



## 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:

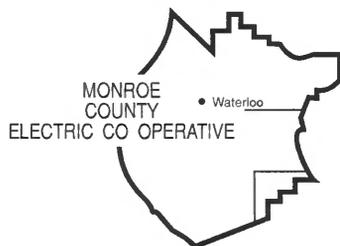
- regulation of electric cooperatives should remain in the hands of the local members;
- no unnecessary duplication of electric lines, and
- participation in deregulation should be at the discretion of each cooperative.

***We get our power from you.***



**Electric Cooperatives of Illinois  
Good for all Illinois**

*Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers*



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

We have just completed our Fall Area Member Meetings. The meetings were held at the Hecker Community Center, Millstadt VFW Hall, Hoefft's Village Inn (Maeystown) and at the Cooperative office in Waterloo. We were pleased at the attendance of all our meetings. These area meetings give you, the members, an opportunity to meet with Co-Op management and staff in an informal setting. We attempt to bring you up to date on activities at the Co-Op and answer any questions you may have.

We began the meeting with a ten-minute video called "Understanding Your Cooperative." The video explained the principle of the cooperative way to do business in not only the electric field, but also in other areas of cooperative business such as housing, telephone service, credit unions, grain buying and health care.

Manager Joe Fellin discussed the issue of deregulation. He stated that the current legislation recently passed in Springfield would not directly affect the electric cooperatives at this time. The part of the legislative package that we have supported was for the choice to "opt in" to competition, and open up the system's service territory. We assure you that your Board of Directors and management will have your best interests as a member in mind with whatever future decision is made. We will keep you informed on future developments in this matter.

Mr. Fellin also discussed that with Soyland's restructuring of debt, we've been able to pass through an approximate 8% reduction in retail rates for the past year through the WPCA adjustment. We expect this reduction to continue through 1998. Under present plans, we expect to see further reductions in retail rates by the year 2001, the year the restructured debt should be paid off.

Brian Beem, superintendent of operations, discussed construction and maintenance activity over the past year. We upgraded the capacity of three substations with larger transformers for present and future growth. The upgraded substations are Waterloo, New Athens and Smithton. Primary line extension was completed to several new subdivisions in our service area which include Villas of Stonegate (Smithton area), The Pines (Columbia), Country Aire Mobil Manor (Smithton), and Arbor Ridge (Waterloo). We have also completed the underground primary line replacement at Wildwood Lake Estates near Smithton.

Mr. Beem also explained how outages are handled at the Cooperative. In the event of a major outage, we would try to restore electric service to as many members as possible in the least amount of time. Any extra information you may have when you call the office can be very helpful to us.

Allan Masterson, member service technician, went over current marketing programs in which the Cooperative is involved. He reviewed the Cooperative's electric heat rate and rebate, existing load management programs and advised those in attendance of the availability of PureWater Systems, L.E.A. Dynatech Surge Arresters and water heaters for sale through the Cooperative. He also explained that the electric heat rebates from Soyland were good until December 31. (Ed. Note: Soyland has since indicated that the rebate program has been extended through June 30, 1998).

We have openings for our 1998 Member Advisory Committee. Please call Willard or Allan if you or someone you know may be interested in serving on this Committee. The Committee meets four (4) times a year and a term consists of three (3) years. It provides the member with the opportunity to learn more about the Cooperative and a chance to ask questions of the board, management and staff.

All members in attendance received a Saturday Evening Post calendar. A drawing was held for five \$10 credits on a member's electric bill, and refreshments were served.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, management and staff, we offer best wishes to the membership for the upcoming New Year!

Ice collects on the wires of overhead power lines. Poles, cross arms, and wires break under the strain. It is a disaster for the electric cooperative and its members.

If the disaster is confined to one area of the cooperative, repair crews, equipment, and material from other locations can be sent. If the disaster hits the entire system, help can be obtained from neighboring electric cooperatives.

How does a cooperative pick up the pieces?

- First, the substations are energized.
- Second, the feeder lines out of the substations must be repaired and energized.
- Third, power lines branching off the feeders are repaired and energized.
- Fourth, individual outages are restored.

These steps must be followed in order to restore power as quickly as possible to the greatest number of members. Also, it doesn't make much sense to take care of item four before working on the top of the list. The only exceptions will be for known health hazards of individuals or emergencies affecting public safety.

Immediately after the storm knocks down

the electric co-op system, employees will be summoned to answer telephones, repair crews will be sent and an effort will be made to assess the damage. The last point is important in terms of ordering materials and/or assistance from neighboring electric cooperatives.

During the initial stages of an ice storm, everything seems hopeless. Linemen repair one break in a line and the same line breaks again. Telephone communications can be frustrating. Many people are sometimes trying to call and the busy signal might make you think the phone is "off the hook." It isn't — keep trying.

You can help in a situation such as this by giving your account number and/or meter pole number when your call is answered. These numbers will help verify your location and speed up the process of plotting outages on the system map.

Illinois' electric cooperatives are prepared for storm disaster with an emergency plan. Let's hope this preparation isn't needed, but if it is, let's all work together and be as patient as possible.

## 1998 "Youth to Washington Tour"

In June of each year, the electric and telephone cooperatives in Illinois and across the United States sponsor groups of young people to Washington, D.C. on the "Youth to Washington" Program. During a full week in the nation's capital, these students get an up-close look at democracy in action and get to meet with their congressional delegation and staff.

Past participants will tell you it is the trip of a lifetime. It's an experience they never forget, full of fun, new friends, non-stop touring and yes, they actually learn something too. Most come back with an even deeper respect for our country, our form of government and their opportunities.

Since 1957, hundreds of future leaders have been introduced to government and the legislative process through this program. Many alumni of the program have gone on to leadership positions in our communities and government. Two current members of the Illinois General Assembly, State Representatives Tom Ryder and Art Tenhouse, are past members of the tour.

The "Youth to Washington" Tour is recognized as one of the best youth tours of Washington, D.C. The tour is well-organized with good chaperones. Participants will see monuments and memorials and visit historical places.

Last year, Lisa Sahr of Freeburg and Ryan Heavner of Columbia attended and had a great learning experience.

For more information, contact the Cooperative office.

# HAPPY NEW YEAR



# 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 roused 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 out-right 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.

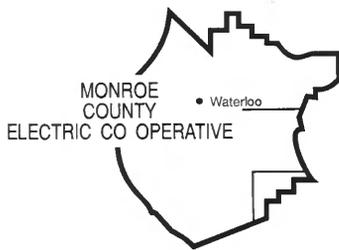
**Yes**, you. Electric cooperatives were formed by individuals to serve their own needs, not profit-seeking investors. They are run by folks just like you—men and women who care about the future of their communities, and who want high quality service and competitive rates. Your cooperative will be making 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.

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Joseph J. Fellin

Where did 1997 go? It's hard to believe that another year has rolled around. We are well into 1998 and we are already preparing for the cooperative's 60th Anniversary and our 60th Annual Meeting to be held March 23, 1998 at the Hecker Community Center. A committee on Nominations has been named and will meet at the cooperative office at 7 p.m. on Feb. 9, 1998 (see related article). Dave Rowe, a former All-Pro football player and Super Bowl Champion (Oakland Raiders) will be the guest speaker. Dave currently is manager of member and public relations for Randolph Electric Membership Corporation, Asheboro, North Carolina. Dave's presentation is humorous and motivational and will cover issues affecting the rural electrification program.

Your management and staff have been busy preparing the 1998 Work Plan and Budget. We project to build 118 new services in 1998. Revenue for 1998 is estimated at \$8,087,212 on projected sales of 75,586,619 kilowatt hours. Power cost is projected at 64 percent of revenue. Expenses for maintenance of transformers, regulators, oil circuit reclosers, testing of single and three phase meters, tree trimming and right-of-way spraying are included in the 1998 Budget. On-going system maintenance is of high priority

## Call us first

Have trees that need trimming under or near our power lines?

If you do, give us a call at 939-7171. Play it safe — trees in and around power lines could be dangerous if you try to trim them yourself.

We have experienced tree trimming crews. Call us and we will try to honor your request. Remember — Call us first at 939-7171.

at your cooperative to insure a reliable continuity of electric service to our members.

We will continue a lightning protection program, started in 1997, of changing out of old arrestors with a new type arrestor to give better protection to our system and members from lightning damage. It will also help with some of the blinking problems and help reduce outages due to lightning.

Most of the construction projects for 1998 will be for growing subdivision development. Several of the existing subdivisions are expanding and there are two new subdivisions, that we know of, planned for 1998. We are looking to upgrade feeder lines between our substations and plan to move and upgrade some electric lines from private right-of-way to road access. Again, this will be an on-going process over several years.

The new WalMart Super Store planned for the property in back of the cooperative headquarters is looking as though it will proceed. It is our intention to provide and install a wholesale power metering point for the City of Waterloo for this project.

Long range plans still call for a new 69,000 KVA transmission line from our Poe Substation to a metering point near Red Bud. Conversion of the 34,500 KVA line between the Waterloo and Poe Substations to a 69,000 KVA line is also in the long range plan.

These maintenance and construction projects will improve service reliability and assure adequate voltage to areas with heavy growth.

## Fax service available

Monroe County Electric now has a facsimile (fax) machine that will send or receive written messages or documents over phone lines to or from most anywhere in the United States in a matter of seconds.

We can send messages or documents at a cost of \$1 per page to cover long-distance phone rates and supplies. We can receive messages or documents at a cost of \$.50 per page. You will need to have available the fax number of the receiving party to send a message, and you will need to let the sending party know our fax number to receive a message.

For more information, please call 939-7171.

## Nominating Committee named: meeting set for Feb. 9

A committee on nominations has been appointed and will meet at 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 9, 1998 at the Monroe County Electric Co-Operative meeting room in Waterloo. The committee will meet to place the names of three persons in nomination to be elected at the cooperative's annual meeting, to serve a three (3) year term as directors of Monroe County Electric Co-Operative.

The cooperative's 60th Annual Meeting of Members will be held Monday, March 23, 1998 at the Hecker Community Center, Hecker, Illinois.

Directors whose current terms expire and who are eligible for re-election are:

- District 3** Kenneth W. Stumpf  
8559 B Road  
Valmeyer, Illinois
- District 7** Walter G. Amann  
8585 Nike Road  
Red Bud, Illinois
- District 8** Vernon A. Matzenbacher  
3378 Wild Road  
Fults, Illinois

Stumpf and Matzenbacher have decided not to seek re-election. As a cooperative member you have the right as well as an obligation to participate in the election process. If you have comments or suggestions for the election, please contact members of the 1998 Nominating Committee.

Cooperative Bylaws state: Any twenty five (25) or more active members, acting together,

may make other Nominations by petition received at the Cooperative office not less than twenty one (21) days prior to the Annual Meeting of members and shall be posted at the same place as nominations by the committee is posted, and shall appear in the official notice of the meeting and on the official ballot. Additional nominations may also be made from the floor. Any nomination by petition or from the floor shall meet the same qualifications and eligibility as nominees by the nominating committee.

