekly" by 82 percent answering the magazine survey, which was conducted in the first quarter 1997.

Who's doing all this cooking? Even though a large majority of married men and women both work outside the home, women are still doing the big portion of the cooking, according to the survey. Women prepare the main meal 92 percent of the time; men just 4 percent of the time.

As to who cleans up after dinner, the results were similar. Women load the dishwasher 86 percent of the time versus only 7 percent for men and 3 percent for children. The numbers change slightly in terms of who unloads the dishwasher: 68 percent women, 13 percent men and 5 percent children.

Don't let your dishwasher flush $$$ down the drain

Add up how much electricity all those appliances in your home use, and pretty soon you're talking real money on your electric bill. Your dishwasher is no exception.

About 80 percent of the energy used by a dishwasher is for hot water, not for electricity to run the motor. So, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recommends doing the following to make your dishwasher more cost effective.

• Check the owner's manual for the recommended water temperature. Many have internal heating elements that will allow you to lower the temperature if it is set too high.

• Scrape, don't rinse, large pieces of food and bones from dishes. Soak or prewash only when there is burned-on or dried-on food.

• Fill your dishwasher before each use — but don't overload.

• Do not use the "rinse hold" on your machine for just a few soiled dishes. This setting uses three to seven gallons of hot water.

• Let your dishes air-dry instead of using the heat-drying option.

• Relax and enjoy the convenience of having a dishwasher because dishwashers use less water than hand washing — about six gallons less per load. Dishwashers also do a better job of killing germs because they use hotter water than you would use with hand washing.

Good reasons to use carbon monoxide indicators and alarms

• Carbon monoxide (CO) cannot be detected by human senses. It is colorless, odorless and tasteless.

• CO can cause death, or permanent injury to oxygen-rich tissue, such as brain and heart. It is a cumulative poison. Even low levels of CO can cause irreversible learning and memory defects in fetuses.

• Fire fatalities are often caused by CO. CO gas may overcome unsuspecting victims before the smoke alarm goes off.

• Even low levels of CO can impair judgement, impede facility and greatly increase risk of accidents and injury to motorists and machine operators.

• Early symptoms of CO poisoning (dizziness, headaches, nausea, fatigue) and frequently misdiagnosed as flu or virus.

• Half of all fatal poisonings in the U.S. are attributed to carbon monoxide.

• Appliance malfunction and backdrafting cause about 1,500 fatalities each year in the U.S., plus another 10,000 serious injuries (such as paralysis, blindness, permanent brain damage) as well as a large number of long-term health problems.

• Many CO poisonings occur because energy conservation measures may cause a vacuum effect in the home which causes backdrafting.

• Automobiles are a major source of CO. Many incidents involving automobiles are the result of faulty exhaust systems. But, often problems occur in vehicles having exhaust systems that are in perfect condition. For example, flat-backed vehicles such as vans/mini-vans and station wagons can create a negative pressure at the rear, which can cause exhaust fumes to be sucked into the vehicle through cracks in door/window seals, ill-fitting seams, or rust spots. This same negative pressure effect can also occur in other types of cars where exhaust fumes are sucked into the trunk through imperfections in rubber trunk seal and then into passenger compartment.

• Use of CO indicators will greatly reduce the number of deaths and injuries.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. is the recipient of Federal financial Assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provides that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

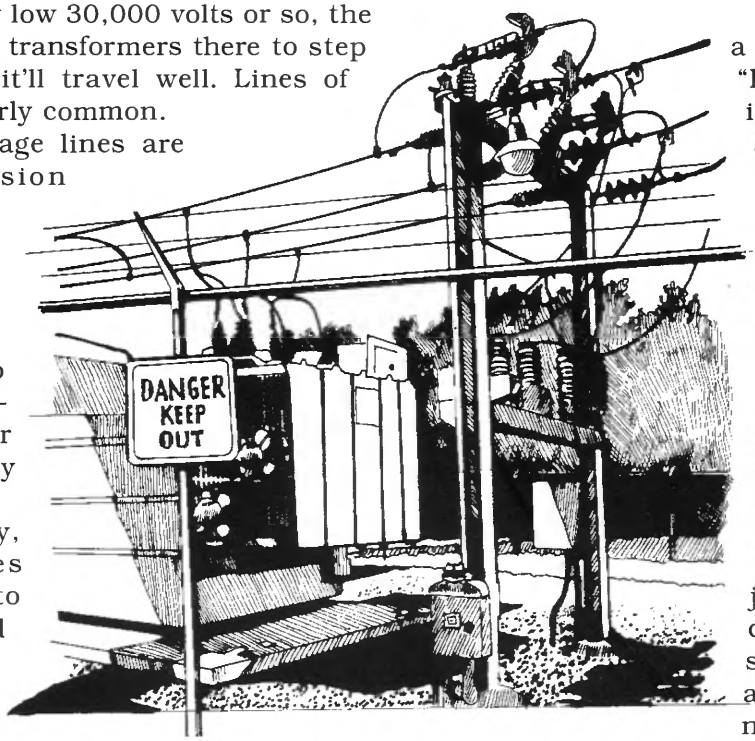
The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Alan W. Wattles, Manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Rejoice! You own part of a substation

That's right: those big roadside things that have all kinds of wires going in and out of them are part of your co-op's system, and as a member-owner of the co-op, you own a part, — a very little one — of that substation, or "sub," as it's called.

As you drive by, it may have occurred to you that your sub is a thing of no great scenic beauty. While that's true, it's still an important part of the system. You see, electricity travels better at higher voltages. Generated at the power plant at a relatively low 30,000 volts or so, the power goes through transformers there to step up its voltage, so it'll travel well. Lines of 69,000 volts are fairly common.

Those high-voltage lines are called "transmission lines," and are used to transmit electricity over distance. When it gets to the sub, the voltage is stepped down to 7,200 volts, for shipment over shorter distances to nearby farms and homes.



Needless to say, all those voltages present a hazard to the untrained, and that's the reason for the tall chain-link fences that surround them. They're to protect people from the electricity, not vice-versa.

While a major part of a sub's function is to reduce voltage, the current is massaged in other ways there, too. There are lightning arrestors to minimize the damage caused by lightning strikes and voltage regulators to keep the voltage steady. Sectionalizers are there to help contain damage when something goes wrong. Your co-op has to buy its power, just like you do, and there are meters in the sub to tell how much current went through, and at what time.

From the sub, lines radiate out to various loads on the system, and they tend to get smaller as they get farther out. When they reach your home, farm or business, the power is stepped down again, from the 7,200 in the line to the 120/240 you use.

That's done by another transformer, which is more than likely at the top of a pole near your home. Depending on the size of your load, it may look like a five-gallon paint can, or a fairly large garbage can. Those that draw their current from an underground line are at ground level. They're called pad-mounted transformers, and are covered by a green or olive-drab box. Like subs, they're not for the uninitiated. We encourage you to stay away from them.

Subs are designed to serve a certain number of homes, farms and businesses. Occasionally a large load, like a factory or prison, will have a sub designed mainly to serve it.

Once in a while, a sub needs to be "heavied up" to enable it to serve a growing area. This involves replacing the existing transformers, usually three, with bigger ones. Other components are beefed up, too.

Why not just build big in the first place? Cost. Those big transformers, the main elements of a sub, are frightfully expensive.

Also, growth projections sometimes don't pan out, and a sub that's designed to accommodate a lot of new homes and businesses is underutilized. In that case, the transformers may be moved to a sub in a faster-growing area, and smaller ones installed. Or a sub may be dismantled and its load switched to nearby subs.

Since any sub will serve miles of line and hundreds of members, a component failure can leave many people without power. Large rural grids are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of weather disturbances, and so are prone to outages during any kind of storm.

To minimize problems, co-ops do their best to "feed" subs from at least two different transmission lines, so a power failure from one side can be compensated for from another. While this is also an expensive proposition, it's an important step in ensuring system reliability.

While subs aren't particularly attractive, they are extremely useful. Be glad you own a small part of one.

Taking the Big Step?

When you take that big step and remodel or build your new home, spend as much time thinking about your home's energy source as you did your China and crystal, the floor plans, and the carpet pattern.

When you choose electricity, you choose the safe, dependable, low-cost alternative. No flames. No fumes. No fuel tanks to fill.

Good for *all* Illinois.

An affirmative action, equal opportunity employer

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Dec. 22.

Accepted 14 new members for service.

Canceled 17 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of December 1997 presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved the list of work orders for the month of November 1997, in the amount of $16,409.02 and December 1997, in the amount of $8,243.26 and **Authorized** Manager Wattles to present the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meeting from Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent AIEC meeting from Trustee Cammon.

Reviewed the 1998 budget in the form presented and **Adopted** the same.

Accepted the disbursement list for December 1997.

Advised of upcoming education programs for the good of the board.

Heard a presentation by Manager Wattles of a recent Safety Hazard Assessment conducted by Jim Nevel of AIEC. Following a discussion of the same directed Manager Wattles to take necessary action to correct the deficiencies noted.

Approved one power contract.

Authorized the Cooperative to enter into an agreement with area Cooperatives to share cost of a live line safety display in the form presented to this meeting.

Advised of upcoming Annual NRECA meeting.

Resolved that the officers of this Cooperative execute the necessary Guarantee Component of Soyland to CFC for the Illinois Power Opt-Out Fee loan, subject to RUS approval.

Heard a presentation by Jim Kaufman of CFC about a CFC loan and tabled any action until Manager Wattles can secure further information.

Adjournment.

Rent a high-pressure sodium security light

Rent a high-pressure sodium, 150-watt security light from Clay Electric Co-operative for only $2.50 per month, and protect your home and family.

Proper lighting at night improves the security of your property and protects it from vandalism and thefts. Falls and other injuries can also be avoided by lighting dark areas.

For more information, call Clay Electric Co-operative at (618) 662-2171 during regular office hours.

Can we talk? Let us know how we're doing

As a consumer-owned, not-for-profit business, Clay Electric Co-operative exists for one reason: to provide you, the member, with the best possible service at the lowest possible price.

In order to do that, we need feedback from you. What do we do, service-wise, that you like? Has one of our employees provided particularly great service for you lately? (We like to recognize our employees for a job well done.) Which of our service policies do you find especially helpful or convenient?

At the same time, we need your input in areas that you think we need to work on. For example, how can our service policies and procedures be improved? Do our employees provide you with the personalized, professional service you deserve? Let us know, because we need to know where you believe we fall short, as well as what pleases you.

Please call or write us. It will be especially helpful if you are as specific as possible when praising current policies, procedures or employees or if you're offering suggestions for improvement.

Remember: As a member of Clay Electric Co-operative, you have a voice and vote in how the co-op is run. The only reason we exist is to serve you. Talk to us—and tell us your stories about your electric co-op. It's an ongoing story and we want to make it better.

Save energy when using your fireplace

With crisp fall weather bringing cool nights to many parts of the country, you may decide it is time to enjoy a fire at night. Before using your fireplace, here are a few tips that will help you save energy—and cut your fuel bills.

Keep the damper closed when you don't have a fire going in your fireplace. An open damper on a 48-inch square fireplace can let as much as 8 percent of your home's heat escape up the chimney.

If you use your fireplace to supplement the heat provided by your regular heating system, you can take a few simple steps to make the most efficient use of your fireplace. First, remember that the heat gain from a fireplace is confined to the room where it is located. At the same time, much of the heat from other rooms can flow into the room with the fireplace and then escape up the chimney. The warm air will be replaced by cold outside air. As a result, your thermostat will sense the heat loss and turn on your furnace.

What to do? While you may want a higher setting for comfort's sake, lower the thermostat to between 50 and 55 degrees Fahrenheit. You'll still lose some warm air through the chimney, but the furnace won't have to work as hard to maintain the set temperature.

And there are other things you should do when using a fireplace. Close all the doors and heat ducts in the room with the fireplace. Then, open a window near the fireplace about an inch, or slightly less. This will reduce heat drawn from the rest of the house and give the fire the air it needs. Don't do this if the fireplace has an outside air supply!

If you have a simple open masonry fireplace, install one of the following: a glass screen, a convective grate, a combination convective grate with glass screen, a radiant grate or a fireplace insert. Some of these devices will cut down on the loss of warm air through the fireplace chimney and may improve heat recovery from the fire.

With fall here and winter on the way, you may have other questions about how to reduce your heating bills. Contact your local electric co-op for help. Your friends there can help you with an energy audit and provide you with any number of options for winterizing your home that will save you money.

