

The power behind your power

By Anne Prince

As April arrives, it brings with it the showers that produce spring flowers. It also heralds the beginning of a potentially stormy season that can inherently include power outages. While Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) strives to provide reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes; however, (484-30) there is a group of professionals that spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst – co-op lineworkers.

One of the most dangerous jobs

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must climb 40 or more feet in the air, carrying heaving equipment to restore power. Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S., lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high voltage power lines. To help keep them safe, lineworkers wear specialized protective clothing and equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect them from electrical shock. While the gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more complex.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes

far beyond climbing to the top of a pole to repair a wire. They are also information experts that can pinpoint an outage from miles away and restore power remotely. Line crews use their laptops and cell phones to map outages, take pictures of the work they have done and troubleshoot problems. In our community, WIEC lineworkers are responsible for keeping 1,220 miles of lines across four counties energized, in order to bring power to your home and our local community 24/7, regardless of the weather, holidays or personal considerations.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any times of the day or night. During

hurricanes, wildfires or storms, crews often work around the clock to restore power. While April is known for spring showers, there is also a day set aside to “thank a lineworker.”

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 9. WIEC invites our co-op members to take a moment and think about the work our line crew does on a daily basis. If you see one of our linemen, buy them a cup of coffee or shake their hand. If you see them in a WIEC truck, give them a friendly wave. If you see one of our linemen, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions.

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





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BUSINESS OFFICE

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TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Rob Gronewold** —
President, Carthage
- **Jay Morrison** —
Vice President, Niota
- **Janet Spory** —
Secretary/Treasurer, Sutter
- **William Newton** —
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer,
Burnside
- **Mark Burling** —
Director, Carthage
- **Kent Flesner** —
Director, West Point
- **Kim Gullberg** —
Director, Stronghurst

STAFF

- **Tommie Long** — Manager
- **Todd Grotts** — Manager
of Operations
- **Becky Dickinson** — Office
Manager

MAP LOCATION CONTEST

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

Ways to serve your cooperative

Nominating Committee appointed

One of the greatest resources of western Illinois is our people and their willingness to serve when asked. There are several ways to serve your cooperative. One is by being on the nominating committee who solicits members to run for the board. Another way to serve is to actually run for a seat on the board of directors if asked.

At the 2018 Annual Meeting, on June 28, three WIEC members will be elected to serve on our WIEC board. To nominate members to be on the ballots, WIEC's board of directors recently appointed the following members to serve on the 2018 nominating committee: District No. 1 – Jerry Carnes, Biggsville and William Gesling, Carmen; District No. 2 – Spencer Berry, Nauvoo and Matthew Crowner, Burnside; District No. 3 – Matt Dallas, Dallas City and Harold Herdrick, Dallas City; District No. 4 – Bryan Stevens, West Point; District No. 5 – Dave Biery, Carthage; District No. 6 – Robert Menn, Plymouth; and District No. 7 – Max Roskamp, Sutter. We thank these members for their

willingness to serve their cooperative.

This group consisting of two WIEC members are appointed from the districts whose board terms expire each year, with one being appointed from remaining districts. These members will nominate at least one member for a three-year term to represent Districts 1, 2 and 3.

- District No. 1, currently represented by Kim Gullberg
- District No. 2, currently represented by William R. Newton
- District No. 3, currently represented by Jay D. Morrison

If you are interested in running for a seat on WIEC's board of directors, please contact one of the above nominating committee members or contact the WIEC office. We'd like to hear from you.

Due to the advance printing of the WIEC News, the first meeting of the nominating committee had not been set at printing time. Call the WIEC Office for more information about meeting dates.



WIEC's Annual meeting will be

June 28, 2018.

Do you have what it takes to be a WIEC director?

The nominating committee will soon be meeting to find qualified candidates for the WIEC board of directors. Have you ever wanted to learn more about your cooperative? Would you like to know where the money comes from and where the money goes? These are the topics you will learn about as a director. Here are a few qualifications that are needed.

What the board does:

- Be a current member of WIEC and be a bonafide resident in the represented district.
- Be accessible to people in their district. While it helps to be sympathetic to the needs of the members, the director must keep the best interest of the entire cooperative in mind.

- Be able to attend most regular board meetings and any special meetings that come up from time to time.
- Be an independent thinker but also a cooperator.
- Be capable of acquiring the knowledge necessary to cope with the issues of a modern electric utility, including finances, management and public issues.
- Have the willingness to listen and learn.
- Be one who can accept and direct change.
- Be of sufficient stature to command the respect of management, employees, fellow board members, cooperative members and the public.
- Be willing to commit adequate time to the work of the board to be

- an effective member and properly discharge the duties of the board.
- Be willing to accept the unpleasant moments of a director's experience.
- Let management manage.