### 1998 Nominating Committee

#### **District 3**

Glen Woodcock, 9560 B Rd., Valmeyer, IL 62295  
Gene R. Stumpf, 473 Gilmore Lk. Rd., Columbia, IL 62236  
Clarence Metter, 6807 Bluffside Rd., Columbia, IL 62236 (Alternate)  
John Conrad, 320 Gilmore Ln., Columbia, IL 62236

#### **District 7**

Ralph Eckart, 9153 Nike Rd., New Athens, IL 62264  
Darrell Grohmann, 7837 State Rte. 156, Waterloo, IL 62298  
Clarence Guebert, 455 Powell Rd., Red Bud, IL 62278 (Alternate)  
Dale Papenberg, Papenberg Stock Farm, 7579 State Rte. 156, Waterloo, IL 62298

#### **District 8**

Morris Brandt, 3365 Brandt Rd., Fults, IL 62244  
James Becker, 3959 LL Rd., Fults, IL 62244  
Steve Mosbacher, 3040 Brandt Rd., Fults, IL 62244 (Alternate)  
Glenn Voelker, 3146 LL Rd., Fults, IL 62244

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# 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.

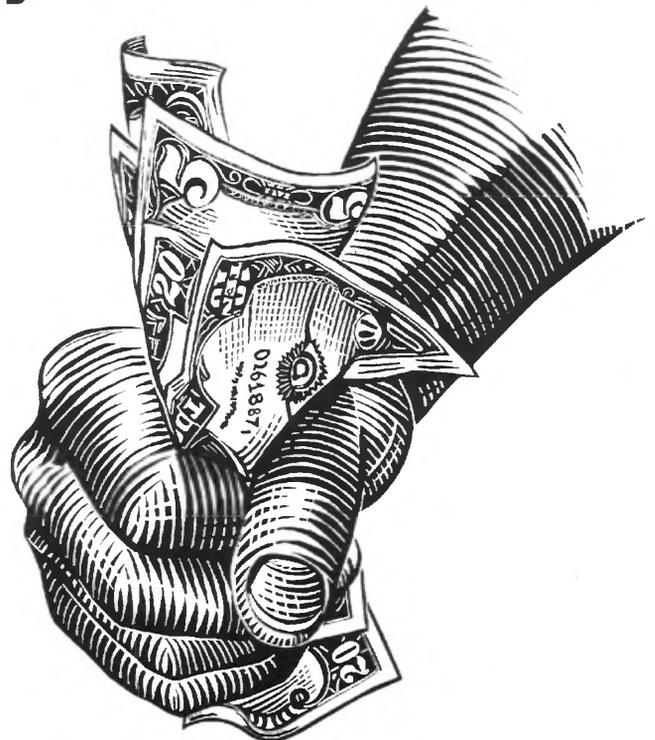
Extension cords are meant for temporary use. Don't use them as permanent household wiring.

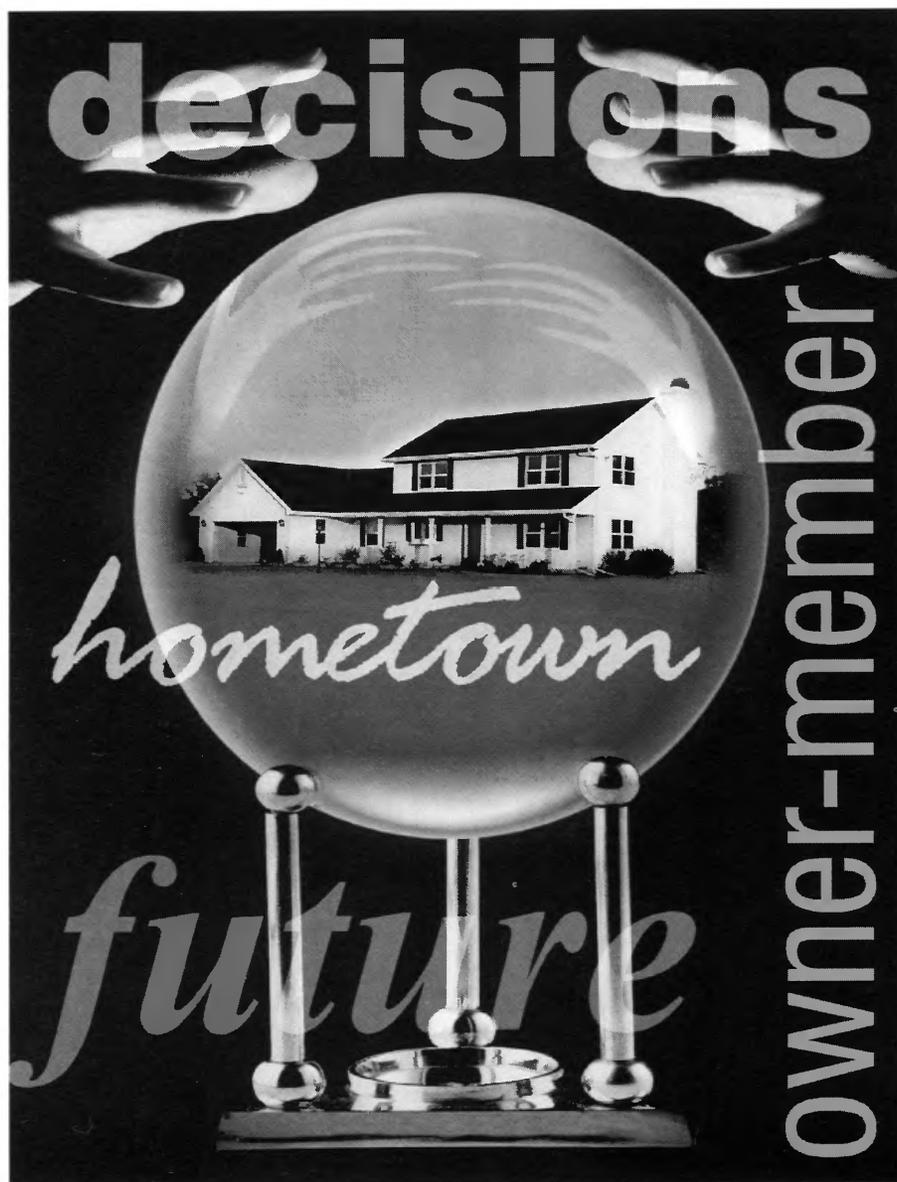
## 4. Don't misuse plugs.

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?**

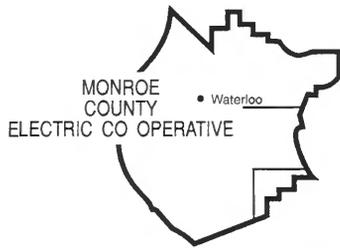
As an owner-member of an electric cooperative, you have a special privilege — and responsibility. The future of the electricity industry is uncertain, but as sure as current finds a path to ground, you have a voice in your cooperative's future. Your cooperative will make many important decisions in the 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.

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## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative will have its 60th Annual Meeting of Members on March 23rd at the Hecker Community Center. Registration and pre-meeting activities begin at 5 p.m. We will again have health-related organizations with informational booths, Harres Furniture will have merchandise on display and for sale, Ameritech will have a cellular phone display and Harrisonville Telephone Company will be demonstrating DIRECTV. A chicken dinner

will be served from 5 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

During the business meeting, you will hear and approve reports of directors and officers, and also elect three members to serve three-year terms to the Cooperative's board of directors. You will also vote to amend the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws that would permit the Cooperative to diversify the services it offers, and act on any other business that may come before the meeting.

Dave Rowe, Manager of Member and Public Relations at Randolph Electric Membership Corporation in Asheboro, North Carolina, and a Super Bowl Champion, will be the featured speaker at this year's meeting.

Come join us as we observe the 60th Anniversary Meeting of Monroe County Electric Co-Operative on March 23rd at the Hecker Community Center.

## Aren't you tired of lugging bottled water?

*From the shelf to the cart  
From the cart to the checkout  
From the checkout to the cart  
From the cart to the car  
From the car to the kitchen  
From the kitchen to the pantry*



**PureWater Filtration System  
only \$600 and only from  
Monroe County Electric Cooperative.**

**\$50 discount to members —  
6 months financing**

## Warning from Julie

**The Illinois One-Call System  
Before you dig call**



**(800) 892-0123**

**The Service is Free  
Operates 24 Hours  
7 Days a Week**

# Low Income Energy Assistance Available

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to assist eligible households pay for winter energy services. LIHEAP will provide a one-time benefit to eligible households to be used for energy bills. The amount of the payment is determined by household size, fuel type and income.

What do you have to do? Contact the local agency that serves your area. The agency that serves Monroe and Randolph Counties is Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council. The agency that serves St. Clair County is the St. Clair Intergovernmental Grants Department. (See addresses and phone numbers listed at right).

This program offers assistance with utility bills to people meeting specific income, age or disability guidelines. When you apply for assistance, bring the following with you:

- Proof of gross income from all household members for the 30-day period prior to application date;
- A copy of your current heat and electric bills (if you pay for your home energy directly);
- Proof of social security numbers of all household members;
- If a member of your household receives AFDC, you must bring their "Medical Eligibility Card";
- If you rent, bring proof of your rental agreement that must state your monthly rent amount.

The agency will determine if you are eligible based on the information provided. You will be notified of eligibility status within 30 days. If you are eligible, you will be informed of the amount of assistance you can receive.

The agency will also notify your energy provider of your participation in the program if you have an energy bill.

If you are eligible, the local agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf or, in some cases, directly to you.

Below are the income eligibility guidelines for the LIHEAP program. For more information, contact the office in your County listed below.

## **Monroe County**

### **Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council**

509 West Mill Street  
Waterloo, Illinois 62298  
Phone: (618) 939-8715

## **Randolph County**

### **Western Egyptian EOC**

P.O. Box 7  
Steeleville, Illinois 62288  
Phone: (618) 965-9031  
Contact: Janey Willis

## **St. Clair County**

### **St. Clair Intergovernmental Grants Department**

19 Public Square - 3rd Floor  
Belleville, Illinois 62220  
Phone: (618) 277-6790  
or  
27 N. Illinois Street  
Belleville, Illinois 62220  
Phone: (618) 257-9246

## **Income Eligibility Guidelines\***

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Gross Income for 30 Days Prior to Application Date</b>
1	\$ 822
2	\$1,106
3	\$1,390
4	\$1,674
5	\$1,958
6	\$2,242
7	\$2,526
8	\$2,810

For each additional family member, add \$284.

\*Income Guidelines are effective from Oct. 1, 1997 through Aug. 31, 1998.