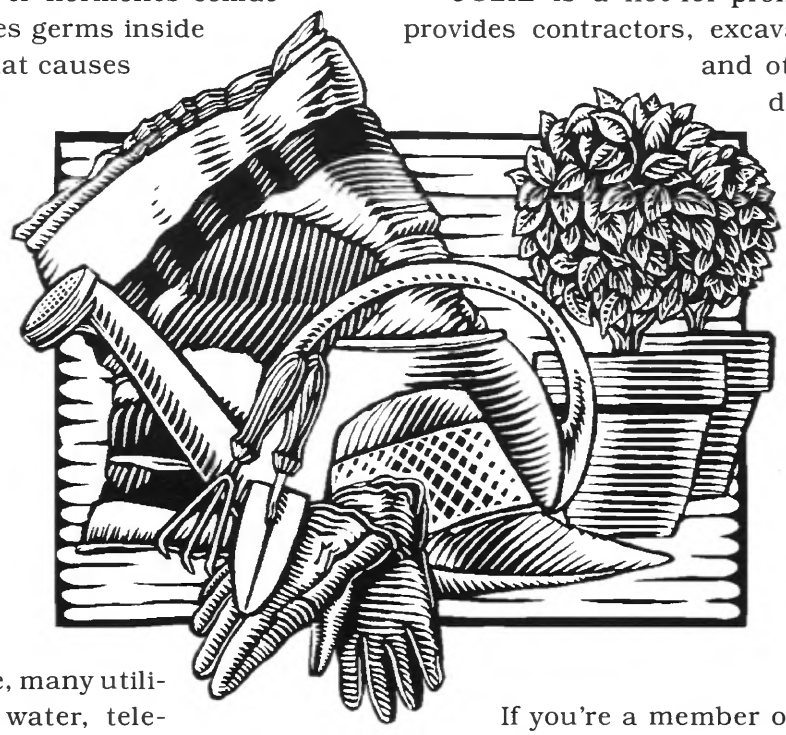
To report outages after hours, weekends and holidays, call (800) 582-9012

Avoid a shock--call before you 'disturb the earth'!

Experts tell us that the shorter winter days, with their drabness and scarcity of sunlight, give many people S.A.D., or Seasonal Affective Disorder. Regular people call this phenomenon "the winter blahs."

The situation is made worse by another condition health wonks refer to as "cabin fever," which is what happens to people when lousy weather keeps them from getting to the mall. Anyway, as spring approaches and days lengthen, that brings out another condition known as (pardon the scientific jargon) spring fever.

When spring fever hormones collide with the winter blues germs inside the human body, that causes perfectly normal people to do strange things. Some have the burning desire to head for the nearest mall, while others forsake their perfectly good kitchens and go outside to burn their food.



Still others get the uncontrollable urge to dig in the yard or its environs. If you're one of these unfortunates, please dig carefully. You see, many utilities, such as gas, water, telephone and electricity, are buried underground now. There's a very real danger that you may dig into a buried underground power line while burrowing in your yard, or along a roadside. Such an event could spoil your entire day and maybe the rest of your life.

Seriously, we urge you to be very careful when getting ready to dig. Unless you are absolutely sure there are no underground pipes or cables around, call first. Not to be terribly picky, but the law actually requires you to be sure you aren't going to have what's known as a "dig-in." The law is not intended to keep you from planting a tree or digging a hole for a new basement. Its main purpose is to assign financial responsibility, and it states that the one who digs into a utility line is the one who's going to pay for any damage and repairs that such a dig-in causes. If that won't motivate you to pick up the phone and dial the toll-free number, nothing will.

Fortunately, there are two easy ways to avoid such problems, and, as mentioned, both involve simple phone calls. Several of the electric cooperatives in Illinois are members of JULIE, or Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators.

JULIE is a not-for-profit corporation that provides contractors, excavators, homeowners and others "who may be disturbing the earth," as they put it, with a free locating service through a toll-free phone call.

Also known as the "Illinois One Call System," JULIE was formed in 1974 by owners and operators of underground utility facilities to reduce damage to their pipes, cables and wires.

If you're a member of one of the co-ops served by JULIE, call (800) 892-0123, at least two days before the urge to dig overpowers you.

JULIE co-ops in Illinois are: Jo-Carroll Electric, Elizabeth; Corn Belt Electric, Bloomington; Shelby Electric, Shelbyville; Coles-Moultrie Electric, Mattoon; Southwestern Electric, Greenville; Clinton County Electric, Breese; Tri-County Electric, Mt. Vernon; and Monroe County Electric; Waterloo.

If you're a member of any of the other electric co-ops, you'll need to call their office before digging, and they'll send someone out to locate any of their lines. Be sure to allow them some time. They'll be glad to help you, and they'll appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Plant trees the right way

Your electric cooperative encourages you to plant trees, but not near power lines.

Help us serve you better. Plant tall varieties (like maple, oak, spruce or pine) away from power lines. Or plant a shorter variety (redbud, dogwood, crabapple). Then, with proper pruning, you'll enjoy beautiful trees that won't endanger lines — or lives.

Good for *all* Illinois.

An affirmative action, equal opportunity employer

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd. Manager Wattles introduced Tom Byers of Rural Development who made a presentation concerning Rural Development Loan and Grant Program for Economic Development.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held January 26, 1998.

Accepted 7 new members for service.

Canceled 13 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of January, 1998 presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved the list of work orders for the month of January, 1998 in the amount of $9,361.82 and **Authorized** Manager Wattles to present the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meeting from Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent AIEC meeting from Trustee Cammon.

Declined membership in Touchstone Energy.

Approved a refund of Capital Credits to the estate of deceased member James Summers pursuant to Cooperative Policy.

Appointed as directors for Soyland from this Cooperative, Manager Wattles and Trustee Dunigan and alternate director Trustee Cammon.

Appointed as voting delegate to NRECA annual meeting, Trustee Henson and alternate Trustee Poehler.

Appointed as voting delegate to CFC annual meeting, Trustee Poehler and alternate Trustee Henson.

Appointed as voting delegate to the ICWCG annual meeting, Manager Wattles.

Accepted the disbursement list for January, 1998.

Advised of upcoming education programs for the good of the board.

Declined participation in 1998 Supplemental Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

Advised of upcoming NRECA Legislative Conference by Manager Wattles.

Approved the date of September 3, 1998 for the Annual Meeting of Members and Directed Manager Wattles to make necessary arrangements.

Approved write-offs totaling $2,055.84 and **Directed** Attorney Todd to write collection on all such accounts.

Authorized Manager Wattles to make application for the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program.

Adjournment.

Office closing

Your cooperative office will be closed Monday, May 25, in observance of the Memorial Day holiday. The cooperative office will open for normal business hours on Tuesday, May 26.

Remember: To report outages after hours, weekends and holidays, please call (800) 582-9012.

Sign up for grain drying rate

Are you signed up for the grain drying rate? Special rate offered for grain drying usage Sept. 1 through Nov. 30, 1998. Deadline for special rate is Aug. 15 for the full three month rate. Check your Clay Electric bill stub to see if the rate code is 11 or 12. If it is 11 or 12 you are already on the rate and *do not* have to reapply.

Call (618) 662-2171 to inquire about the rate.

Focusing on what matters — the consumer

The consumer comes first. That is the driving motivation behind Clay Electric Co-operative's work. It doesn't take a lot of fancy words to understand the difference between your local electric cooperative and other utility companies that want to provide energy services to you.

Simply put, if something — a policy, a service, a way of doing business — is good for the member-consumers, then it is good for the electric co-op, too. Contrast this philosophy with that of the big power companies. Making a profit is first and foremost with them. That's all well and good — unless there is a clash between profits for the company, and serving consumers and their communities.

When that happens, guess who wins? Whom would you rather have serving you? An investor-owned utility that exists to take money out of your pocket and out of the community? Or would you rather get your electricity from your electric cooperative that is in business to serve you and help you keep your hard-earned dollars in your pocket and your community?

The choice is simple because the philosophy of Clay Electric Co-operative is simple: Member-consumers *are* the co-op, so if it's good for them, it has to be good for the co-op itself.

However, the reasons your electric cooperative looks out for your interests better than a big power company goes way beyond differences in business philosophy. The men and women who work for you at your cooperative are in a better position to protect your interests in the debate over the future of the electric utility industry. Why? They live and work in the same community you do, and they are attuned to paying attention to what you are saying. And, your electric cooperative is run by an elected board of directors — your friends and neighbors — who have a duty to put consumers first.

Today, Americans all across the nation are beginning to realize just how special and unique cooperative businesses can be in finding solutions to local problems and needs. As the laws governing how utility companies operate continue to change in state after state, consumers are discovering that the best way to find solutions to community problems is to empower themselves to solve those problems. That's a cooperative way of getting a job done — it puts the member-consumer first.

Nearly 60 years ago, hard-working families in your community teamed up and organized Clay Electric to bring electric power to their homes and businesses. The big power companies had turned their backs and refused to help because they didn't believe there was money to be made. Your needs as a consumer did not come first — the interest of the power company came first.

Today, it seems cooperative businesses across the nation are becoming more popular. People are weary of dealing with distant corporations and are frustrated with inattentive, large bureaucracies. And, they want to feel that they are more than just a statistic.

In fact, national research confirms that electric cooperatives nationwide get far better ratings on service than any other group of utility companies. We are recognized for our local orientation, our attention to detail and, primarily, putting you — our consumers — ahead of all other priorities. In research recently conducted for electric cooperatives, 85 percent of member-consumers said their electric co-op is "providing quality service," and 80 percent said it is "being responsive to customers." Furthermore, 69 percent agreed that co-ops are responsive and close to the community.

These results of this research should not be surprising. I have found electric cooperatives to be businesses where honesty, integrity and cooperation are the norm. That's because member-consumers are the cooperative, and the driving force behind everything the cooperative does is the consumer. At Clay Electric Co-operative, the consumer comes first — and that means you.

Energy-saving tips for your kitchen

Have you exhausted your little bag of tricks that help you cut energy costs? Never assume you've thought of everything! Your electric co-op offers the following tips on how to cut energy use — and costs — in the kitchen:

- Do you own gas appliances? Look for blue flames — yellow flames mean the gas is burning inefficiently and needs adjustment.
- If possible, use small electric pans or toaster ovens for small meals rather than your large stove or oven. A toaster oven uses one-third to one-half the energy of a regular oven.
- Use pressure cookers and microwave ovens whenever it is convenient to do so. They can save energy by significantly reducing cooking time.
- If you cook with electricity, turn off the burners and/or oven several minutes before you're done cooking. The heating element stays hot long enough to finish the job without using more electricity.

If you need more energy-saving tips, contact your electric co-operative. Your co-op will be glad to help you find ways to reduce your monthly energy bill.

Geothermal fits right in with Arbor Day, Earth Day

Arbor Day and Earth Day remind us of the importance of energy conservation and reducing pollution. Planting trees and conserving existing resources are both excellent ways to preserve the earth.

Anyone who has access to electricity also has access to a way to save energy and money — big time. A geothermal system is probably the most earth-friendly solution to the problem of heating and cooling your home. It can also take care of about half your water heating needs.

If you stop to consider that heating, air conditioning and water heating together make up the second-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in North America, you'll realize that a better way to heat and cool would help in reducing such gases. While the jury's still out on greenhouse gases and their effect on climate change, the simple fact that geothermal is so energy efficient is enough to recommend it. Think of the great savings as your major reason to go geothermal, and environmental benefits as the frosting on the cake.

Strangely enough, geothermal is a form of solar heating and cooling, without all the big unsightly collectors and exotic, temperamental hardware.

Instead, sunlight on the earth's surface is the key. A geothermal system uses earth-stored energy in partnership with safe, clean electricity, to offer a hard-to-beat way to heat and cool your home.

The heart of the system is essentially a heat pump with a difference: but what a difference! The average air-to-air heat pump is essentially a reversible system that removes heat from your home in the summer and expels it to the outside air. It does the opposite in the winter.

If the air-to-air heat pump has a disadvantage, it's that it starts losing its efficiency at about 10 degrees F., so you have to rely on a backup heat source to make up the difference.

A geothermal system doesn't have that disadvantage. It draws its heat or coolness from a liquid-filled grid of plastic piping buried 5-6 feet underground. Once you get about 5 feet below the surface of the earth, the temperature in Illinois is a fairly consistent 55 degrees F., the year around.

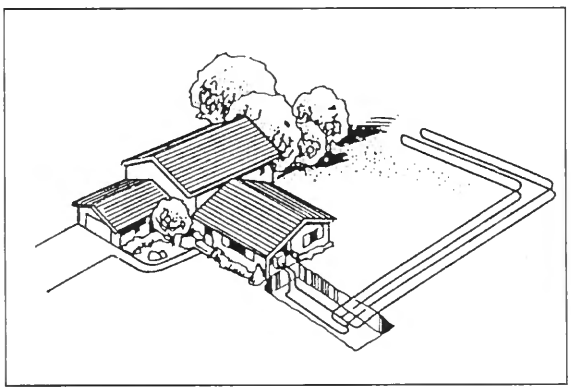
Instead of having to deal with 90-degree air in the summer, or -10 degree air in the winter, the unit is dealing with a 55-degree medium, which it handles very efficiently.

