

## WIEC's 2019 allocation of margins

### Notices were mailed at the end of April for May receipt

One of the main differences between a cooperative and an investor-owned utility is that any margins (sometimes called "profits") accumulated during the year are returned to members in the form of capital credits. Each year, WIEC sends allocation notifications to members detailing their share of the previous year's margins. **5531-7** This year, members should have received their allocation notices in the mail in early May. The notices informed members of the dollar amounts related to 2019 margins that were added to their individual capital credit balances.

Companies like WIEC, who eventually return all margins to member-owners, still need actual cash to operate from day-to-day. Cash is used for many things including building or expansion of any sort within WIEC's territory ... think skilled-labor wages, high-dollar materials and components plus large vehicles and other heavy equipment. The electric industry is one of the most capital-intensive in the world. Many times these construction activity costs are not covered directly by the current electric rates WIEC charges.

Past margins or new loans are two options WIEC has to fund construction activities. If we choose to use past margins,

that delays the return of those dollars to members. If we choose to take out loans, then there are ongoing interest charges to be paid throughout the life of the loan than can contribute to rate increases. WIEC's board of directors takes both factors into consideration to determine when it is financially responsible to return funds to members in the form of capital credit retirement checks.

Many co-ops aim for something close to a 30-year retirement cycle for their capital credits. This is partially because the average, anticipated useful life for many of the construction materials purchased using those

dollars is close to 30 years. This also means that margins earned in and allocated for 2019 would be retired (paid back to members in the form of capital credit checks) around 2049.

To recap ... you should have received your margin *allocation* notices for 2019. An allocation is simply your allotted portion of any margins earned during the previous year. When the board determines it is financially responsible for the co-op to do so, actual dollars are returned to members in the form of *retirement* checks.

As always, please contact the WIEC office at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125 if you have questions.

**Happy Father's Day on June 21st.**

**With your elbow grease and worn out boots, you never failed to put us first.**





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Carthage, IL 62321  
www.wiec.net | 800/576-3125

### OFFICE HOURS

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

### BUSINESS OFFICE

217-357-3125

### TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

800-576-3125

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

### STAFF

- **Todd Grotts** — General Manager
- **Ryan Biery** — Manager  
of Operations
- **Wendi Whitaker** — Finance and  
Accounting 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.

# I hit a power pole or other electrical equipment. Now what?

We all think it will never happen to us, but it can in an instant.

Drivers veer off the road and run into power poles. Farmers sometimes contact a power line while driving tractors or other machinery. Dump or feed truck drivers raise or lower their bed and snag a power line. It happens.

People can become dangerously close to or enter electricity's path. **Knowing what to do in that situation can save your life.** Incidents with power lines or other utility equipment break the electrical current's usual path. This can make the ground, vehicles and other equipment electrified.

If you hit a utility pole, pad-mounted transformer (green box on the ground) or other electrical equipment, **DO NOT** get out of the vehicle. **4714-1 Instead, call 9-1-1 and wait for utility crews to come to de-energize power.** Call 9-1-1 in all of these instances:

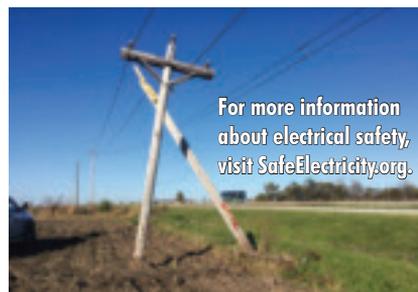
- Your tractor or car **strikes a guy wire** (guy wires are the wires staked into the ground that stabilize utility poles). Under normal conditions, the guy wire is neutral, but if the wire is weakened, pulled out of the ground or otherwise damaged, it could become energized.
- You hit a patch of ice and go off the road and **hit a utility pole**. Or you are in a car accident and **one of the vehicles strikes a power pole**. Only get out of the car if there is smoke or a fire; otherwise, stay put. If there a fire, make a clean jump or hop from your car or truck (without touching it), and hop with your feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground at least 30 feet to safety. Think of the downed line sending electrical current across the ground in a ripple-like effect. Each ring of

the ripple represents a different voltage. If you step from one ring to another, **this is called step potential** and it can electrocute you.