# 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.

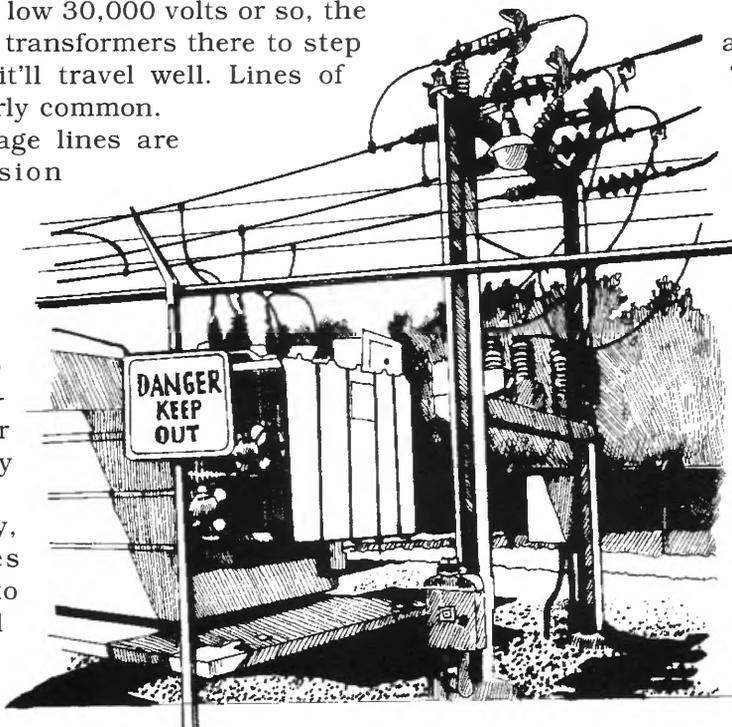
While a major part of a sub's function is to reduce voltage, the current is massaged in other ways there, too. There are lightning arrestors to minimize the damage caused by lightning strikes and voltage regulators to keep the voltage steady. Sectionalizers are there to help contain damage when something 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 busi-

nesses 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.

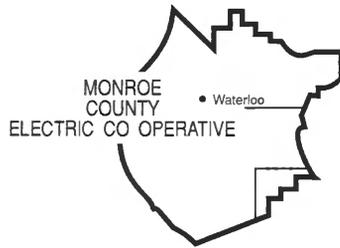
When you choose electricity, you choose the safe, dependable, low-cost alternative. No flames. No fumes. No fuel tanks to fill.



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**Good for *all* Illinois.**

*An affirmative action, equal opportunity employer*



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

Several articles have appeared in the local newspapers lately about Monroe County Electric filing a preliminary plat to sub-divide the property on which the cooperative headquarters is located.

As most of you know, Wal-Mart is going to construct a new Super Center behind the cooperative

property.

The Board of Directors decided it would be in the best interest of you, the member-owner, to file a preliminary plat and seek the approval of both the Monroe County and the City of Waterloo planning boards. Our property, which consists of approximately twelve acres, is zoned for commercial highway business.

There has been a lot of interest in our property since it is zoned for commercial business and is in close proximity to the new Wal-Mart Store.

At the present time, the Board has not decided to sell any of the proposed lots, but wants to be in a position to do so if there is a benefit to our membership. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to come and visit with me.

## Outage Summary for 1997

Electric service is one of the most dependable items you can buy. Monroe County Electric Co-Operative takes pride in bringing you reliable electric power. Occasionally, however, your power may be interrupted by circumstances over which we have little or no control. It is our goal to keep the average outage per member as low as possible and keep the momentary blinking and surges to a minimum.

During 1997 there were 227 outages on the cooperative's system, totaling 16,649 consumer hours of outage time. This represents an average outage time of 3.11 hours per member for 1997. This is up 1.02 hours per member from 1996.

During 1997 power supplier outages accounted for 43 percent of the outages on our system. This turned out to be one incident that caused six of our substations to go down. Illinois Power's transmission line went out due to a bad transmission insulator. Weather-related outages accounted for 25 percent of the outages. This was down about 6 percent from last year. Equipment failure, which includes overload, transformer failure, and deterioration, added another 24 percent.

To ensure reliable electric service, your cooperative places a high priority on system maintenance.

Approximately 25 percent of our operating expense is for upkeep and maintenance. Tree trimming and right-of-way maintenance is of utmost importance in keeping our electric distribution lines clear of trees and falling limbs during storms. Other maintenance performed includes pole testing and change-out, testing of substation regulators and transformers, meter testing, upgrading and replacing Oil Circuit Reclosers (OCR's) and other routine maintenance.

Service is our most important commodity. We are aware of the inconvenience resulting from outages. Management and employees alike are committed to keeping our system in top operating condition.

The following chart shows the cause, total consumer hours and percentage of outage for 1997:

Cause	Total Consumer Hours	Percent
Power Supply	7,148	42.9
Construction & Maintenance Equipment	529	3.2
	3,942	23.7
Weather	4,113	24.7
Animals	323	1.9
Accidents & Unknown	594	3.6

## Rebates! Rebates

Electric heat rebates available for new home construction or remodeling

### System GT:

**Rebates:** \$125 per ton of installed capacity from Soyland Power,  
and \$350 rebate from Monroe County Electric Co-Op.

Plus, free electric water heater with radio control!

Install a geothermal heating and cooling system to qualify for above rebate.

### Total electric heat:

Rebates: \$30 per KW of installed capacity from Soyland Power,  
and \$350 rebate from Monroe County Electric Co-Op.

Plus, free electric water heater with radio control!

Qualifying electric heat systems must be a minimum of 5 KW and include:  
electric furnace, air-to-air heat pump, baseboard, ceiling cable  
or any other electric heating system.

These rebates are for Monroe County Co-Op members only.

**For information on these rebates call:**

**(618) 939-7171**

**or (800) 757-7433**

**Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 128 • Waterloo, IL 62298**

*Soyland Rebates to end 6/30/98*

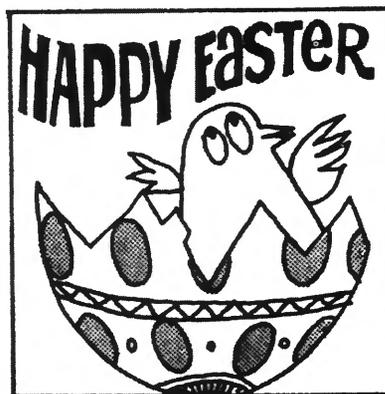
## Total Home *Lightning & Surge* Protection

Major Appliances  
TV • VCR  
Computer  
Telephone  
Fax



Now available from  
**Monroe County  
Electric Cooperative**  
939-7171

901 N. Market • Waterloo, IL 62298



## Office closing

**Monroe County Co-Operative  
will be closed for  
Good Friday, April 10, 1998.**

*For emergencies call,*  
**(800) 757-7433 or  
(618) 939-7171**

# 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 finan-

cial 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

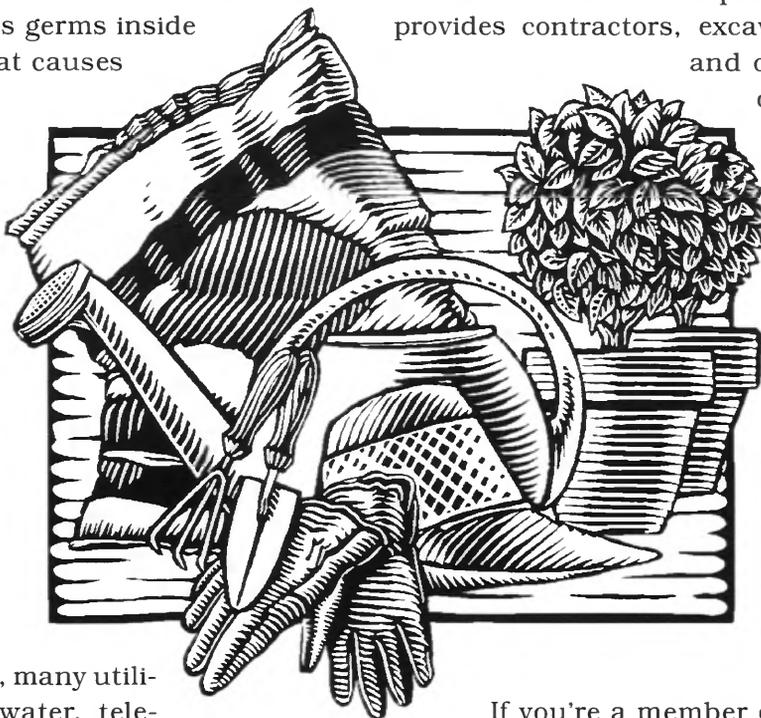
disturbing the earth," as they put it, with a free locating service through a toll-free phone call.

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

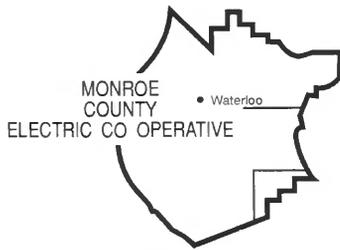
Your electric cooperative encourages you to plant trees,  
but not near power lines.

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*



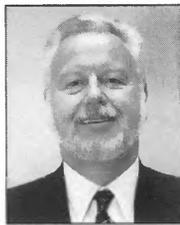
# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

Over 500 members and guests attended your Cooperative's 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting, Monday, March 23, 1998 at the Hecker Community Center in Hecker. We were pleased with the attendance and thank all of you who participated in the meeting.

Walter Amann was re-elected to a three year term to your board of directors, representing District 7. Two members have decided not to seek re-election; Kenneth Stumpf, District 3 and Vernon Matzenbacher, District 8. The nominees voted on and approved to succeed Stumpf and Matzenbacher were Joel Harres from rural Columbia, District 3, and Manlee Knobloch from rural Fults, District 8.

All members who were registered for the meeting received a utility steak knife as a door prize and were eligible for the drawing of attendance prizes awarded at the end of the meeting.

Speaking to the members and guests, Board President Terry Grommet stated that change is the main thing that has happened to the Cooperative over the past few years. He discussed the cooperative property that was taken by the Illinois Department of Transportation for a new four-lane highway, and also the negotiations which have taken place with Wal-Mart for a road to their new Super Center. He also talked about the development of "Co-Op Center". This was necessary in order to get the remainder of the Cooperative property platted with the County for possible future sale and development.

Grommet stated that one thing that will not change is the Cooperative's dedication to service to its member-owners.

Joseph J. Fellin, Manager, discussed the growth the Cooperative has been experiencing for the last 3 to 4 years. Fellin went on to note that in 1997, our line crews constructed about fourteen miles of new line to serve 144 new services. He added that we

increased the capacity of three distribution substations and replaced about a mile of three phase line in Wildwood Lakes Subdivision.

Fellin explained that energy sales were about the same as last year, even with the loss of the temporary Valmeyer School and a decrease in sales to the pumping loads. He added that most of our sales are to rural residential and farmsteads, and weather played a big part in our annual sales. "So far, our purchases are down over nine percent due to the mild weather we have experienced," he said.

Manager Fellin explained that the new deregulation bill was very lengthy, approximately 260 pages and very complicated. In comparison, the five pages dealing with not-for-profit utilities are relatively simple and to the point. Probably the most significant part of the bill is our member's right to act as the guiding force behind our electric cooperative. "This means that your elected board of directors have the prerogative to decide if the co-op will "opt in" or "opt out" of the electric utility market."

