

THE GRID

P.O. Box 709
(104 Dewitt Ave., East)
Mattoon, Illinois 61938

Phone: 217/235-0341
or Toll-Free:
1-888-661-CMEC (2632)

Office hours:
Monday-Friday
7:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

Chairman

Debbie Albin..... Mattoon

Vice Chairman

John Bowers..... Lovington

Secretary

Bill Voyles Sullivan

Treasurer

Jeffery Hudson Charleston

Directors

Andrew Fearn Charleston

Kent Metzger Gays

Thomas Sherman ... Humboldt

President/CEO

Amy Borntrager

To Report an Outage
call #888-661-2632

Send your current email
to info@cmec.coop
for a chance to win a
\$25 bill credit



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Board of Director Nominations

Our board is democratically elected by you, our members. We have seven board of directors representing each district. These positions hold great importance in our communities and impact rates, policies and strategic planning. Any qualified cooperative member is welcome to run for an

open position. Districts up for election this year are 2, 4, 5 and 6. Nominating petitions are due in the office of the cooperative by **4:30 p.m., March 20, 2020**. We encourage interested members to contact us at 217-235-0341 or email info@cmec.coop.

Your Board of Directors



Bill Voyles
District 1



John Bowers
District 2



Kent Metzger
District 3



Deborah Albin
District 4



Andrew Fearn
District 5



Tom Sherman
District 6



Jeffery Hudson
District 7

What Is Right-of-Way and Why Is It Necessary?

A right-of-way, when it comes to utilities, is an agreement that allows a utility to use or access a piece of property according to the terms of the easement.

Easements are areas designated for overhead and underground utility access and are usually defined when a lot or neighborhood is first platted. Easements are implemented because it is more efficient and less expensive to run utility lines straight through neighborhoods than it is to run them around parcels of land. **Rob Perry**

Having right-of-way means that utilities can access the area to fix a utility-related problem or to perform maintenance. Easements outline general property rights by others while right-of-way (as its name implies) is a specific property right.

According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's frequently asked questions:

Q: Who decides whether an electric utility can cut down a tree near a power line?

A: The choice of how to trim trees and manage vegetation growth near a power line is primarily made by the electric utility, subject to state and local requirements and laws, applicable safety codes, and any limitations or obligations specified in rights-of-way agreements.

Q: The power lines near my house don't seem near the trees. So why are my trees getting trimmed anyway?

A: There are two reasons for this. First, electric utilities are required to maintain the appropriate clearance between trees and power lines. On a cool, still day, it may appear that there is ample clearance. However, power lines sag as they expand in the summer due to air temperature and heavy use. Clearances around the lines must account for this, as well as wind, which causes the lines to sway. Second, electric utilities usually prune or remove vegetation to a distance greater than the minimum clearances

to account for future growth, movement of trees or power lines due to wind, conductor sag due to heat and line loading, and other factors.

Q: The trees are in my yard. Why can't I stop the utility from cutting down or trimming my trees?

A: An electric utility is granted an easement or a right-of-way on private property in order to build and maintain power lines. The terms of a utility right-of-way, defining the rights of the parties for building and maintaining electric lines, are specified in rights-of-way agreements. These agreements are usually attached to a property deed.

Workers who service utility lines should arrive in a marked vehicle and have proper identification. If you have any concerns, please call us toll free at 888-661-2632. For more about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

CMEC Scholarships Awarded in 2020



One of our guiding cooperative principles is Education, Training and Information. This is one of the reasons we provide annual scholarships to area students. In 2020, we will award six \$500 scholarships to assist members or dependents with their college education. For more information, stop by our office, visit our website, cmec.coop, email info@cmec.coop, call 217-235-0341 or ask your local high school guidance counselor. Applications must be received at Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative's office (104 Dewitt Avenue East, P.O. Box 709, Mattoon, IL 61938) **no later than April 30.**

PRESIDENT/CEO REPORT - December 2019

President and CEO

- Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative was picked as a host site for Industrial Day coordinated through Coles-Together. Anita Hoene, David Welsh, Shaun Vester and Amy Borntrager gave departmental presentations to 30 Charleston High School students.
- Amy Borntrager attended the IEC Managers' Association Meeting on Dec. 5-6, 2019 at the AIEC. There was a presentation from AT&T FirstNet representatives about a public safety communications platform. This allows first responders and utilities priority access to the "network highway." A variety of topics were up for discussion which included solar, legalizing cannabis, employee policies, storm assistance and overseas support. She plans to present to the AIEC Board in December 2020.
- Amy Borntrager attended the December 2019 Prairie Power board meeting.
- Brian McMichaels retired after 41 years of service with the cooperative. Brian provided an old substation sign that he had repainted by Justin Grady as a gift to the cooperative for providing him with a "good life." With all of the employees' service years added together, we have 543 years of service. We plan to lose three experienced employees in 2020.
- CMEC now offers a language line through CRC which offers interpretation services to our members. We have the ability to offer more than 100 languages.
- Cooperative members successfully lobbied Congress to pass the RURAL Act in late 2019 to preserve co-ops tax exempt status.