Many closed-loop systems are trenched horizontally in the yard around the home, and this is where a lot of the expense of a geothermal system goes. A pond or well will work, too. It is like burying a giant radiator in the gound.

If you don't have room for a horizontal loop, you can have a well — or wells — drilled. If you need to have your yard trenched, it's usually no big problem. The trenches are about 6 inches wide, and a simple reseeding will take care of the disturbed lawn. The pipes have no adverse affect on plants above them.

A big plus is that the heart of the unit is installed inside the house, in a garage, storage closet or crawl space, where it's protected from the elements. That prolongs the life of the unit. It is very quiet because there is no outside condensor fan.

While geothermal units seem too good to be true, they do have one disadvantage. They're relatively expensive to install because of the trenching or well drilling needed.



But don't let that deter you. A geothermal unit will save you so much money on your heating, cooling and water-heating costs it will pay for itself much sooner than any other kind of system.

And, since geothermal heat pumps don't burn fossil fuels, they don't give off harmful gases. That's good for you, and it's good for the environment, too.

Talk to the people at your local electric co-op. They'll be glad to tell you about the benefits of a geothermal heat pump.

DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

As the planting season winds down, details weigh on your mind . . . money, weather, factors vital to your livelihood. The most important concern, though, is safety. Tragedy can occur in that flash of an instant when you let your guard down — taking a short cut, overlooking basic safety rules. To ensure future planting seasons, always work the safe way.

- Watch out for overhead power lines.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment.
- make sure helpers are familiar with equipment they are using.
- Shut off power before fixing or unclogging machines.
- Keep extended machinery away from power pole guy wires.
- Keep shields in place.

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES OF ILLINOIS

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

High school students from across Illinois met their state legislators in Springfield during "Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day" on Wednesday, April 22. Six area students representing Clay Electric Co-operative, Flora, met with Senator William L. O'Daniel at the State Capitol. The 250 students and chaperones also toured the Illinois Supreme Court, the State Capitol, Old State Capitol and the Executive Mansion. Representing Clay Electric were, from left, Keith Gibson of Flora, Shannon Waggoner of Clay City, Amber Connell of Flora, Sen. O'Daniel, Michael Cash of Mason, Jamie Harvel of Clay City, Stephenie Fleener of Louisville, and Doug Hockman, chaperone. The day's activities were sponsored by the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois.

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Feb. 23, 1998.

Accepted 15 new members for service.

Canceled 22 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of February 1998, presented by Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent Soyland meeting from Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent AIEC meeting from Trustee Cammon.

Approved readoption of NRECA SELECTRE Plan effective January 1998.

Directed Manager Wattles to take all necessary action with RUS to secure approval to enter into a guarantee on behalf of Soyland for the purchase of the Illinois Power Buy-out.

Accepted the disbursement list for February, 1998.

Declined participation in AIEC market study.

Adjournment.

Budget billing offered

If you're on a tight budget or income, you may want to try our budget billing program. Clay Electric Co-operative offers a fixed budget plan. The amount of the budget will be computed based on the applicant's previous twelve months billing history. If there is not twelve months history, members are not eligible for budget billing.

The next budget billing year will be for the period of June 1998 through May 1999.

Budget billing accounts will be reviewed in October 1998 and February 1999 and at this time your account will be reviewed to either increase or decrease your budget amount based on your actual usage.

May is the catch-up month. The applicant will pay the May actual bill.

The applicant may cancel the agreement at any time by notifying Clay Electric and agreeing to remit the total of electric bill rendered from the time forward, when due. At the time of cancellation, the applicant further agrees to pay in full any arrears charges that may be due on said account.

If you are interested in budget billing, please contact the office. There is a budget agreement that needs to be completed before you can be enrolled in the budget billing program. The deadline for sign-up will be by the tenth of each month. Don't delay — take full advantage of our budget billing program now.

Call the billing department at (618) 662-2171.

Standby power: Insurance against Mother Nature

Buying a standby generator is like buying fire insurance—you may never need it, but it is invaluable when trouble hits.

Although our electrical system is highly dependable and reliable, it is subject to the whims of Mother Nature.

How well are you prepared to handle a prolonged outage? Now is the time to take inventory of your home and farm. Determine how you would pump water, move grain, keep pipes from freezing, and provide heat and ventilation for livestock. How will you heat your home and keep foods from spoiling?

Now is the time to inventory your electrical needs. Assume you will experience long outages that could cause you inconvenience and financial loss. The cooperative does not sell standby generators, but we do have personnel to help you analyze your load and make recommendations. And remember, standby generators are not normally stocked in any quantity, so don't plan on buying one after an outage occurs.

Remember, too, the installation of standby equipment requires a positive double-throw switch. Operating a standby generator without one is extremely dangerous and could result in financial liability.

Let us help you guard against any of those acts of God no one can foresee.

Rent a high-pressure sodium security light

Rent a high-pressure sodium, 150-watt security light from Clay Electric Co-operative for only $2.50 per month, and protect your home and family.

Proper lighting at night improves the security of your property and protects it from vandalism and thefts. Falls and other injuries can also be avoided by lighting dark areas.

For more information, call Clay Electric Co-operative at (618) 662-2171 during regular office hours.

Office closing

Clay Electric Co-operative's office will be closed Monday, May 25 in observance of Memorial Day.

The cooperative office will resume normal business hours on Tuesday, May 26.

As June rolls around, we need to think safety

June is Safety Month, and while we should practice safety the year around, we might be wise to use the month to recommit ourselves to safe practices in and around the home, much as we use the beginning of a new year to work on self-improvement.

Let us hope we are more successful with safety than with New Year's resolutions.

While we tend to deal with electrical safety most often on this page, it is important to review all kinds of home safety occasionally, and these tips are intended to remind you of the many hazards in the modern household. You may be able to think of more.

Do you have smoke detectors? If not, run out and get some. They're your first line of defense in saving you and your family from fire, and they're very inexpensive. Make it a point to check your batteries twice a year, when you change your clocks back and forth for daylight-saving time.

While not very common, carbon monoxide detectors are being installed in more and more homes, and you should get one if you have any fuel-burning appliances. They are more important now than they were in the past, because homes tend to be tighter, and the natural ventilation that used to provide air exchanges is no longer there.

Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters, or GFCIs, are also an important part of home safety. Like smoke detectors, they are recognized as being so important that they're now required by law in new construction, in kitchens, bathrooms and for outdoor electrical outlets. Unfortunately, they're uncommon in even fairly new homes, and they offer enough protection that you might want to talk to an electrician about having some put in your home. They're intended to protect you from shock or electrocution if you come in contact with a faulty circuit or appliance.

There are some on the market that can be used with existing wiring, and you'd be wise to invest in some of them until you can get your home wired. Some extension cords intended for outdoor use have them built into one end, and you can buy plug-in units to use in kitchen and bathroom receptacles.

Be sure to have an emergency evacuation plan, so all family members can escape in the event of a fire. Have a designated place to meet outside, so nobody goes back in to look for someone who may be perfectly safe but out of view. Practice your plan, especially if you have children.

It's a good idea to have fire extinguishers where you can get at them, and near an exit. If firefighting efforts fail, it's important to be able to get away from smoke and flames. A multipurpose dry chemical ABC extinguisher is best for general home use.

Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit handy, and be sure the contents are up-to-date, since some medications have expiration dates. Make sure family members know how to use the kit. First aid kits should be checked periodically for expiration dates and to restock those items which are missing from prior use.

It's important to get help quickly in an emergency, and one good way to do that is to have a list of emergency telephone numbers posted near every phone in your home. If you have children, teach them to dial emergency numbers. And stress that they should not dial emergency numbers unless there's a real emergency!

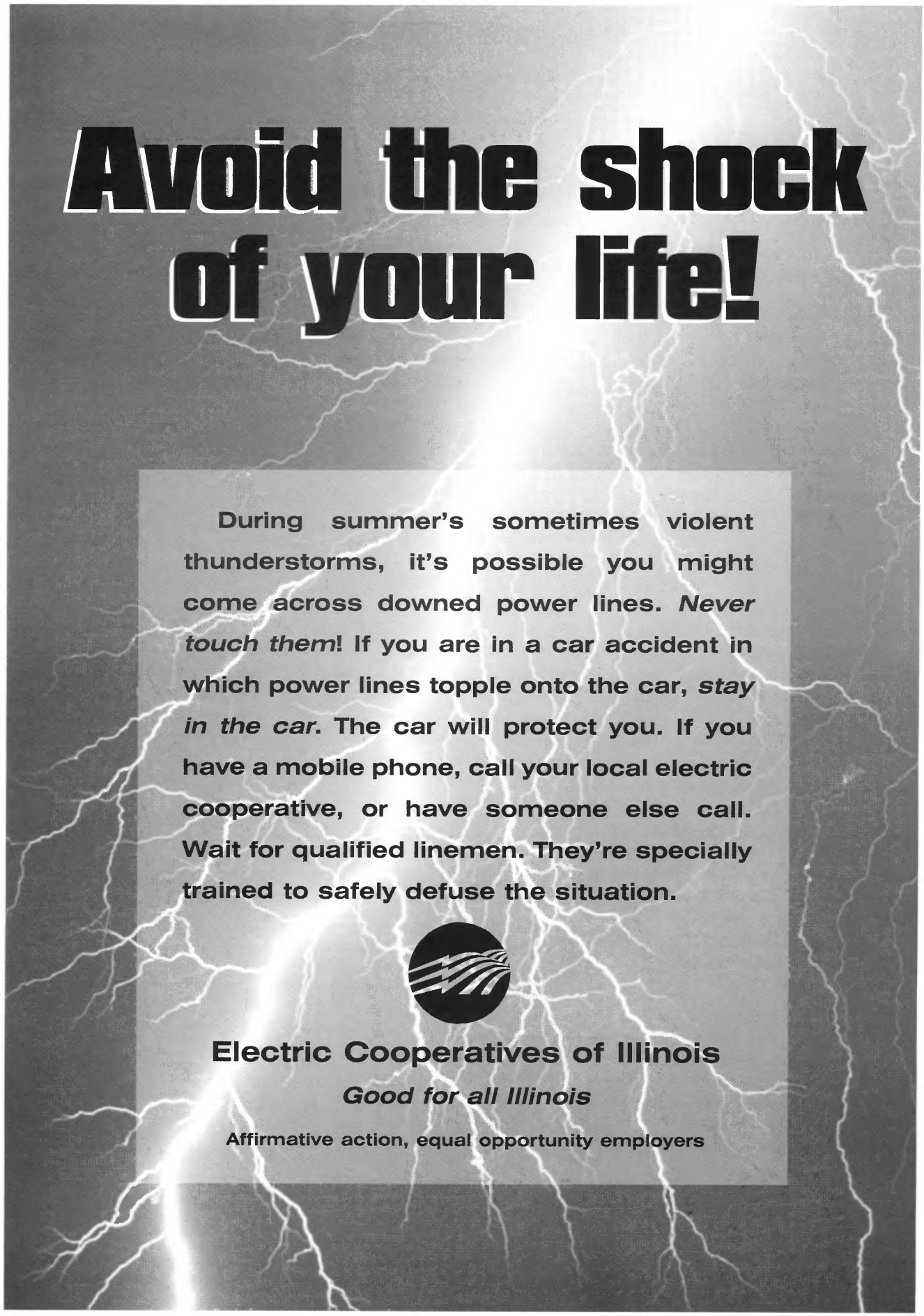
While it's nearly impossible, make a special effort to keep flashlights handy, and try to keep the batteries current. You may want to change them out when you check your smoke detector batteries. It's a good idea to have at least one flashlight for each bedroom. Since kids tend to find flashlights terribly fascinating, get toy ones for them, and tell them they can use them any way they want to, but that the real flashlights are off limits. That doesn't always work, but it's worth a try.

Know how to shut off all the energy sources coming into your home. Put a tag on the valves for gas, oil, water and electricity, and know how to shut them off safely. Some valves take a special wrench, and it's a good idea to have one taped to the pipe leading to the house, or kept in a similarly handy location. Know how to use them.

An emergency kit is essential in Illinois homes, because of the danger, nearly any time of the year, that the weather will do something very unpleasant. Tornadoes can strike at any time, and lesser windstorms can also cause prolonged power outages. Winter storms can do the same thing, and cold weather may be life-threatening. And there's always the possibility, however remote, of a flood or earthquake.

Your emergency kit should include a battery-powered radio (keep fresh batteries, too), a flashlight, clothing and bedding, non-perishable food that needs minimal preparation, containers of water and a first-aid kit. During winter time, you may want to have a portable space heater that burns kerosene, butane or propane, just to be on the safe side.