"As you know, MCEC purchases its power from Soyland Power Cooperative, as do seventeen other cooperatives. MCEC has a long term contract for all of its electric purchases. Soyland is forecasting much lower costs after 2002/2003 when the debt resulting from restructuring will be paid off. At that time, there will be further reductions in rates to our members (as much as \$25 to \$30 per month)."

Manager Fellin thanked the board of directors and fellow employees for their support this last year. "We have gone through some difficult times over the past twenty years, but I sincerely think that things are looking up as far as retail rates are concerned," he said. Fellin also thanked the membership for all the support they have given over the years. "If we hang together, we can achieve much lower power costs in the not too distant future."

Willard P. Wiggers, retiring Director of Member Services at your cooperative for the last 28 years, received a plaque from Fellin honoring his years of service. Also receiving service plaques were Kenneth Stumpf, who is retiring from the board after 21 years and Vernon Matzenbacher, who is retiring after 12 years on the board. Many thanks to Willard, Kenneth and Vernon for their years of service!

Dave Rowe, ex-professional football player and rural electric member services manager, was our featured speaker.

**Free  
installation  
no cost  
to you!**

**Air conditioner load leveler**

**Save \$30.00**

You can save \$30 by enrolling in our Air Conditioner Load Leveler Program. Let the Cooperative install a load leveler on your air conditioning or heat pump unit — **Free** — and save \$10 a month for July, August and September. The load leveler is a simple device that regulates the on-and-off time of the air conditioning cycle when the outside temperature is 90 degrees or higher. During these periods the air conditioner will operate to give a 25 percent reduction in compressor run time which will help reduce our system peak load. Most people report they can't tell when the device is working or when it isn't. You'll save money and help us control our summer electrical peak demand. Give us a call at 939-7171 today!

**SAVE \$48.00 year**

**Water heater control**

**Monroe County Electric Co-Op  
continues**

**\$4.00 monthly credit**

For members who have control switches installed on their electric water heaters

**Installation late spring — early summer**

We install control switch at no cost to members, and will use it to keep water heaters from operating during our summer peak energy demand periods only. These peak periods will be just a few short hours each month, most likely between noon and 8 p.m. from June 15 to Sept. 15. The water heater will function normally the rest of the year. (No winter control).

Get 'switched' now!

**Call the Monroe County Electric Co-Op  
939-7171**

**Office closed**

**Monday  
May 25,  
in  
observance  
of  
Memorial  
Day**



# 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 Illi-

nois 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.

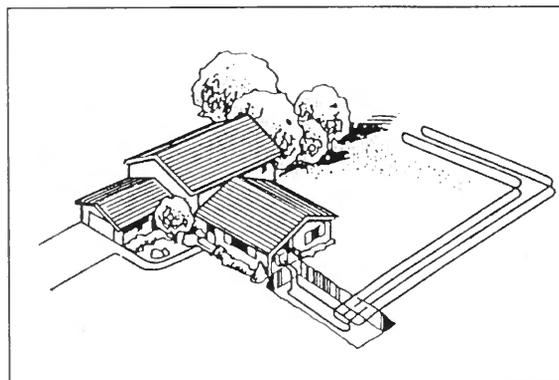
Many closed-loop systems are trenched horizontally in the yard around the home, and this is where a lot of the expense of a geothermal system goes. A pond or well will work, too. It is like burying a giant radiator in the ground.

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.



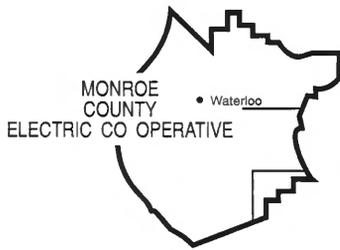
# DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

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**



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

It looks like summertime and warm weather are here again. It is time to be thinking of summer demand and peak control. Starting June 15 and running through Sept. 15, we all need to be conscious of summer demand.

Members with radio controls on their water heaters will be subject to having their water heaters turned off on days when Soyland Power Cooperative is experiencing peak conditions. This

could happen several days between the above dates and can be between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on the peak days, which includes weekdays, but excludes holidays. Weekend days are excluded also.

When peak conditions occur, all our interruptible loads will be notified by us to drop load.

Members who have load levelers on their air conditioners are reminded that the load leveler will be activated when summer temperatures reach 90 degrees and above. These devices will cause an approximate 25 percent reduction of compressor run time. Most of our members with a load leveler installed do not experience a noticeable change in temperature in their home. If you do notice a significant difference in temperature, let us know. You may need a new load leveler installed.

## Deregulation

It has been more than a year now since a number of huge companies began making all kinds of noise about "deregulating" the electric power industry. They tossed around words like "customer choice," "competition" and "savings" in a massive campaign to hide their real motives — to grow their already large monopolies, eliminate their competition and limit the real choices available to consumers.

As Congress and state legislatures continue to debate and consider different proposals to change the electric utility industry, your local electric cooperative and its cooperative partners across the country are continuing the fight to protect the interests of consumers.

Survey after survey confirms that people everywhere today know very little about the changes being proposed in the electric utility industry and it begs the question about the urgency that some feel to change a system that has worked so well. Make no mistake, change is needed, but the change we support must enable consumers to make the choices they need to make to defend themselves against the mo-

tives of those trying to push the rest of the country to their way of thinking — no matter how misguided.

In Michigan, for example, even after extensive media coverage of deregulation proposals there, two-thirds of those surveyed still said they had not heard about the issue and only 22 percent believed it would lead to lower prices. In Washington state, 53 percent thought deregulation proposals in the state would lead, in fact, to higher prices. And in New Hampshire, 54 percent of the participants in a retail wheeling pilot program said that more regulation of utilities, not less, would be required to protect consumer interests.

Finally, in a national survey last month more than one-half of those surveyed believed that power company profits will increase with change while only one-third believed that prices would decrease as a result of deregulation.

The pace of mergers in the investor-owned community tells us that all they want to do is dominate the marketplace. They want to squeeze

*(continued on 16c)*

out those who think that providing high-quality energy services is more important than greed. They want to stamp out those who think that serving a community with affordable and reliable electricity is more important than profit.

Your local electric cooperative and others like it around the country are developing and

testing new ideas and programs that will help you, the consumer, benefit, not suffer, from the changes to the marketplace.

As the next few years unfold, electric cooperatives will become the front-line of defense for consumers to take advantage of the changes occurring in the marketplace.

## New billing look in July

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative has just changed over to a new CAPS XL PLUS "in house" billing and accounting system.

Starting in July, your bills will take on a new and improved look. The bill itself will be on an 8 1/2" X 11" sheet rather than a card. All the information that appeared on your old cards will also be shown on the new billing, along with some extra information.

Your bill will be mailed in a window envelope which will have a return envelope enclosed. You will tear off the bottom portion of your bill, just as you removed the meter reading half of your billing card, and send it in with your payment.

Some of the new features will include:

- A 12 month usage bar graph at the top showing your pattern of usage for the year.
- The current month's average kilowatt hours used per day.
- The current month's average cost of electric usage per day.

- A box that you write in the amount that you are paying.

- With the increased space, the cooperative can insert messages or bulletins to the membership.

- Information that appeared on the back of the old billing, related to outages, will be shown on the front of the new billing.

All members who currently have an electric sub meter account will now receive only one billing but will have a place to put both the master and sub meter readings.

Again, the main part of the bill will basically look like the old bills did with the "Net Amount Due" and the "Gross Amount Due."

We feel this new billing will be a big improvement. Hopefully, this transition will be a smooth one but we're sure there will be questions. Our office phone numbers appear on the bill so if you have any problems, please feel free to call us. We're here to help you!

## Spring begins tornado season

Springtime begins tornado season. Although tornadoes can occur anytime, peak months are March through August.

There are two types of tornado alerts. A watch means atmospheric conditions are right for a tornado to develop. Stay tuned to the news for further information. A tornado warning means one has been sighted in the area or will occur.

If a warning has been issued, seek shelter immediately. The best shelters are basements or storm shelters. If your home does not have a basement, move to a small room, such as a bathroom or closet, in the center of the house.

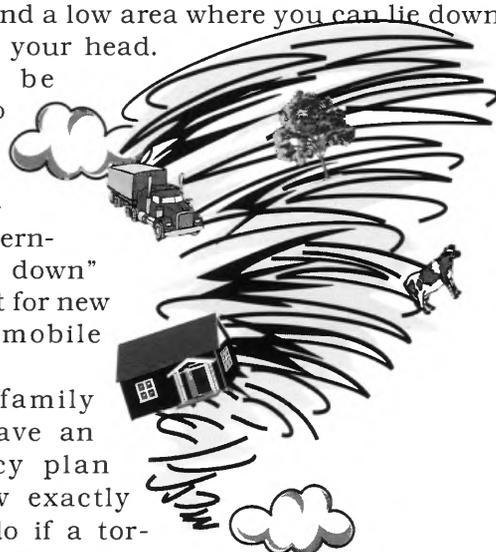
If you are in your vehicle, do not try to outrun a tornado. If you cannot escape the path of the tornado, stop and get away from your vehicle. Lie flat with your head covered in a low area such as a ditch or a ravine. One of the major causes of tornado deaths and injuries is flying debris, so be sure and keep your head covered.

Do not stay in a mobile home. Evacuate the

home to find a low area where you can lie down and cover your head.

It might be wise to also check rules and regulations concerning "hold down" equipment for new or used mobile homes.

Your family should have an emergency plan and know exactly what to do if a tornado hits. Each home should have basic emergency supplies, such as a portable radio, batteries and flashlights on hand in the basement or closet. Being safe is being prepared!



# 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!

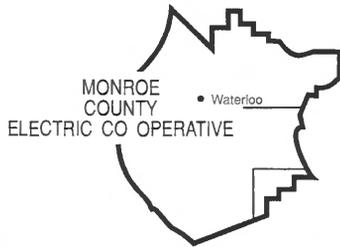
# Avoid the shock of your life!

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



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Supercenter Construction Underway

Wal-mart is in the midst of construction of its new supercenter just west of your Monroe County Electric Co-Operative office.

A ceremonial groundbreaking with City officials and Wal-mart representatives was conducted in mid March for the 150,000 sq. ft. building.

Poettker Construction, a contracting firm with offices in St. Louis and Breese, is building the store. Poettker built the new Waterloo City Hall in 1997 and First Bank's Waterloo facility in 1995.

Monroe County Electric has a four year agreement to sell wholesale power to the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency (IMEA) for the new Wal-mart Supercenter. Because of that agreement, along with other improvements Wal-mart

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

has agreed to make to the Cooperative's property, the Board of Directors has approved a street through the Co-op property.

Dave Paulissen, who manages Wal-mart's existing North Market Street store, said the Supercenter, the 547th such facility built by Wal-mart, will combine the retailer's familiar discount department concept with a grocery department, a bakery, a vision center, a pharmacy and a tire and lube shop.

