Western Illinois ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
NEWS
P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ www.wiec.net ■ 800/576-3125

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. cancels 2020 Annual Meeting

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Western Illinois Electrical Coop's board of directors has canceled the organization's 2020 annual meeting. The WIEC meeting is typically held in late June, but had already been pushed back to Thursday, Aug. 27 due to the pandemic.

"This is not a decision that our board took lightly," explained Kent Flesner, board president. "The health and safety of our membership is of the utmost importance and we greatly appreciate our members' understanding in our choosing to uphold one of our seven Cooperative Principles – Concern for Community."

"We want our members to know that Western Illinois Electrical Coop's critical business operations continue without interruption," says Todd Grotts, WIEC manager. "We're not only looking out for the best interest of our members and the public but also taking careful and necessary steps to ensure the health and well-being of our employees so we can continue meeting the needs of our members through this period of uncertainty."

WIEC's commitment to our members and our community remains strong and our employees, in all areas of our cooperative, continue to work to provide safe and reliable electricity while properly social distancing. WIEC member service representatives are available to assist members who are impacted by the pandemic situation. Those members are asked to reach out to WIEC if they need to make payment arrangements or for financial assistance information.

Members with questions or concerns are encouraged to contact our office at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125.

Budget Billing enrollment begins July 20

WIEC's Budget Billing program gives members a sure-fire way to anticipate the amount of their next electric bill and plan ahead for payment. It's also a great way to prevent large monthly fluctuations. The program is designed to keep your electric bills consistent every month of the year, as long as you remain on the plan. It's the ideal way to accurately predict your monthly expense, which makes managing your money simpler than ever.

When you sign up for Budget Billing, our Billing Coordinator looks at your electric usage for the most recent 12-month period. She determines your average monthly kilowatt hour usage, then calculates what the bill for that amount of electricity would be at current rates. Agreeing to pay for your average usage each month allows you to plan ahead for a consistent expense, even in very cold or hot months when actual usage may be significantly higher.

WIEC's Budget Billing program is free. It is offered to members who have accounts in good standing with at least 12 months of service history to review. A member may opt back out of the Budget Billing program at any time by contacting our Billing Coordinator. If a member on Budget Billing becomes delinquent or enters into a delayed payment agreement, they will be removed from the program and any actual balance is due immediately. In addition, there is an annual "true-up" of budget payments received versus actual usage for the year. Minor differences are either refunded via a bill credit or due along with your usual charges in July. **5612-1**

Enrollment for Budget Billing this year begins on July 20. For more information on the program, or other billing-related questions, please contact our office at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125.

Western Illinois
ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

524 North Madison | P.O. Box 338
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.

A well-designed landscape can save you some green

Thinking of planting some trees in your yard this summer? If the answer is yes, giving some thought about where to put them could help reduce your energy bill. Not only are trees beautiful, but shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun. **6615-23**

The savings are nothing to sneeze at. According to the Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs 15 to 50 percent. Our nation's energy authority also boasts that on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than 8 years.

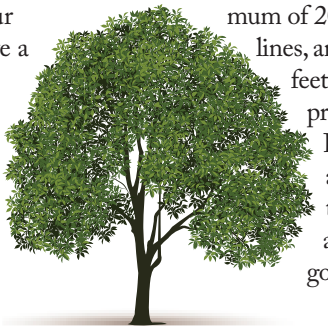
Although effective, shade-producing landscaping strategies vary by climate. Here are some general planting guidelines from the Arbor Day Foundation.

- Plant on the west and northwest side of your home to provide mid- to late-afternoon shade.
- Plant shade trees over patios, driveways and air-conditioning units (but never crowd or block your A/C unit—it should have a 5-foot clearance above it and 3 feet on all sides).
- Use trees to shade east and west windows. If they block your view, prune lower branches.
- In general, large, deciduous trees planted on the east, west and northwest sides of your home create shade in the summer and can help decrease the cost of running your air conditioner in the heat of the summer.

What is deciduous, you ask? Deciduous trees shed their leaves annually. Although It equates to a lot of leaves to rake come October, the annual cycle lets the sunshine through in the winter but blocks the sun's rays in the summer. Either scenario helps reduce energy costs if trees are strategically placed in relation to your home. Trees that don't shed leaves are called evergreens, which usually block the sun year-round. That's great in the summer but not in the winter.

Consult a landscape professional for specific climate/region recommendations.