We're sure you can think of more, but the main thing is to get started planning now — don't wait for New Year's day!


Avoid the shock of your life!
During summer's sometimes violent thunderstorms, it's possible you might come across downed power lines. *Never touch them*! If you are in a car accident in which power lines topple onto the car, *stay in the car*. The car will protect you. If you have a mobile phone, call your local electric cooperative, or have someone else call. Wait for qualified linemen. They're specially trained to safely defuse the situation.
Electric Cooperatives of Illinois
Good for all Illinois
Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles, Cooperative Attorney Todd and Richard McCracken of Federated Insurance.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held March 23, 1998.

Accepted 12 new members for service.

Canceled 13 members no longer receiving service.

Heard a presentation by Mr. McCracken concerning the cooperative's insurance coverage.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of March, 1998 presented by Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent Soyland and AIEC meetings.

Approved list of work orders totaling $15,774.41 and authorized Manger Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Reviewed the audit as prepared by Quint-Dreyer & Co. and following discussion thereof the same was **accepted**.

Approved a refund of Capital Credits to the estates of deceased member Roy Kitley and Charles Eash pursuant to cooperative policy.

Approved one contract for purchase of power in the form presented.

Reviewed bids for the cooperative's insurance coverage.

Accepted the bid of Federated Insurance for the cooperative's insurance coverage.

Approved the formal resolution for guaranteeing Soyland Power Cooperative buyout of the IP opt-out fee for the purchase power contract.

Accepted the disbursement list for March 1998.

Appointed Manager Wattles as delegate and Mike Winka as alternate delegate to the United Utilities Service Supply Companies annual meeting.

Adjournment..

Rent a high-pressure sodium security light

Rent a high-pressure sodium, 150-watt security light from Clay Electric Co-operative for only $2.50 per month, and protect your home and family.

Proper lighting at night improves the security of your property and protects it from vandalism and thefts. Falls and other injuries can also be avoided by lighting dark areas.

For more information, call
Clay Electric Co-operative at
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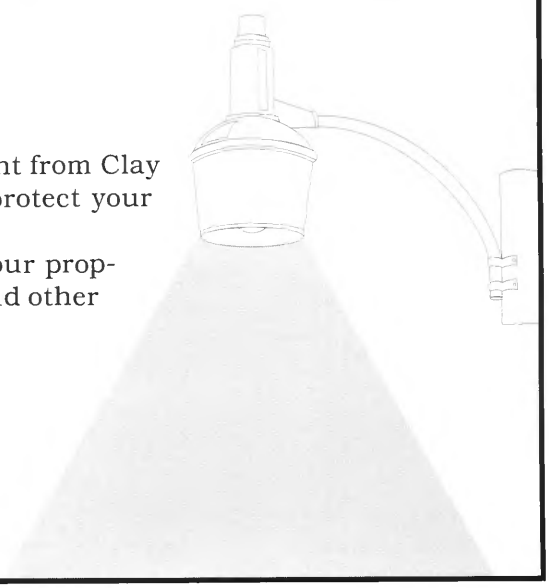
during regular office hours.



Demystifying the Deregulation Debate

Are you confused by all the technical terms, acronyms and references to government agencies being thrown around regarding deregulation of the electric utility industry? (Perhaps "reregulation" is a more accurate word since industry regulations won't disappear under any scenario, regardless of whether regulatory changes occur at the federal, state or federal *and* state levels.) Here is a primer to help you, the electric consumer, keep it all straight.

access charge - A charge levied on power supplied, or its customer, for access to a utility's transmission or distribution system. It is a charge for the right to send electricity over another's wires.

direct access - the ability of retail customers to purchase commodity electricity directly from the wholesale market rather than through a local distribution utility.

distribution - The delivery of electricity to the retail customer's home or business through low-voltage distribution lines.

electric cooperative - A member-owned electric utility company that distributes electricity on a non-profit basis. As with other cooperative businesses, any margin is returned to the consumers according to the amount of business conducted with the cooperative.

Embedded Costs Exceeding Market Prices (ECEMP) or stranded costs - Embedded costs of utility investments exceeding market prices are: costs incurred pursuant to a regulatory or contractual obligation; costs that are reflected in cost-based rates; and cost-based rates that exceed the price of alternatives in the market place. ECEMPs may become "stranded costs" where they exceed the amount that can be recovered through the asset's sale.

EPAct - The Energy Policy Act of 1992.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) - Established by Congress in 1977, FERC regulates the price, terms and conditions of power sold in interstate commerce and regulates the price, terms and conditions of all transmission services. For example, it sets and enforces the wholesale rates that investor-owned utilities charge rural electric co-ops and other wholesale customers; also licenses hydroelectric projects. Part of the Department of Energy, but functions independently.

FPA - Federal Power Act of 1935. It establishes guidelines for federal regulation of interstate energy sales and is the primary statute governing the FERC regulation of the electric industry.

generation company (Genco) - An entity that operates electricity generating plants. The Genco may own the generation plants or interact with short-term market on behalf of plant owners. A "G&T" is a generation and transmission electric cooperative. G&Ts are owned by member distribution cooperatives.

grid - A system of interconnected high-voltage transmission lines and power-generating facilities that allows bulk-power suppliers to share resources on a regional basis. This system provides emergency generation and transmission.

independent power producer (IPP) - A private entity that generates electricity and sells it to other businesses, including utilities.

investor-owned utility (IOU) - A stockholder-owned power company that generates and distributes electric energy for a profit.

municipal - Electric distribution system owned by a city to provide service for its residents.

power marketing administrations (PMAs) - The umbrella term for four federally owned PMAs that sell power produced at federal hydropower projects, giving first priority to consumer-owned systems such as co-ops or municipals and making that power available at the cost of production.

Public Utilities Holding Company Act (PUHCA) - Federal legislation dating from the Great Depression designed to control corporate activities of investor-owned utilities.

Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA) - One of the five parts of the National Energy Act passed by Congress in 1978. It is concerned with voluntary rate standards, cogeneration, small hydro loans, interconnections and wheeling, and other regulated utility activities.

retail wheeling - A system in which individual retail electric customers are allowed to choose their electric supplier. Also known as retail competition.

rural electrification - A term used to describe the introduction of electricity to rural areas unserved by power companies until then.

Rural Utilities Service (RUS) - The U.S. Department of Agriculture agency that lends money to the nation's consumer-owned electric and telephone cooperatives and offers engineering and account assistance.

service area - The geographic region that a utility is required to serve, or has the exclusive right to serve, in supplying electricity to the ultimate consumer.

stranded benefits - Public interest programs and goals that could be compromised or abandoned by a restructured electric industry. These potential "stranded benefits" might include environmental protection, fuel diversity, energy efficiency, low-income rate payer assistance, and other types of socially beneficial programs.

transmission system - All the lines, poles and other equipment used to move bulk electricity from a generating plant to a distribution system.

unbundling - Refers to the requirement that a utility separate the operations of generation, transmission and distribution of electricity. An unbundled electric bill would list all costs associated with providing electricity to the consumer.

wheeling - Transmitting bulk electricity from a generating plant to a distribution system across a third system's lines.

wholesale customer - A power purchaser that buys for resale to retail customers. ■

Be alert! 'Tis the season to be tornadoed!

The weather this year has been odd, to say the least, and it's not unreasonable to expect the tornado season to be odd, too. In Illinois, the towns of Mattoon and Bath have already experienced severe damage. While we hope the worst is over, it still makes good sense to prepare.

Although peak storm activity occurs during April, May and June — in a normal year — tornadoes can blow in any time. And while most take place between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., they can form at any time; late night storms seem to be the norm this year.

There are two different kinds of warnings involving tornadoes. A tornado watch simply means that the weather is getting rotten and that a tornado may develop if things get worse. You can go about your normal business if you keep an eye on the weather.

This might be the time to stash a few items in the safest place in your house, such as a flashlight, battery-powered radio and blankets and pillows to cover yourself, for protection.

A tornado warning means that the weather has gotten dangerous, and that it's time to seek shelter in that safe (relatively) little nest you prepared earlier. Warnings aren't issued unless a tornado shows up on radar, or one has actually been sighted.

If you hear a warning, go to your basement. That's by far the safest place. In many homes, a stairwell or inside hallway on the lowest floor will be the safest place. Get into a closet, if you need to.

If you're in a public building, look for a designated shelter. Normally, there'll be one in an interior area on the lowest floor. Stay away from outside walls, doors and windows. Stay out of large rooms, such as gyms, and avoid parked vehicles.

If you're outside when a tornado comes, head for the nearest shelter. If you're caught out in the open, lie down in the nearest ditch or depression, preferably away from trees and power lines. Since flying debris is a major cause of tornado deaths and injuries, cover your head as well as you can.

If you're in your car, get out and find shelter, if there is any at all. Otherwise, lie flat in a depression. Don't try to outrun a tornado in your car.

One of the worst possible places to be in the event of a tornado is in a mobile home. You're well advised to leave one immediately if you hear a tornado warning and take your chances in the best shelter you can find. Experts agree that you're better off in a ditch or small depression than in a mobile home.

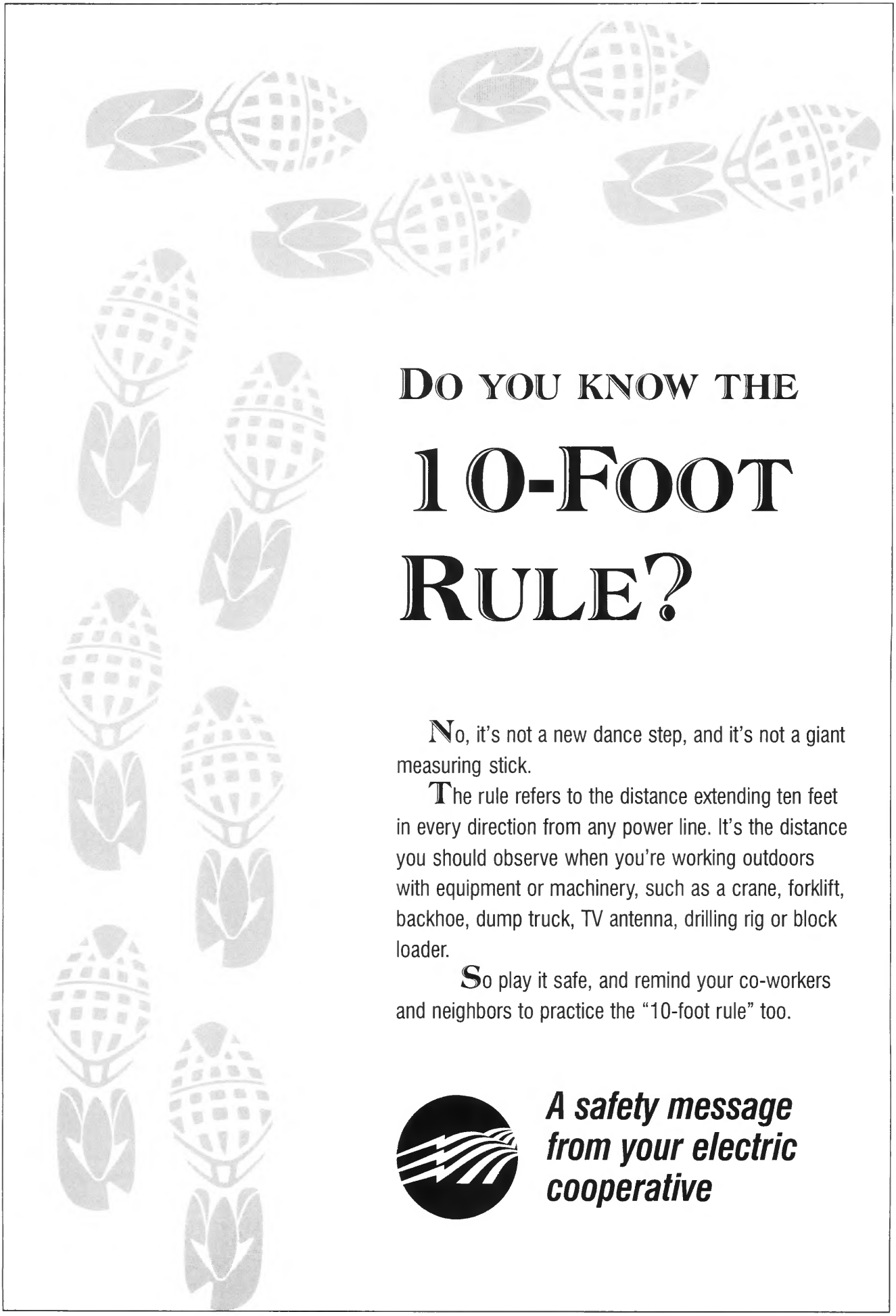
Incidentally, some areas require that you have tie-downs on your mobile home. You might be wise to check into the possibility of having a tie down kit installed. But remember: While they'll help against severe windstorms, they still won't keep a full-blown tornado from shredding your mobile home.