At this time, sources have indicated to us that the target date for opening the store is Labor Day weekend, September 5-7.



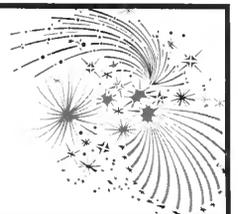
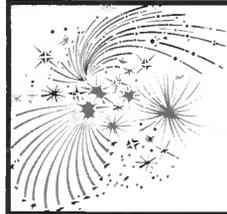
A front view of the Wal-mart Supercenter taken from the back driveway going to the Co-Operative office.



A back view of the Supercenter taken from HH road just east of the Moore Street intersection. The Co-operative radio tower centers in the background.

## Office closed

Monroe County Electric will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day.



# It's water heater — air conditioner control time 31

As you know, we are in the middle of the summer peak alert time.

For those of you who have the water heater control switch or the air conditioner load leveler installed, we need your help. We have run across a few instances where these units were either unhooked or not working properly.

If you have had anyone work on your electric system or have installed a new water heater or heating and cooling equipment, please let us

know. Sometimes the repairmen do not reconnect these units when they repair or change your equipment.

The control units sitting out there not hooked up are not helping control peak.

Please let us know if you have had repair work or replaced any of these appliances. We will come out and check if they are working properly. Thank you!

## It's peak alert time

**Get 'switched' now!**

**Call Monroe County Electric Co-Operative 939-7171**

**Free installation**

**SAVE \$30**

**No cost to you!**

You can save \$30 by controlling in our Load Leveler Program. Let the cooperative install a Load Leveler on air conditioning or heat pump unit — free — and save \$10 a month for July, August and September. The Load Leveler is a simple device that regulates the on and off time for the air conditioning cycle when the outside temperature is 90 degrees or higher. During these periods the air conditioner will operate to give a 25 percent reduction in compressor run time which will help reduce our system peak load. Most people report they can't tell when the device is working or when it isn't. You'll save money and help us control our summer electrical peak demand. Give us a call at 939-7171 today!

**Free Installation • \$48 Year**

## **\$4 monthly credit**

**for members who have control switches installed on their electric water heaters**

We install the control switch at no cost to members, and will only use it to keep water heaters from operating during our peak energy demand periods. These peaks occur only on a few days during the period June 15 — Sept 15. Water heaters will be subject to control from 2 to 8 p.m. on peak days during these periods. The water heater will function normally during all other periods.

**Get 'switched' now!**

**Call Monroe County Electric Co-Operative  
939-7171 or (800) 757-7433**

**Be sure to visit our booth at the Monroe  
County Fair, July 27-Aug. 2**

# 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 pos-



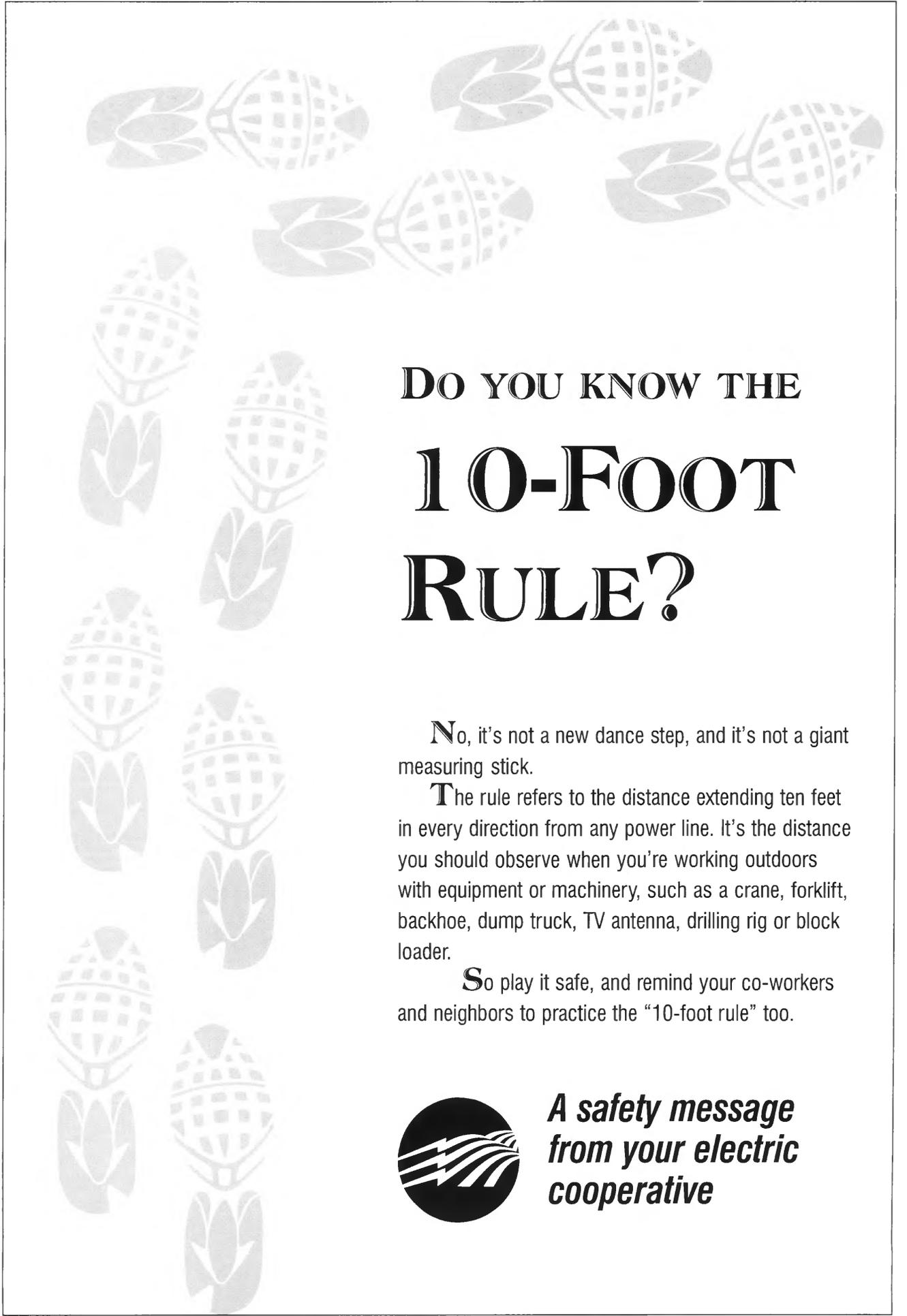
sibility of having a tie down kit installed. But remember: While they'll help against severe windstorms, they still won't keep a full-blown tornado from shredding your mobile home.

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?

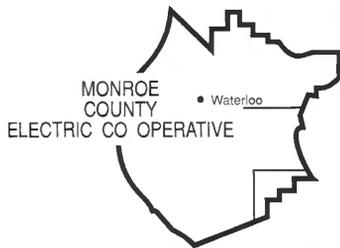
No, it's not a new dance step, and it's not a giant measuring stick.

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*



# Monroe Electric News

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WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

## New alliance in 1999

As many of you may have already read, Monroe County Electric Co-Operative will join with three other southern Illinois electric distribution cooperatives in membership within Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC), a generation and transmission cooperative located in Marion, Illinois.

Beginning Jan. 1, 1999, Monroe County Electric will join Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Southeastern Illinois Electric Cooperative and Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, paying a market-based electric rate for the first three and one-half years. Together, the three current members of SIPC provide electricity to about 43,375 members in southernmost Illinois. MCEC, which is contiguous to Egyptian Electric, currently serves about 5,270 members in Monroe, Randolph and St. Clair Counties.

An alliance with the southernmost cooperatives will provide additional transmission capability, as it will provide a southern feed that MCEC currently lacks. This will improve reliability of service in the southern part of our system. Back in May and June of 1995, a tornado and wind storm left several hundred co-op members without electricity for several days because of the loss of one of the co-op's transmission lines. That southern transmission feed would have prevented such a long outage for most of those members.

The new alliance is not expected to affect the current rates for MCEC, but it is expected that rates will go down (possibly 20 percent or more) for members by the year 2002 when the Cooperative becomes a full-fledged member. We anticipate passing along these rate reductions to the members at that time.

The new alliance means Monroe County Elec-

tric regrettably bows out as a member of Soyland Power Cooperative of Decatur. I served on Soyland's board of directors for 20 years and as President of its board for seven years.

Soyland has gone through a lot of restructuring and a lot of good things have happened. We just thought this change was a good business decision as we look toward the future. We hope Soyland continues to have the success that they believe they're going to have in the years to come.

Your board of directors made the decision at their May meeting after many months of careful consideration. During the initial three and one-half year period, MCEC will pay off its debt to Soyland Power Cooperative without having to increase rates. We are working with the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUCFC) to borrow that money for the buyout.

One of the huge benefits to SIPC is that they can base load their large generation unit. That increases the efficiency of running the unit and lowers operating costs.

Tim Reeves, who is President and General Manager of SIPC, welcomes Monroe County Electric as a new member. We are in agreement with Mr. Reeves that the new alliance will be good for Monroe County Electric and SIPC as we look forward to the future.

## Warning from JULIE

The Illinois One-Call System  
Before You Dig Call (800) 892-0123

The Service is  
Free  
Operates 24  
Hours  
7 Days a Week



Effective Jan. 1, 1991, it is now state law to contact JULIE before you dig.

# Power supply shortages possible

As we reported last summer, we may again face the possibility of a power shortage. If the weather this summer is unusually hot for an extended period of time, rolling power blackouts may be necessary in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc., and other utilities throughout the region are working hard to prevent possible blackouts but also warning customers so they can prepare for the possibility.

The potential power supply shortage is the result of several regional problems. The Clinton Nuclear Plant is still not in operation. Several coal-fired generating plants are also out of commission. Although some plants have come back on line since last summer, there still will be less generating capacity than is normally available.

The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) was formed in 1968 after the Nov. 9, 1965 blackout that affected the Northeastern United States and parts of Canada.

NERC and the regional councils help U.S. utili-

ties work together to maintain the most reliable power supply in the world. Michael Gent, President of NERC, believes that Illinois and Wisconsin are prepared to handle the summer's problems. But he warns, "Such shortages could require controlled interruption of electric service to customers in parts of the region."

If a peak demand situation occurs, there will be three levels of response. First a peak warning will be issued. Normal demand control procedures will go into effect. Peak demands can occur anytime between mid-June and mid-September, from noon to 8 P.M.

Locally, Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc., will begin cycling off water heaters and air conditioners with the cooperation of consumers who participate in the load control program. Contact Monroe County Electric Co-Operative if you are interested in participating. Local radio stations will make peak alert announcements and voluntary load reduction by consumers will also be urged.

## Keep cool and keep your electric bills down

"The good old summertime" can have one big drawback: high electric bills from running your air conditioner. However, your electric cooperative recommends the following efficiency tips when you use your air conditioner this summer.