What the board does not (5816-8-2) do:

- The board does not oversee WIEC's day-to-day operations. Directors establish policies and point the cooperative in the direction they want employees to follow. The employees decide the best way to get the job done.
- Directors aren't required to be a walking Wikipedia about electric utilities when they are elected. But it is their job to become knowledgeable about issues facing Western Illinois Electrical Coop. so they can make intelligent decisions.

Geothermal heat pump federal tax credits reinstated

Federal tax credits for geothermal heat pumps were recently reinstated by the federal government. Residential consumers are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit for installing a geothermal heat pump system in their home. The reinstated tax credits are retroactive to Jan. 1, 2017, meaning that anyone who installed a geothermal system in their home in the past 14 months now qualifies for the tax credit. The tax credits are extended through Jan. 1, 2022, through a phase out plan in which the credit is reduced to 22 percent before ending.

The geothermal tax credit was part of a measure to extend the tax incentives to renewable energy technologies like geothermal heat pumps, combined heat and power

systems, microturbines, small wind systems, fuel cells, etc., that were taken out of the legislation passed by Congress two years ago, extending the tax credits for the solar industry.

In addition to the residential tax credits, there is also a 10 percent investment tax credit for commercial geothermal systems that was also extended.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association joined with a coalition of many national and state organizations to support reinstatement of the tax credits. The cooperatives are appreciative of the efforts of Rep. John Shimkus and several other Illinois Congressmen who sponsored legislation leading to the tax credit reinstatement.

The tax credit extension was part of the (461-58) Continuing Resolution action by the Congress in early February to fund the federal government.

"We are appreciative of our leaders' support for geothermal heat pump technology and providing parity with the other renewable energy technologies," said John Freitag, executive director of the Geothermal Alliance of Illinois. "Geothermal heating and cooling is by far the most efficient and effective way known today to heat and cool our homes and businesses. The tax credit extension helps to make installation of a geothermal heat pump the obvious best choice for heating and cooling."

Member service

An Important part of the puzzle

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) is an electric cooperative that provides electricity to the rural areas of Hancock and southern Henderson County. That is our main function, but there are other pieces to the entire WIEC puzzle. There is the operations department, which oversees the operations and maintenance of the system; the line-men who do the actual work on the system; the billing department who runs the office, handles billing, payments and answer questions our members may have.



One other important part of the puzzle is our member service department. If anyone ever is around a WIEC employee or director for very long, they've probably have heard them speak of "member service." But what does that (3510-34) really mean?

The member service department's goal it is to provide service beyond what's expected. Since WIEC is responsible for wiring up to the meter; our members are responsible for the

wiring past the meter to their home, buildings or bins. If our members have a specific question about the wiring on their side of the meter, benefits of a geothermal HVAC system, or other types of electric heat, installing a generator, or any other electrical question, they can call our office for advice. By having someone to talk with or

bounce off ideas, it can give our members peace of mind before starting a project. Our electrician, Mark Kissinger, can install electric water heaters or do electrical wiring. Since he has been doing this

for quite a while, our members trust him to do it right and at a fair price.

Members who have high bill questions can call our office and discuss their concerns. We can supply usage information to help track when those kilowatts were used and offer suggestions about what may have caused the high usage. Often, it is helpful to know if usage spiked during a certain hour or day or week. If no resolution can be found, our electrician is

available to go visit the member's home and help determine the cause. We do not charge for this service, it is a benefit of being a WIEC member-owner.

Other benefits we offer at no charge are:

- Hanging and servicing security lights purchased from WIEC or elsewhere.
- Taking down electric wires temporarily when working on siding or other construction and then rehanging once the work is completed.
- Locate member's underground wires away from the meter.

When you hear the phrase "member service," we try to explain it as the benefits our member-owners receive just by being a WIEC member. These are benefits received beyond having electrical service from WIEC. These are things we do above and beyond what is expected from an electric company.

Since the electric world is ever changing due to technology and innovations, we will try and keep the services we offer viable and useful. We welcome any suggestions of new ways to keep the "service" in member service.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Make sure your refrigerator door seals are airtight for maximum energy efficiency. Test the seal by closing the door over a piece of paper (so that it's half in and half out). If you can easily pull the piece of paper out, your seal may need to be replaced or the latch may need to be adjusted.

Source: energy.gov

Congratulations, Wilber Tripp and Roger Bisby!

These members won \$10 because they found their map locations numbers in recent issues of the WIEC News. Each month we hide four map location numbers in the WIEC News. It's so easy; find your number, call our office and you'll receive a \$10 bill credit on your next electric bill.

Remember, you can't win if you don't look!

Welcome New Members

American Tower, Spokane WA
Connection Bank, Keokuk IA
Steven R. Cushman, Kankakee IL

Amber Picard, Lomax
Brent Whiting, Mapleton VT