If you're stuck in a tornado-prone area and a house without a basement, there is an option you may look into. Years ago, it was common practice to have a small storm shelter out in the yard, usually about half underground and mounded over. As more and more homes were built with basements, they fell out of favor.

And some weather watchers tell us that the weather between the end of World War II and about 1990 was more stable than we had any right to expect. It was, in short, an aberration. Perhaps the odd weather we've been having the last few years isn't odd at all, but the norm. If that's the case, more people may well need some form of storm shelter, and if a basement isn't a viable option, maybe one of the little outside shelters would be a life saver.

If you have a mobile home, and no access to a better form of protection, you may want to give some thought to building a shelter.

Whatever the case, with the weather the way it's been lately, you'll be wise to keep a special eye out for watches and warnings. We may have a lot of them yet this year.



DO YOU KNOW THE 10-FOOT RULE?

No, it's not a new dance step, and it's not a giant measuring stick.

The rule refers to the distance extending ten feet in every direction from any power line. It's the distance you should observe when you're working outdoors with equipment or machinery, such as a crane, forklift, backhoe, dump truck, TV antenna, drilling rig or block loader.

So play it safe, and remind your co-workers and neighbors to practice the "10-foot rule" too.

A safety message from your electric cooperative

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held April 27.

Accepted 14 new members for service.

Canceled 12 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of April 1998 presented by Manager Wattles.

Received report of recent Soyland and AIEC meetings from Manager Wattles and Trustee Cammon.

Approved list of work orders totaling $8,571.59 and authorized Manager Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Approved two contracts for purchase of power in the form presented.

Accepted the disbursement list for April 1998.

Advised about May safety meeting and its topics presented by Paul Schwarz, interim safety man from AIEC.

Advised about a reported injury to an employee.

Were **presented** with information by Manager Wattles for review and discussion at the June board meeting concerning rebates and appliances.

Adjournment.

The week of June 12-19 was a memorable one for two area youths. The students spent a week exploring Washington, D.C., meeting with Illinois congressional leaders and learning about government during the annual "Youth to Washington" tour, sponsored by the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois. Stephenie Fleener of Louisville and Jamie Harvel of Clay City represented Clay Electric Co-operative, Flora. They met with Congressman Glenn Poshard on Capitol Hill and were among 62 rural youth leaders selected for the trip. In addition to the Capitol, students also explored Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Museums, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial, the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia and a number of other historical sites. Pictured are (l-r): Fleener, Congressman Poshard and Harvel.

Be sure to attend your

Annual Meeting

Thursday, September 3

at Charley Brown Park, Flora
Registration and meal, 6 p.m.
Business meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Hope to see you there!

Enron Corp. hits a bump in the road

Enron Corp.'s quest for world domination has hit a detour.

The Houston-based energy marketer, which has entered competitive retail electricity markets across the country with great fanfare, announced April 23 that it had pulled out of California's residential market. It also announced that it would suspend plans to enter residential markets in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Enron Energy Services Chairman Lou Pai complained that a lack of interest and confusion among California residential customers led to Enron's decision to abruptly pull out just three weeks after the state officially deregulated its electricity market.

That, combined with a three-month delay in opening the California market and adverse publicity involving several other would-be power marketers, took a lot of steam out of Enron's $10 million retail power venture. Despite promises of two free weeks of electric power and other incentives, Enron attracted just 30,000 residential customers to its program — at an average cost of more than $330 per customer.

The number defied Enron's own market research, which indicated that it could capture up to 10 percent of residential market.

"This is a lesson that Enron may have to learn 50 times over — once for each state — when it comes to residential customers, "said NRECA chief Executive Officer Glenn English. "It is an unfortunate, yet perfect example of what happens when you don't have the consumer's best interest at heart. Electric co-ops do. It's what defines us."

Reaction in California was mixed. California Public Utilities Commissioner Gregory Conlon called Enron's decision "premature," noting that customers would be more likely to switch suppliers during summer, when usage and bills are highest.

But state Sen. Steve Peace, who crafted the state's restructuring law, said Enron's decision proved that the state's newly created Power Exchange was a success. "Holders of large amounts of cheap energy, like hydro, are now selling into the PX and not to Enron, creating little or no margin for profit for marketers like Enron," Peace told *Electric Power Daily*.

Not all is lost for Enron, though. While its retail program flopped, its efforts to attract customers attracted nearly $2 billion in deals.

But even there, Enron acknowledges the margin may not pan out. The legislatively mandated competitive transition charge, or CTC, to pay for stranded cost recovery may, in the long run, effectively prevent Enron from making money on those deals. Unless the CTC criteria changes, Pai said, it would be "nearly impossible" for retail suppliers such as Enron to make money in California.

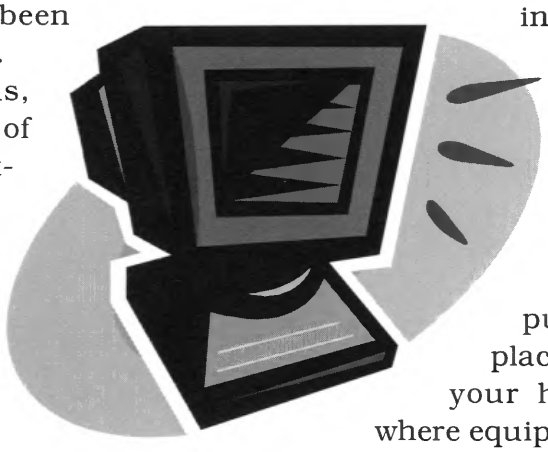
Our concern is that if this becomes the trend across the U.S. as states implement deregulation legislation, then the residential and small commercial users will not see savings or they will have to pick up lost revenues from large users who have the size to demand lower rates for themselves.

We will continue to keep you informed as events emerge about deregulation.

Fried appliances

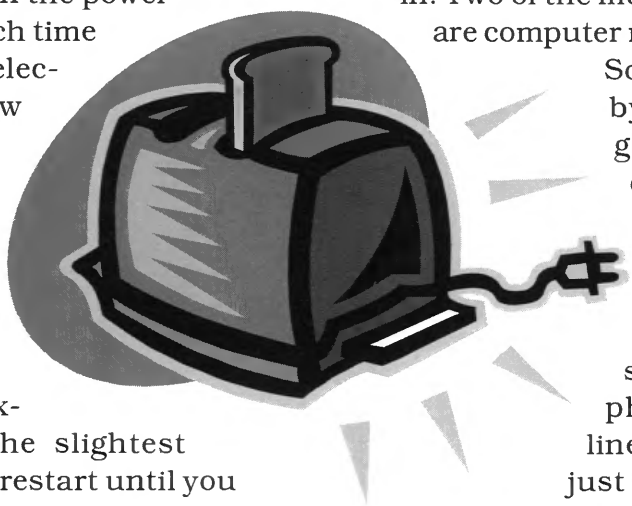
Why you need surge protection for your home

Some things are good fried. Others are not. Household appliances are a case in point. "What is a fried appliance?" you ask. It's one that has been zapped by a power surge.



If you're like most of us, you have a fair amount of money invested in computers, TVs, stereos, refrigerators, washers, clothes dryers and more. But are you protecting your equipment from power surges?

Years ago, clocks and the like were sturdy and robust. If the power went off, they just quit, and resumed when the power came back on. How much time was "missing" on your electric clock told you how long an outage had lasted. Momentary glitches, for the most part, went unnoticed.



But today's electronics and appliances are very sensitive — digital clocks, for example, will stop at the slightest provocation, and won't restart until you reset them.

And remember that *anything* you plug in can be damaged or destroyed by a power surge. A power surge is a brief, unpredictable increase in voltage that can enter your home through the power, telephone or cable television lines.

Your electric co-op is always working to maintain a high-quality supply of power to your home. However, there are several things that can cause power surges in the very best of electric utility systems. The most common one is lightning, but there are other causes, too. These include an object coming in contact with a power line as well as electric-powered equipment suddenly starting or taking extra power. If you have an appliance that causes lights to dim every time the motor starts, you've got power quality problems in your home.

Good surge protection puts up guards in several places: where electricity enters your home; inside your home where equipment is connected to electricity through outlets; on your incoming phone lines; and on your television lead-in. Two of the most often damaged items are computer modems and televisions. Sometimes this is caused by the lack of a common ground for telephone, cable TV and electrical services. Also, computer modems and televisions are often left unprotected from surges coming through phone lines and cable lines. Surge protection at just the electrical outlet is not enough.

A meter-based surge protector guards your home from power surges at the electrical service entrance. Plug-in devices for surge protection inside the home protect your equipment at the outlet stage, and at your telephone and antenna or cable TV lead-in.

Don't wait for a power surge to hit your home. Call your electric co-op today for information about power surge protection — they will be happy to help.

Farm Safety Week is Sept. 20-26

More than 30,000 collisions on public roads each year involve agricultural equipment. A motorist driving 50 mph has less than 10 seconds to react to a tractor 400 feet ahead that is traveling 15 mph. Watch for the triangular slow moving vehicle emblem. Farmers, be sure that faded emblems are replaced, positioned with the point up and clearly visible from the rear.

We urge farmers to renew their commitment to safety, and be extra careful when working around electric lines.

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Good for all Illinois

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All trustees were present, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held May 27, 1998.

Accepted 24 new members for service.

Canceled 12 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of May 1998, presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved list of work orders for April totaling $12,756.28 and authorized Manager Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland and AIEC meetings from Manager Wattles and Trustee Cammon.

Approved a refund of capital credits to the estate of deceased members, Clint and Opal Stipp, pursuant to cooperative policy.

Appointed H. Clifford Cammon as voting delegate and Edwin Henson as alternate voting delegate to the AIEC annual meeting.

Appointed Edwin Henson as the representative of this cooperative to the NRECA state meeting and H. Clifford Cammon as alternate representative to such meeting.

Appointed H. Clifford Cammon as director from this cooperative to the AIEC board for the ensuring year and Edwin Henson as alternate director.

Accepted the disbursement list for May 1998.

Approved write-offs totaling $1,706.16.

Authorized the purchase of a power washer.

Authorized the purchase of a copy machine.

Approved continuing the rebate program for geothermal units.

Appointed the following nominating committees:

District I
Henry D. Carter
Harvey Wattles
Darrel Birch
Cecil Sparling
Vernon Dewaine Wendling
Junior Habbe
Melvin O. West
Kenneth Fulfer, Jr.
Neil Gould
John R. Grove
James D. Wood

District IX
Ralph F. Marti
Roy Eubanks
George Burgess
Robert L. McCorkle
Fred Bayles
Robert L. Henson
James R. Smith
Bob L. Ragsdale
Gary D. Sessions
Francis Herman
Tony Luttrell

District III
Franklin Byers
Ronald Byers
Helen V. Smith
Raymond Scoles
Ardnel R. Steele
Robert Brewer
David Kuhns
Cecil G. Pilcher
Johnny W. Fender

Set the nominating committee meetings for July 13, 1998 at the cooperative office at the following times:

District IX	6:00 p.m.
District III	6:15 p.m.
District I	6:30 p.m.

Adjournment.

"Don't forget to attend your annual meeting"

Clay Electric Annual Meeting of Members
Charlie Brown Park, Thursday, Sept. 3, 1998

Meal and Registration 6 p.m.
Business Meeting 7 p.m.

Attention recipients of:

Medicaid, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal public housing assistance, or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).

You may be eligible for telephone installation charges up to $40 less than the standard cost. You may also be eligible for a $5.25 monthly reduction in the cost of basic local phone service.

Call your local telephone company and ask them if you qualify for Link-Up or Lifeline.

Link-Up and Lifeline are federally funded programs. Reimbursement for these programs depends on the FCC's Fund Administrator's management and distribution of the funds collected through universal service mechanisms.

Like it or not, there's still lots to do outside — carefully

For many of us, as winter draws to a close and spring arrives, we begin to look forward to getting outside, even if it's just to mow the lawn, do the trimming with our monofilament trimmers, pull weeds, and to do other chores around the yard. We get those urges because winter confinement and snow shoveling has warped our minds.

Unfortunately, the chores that look so fun in the first bloom of spring last well into the summer and fall. Many of us, by now, are a little less enthusiastic about yard work than we were just a few short months ago.

Still, those chores need to be done. Remember, there's always a certain amount of risk when dealing with power tools outdoors, or when working with ladders and poles near electric lines.