- Set your thermostat as high as possible — 78 degrees Fahrenheit is often recommended as a reasonably comfortable and energy-efficient indoor temperature. If you raise the thermostat 6 degrees (from 72 degrees Fahrenheit), you should save 12 to 47 percent in cooling costs, depending on your climate.

- Set the fan speed on high except in very humid weather. When it's humid, set the fan on low; you'll get less cooling, but more moisture will be removed from the air.

- Clean or replace air-conditioner filters at least once a month. When the filter is dirty, the fan has to run longer to remove the same amount

of air, taking more electricity.

- Turn off your window air conditioners when you leave a room for several hours. You will use less energy cooling the room down later than if you had left the unit running.

- Consider using a fan with your window air conditioner to spread the cooled air farther without greatly increasing your power use. But, be sure the unit is strong enough to help cool the additional space.

- Do not place lamps or televisions near your air conditioning thermostat. Heat from them is sensed by the thermostat and could cause the unit to run longer than necessary.

- Keep out the daytime sun with shades and/or curtains and keep lights low or off.

- Turn your air conditioner off on cooler days — open the windows and turn on fans.

## Aren't you tired of lugging bottled water?

*From the shelf to the cart  
From the cart to the checkout  
From the checkout to the cart*

*From the cart to the car  
From the car to the kitchen  
From the kitchen to the pantry*

**PureWater Filtration System only \$600 and only from  
Monroe County Electric Co-Operative.**

**\$50 discount to members - 6 months financing**



# 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

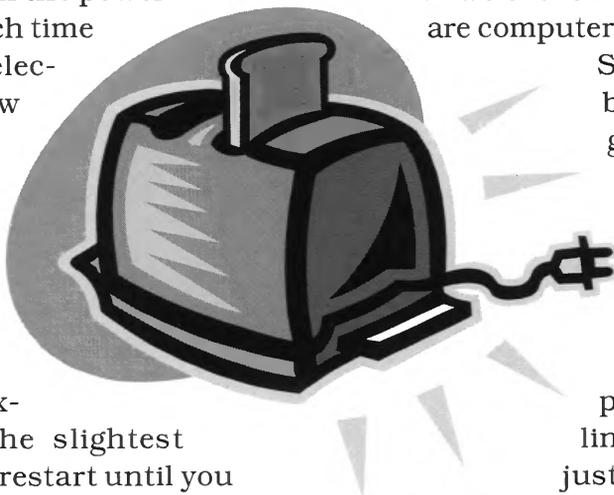
causes, too. These include an object coming in contact with a power line as well as electric-powered equipment suddenly starting or taking extra power. If you have an appliance that causes lights to dim every time the motor starts, you've got power quality problems in your home.

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**

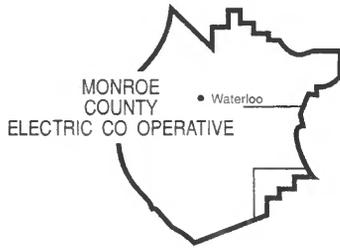
**M**ore than 30,000 collisions on public roads each year involve agricultural equipment. A motorist driving 50 mph has less than 10 seconds to react to a tractor 400 feet ahead that is traveling 15 mph. Watch for the triangular slow moving vehicle emblem. Farmers, be sure that faded emblems are replaced, 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



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## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

### Power shortages possible

Again this summer, rolling blackouts may be necessary because electric generating capacity is critically low in Illinois and Wisconsin. Monroe County Electric Co-Operative and other utilities throughout the region are working hard to prevent possible blackouts, but are also warning customers so they can prepare for the possibility.

The potential power supply shortage is the result of several regional problems. One-third of the region's nuclear power plants in both Illinois and Wisconsin are down, including the Clinton Power Plant. Several coal-fired generating plants are still out of commission. The bottom line is that there is still less generating capacity than is normally available.

Utilities also are concerned about a lack of transmission line capacity for importing power from other regions. Transmission lines are like the interstate highway system for electricity. With limited transmission line capacity, it can be difficult or impossible to import power from one area to another to resolve supply shortages.

The Mid-America Interconnected Network (MAIN), a regional power supply reliability council covering all of Illinois and parts of Wisconsin and Missouri, warns that up to 6,000 megawatts of power may be unavailable this summer. MAIN is a member of the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC). NERC was formed in 1968 after the Nov. 9, 1965 blackout that affected the North-eastern United States and parts of Canada.

NERC and the regional councils help U.S. utilities work together to maintain the most reliable power supply in the world. NERC officials do this by reviewing past lessons learned, monitoring the present for compliance with policies, standards,

principles and guides, and assessing the future reliability of the bulk electric power systems.

Utilities throughout the MAIN region have taken precautionary measures. For example, maintenance and testing of key components has been stepped up, some transmission lines upgraded and communications systems have been tested.

If a peak demand situation occurs, there will be three levels of response. First a peak warning will be issued. Normal demand control procedures will go into effect. Peak demands can occur anytime between mid June and mid September, from noon to 8 p.m.

Locally, Monroe County Electric Co-Operative will begin cycling off water heaters and air conditioners with the cooperation of members who participate in the load control program.

The second level will be to require large commercial customers on interruptible rates to begin shutting down load. Voltage reductions may also go into effect.

Finally, if normal load control methods do not work, rolling blackouts may be necessary in regions that do not have enough generation or import capacity to serve their loads. Individual substation circuits will be turned off for approximately two hours. This situation will be avoided if possible, but the priority will be to keep the network intact and keep all generating units on line. Avoiding a disaster will take a lot of cooperation between utilities and consumers to keep demand from overwhelming the system.

If you have questions or concerns about your electric service or would like to participate in the load management program, contact us at the Co-operative.

## Office hours

8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Outages and emergencies

Call 939-7171 or (800) 757-7433

24 hours a day

# Rebates! Rebates!

## Electric heat rebates available for new home construction or remodeling

### System GT:

**Rebates:** \$125 per ton of installed capacity and \$350 rebate from Monroe County Electric Co-Op.

Plus, free electric water heater with radio control!

Install a geothermal heating and cooling system to qualify for above rebate.

### Total electric heat:

**Rebates:** \$30 per KW of installed capacity and \$350 rebate from Monroe County Electric Co-Op.

Plus, free electric water heater with radio control!

Qualifying electric heat systems must be a minimum of 5 KW and include: electric furnace, air-to-air heat pump, baseboard, ceiling cable or any other electric heating system.

These rebates are for Monroe County Co-Op members only.  
(The \$350 rebate is for new construction only).

For information on these rebates call Member Services Dept.

**(618) 939-7171 or (800) 757-7433**

**Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 128 • Waterloo, Illinois 62298**

*Rebates good until 12/31/98.*

## Total Home

## *Lightning & Surge* Protection

Major Appliances  
TV • VCR  
Computer  
Telephone  
Fax



Now available from  
**Monroe County  
Electric Co-Operative**  
939-7171  
907 N. Ill. Rt. 3 • Waterloo, Illinois 62298

## Office closing

Monroe County  
Electric  
Co-Operative's of-  
fice will be closed  
Monday, Sept. 7 in  
observance of Labor Day.



## Summer's over!

The school year has either begun or will soon. Now's the time to get back into the habit of looking more carefully when you're driving. Kids are out and about more, and they're not in the habit of being particularly watchful or careful. So, please be especially careful to avoid them.

# 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.

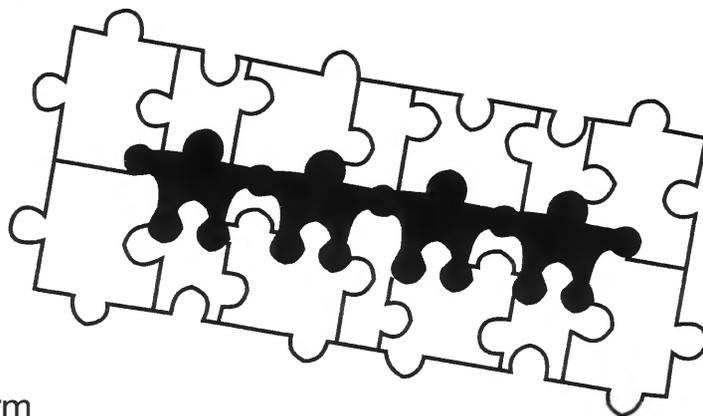
And while some lines are sturdy enough that your shovel isn't going to damage them very much, telephone and electric lines are sheathed in plastic and will break fairly easily. If you're using some kind of mechanical digger, you can do a lot of harm quickly.

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.

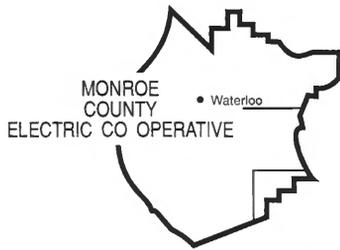
We salute the work of the cooperative employees — men and women who are our neighbors — who give meaning to the word *reliability*.

**We get our power from you.**

## **Electric Cooperatives of Illinois**

*Celebrating National Cooperative Month in October*

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers



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WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

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## School days

It's back-to-school time across America. For parents, it's a bittersweet reminder of the passage of time as we watch our children grow and become increasingly independent. It's also a time when we think about their safety.

Your electric cooperative shares that concern. That's why so many are looking out for the safety of our children. With the beginning of every school year, thousands of co-op line workers are keeping an eye out for children on their way to or from school. Sometimes it means helping a disabled school bus. Frequently, it means using their mobile communications to report a problem or a suspicious occurrence in a neighborhood. And always it means being there to lend a hand, whatever the problem.

Being committed to the community you serve means making the decision that service to the community involves more than just making sure your electric service is reliable. Even in these days when electric utilities are faced with competition that's getting tougher every day, going the extra mile in consumer and community service is standard operating procedure for an electric cooperative. It has to be that way because electric cooperatives are fundamentally different from for-profit electric utilities.

Every day now, we hear reports of other utility companies closing their local offices and moving out of town in order to save money. When that happens, their customers have to do business long distance, frequently talking to people hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles away. Your local electric cooperative is different. Our first obligation is to our consumers. You can still stop by the local office and talk to someone you know about any part of your service. And when you call your elec-

tric cooperative, you'll speak to someone close by who knows your community and what's happening in it.

Being a local electric cooperative means doing business close to home. Because our consumers are also owners, the cooperative gives first consideration to what's in the consumers' best interest. So, there will always be someone nearby you can talk to about any aspect of your electric service. At first glance, it may seem that there is little connection between school kids waiting for their bus and the line crew in the local co-op's truck. But look again. Those line crews working on utility poles probably have kids waiting for their school bus alongside yours. Making sure all our children stay safe is part of what holds local communities together and it's part of the work your local electric cooperative takes pride in every day.

## October is cooperative month

Today many electric cooperative consumers don't remember the first day electricity came to their homes. In fact, your electricity was probably already there when you moved in — one of those automatic things like the telephone line and running water.

The day you joined your electric cooperative, you became a member of a unique organization. An electric cooperative is different.

Your electric cooperative is not-for-profit and consumer owned, like the local credit union or food cooperative. That means any revenue above expenses is eventually returned to the member (you) in the form of capital credit payments.