- You see an accident that involves **a downed power line. DO NOT** approach the scene.
- You hit a **pad-mounted transformer** or other type of **electrical box**.
- Your vehicle hits a **substation**.
- You ran off the road, hit a pole and it's dark out, but **YOU DON'T KNOW** if lines are down.

### Other situations

- You get something stuck in power lines (drone or remote-control device): Do not try to retrieve it.
- You see kids climbing or sitting on pad-mounted transformers: Tell them not to sit or play on it.
- You are carrying a tall ladder or pole: Look up for power line locations and keep at least a 10-foot clearance at all times.
- You see kids climb trees that have power lines above: Warn them not to climb trees near power lines.
- You are using a portable generator: Never plug it into a wall outlet. This can cause backfeeding into the line and kill a line-worker or neighbor.



For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

# Let's talk

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in more green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying electric bills more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations, in particular. That's because of two factors.



Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

## Avoid phone scams

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or

money order, often within a short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam easily by being aware of the status of your account... and by knowing that WIEC does not require prepaid debit cards in any circumstance. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call and do not trust. WIEC's Billing Coordinator does sometimes make courtesy reminder calls to members with outstanding balances who have historically paid on time. In addition, she may follow up with individuals who have made payment arrangements for past due balances, but not kept up with the agreed-upon payment schedule. If your account doesn't fit into one of these categories, then it's probably not us calling. Anytime you have a question or concern about your energy bill, please call us directly

at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. Do NOT use a different phone number given by the scammer.

## Avoid solar scams

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to private solar installations. Homeowners or businesses with private solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade or extended warranty to their solar array. **5816-39** The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call Western Illinois Electrical Coop. or the company that

installed the solar array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, systems like rooftop solar (if installed correctly) are virtually maintenance-free.

## Use trusted sources

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop (or similar) solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect. WIEC members can contact the office to see if we have knowledge of, or experience working with, a particular solar company.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor – your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused, member-owned organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills – we're here to help.

## Welcome New Members

Barry, Gwyn  
Edmunds, Robin  
Hedge Hollow, LLC  
Leath, Quinn & Paige  
McMillan, Jane  
Melvin, Ryan & Lindsay  
Reavis, Brian

March  
2020

# Amber waves of grain

## Farmer safety

We don't have to remind those who work the land and raise livestock that they have a potentially dangerous occupation. However, due to the nature of the job, and because of long days and tiring work, here are some reminders about electrical dangers on the farm.

## Overhead power lines

If you contact a power line, guy wire, utility pole, electrical box or any other electrical equipment, do not get out of your cab or truck. **STAY PUT** and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the local utility to de-energize the power. If you must get out due to smoke or fire, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop or shuffle away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you go.

## Determine proper clearance

Contact us to measure power line heights; do NOT do this yourself. Once you know the heights, you can determine appropriate equipment, implement and extension clearances. **5710-6** Always maintain at least 10 feet between the power line and the tallest height of the equipment. Keep in mind that due to wear, age and even weather conditions, power lines can change height. Please contact us with any concerns. And while it's good to know power line clearance... you should still always have a spotter to ensure your safety.

## Always dig safely

Whether installing new fence posts or using large tillage tools, call 8-1-1



## Call us before moving or adding a grain bin

The National Electrical Safety Code addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with specific requirements. The requirements are in place to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with power lines. If you plan to build a new grain bin or remodel an area that already has one, contact Western Illinois Electrical Coop. at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. We can help with specific code requirements. The taller a grain bin, the farther it must be placed from a power line.

before you dig to have underground utilities marked. Even if you think you know where buried gas, power and other lines are, don't rely on your memory. Get all utilities marked so you know for sure. Utility locators do not mark private lines.

## Use standby generators with care

If you have a standby generator to provide essential power during an

outage, be sure to correctly use the transfer switch. Once you properly engage the switch, it stops your farm's generated power from entering utility lines. This is called backfeeding, which can electrocute lineworkers who are working to restore power.

**For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).**



Map Location Winners – April issue  
Teresa Leenerts, Ed Meeker  
and David Casady

*Congratulations!*