There are several things you can do to make your outdoor work safer, and some of the rules also apply to power tool activity. For example, you should inspect power tools before each use. to make sure they are in the same condition they were in when you put them away. Tools sometimes have a way of getting borrowed, broken, and returned, without you knowing about it, especially if you have children.

At any rate, be sure to look for frayed power cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housings. When using tools or power cords outdoors, be sure they're marked for use outside. And any time you're using power cords, be sure they're rated for a higher amperage than the tool they're powering. Always turn off a tool if its cord overheats.

A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is an important part of any circuit that is used outdoors, or where you may come into contact with water. GFCIs sense a fault in a current and can shut off that circuit in a fraction of a second, before it can do any real damage.

The National Electrical Safety Code, often referred to as "the code," requires GFCIs in newly constructed kitchens, bathrooms and outside receptacles. Safety experts strongly recommend that you have them retrofitted into older homes, too.

But they're especially important outdoors, where you're more likely to be standing on the ground and working in damp conditions. Working with electricity in wet conditions is not a good idea, GFCI or not. If you have outside outlets on your home, be sure they're weatherproof, and make sure that they're protected by a GFCI.

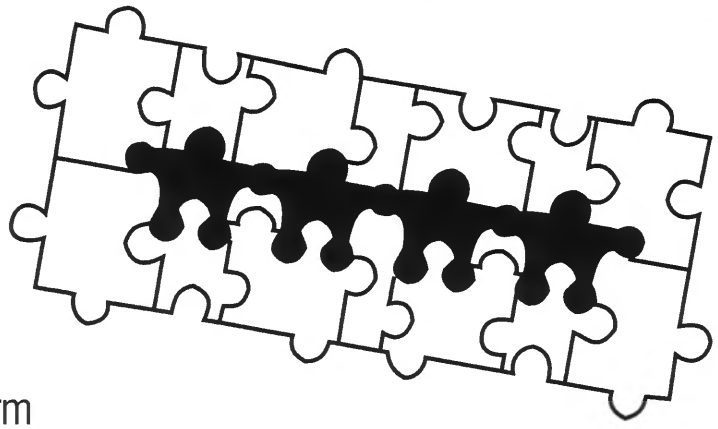
If you have an outlet and it's not protected, you can buy extension cords with such protection built in. They're not very expensive, and they offer a lot of protection.

As fall approaches and the urge to plant a tree overcomes you, be sure to look up — and down — before starting to dig that hole. Look up to be sure the tree you plant won't eventually grow into your lines, or those of your co-op. And look down, because more and more homes these days are being served by underground utilities. It wasn't all that long ago that you had one line coming into your house for electricity, a pipe for some kind of fuel, and water and sewer lines. Now you need to worry about electric lines, telephone lines, water lines, sewer lines, and maybe a couple of others. Be sure you know where they are before you dig. Digging into an electrical line could ruin your whole day, if not your whole life.

And while some lines are sturdy enough that your shovel isn't going to damage them very much, telephone and electric lines are sheathed in plastic and will break fairly easily. If you're using some kind of mechanical digger, you can do a lot of harm quickly.

The danger of dig-ins brings up an important safety point for the future: If you don't know where all your underground stuff is, find out, and draw a simple map spelling out all those locations. It may help you avoid dig-ins in the future. If the recent past is any indication, there's a good probability that there'll be more underground things going into your home, not less.

One reason they're called cooperatives



When weather is severe —*from ice storms to tornadoes* — your cooperative has assistance at the ready. Last year, as early as Halloween, an ice storm caused severe damage in the northern part of the state. How reassuring to know help was only a phone call away.

All 26 of Illinois' electric cooperatives participate in an emergency response program. When help is needed, available line crews from cooperatives across the state are dispatched to the trouble spots. Working together in perilous conditions, they combat the obstacles to restore electricity.

We salute the work of the cooperative employees — men and women who are our neighbors — who give meaning to the word *reliability*.

We get our power from you.

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Celebrating National Cooperative Month in October

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present, with the exception of Trustee Dunigan, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held June 22, 1998 and the special meeting held July 21, 1998.

Accepted 17 new members for service.

Canceled 17 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of June, 1998 presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved list of work orders for June totaling $3,853.69 and authorized Manager Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland and AIEC meetings from Manager Wattles and Trustee Henson.

Approved one power contract in the form as presented to this meeting.

Resolved and Authorized that this cooperative establish a line of credit and borrowing from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation subject to the provisions of the Line of Credit Agreement in the form as presented to this meeting.

Discussed upcoming AIEC annual meeting.

Discussion regarding the Board Governance proposal at Soyland with no affirmative action being taken.

Accepted the disbursement list for June, 1998.

Discussed upcoming NRECA Region V meeting.

Advised about AIEC Safety Instructor Doug Drake's recent safety meeting where he and the Line Personnel performed testing on all cooperative hot stick tools June 24, 1998.

Advised about AIEC Safety Instructor Roger Stegeman's recent safety meeting concerning OSHA required Pole Top rescue training, an accident at Western Resources, an underground accident at another cooperative and ladder safety July 16, 1998.

Were **Advised** of a reported sprained ankle by an employee during a rainstorm with negative x-ray results.

Adjournment.

Handle harvest with care

If you are handling loose, harvested grain, it is all too easy to get trapped in the grain — or even die of suffocation. Grain handling accidents happen very quickly, and flowing grain can draw in a person in seconds. If you are in a large wagon or a grain bin, you could become completely submerged in as little as 15 seconds.

A grain surface may appear solid, but it's not — a small opening in the unloading gate gives the entire surface the quality of quicksand. When kernels are removed from the bottom, kernels directly above rush in to fill the void, creating a fluid motion. Even if the grain flow is stopped, the danger is not over. It is very difficult to remove people from grain once they are trapped. For example, the force required to remove a person buried in grain can exceed 2,000 pounds — the same as lifting a small car.

Don't be a victim of suffocation when handling loose grain. Follow these safety tips:

- Lock out power to all types of grain-handling equipment. Disconnect power, and place locks over operating switches. This also helps discourage grain theft.
- Always use the buddy system when you are unloading or loading grain. Notify a second person of your whereabouts at all times, so that he/she can obtain help if necessary. Ideally, have a second person on site.
- Never permit children to ride in grain wagons or enter grain storage areas.
- Apply suffocation hazard decals to all grain wagons, grain bins and storage structures. Instruct everyone who handles grain about the danger of suffocation.
- Lock access doors to grain bins; limit access to the top of grain wagons.

Source: The National Ag Safety Database / Iowa State University Extension

A couple of degrees equals a bunch of dollars!!

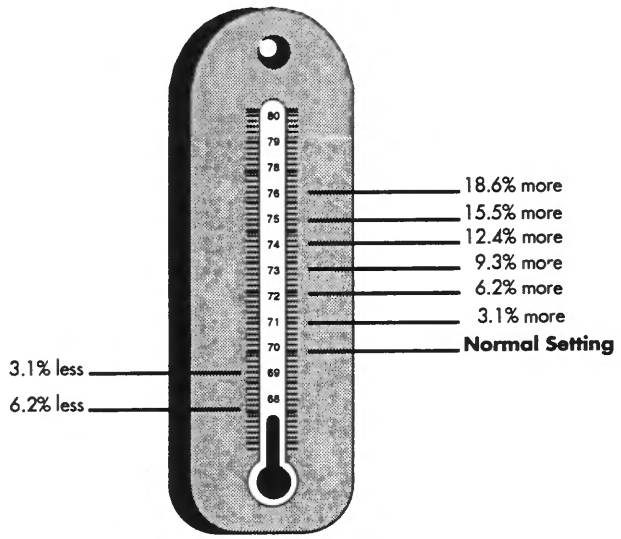
A degree here and a degree there and pretty soon you're talking real money! Lowering your thermostat by one or two degrees in the winter can mean real savings on your heating bills. Raising the temperature can also result in much larger heating bills.

For example, lowering your thermostat to 68° from 70° will save you 6.2 percent on your heating bill. Lowering the thermostat just one degree will save you 3.1 percent. However, let's say you like to keep your home toasty warm in the winter. Cranking up the thermostat to 76° will jack up your heating bill by 18.6 percent. Remember: each degree you raise or lower the thermostat from 70° means you will pay 3.1 percent more or less on your heating bill.

If you need more information on how to cut your winter heating bills, call your electric co-op for more assistance. As a not-for-profit electrc utility, your co-op will be happy to help you save money. As a member-consumer, it's your co-op.

Temperature settings affect heating operating costs

Cost of keeping room temperature above and below 70°.



Source: *The Hi-line News*, Meade County RECC

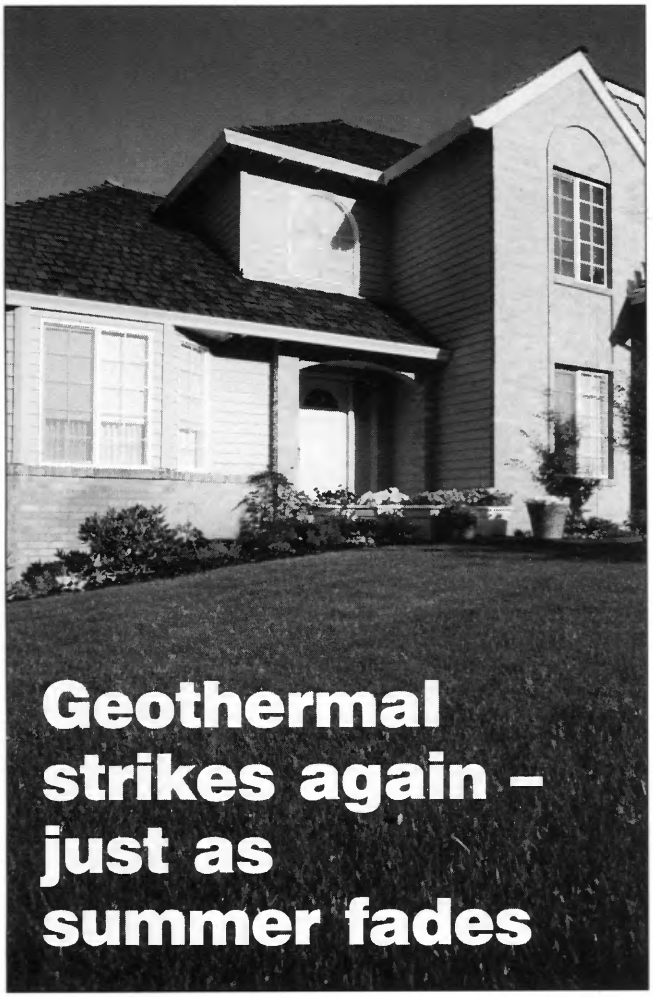
Tips on determining your true energy costs

Would you like to find out how much you are really spending on energy for your home or business? Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Energy for figuring your energy costs:

- Energy costs can vary greatly with the seasons. As a result, look at your energy costs on an annual basis over a 12-month period. Gather your electric and natural gas bills for one year and add them together. Remember to include bills for propane, oil, wood or other heating fuels that you may have purchased. (If you have a large oil storage tank that you seldom refill, you may need to add up several years worth of oil bills, and divide by the number of years.)
- Remember that a mild or harsh winter and/or summer can significantly affect your energy costs. How to handle this? Add up several years' worth of bills and then divide by the number of years to get an accurate figure.
- Would you like to go hi-tech? Or perhaps you want to find out how much energy your "dream house" would use? If you have access to the Internet, you can use the Virtual Home Energy Advisor, which can be accessed on your computer at www.eetd.lbl.gov/HES. This program, created by the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, uses detailed information from you to estimate your home's energy usage and annual energy costs. The Advisor includes detailed calculation of all your energy uses, including heating, cooling, hot water, lights and appliances.

Do you have questions about home energy costs? Are you looking for ways to save money by increasing energy efficiency in your home or business?

Call Clay Electric Co-operative and we will be happy to help you.



Geothermal strikes again – just as summer fades

Mother Nature is a perplexing creature. She hits us with hot weather, cold weather, dry weather and rainy weather, and sometimes it seems that we're getting them all at once.

But she prepares her brood for weather by providing them with ways to get out of the worst she throws at them. For many of our furry little friends, Ma Nature gives them the wisdom to dig a burrow, or to move into someone else's. Hundreds, if not thousands, of species winter underground, and many also escape the summer's worst heat by finding a subterranean snug place, where the temperature's about the same the year around.

We can do that too, and we don't have to go down there where it's dank and dark and musty. We can have a geothermal heating-and-cooling system installed in our homes.

As we've said here many times, a geothermal system is an all-in-one heating, cooling and water-heating system, and it will provide you with definite benefits through all the seasons.