Your electric cooperative is committed to providing the best possible service at the lowest possible cost. We take pride in our cooperative — a grassroots system of service started by pioneers like those who settled this area. Keeping the cost of electricity affordable helps keep local businesses competitive, while preserving our rural heritage and standard of living.

There is some thing different about receiving your electricity from an electric cooperative. We think it's a difference you can be proud of.

# PureWater assures clean water for 4 cents a gallon

Whether you're concerned about chemicals in your drinking water, or just not happy with the taste from your well or water supplier, MCEC can help with an affordable water treatment system called PureWater.



The PureWater system uses reverse osmosis to remove pesticides, heavy metals, dissolved solids, bacteria and other contaminants from your drinking water. It also includes two carbon filters to

improve the taste. Installed under or near your kitchen sink, it can produce daily about 10 gallons of clean, sweet water for drinking, mixing beverages, ice cubes and cooking.

Reverse osmosis is a proven system which uses a semi-permeable membrane film. The membrane allows water molecules to pass through while acting as a barrier to dissolved solids and contaminants. The contaminants are concentrated and washed from the surface of the membrane, requiring no electrical connections or special pumps.

MCEC's board and management decided to sell the PureWater system to our members because of the confusing array of water treatment systems being promoted today, the limited effectiveness of many systems, and the high cost of the better equipment. PureWater is one of the most effective systems available, yet it's simple and reliable and can be self-installed in many instances.

How much does the PureWater system cost? We are selling the unit for \$600, with a 30-day money back guarantee and a five-year warranty on all parts except the replaceable filters and membrane. While that may sound like a lot of money, over five years of usage the average cost of pure, safe water is only about four cents per gallon!

As an introductory bonus, MCEC will offer a \$50.00 discount to MCEC members. The unit includes all the tubing and connections needed, plus a three-gallon storage tank and a separate faucet to deliver purified water to your kitchen sink. The system can be installed under the sink or under the floor if protected from freezing.

An informative booklet called "The Water Book" is available on water quality sources and symptoms, and the types of treatment systems available. Members can get a free copy of "The Water Book" by calling the MCEC office or dropping a note in with your bill payment.

## Typical PureWater Contaminant Removal Rates\*

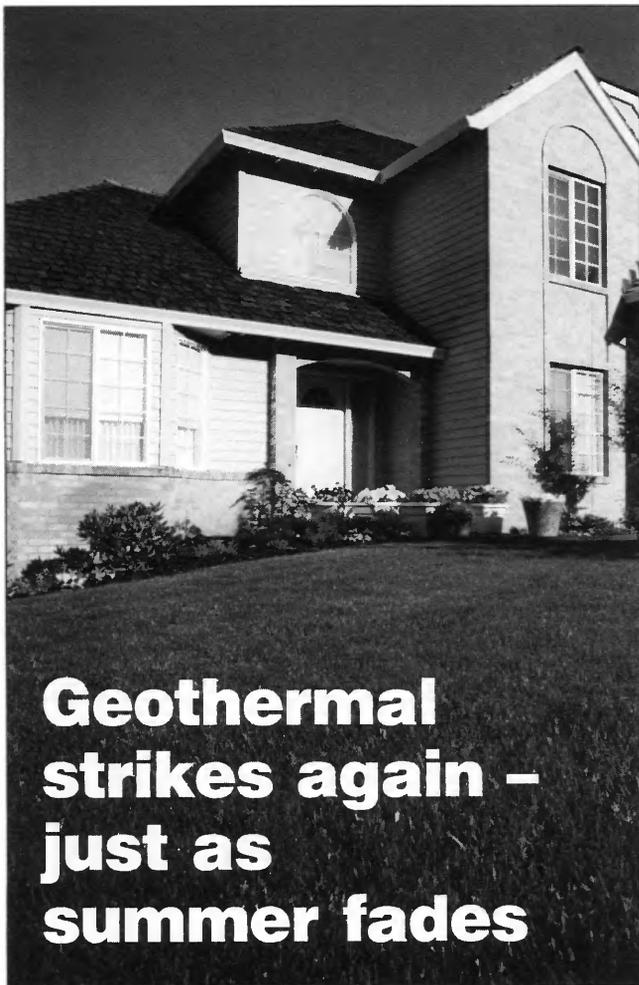
Material/Element	% Removal.
Barium	97%
Bicarbonate	94%
Cadmium	97%
Calcium	97%
Chloride	92%
Chromate	97%
Copper	97%
Detergents	97%
Fluoride	92%
Lead	97%
Magnesium	97%
Nickel	97%
Nitrates	80%
Potassium	92%
Silicate	96%
Sodium	92%
Sulfate	97%
PCBs	97%
Insecticides	97%
Herbicides	97%
Total dissolved solids	95%

\*Water at 60 psi, 25 deg C., pH8

**Only \$600 plus tax**

**\$50 discount to MCEC members.**

**Up to six months to pay to qualified members.**



## 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.

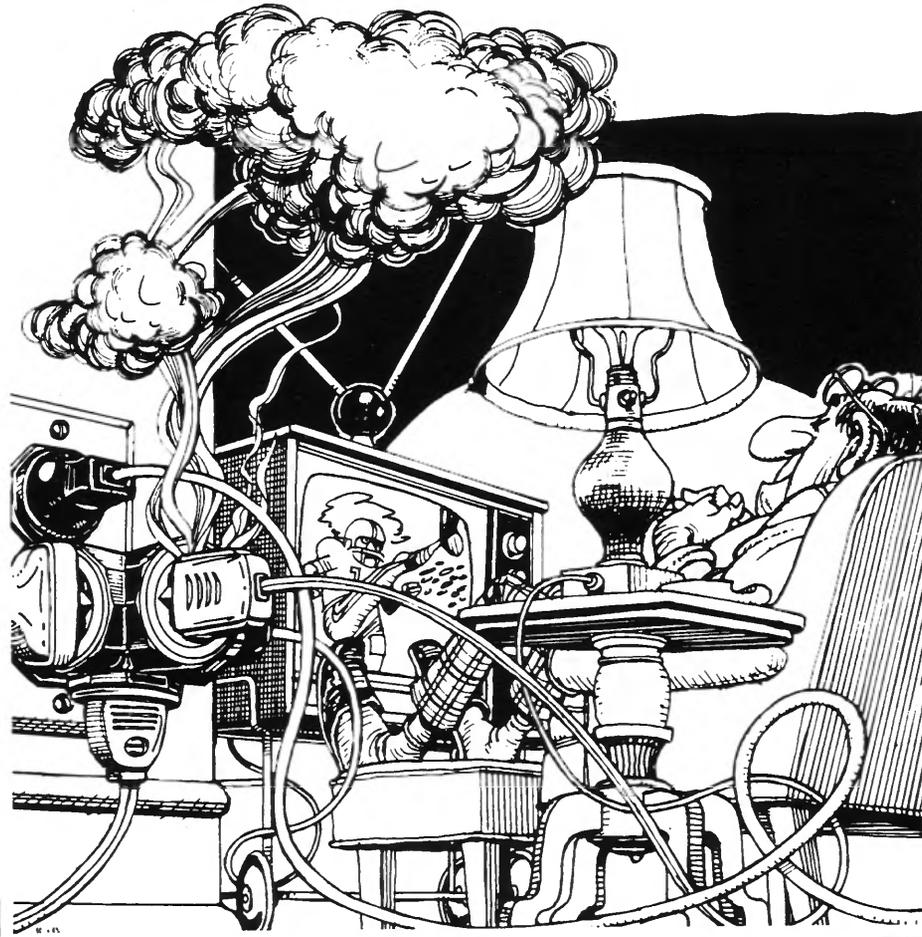
And while the average heat pump struggles to heat zero-degree air in the winter, your geothermal unit is breezing along with its 55-degree medium, taking warmth out of the ground and blowing it into your home. It's a system that can't be beat.

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.

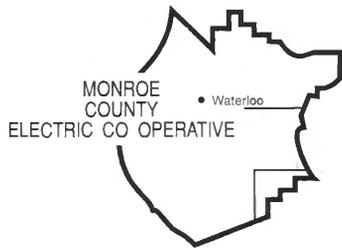
# Don't take safety for granted



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.***



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

A series of local member meetings have been scheduled for four locations in the cooperative service territory during November. These meetings will give you an opportunity to learn about your cooperative, visit with cooperative personnel, friends and neighbors.

At the area meetings we will bring you up to date on cooperative activities and operations. We will set aside a few minutes to answer questions you may have concerning your cooperative.

Each member or family member attending these meetings will receive a 1999 Saturday Evening Post Appointment Calendar. Five \$10 credits on electric bills will be awarded as attendance prizes in a drawing at the conclusion of each meeting. Refreshments and a fellowship period will close the event.

A post card will be mailed to each member announcing the meeting in their area. If you can not attend the meeting in your area, please feel free to attend one of the other scheduled meetings listed below:

### 1998 Area Meetings - Dates and Locations (All meetings begin at 7 p.m.)

**Monday, November 9**  
VFW Hall  
Millstadt, Illinois

**Tuesday, November 10**  
Hecker Community  
Center  
Hecker, Illinois

**Tuesday, November 17**  
Eschy's (Hoefft's  
Village Inn)  
Maecystown, Illinois

**Thursday, November 19**  
Monroe County Electric  
Co-Operative  
Waterloo, Illinois

*Hope to see you at one of these meetings!*

## Insulate to save money and energy

You probably think about your home insulation only when it's cold outside. However, that same insulation, or lack of it, goes a long way in determining how comfortable you and your family are on a hot summer day. And, besides greatly adding to your comfort, insulation can also lower your home heating and cooling bills.

To increase your comfort, and decrease your energy bills, you must install the right amount of insulation in the right place, according to the Edison Electric Institute and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, two national electric utility trade associations. Besides comfort and lower energy bills, proper insulation levels will also help you to protect the environment because you are using energy efficiently.

### Insulation guidelines

Remember that the higher the insulation's resistance, or "R" value, the lower your heating and cooling losses. Where do you insulate? Your home's attic and basement (over an unheated crawl space) are two essential spots. You should also look at insulating your home's exterior walls. Your local electric cooperative or an insulation contractor can give more information.

Heating and air conditioning ducts, if already enclosed in the living areas of your home, generally require no insulation. Insulate them, however, if they are in an unheated space. And, don't forget about an insulating blanket for the water heater. After home heating and cooling, water heating is your largest energy expense. Many of the new water heaters already are well insulated; check with your dealer to see if you should add additional insulation.

For more information on home insulation, call the member services department at the cooperative.

## Fax service available

Monroe County Electric now has a facsimile (fax) machine that will send or receive written messages or documents over phone lines to or from most anywhere in the United States in a matter of seconds.

We can send messages or documents at a cost of \$1 per page to cover long-distance phone rates and supplies. We can receive messages or documents at a cost of \$.50 per page. You will need to have available the fax number of the receiving party to send a message, and you will need to let the sending party know our fax number to receive a message.