When planting trees, be sure to consider height potential. Do not plant a tree that will mature to more than 15 feet tall near or under power lines. Taller-growing trees (taller than 15 feet at maturity) should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, and much farther – 50 feet away – to avoid future pruning/power line issues. For more information about planting the right tree in the right place or about electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Spending more time at home? Try an online energy audit to assess the overall efficiency of your home. Visit www.energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started!

Common electrical terms: conductors, ohms, step potential and other buzz words defined

If you work with electricity for a living or other related industry, you will know every term listed here. This article is for everyone else. Here are some common electrical terms and basic definitions:

Path to ground: Electricity likes to take the easiest path. If electricity's usual path is interrupted, the current will take the new path. If that path is a person, electrical current will shock or kill as it runs through the body, since the body has become part of the electric circuit or pathway.

Ground literally means the earth or ground in the term "path to ground" because electrical circuits can be connected to the ground. A ground wire is a wire that has been intentionally connected to the earth but does not typically carry electricity, although it can if the system detects a problem.

Ground fault: This is when an electrical circuit malfunctions and finds a path to ground outside the established path. When there is a ground fault, a human in contact with the wiring may suddenly become part of the pathway to ground.

Voltage: Voltage, measured in volts, is what makes electric charges move. Industry professionals often liken electricity to an invisible fluid that moves through some materials better than others while doing its job. To expand on this analogy, voltage would be the pressure needed to move the fluid along. No voltage (pressure), no movement of electricity (fluid).

Current: Measured in amperes (amps), current is the amount of electricity that moves through the path as pushed by voltage (pressure). Continuing with the fluid analogy, current is the flow.

Circuit: This is an electrical pathway in which electricity enters and exits. Your home's electrical system/wiring has different circuits. Several devices that don't draw much power (a lamp or clock, for instance) can be plugged into the same circuit, while large appliances that draw a lot of power are usually placed on their own circuit.

Ohm: This is a unit used to measure electrical resistance. Resistance measures how much an object (like a wire) resists the current moving through it. Other ways to think of it (fluid analogy again), a water pipe with a lot of buildup would have higher resistance than a clean pipe; a small pipe would have higher resistance than a large pipe.

GFCI: This stands for ground fault circuit interrupters, and they help protect against electrical shock and electrocution if working properly. GFCIs detect whether electricity is staying inside the circuit or leaking out somewhere else (like through you). It's a good idea to test them monthly.

Arc: An arc is a discharge between two electrodes that can cause intense heat or light. Lightning is a big arc.

AFCI: This acronym stands for arc fault circuit interrupters, and they break the circuit when they sense a dangerous electrical arc. AFCIs are more sensitive to arc faults than regular circuit breakers.

Step potential: As its name implies, it is the potential for a person to step from one voltage to another, which can cause electrocution. When there is stray electrical current running through the ground from a downed power line or other electrical source, it spreads like ripples on a pond, and each ripple represents a different voltage. This happens because the electricity going into the ground in not limited to just where the wire touches. The ground resists the flow, which can cause a "pool" of electricity to form. When you step in it, you give it another path to take.

Watt: Simply put, a watt is a unit of power, named after James Watt, inventor the steam engine.

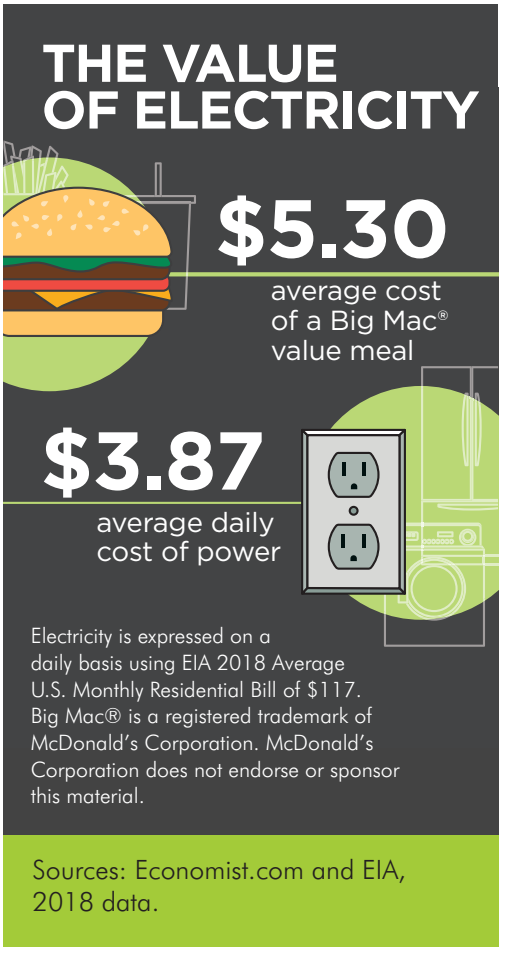
Joule: Simply put, a joule is a unit of work or energy.