A geothermal heating-and-cooling system can cool your home more efficiently than a regular air conditioner or heat pump, and it can provide you with heat for less money than natural gas. That's right: Geothermal gives you cheaper heat than natural gas. Electric co-ops don't discuss that fact very much because in many places, it's really a moot point. Most co-op members don't have natural gas, and the prospects of them getting it any time soon are slim, except in those areas where electric co-ops are branching out into the natural gas business!

If you heat with propane, remember that geothermal can heat and cool for less than you can perform those chores with propane.

And when you're about to replace that old propane furnace that's limped through the last couple of winters, remember the horrendous price spikes of just a few years ago, when your supplier was forced – because of a shortage – to triple his prices, just as cool weather set in.

That situation has improved for some, since some electric co-ops have gotten into the propane business to help insulate their members from such practices.

Electricity rates in Illinois have been steady for some 15 years now, and while they've been higher than your co-op friends like, they are coming down. That's another thing to consider when you set out to replace that old furnace.

To refresh your memory, a geothermal system is really just a heat pump, but it's like a heat pump on steroids. A heat pump is sort of a reversible air conditioner, bringing cool air into your home in the summer, and bringing in warm air in the winter. You control what it does with your wall-mounted thermostat.

But if a heat pump has a weakness, it's that it begins to lose its "oomph" in the wintertime about the same time most of us do. When the mercury drops to about 10 degrees F., your heat pump's efficiency drops, leaving you hunting supplemental heat.

A geothermal unit is different. It uses a liquid-filled buried loop that circulates underground much like those burrowing little critters we were discussing earlier. It works with a medium that's about 55 degrees F., the year around.

So while an air conditioner or heat pump has to work hard to cool 90-degree air in the summer, your geothermal unit is breezing along with its 55-degree medium, blowing cool air into your home. That's a lot easier than working with the normal outside air temperature. And when it's cooling, it's also transferring heat into a water-heater connection, to help you save about half the cost of that convenience.

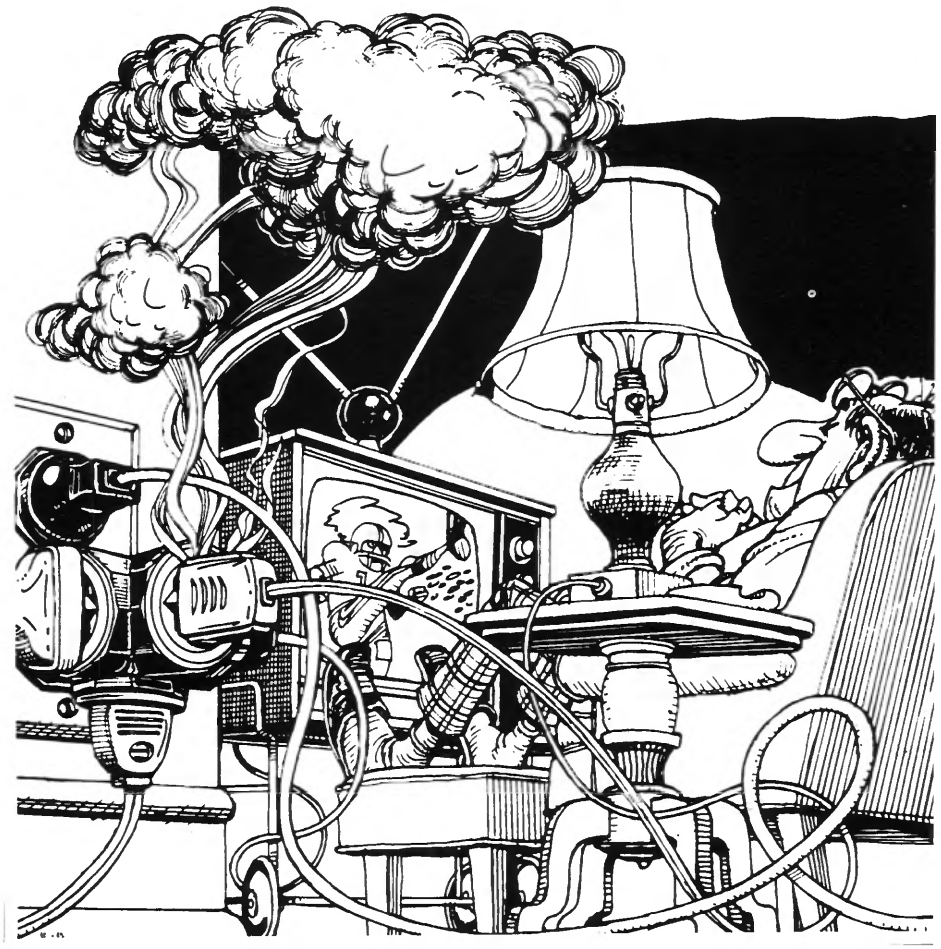
And while the average heat pump struggles to heat zero-degree air in the winter, your geothermal unit is breezing along with its 55-degree medium, taking warmth out of the ground and blowing it into your home. It's a system that can't be beat.

If there's a disadvantage to geothermal, it's that the initial cost can be steep. Those buried loops are often sunk into trenches or wells, and digging those can get expensive. Often, the grid can be sunk into a good-sized pond, since you're really just looking for a hefty heat sink.

But whatever the case, geothermal warrants very careful consideration, because its savings are so great. And it's available wherever there's an electric line.

Be sure to look into geothermal, especially if you're thinking of building a new home or replacing an old furnace. The difference is well worth the trouble, and your friends at your local co-op will be happy to help you make the right decision.

Don't take safety for granted



Electricity is the safest form of energy. You don't have to worry about an open flame, light a pilot light or be concerned about carbon monoxide poisoning. But you still can not take electric safety for granted. Remember these basic rules:

- Don't overload outlets, circuits or extension cords
- Don't use any appliance while you are wet
- Install GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters) in areas that can get wet
- Repair or discard any appliance that shocks you, or that sparks or smokes
- Update old wiring to include a ground
- Have a qualified electrician inspect the wiring in your home
- Know the location of your circuit breakers and how to use them

If you have concerns or questions about electric safety, call your local electric cooperative.

CLAY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Flora

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present, with the exception of Trustee Poehler, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held July 27, 1998.

Accepted 23 new members for service.

Canceled 17 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of July, 1998 presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved list of work orders for July totaling $18,925.97 and authorized Manager Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland and AIEC meetings from Manager Wattles and Trustee Cammon.

Approved a guarantee for the Cooperative Response Center to the National Rural Utilities. Cooperative Finance Corporation in the form as presented to this meeting.

Approved a refund of capital credits to the estate of deceased member Charles Robertson.

Discussed upcoming annual meeting of members of Clay Electric Cooperative.

Accepted the disbursement list for July, 1998.

Declined participation in the IHEAP energy assistance program for 1999.

Approved Cinergy Communications the exclusive license to act as the Cooperative's agent to market telecommunications facilities owned or leased by the cooperative in the form presented to this meeting.

Approved one purchase of power contract.

Authorized the manager to offer free electric water heaters to any new home constructed that would be all electric and had either a geo-thermal or heat pump HVAC system installed.

Ratified and Confirmed the action of the board taken outside of regular meeting to accept the settlement from EPA for the Osage Metals Superfund Site.

Adjournment.

Farm electrical accidents: When help is miles away

Frequently, farm accidents occur when emergency help is not readily accessible. There are any number of reasons. Perhaps an injured worker must walk to a farmhouse for first aid. Or the closest hospital may be more than 20 miles away. Harsh winter weather can create conditions that make travel difficult, too. That is why it's important for farmers and ranchers to know the proper steps to take in case of an electrical accident. The National Food and Energy Council, an association of electric co-ops and companies, makes these recommendations:

- Call for help immediately. Give the emergency operator your name, address, the number of victims, and type of accident. Do not hang up.
- Always assume a downed power line is hot. Keep others away and call the power supplier.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line with anything.
- If you are in a piece of machinery that is in contact with a power line, remain inside and wait for help.
- If the threat of fire exists when machinery is in contact with a power line, jump out and away from the machinery, so that no part of your body touches the equipment and the ground simultaneously.
- Don't touch or move someone in contact with a downed power line.

Questions about electrical safety around your farm? Call your electrical cooperative; they'll be glad to help you.

If you are planning on building a new home, please call our Member Services department about our Geothermal rebates, and how to receive a lifetime water heater free of charge.

Start winterizing your home now

Fall is here, even though we may have a few more relatively warm days ahead of us before the real chill sets in. Now is the time to start planning for the cold cental Illinois winter weather. Since many of us haven't used our furnaces since, oh, perhaps last April, this may be the best place to start.

Heating systems and humidifiers

If you have a humidifier attached to your furnace, clean and chlorinate it. Replace filters, making sure the water is turned on and the drain is clear. Make sure the humidifier is not leaking into the furnace.

Check all furnace filters to make sure they are clean. If they're not, either clean or replace them. In some systems, filters should be replaced monthly during the regular heating period. Check your owner's manual for recommended replacement time and other maintenance requirements.

If you have a wood-burning stove, check all ductwork for possible leaks. Do not vent a wood-burning stove or fireplace in the same flue as a gas, or oil burner, or space heater. Check your fireplace chimney for obstructions or creosote buildup, and clean it at least once a year. Leave the damper slightly open at all times if you have a gas log or gas starter.

Plumbing and water heaters

Locate your main water shut-off valves and know how to use them.

Turn off any water lines going to outside faucets and drain the pipes to prevent winter freeze up.

Insulate water lines in your basement or outer walls exposed to cold drafts; however, do not use heat tapes in hard-to-reach areas.

Install a temperature pressure relief valve and metal overflow line on your electric water heater. Consider insulating your water heater to prevent unwanted heat loss.

Snow Birds

If you plan on taking an extended vacation over a period of months, consider draining your entire water system and shutting the water off to your home until you return.

Unplug any large appliances not in use: range, washer, dryer, refrigerator (if empty and defrosted, leave door ajar), television, etc.

Set your thermostat at a minimum of 45 degrees to prevent freeze up.

Ask a friend or neighbor to periodically check your home in case of some unforeseen emergency.

Call the Clay Electric Co-operative office for more winterizing tips.

By reviewing your winterization needs now, you'll be ready later — as Old Man Winter is knocking on your door.

Office closing

Our office will be closed
Thursday and Friday, Nov. 26, and 27,
in observance of Thanksgiving.
Enjoy your holidays!

Smart responses to electrical emergencies

We've said it here many times: Electricity is wonderful stuff. It lights our homes, warms them, heats water and powers many of our appliances. But the fact that it can do work proves that it is also a source of possible danger, if improperly used.

With that in mind, it's a good idea to know what to do in the event of an electrical accident. A quick, correct response can save a life, while the wrong one might do more harm than good. The National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) offers the following tips for electrical accidents and emergencies.

Shock and Electrocution. A shock victim must be removed immediately from the source of electricity. However, always turn off the power before touching the victim, wire or equipment. If it's not possible to turn the power off, use a nonconducting tool—such as a rope or a dry wooden stick—to move the person; then call for help. Do NOT complete a circuit between one wire and the ground. If the victim is touching a power line, get help—don't touch them.

Injuries resulting from contact with electrical current have their own set of symptoms and complications. To make sure you, or someone you're with, gets help if injured, NECA notes that electrical injuries could include any one or a combination of the following:

- **Loss of consciousness**-it can last from several minutes to hours.
- **Involuntary muscle reaction**
- **Ventricular fibrillation-** the steady heartbeat may be disrupted and the rhythm lost, possibly resulting in cardiac arrest. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) may be needed, but always check the person's airway, breathing and circulation before beginning CPR.
- **Respiratory arrest**-Breathing may stop.
- **Internal bleeding**
- **Nerve cell damage**-This may not be apparent until the victim tries to walk.
- **Electrical burns**-An electric arc generates temperatures as high as 20,000° C, and can cause serious burns.

NECA notes that several factors influence the extent of electrical injuries, including the voltage, the amperage, the path the current takes through the body and the length of the contact.

As mentioned earlier, you should check the person's breathing and pulse before attempting any treatment. Remember that after four to six minutes, oxygen deprivation will cause brain damage. If the victim is not breathing, give artificial respiration.

If there's no heartbeat, start CPR immediately and continue until medical help arrives or the person breathes on his/her own.

Fires. Never use water to put out an electrical fire! If the electrical fire is still small, you can use a Class C or combination fire extinguisher. If the fire is out of control, get out and call for help.

Stay low to avoid inhaling smoke. If your clothes catch on fire, stop and drop to the ground and then roll to extinguish the flames.