Member Advisory Committee

- The next Member Advisory Committee meeting will be held in February 2020. Our speaker plans to talk about what

it means to be a cooperative-Coop 101. We will invite the MAC members to the annual meeting and have two additional meetings in 2020. We will continue with the monthly newsletter. We will also distribute capital credit checks to a few commercial accounts at that event.

Member Services

- Carla Bradbury presented at the Mattoon High School Real World. This program provides high school juniors the ability to pick their future career and experience what a month in the "real world" costs.
- With the new "Look Up and Live" campaign directing members to our website, we have seen an uptick in traffic. During a normal month, CMEC sees around 1,400-1,500 users. This past month we had over 1,837 members visit our website. We hope the campaign will continue to increase traffic on our webpage.

Safety

- With the potential for inclement weather days during the winter, we plan to utilize our employees to help achieve some of the objectives set forth in the RESAP evaluation.
- Sam Adair completed the second session of the Certified Loss Control Professional (CLCP) Training. He will need to finish two more sessions and complete a project before successfully obtaining the certificate for this program.
- Thad France from the AIEC taught a class on communication. Both our outside and inside employees attended this training. It is crucial to understand how our employees communicate to keep everyone safe.
- Preparation for the required safety training will be done by Dec. 26, so it will be available to our employees at the beginning of 2020. We require all

levels of employees to complete this training.

Key Accounts

- Sam Adair will begin to do the end of year visits with the large power members. Each year, we make continuous contact with our members to ensure that they know we are available to them if they have questions or concerns.

CONNECT

- Connect technician completed 58 Service Orders, 4 new Installs, 13 Signal Checks, 36 Miscellaneous Orders and disconnected 5 customers.
- Non-Member Signal Checks- Since starting CMEC Connect, the CMEC Connect team has done over 230 nonmember signal checks. Some have been installed and others have been unable to receive service.
- Drew Haumesser attended a broadband/fiber course at the AIEC. This course covered installing and maintaining a fiber system. Connect is currently waiting on getting its fiber analysis back.

Information Technologies

- We had an extender bridge in Charleston that was replaced.
- We signed a letter of agreement with our software platform to move toward two new modules in the engineering department that will create a more efficient flow of data through the cooperative. We won't see any movement on these modules until the latter quarters of 2020.
- David Welsh worked with an integration with our answering service to allow them to see real time data in the customer information system.

Geographical Information System

- Shaun Vester repaired and fixed issues

- Continued on page 20D

Find Your Name and Win \$25

Find your name hidden inside this issue of **The Grid** and receive a **\$25 bill** credit. Credit must be claimed by the end of each month in which this newsletter is published.



with WebMap. He also created a CSV upload for the outage viewer.

Operations and Engineering

- The project list for the 2020-2023 Construction Work Plan has been created in time to include the projects in the 2020 Operating Budget.
- Jim Wallace organized a call with our engineering firm on 11/26 to discuss the Bruce transformer issue.
- The underground cable replacement in Heritage Woods is finally completed. By utilizing contractors to bore the new cable, the time that was required to be in that area was cut in half. It was necessary due to numerous faulted cables.
- There continues to be more solar interaction in the last month. There has been six more installations added since the last meeting.

Accounting and Finance

- The process of retiring capital credits

creates a lot of returned checks to the cooperative. The billing and accounting departments have been working together to ease the workload on one individual. Through this process, it also creates a lot of estate retirements due to deceased members. This has been moved from the accounting department to the billing department.

- We have completed the transition of customer information system year end from accounting to the billing department.
- CMEC 2020 Operating Budget is complete and will be presented in January.
- We continue to develop our AVL program/procedures to assist accounting and reduce fleet expenditures.
- We continue to cross train with human resources on payroll.
- We hope to have a CFO in place by March, and the controller will

be training this individual full time in order to have her duties transfer to that person by her retirement in January 2021.

Human Resources

- We have currently posted for the CFO and a journeyman lineman position on Facebook, Indeed and Cooperative.com.
- We have a date set for an all employee sexual harassment and discrimination training, a union training and reasonable suspicion training for management.
- Congratulations to the following employees for their service awards. Presentations were made at the 2019 Christmas party.
 - Sandra Fisher - 40 years
 - Summar Smith - 20 years
 - Shaun Vester - 3 years
 - Jim Geldert - 1 year
 - Kellie Kastl - 1 year

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes can be viewed on our website: cmec.coop

Stay Connected

Keeping your contact information up to date is important! This helps us get a hold of you if we have questions regarding service and may speed up the power restoration process during outages. Let us know if your mailing address, email or phone number(s) have changed. You can update these by logging into SmartHub, calling our office or sending an email to: info@cmec.coop.

Incentives for 2020

CMEC has both a water heater and insulation incentive for 2020. Contact us for details or forms at info@cmec.coop or call 217-235-0341.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Placing hot food in the refrigerator makes the appliance work harder than necessary, using more energy. Allow food to cool down before you place it in the fridge.

Save the
DATE

**Save the Date for our
81st Annual Meeting of members
set for Friday, June 19, 2020.**