For more information, please call 939-7171.

## Office closing

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative's office will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day; and Thursday and Friday, Nov. 26 and 27, in observance of Thanksgiving.



## Applicants for IEC Memorial Scholarship sought

A scholarship program to financially assist students among electric cooperative members is seeking applicants for the 1998 awards. Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc. is a participant in the Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

This is the fourth year that the fund is available to high school seniors pursuing a college education in Illinois. Two scholarships of \$1,000 each are to be awarded. One award goes to the son or daughter of an electric cooperative member. The other is presented to the son or daughter of an electric cooperative director or employee. The application deadline is Jan. 1. The program was established in 1994 by the board of directors of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

The fund's purpose is to help the children of electric cooperative members and provide a means to honor deceased rural electric leaders through memorial gifts, says Monroe County Electric Co-Operative manager Joe Fellin. "As a vital part of their community, the electric cooperatives want to make a difference in the lives of local young people. This is one way we do that."

The recipients are selected according to grade point average, college entrance test scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and knowledge of electric cooperatives as demonstrated by a short essay.

Information on the IEC Memorial Scholarships is available through Monroe County Electric Co-Operative.

• Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded each year.

• One scholarship per year will be awarded to a student in each of the following categories:

- 1) son or daughter of Illinois electric cooperative member/consumer;
- 2) son or daughter of Illinois electric cooperative employee or director.

A scholarship applicant is eligible for consideration in *only one of the two categories*.

- The applicant must be a high school senior.
- Scholarships must be used for educational costs at any two-year or four-year accredited college or university in Illinois, including vocational/technical schools.
- Scholarship winners must begin undergraduate studies within a year of being notified that they have won.
- Scholarship winners will be expected to be full-time students (at least 12 hours).
- Scholarships are for one year and are not renewable.
- Scholarships will be awarded based on grade-point average, college entrance test scores, work and volunteer experience, participation in school and community activities, biographical statement and knowledge of electric cooperatives as demonstrated by a short essay.
- Applications must be received by Jan. 1, 1999.

*For information or an application, please contact Allan Masterson, director of member services, at 939-7171 or toll free (800) 757-7433.*

# 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 Electrocutation.** 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 dis-

rupted 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.

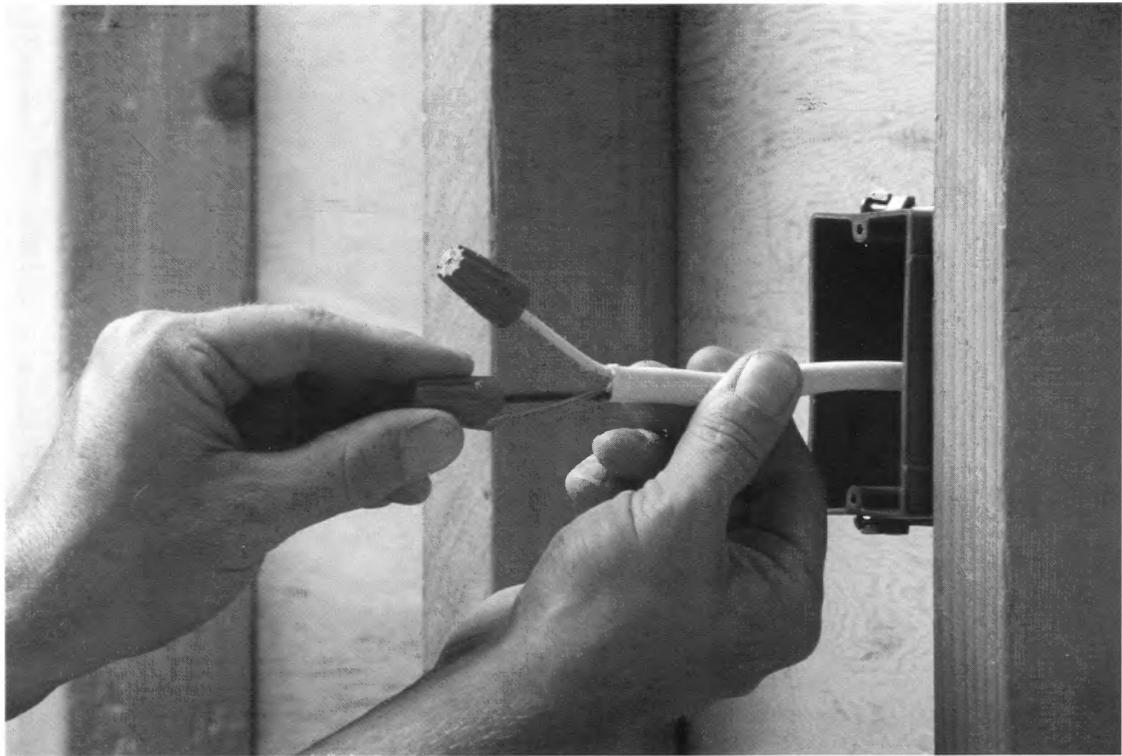
If you have questions about electrical safety, please contact your electric cooperative for information. Your electric co-op is always glad to help you.

.....

***“...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.

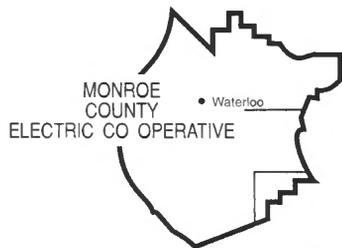
- Do fuses blow or breakers often trip?
- Do lights dim or does the TV picture shrink when appliances switch on?
- Is the switch box warm to the touch?
- Do you have trouble with faltering motors?
- Have you added new appliances?

## 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.



# Monroe Electric News

618-939-7171

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

WATERLOO, ILLINOIS

## Across the Manager's desk



Joseph J. Fellin

### Neighbors helping neighbors

For more than 60 years, America's electric co-operatives have made a positive difference in their communities, serving as the good neighbor. Now, Congress and various state legislatures are considering changing the rules of the electric utility industry. In fact, some states have passed restructuring legislation that allows consumers to choose a power provider.

As these changes occur, electric cooperatives will always be there, working for the wellbeing of individual member-consumers as well as the entire community.

Your co-op's commitment to you begins with helping you keep your electric bill as low as possible — using energy efficiently. Co-ops offer information that is helpful in evaluating a home's insulation and the efficiency of appliances. Additionally, many co-ops provide their members with information in publications and newsletters on how to lower electricity use.

Another way some electric co-ops are helping their member-consumers is by forming business alliances with one another. This increases each co-op's buying power and lowers the cost

of the electricity that member-consumers purchase. Saving money for individual consumers while making their homes and businesses more comfortable — that's superior service.

But as a good neighbor, your electric cooperative also has a strong commitment to the entire community. Co-ops are often leaders in economic development, working to attract new businesses and jobs.

Co-op employees also strive to improve the quality of life in their communities by coaching Little League teams, working at local food banks and volunteering in schools. Important indeed.

It is precisely because your electric co-op is a local business, owned by its member-consumers and staffed by local professionals, that it is in a good position to listen and respond to your needs. Unfortunately for their customers, the large and impersonal corporate power monopolies are often too far removed from their customers to be able to provide the same caliber of service, let alone such intensive support for the community.

All these things — helping consumers save energy, economic development, and volunteerism — point to one thing: your electric co-op and its staff are more than just an electric utility, they are an integral part of the community. That's why electric co-ops will continue to do everything they can to improve the quality of life in your community.

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative is a company that cares about the people it serves. That service goes a long way beyond keeping the lights on. It's neighbors helping neighbors. That's what it's all about — that's the electric co-op tradition.

## Assistance available for energy bills

Energy costs place severe and continuing stress on a low-income family's budget.

While the energy bills a low-income family receives may not be higher than those of families with higher incomes, it takes a larger percentage of their income to pay them. The average family spends approximately five percent of its income on energy bills, while a low-income family typically pays 20 percent of its income on energy bills.

The primary purpose of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is to assist eligible citizens with their home energy costs through financial assistance, counseling, outreach and education.

Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council is designated by the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs to implement LIHEAP in Monroe and Randolph Counties. St. Clair Intergovernmental Grants Department is

the contact agency for St. Clair County.

The program began Oct. 1 with a special one-month priority period for elderly and disabled customers and households that are disconnected from their energy source. The program is available to all eligible households after Nov. 1.

To make an appointment, arrange for a home visit or information; contact the outreach office in the county in which you reside. **The phone numbers are: Monroe County, 939-8715; Randolph County, 826-3141; and St. Clair County, 277-6790.**

When applying for assistance, documented proof of the following will be needed: gross income for all household members for the previous 30 days, current copies of heating and electric bills, and proof of Social Security num-

bers for all household members.

To be eligible for LIHEAP assistance, total monthly gross income for the household must be at or below the following: one person \$839; two persons \$1,130; three persons \$1,421; and four persons \$1,712.

We at Monroe County Electric Co-Operative are sensitive to the cost of energy to low-income families. If you have difficulty paying your electric bill, please contact us before it becomes a problem. We may be able to assist you.

**Office closed**  
Dec. 25 — Christmas Day  
Jan. 1 — New Year's Day  
*Season's Greetings!*

## Heating tips for saving money this winter

Are you looking for some easy, no cost/low cost ways to save energy and cut your heating bill this winter? The U.S. Department of Energy offers these tips:

- Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable.
- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as needed.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters and radiators as needed. Make sure furniture, carpeting or drapes do not block them.
- Bleed trapped air from hot-water radiators once or twice a season; if in doubt about the procedure, call a professional.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Use kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans wisely; in just one hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed or cooled air. Turn fans off as soon as you're done.

- Keep draperies and shades open on south-facing windows during the heating season to allow sunlight to enter your home. Close them at night.
- Close an unoccupied room that is isolated from the rest of the house, such as in a corner, and turn down the thermostat or turn off the heating for that room or zone. However, do not turn the heating off if it adversely affects the rest of your system. For example, if you heat your house with a heat pump, do not close the vents — closing the vents could harm the heat pump.

Do you need more information about saving energy and cutting your heating bills this winter? Contact Monroe County Electric Co-Operative for more information. As a consumer-owned electric utility, your co-op is always glad to help you save energy and money.

## IEC Scholarships offered

### Official rules

- Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded each year.
- One scholarship per year will be awarded to a student in each of the following categories:
  - 1) son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative member/consumer
  - 2) son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director.

A scholarship applicant is eligible for consideration in *only one* of the two categories.

- The applicant must be a high school senior.
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- Scholarship winners must begin undergradu-

ate studies within a year of being notified that they have won.

- Scholarship winners will be expected to be full time (at least 12 hours) students.
- Scholarships are for one year and are not renewable.
- Scholarships will be awarded based on grade-point average, college entrance test scores, work and volunteer experience, participation in school and community activities, biographical statement and knowledge of electric cooperatives as demonstrated by a short essay.

For information or an application, please contact Allan Masterson, director of member services, at 939-7171 or toll free (800) 757-7433.

Applications must be received by Jan. 1.

# 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.