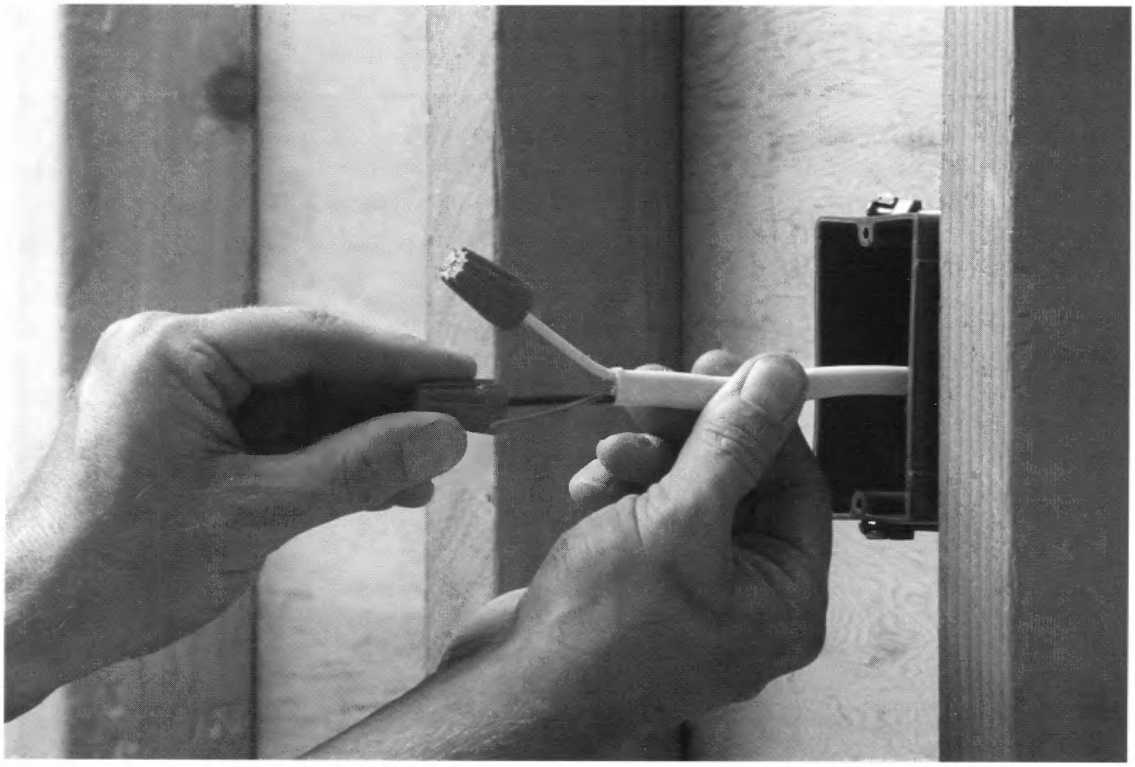
Burns. The first hour after an electrical accident is crucial for treating electrical burns. Treat a minor burn with cool water and cover with a clean, dry cloth. If the burn is more serious, cover it with a sterile, dry cloth and get medical help—immediately!

Remember that electrical accidents can affect a person's skin, muscles and bones. It is possible the victim will go into shock from an electrical burn. Keep the person lying down with feet elevated. Never try to pull charred clothing off burned skin.

If you have questions about electrical safety, please contact your electric cooperative for information. Your electric co-op is always glad to help you.

"...it's a good idea to know what to do in the event of an electrical accident. A quick, correct response can save a life..."

Wiring problem warnings



You can often spot wiring problems if you watch for the following signals. If they occur have a qualified electrician check the wiring.

- Do fuses blow or breakers often trip?
- Do lights dim or does the TV picture shrink when appliances switch on?
- Is the switch box warm to the touch?
- Do you have trouble with faltering motors?
- Have you added new appliances?

Only you can prevent house fires

Check the circuit panel for signs of overheating — discoloration and melting of insulation. Tightening screws in the fuse box can prevent flickering and excessive heating of terminals.

Make sure appliance cords are kept in good condition. If an appliance makes a funny noise, does not work, or has a burnt smell — unplug it immediately. Malfunctioning appliances at the very least increase your electric bill, at the worst they can cause a fire.

Be extremely careful with all portable heaters. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Give someone you love a fire extinguisher for Christmas and buy one for yourself.

Clay Electric News

CLAY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC. 618-662-2171 FLORA, ILLINOIS

Board meeting report

All Trustees were present, with the exception of Trustee Logan, also present were General Manager Wattles and Cooperative Attorney Todd.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Aug. 24, and the organizational meeting of the board held Sept. 3, 1998.

Accepted 18 new members for service.

Canceled 17 members no longer receiving service.

Approved the financial, maintenance and outage report for the month of August 1998, presented by Manager Wattles.

Approved list of work orders for August totaling $35,723.93 and authorized Manager Wattles to submit the same to RUS for reimbursement.

Received report of recent Soyland meeting from Manager Wattles.

Approved participation in the AIEC continuing education program for 1999.

Approved a refund of capital credits to the estate of deceased members Lawrence and Ethyl Hazel.

Discussed the annual meeting of members of Clay Electric Cooperative held Sept. 3, 1998.

Accepted the disbursement list for August 1998.

Reviewed a letter from RUS Field Representative Aaron Johnson and **Directed** Manager Wattles to secure quotes from engineering companies regarding two year work plans and a long range plan.

Discussed upcoming NRECA annual meeting.

Directed Manager Wattles to solicit bids for the purchase of an aerial lift truck in 1999.

Received a Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) key ratio trend analysis report for review and were given information by Manager Wattles concerning the CFC National Cooperative Services Corporation which has been formed.

Received a letter of resignation from Trustee Lewis Pettit effective Sept. 28, 1998 and following discussion **Accepted** said resignation effective at the close of this meeting.

Directed the Executive Committee to conduct a search for a replacement for Trustee Pettit.

Adjournment.

Alan W. Wattles (left), manager of Clay Electric Cooperative, congratulates three area members who were re-elected to serve on the cooperative's board of directors. Pictured with Wattles are (l-r): Howard Poehler of Louisville, Edwin Henson of Xenia and Kevin Logan of Edgewood. The directors were elected during the cooperative's 54th annual meeting of members, held September 3 at Charley Brown Park west of Flora.

Office closings

Our office will be closed on the afternoon of Thursday, Dec. 24th, and all day on Friday, the 25th, in observance of the Christmas holiday. We will also close on Friday, Jan. 1st, for New Year's Day.

Enjoy your holidays!

Local farmer produces kid's farm video

Every time Darrell Garbe's nieces and nephews (age 2 to 10) from the city came to visit the family, they couldn't wait to go to the barnyard to visit the cattle, pigs, horses, and other farm animals. Darrell figured there must be plenty of other children that had the same desire to see farm animals close up, but who did not have the benefit of a relative on the farm. So Darrell, who is the son of Clay Electric Cooperative member Gilbert Garbe of Dieterich, produced a 30-minute videotape designed to provide children with a wholesome, entertaining, and educational look at Barnyard Animals.

Barnyard Animals follows 2-year old Brittany, 4-year old Marissa, 7-year old Zachary, and 10-year old Breanne as they visit the many colorful and interesting animals of the farm. Garbe, who grew up on a farm before getting a Masters degree from UCLA, picked up video production expertise while working for major ad agencies in Los Angeles. He then returned to the farm, produced the videotape with professional equipment, and added a catchy musical score to complete the project.

Barnyard Animals has received rave reviews from mothers, fathers, and child-care centers around the country. "We often get calls from parents who tell us their kids watch it over and over", says Garbe.

Barnyard Animals is chock-full of playful, colorful, and zany farm animals. Parents and children learn about horses, dairy cows, pigs, turkeys, and chickens as they frolic on picturesque family farms. Playful goats, deer, elk, ostrich and llamas entertain viewers as they roam in beautiful country pastures.

Everyone loves babies, and *Barnyard Animals* provides plenty of shots of adorable young calves, piglets, colts, rabbits, and lambs taking their first steps in their new barnyards.

"After watching *Barnyard Animals*, parents often call to see if we have other children's videotapes available for sale," says Garbe. His company, *Family Farm Productions*, has produced three other critically acclaimed videos, *Giant New Tractors from the Big Farm Shows, Steamers, Threshers, and Antique John Deeres*, and the original *Big Tractors Kids Video*.

Barnyard Animals is available by calling (800) 896-5660, or by writing to Family Farm Productions, 1661 N. 2200 St., Dieterich, IL 62424. The company has a website at http:Hplanetpages.com/farm.

Take precautions when using supplemental heaters

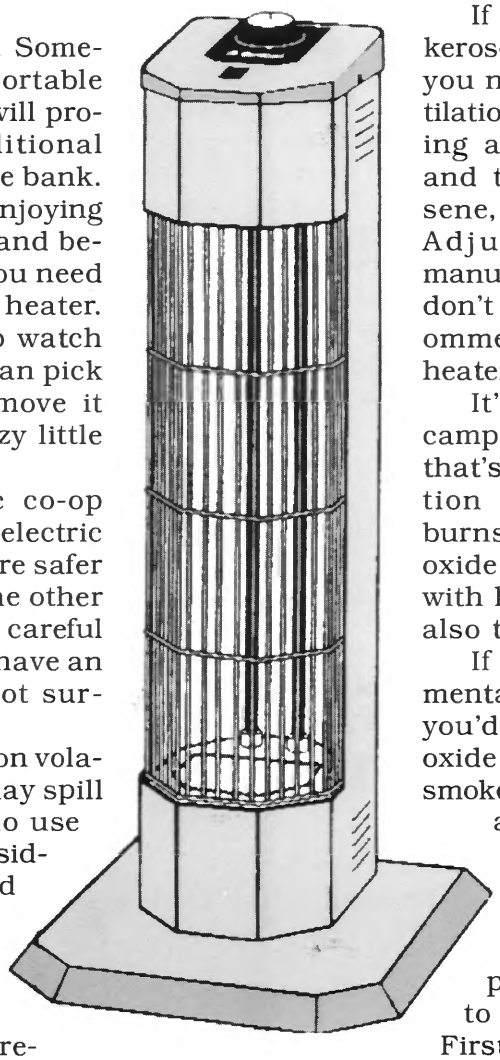
As we move into fall, when the weather often changes from somewhat warm to downright chilly and back again, many of us are faced with the choice of freezing or turning on the furnace. Often, because it's really not that cold, we're reluctant to turn up the thermostat and incur the costs of being warm all through the house.

Often, it's not necessary. Sometimes a carefully placed portable supplemental space heater will provide just the needed additional warmth, without breaking the bank. So if you're in the kitchen enjoying the thrill of washing dishes and begin to feel a trifle chilly, all you need to do is bring in a little space heater.

Afterward, if you want to watch TV in the family room, you can pick up your little heater and move it there to create your own cozy little nook.

Naturally, your electric co-op hopes you'll use a portable electric heater because, overall, they're safer and more convenient than the other kinds. Even so, you must be careful with them. While they don't have an open flame, they do have hot surfaces.

And while they don't rely on volatile liquid or gas fuels that may spill or get out of control, they do use electricity, which packs considerable punch when not used properly.



One of their major advantages, though, is that they do not give off carbon monoxide, and they don't require venting to make them safe.

Be sure to use your portable electric heater only for temporary heating of limited space only.

Be sure not to place them in heavily traveled areas, or in places where children may touch them. Don't use an extension cord with an electric heater if you can possibly avoid it. Most cords you'll find around the home aren't adequate.

Don't conceal the cord under a rug to get it out of sight or prevent tripping. Extension cords wear quickly under a rug, and can become a shock or fire hazard before you know it.

While most portable space heaters built in the last few years have good, solid bases to prevent tipping, older ones may not, and you need to be very careful with them. Newer models also have built-in switches to shut them off automatically if they tip over, and that's a desirable safety feature.

If you decide to use a portable kerosene heater, keep in mind that you need to provide adequate ventilation, which usually means cracking a window to let in fresh air and the cold. Use only 1K kerosene, and no other kind of fuel. Adjust the burner to the manufacturer's specifications, and don't refuel a hot heater. Many recommend that you refuel kerosene heaters outdoors.

It's tempting to bring in gas camping heaters and the like, and that's downright unsafe. In addition to the dangers of contact burns, the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning is as great as it is with kerosene heaters, and there's also the problem of tipping.

If you plan to use any supplemental heater besides electric ones, you'd be wise to buy a carbon monoxide detector in addition to your smoke detector, and make sure both are properly installed and working.

No matter what kind of portable heater you use, there are some basic safety precautions YOU should take to avoid becoming a statistic. First, you should keep children and pets away from portable heaters, and avoid using them overnight in a room where you're sleeping.

Keep heaters at least three feet away from bedding, drapes, furniture and other combustibles, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions in installing, operating, and maintaining your heater.

Properly used, portable space heaters can help you stay comfortable while keeping your costs within reason. If you have questions about the safe use of portable electric heaters, contact your friends at your local co-op. They'll be glad to help.