Conductor: This is anything electricity can go through. **656-58**

Non-conductor: this is anything that is bad at conducting electricity, like most plastics and rubber. Non-conductors are also called insulators.

One last definition: electrical safety. At Western Illinois Electrical Coop. safety is our TOP priority – your safety and the safety of our employees. Since electricity is invisible, people often forget to respect its potential for danger.

Please respect electricity. Always be aware of power line locations when outside, and always assume a downed power line is live and NEVER go near one. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



What are GFCIs and AFCIs?

We have probably all heard the terms GFCI and AFCI when it comes to electrical safety, but what do the letters stand for? How do these letter-heavy, acronym-named devices help keep us safe?

GFCIs

GFCIs, or ground fault circuit interrupters, help protect against electrical shock and electrocution. It's important to test and reset the red outlet (GFCI) buttons monthly to ensure they are working properly. GFCIs are typically installed in outlets or circuits close to water sources in and outside of the home.

When in working order, GFCIs help prevent shock by detecting current variations along the electrical path. If a person's body starts to receive a shock, the GFCI senses this and cuts off power.

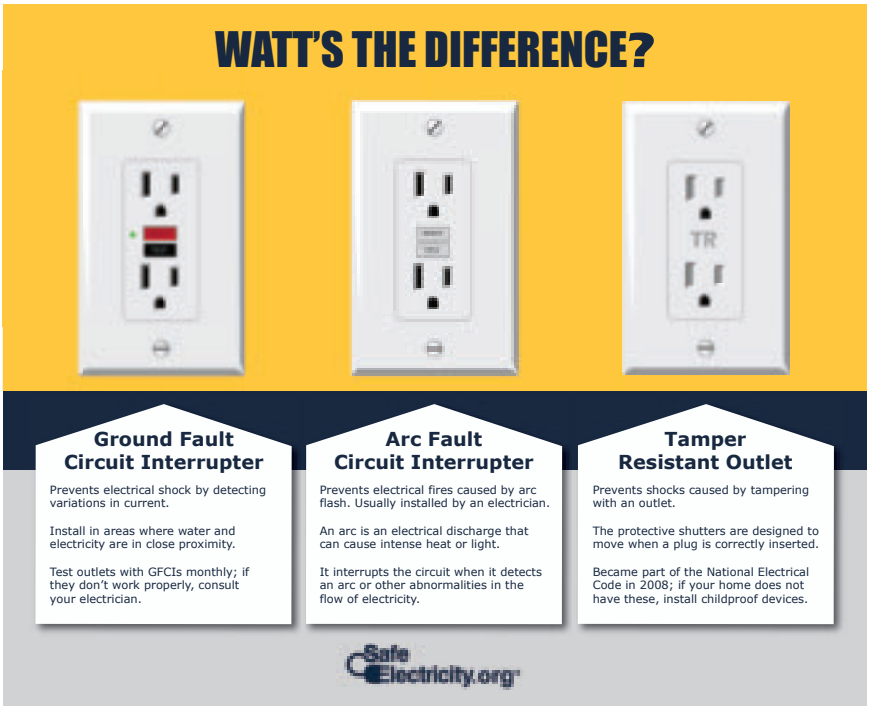
According to the National Electrical Code, a "ground fault" is a conducting connection (whether intentional or accidental) between any electric conductor and any conducting material that is grounded or may become grounded.

In other words, a ground fault happens when an electrical circuit malfunctions, causing the electrical current to seek a path to ground other than via the intended wires. A human or animal in the wrong place at the wrong time could become that "path to ground" or conduit of electricity.

AFCIs

AFCIs, or arc fault circuit interrupters, are required by the National Electrical Code for some, but not all, electrical circuits in the home. The device breaks the circuit when it determines a dangerous electrical arc, which is a discharge between two electrodes that can cause intense heat or light. The extreme heat of an arc can cause a fire, which is why AFCIs are required by code.

Most people associate arcs with welding, but they can happen in the home or when the conductors on a power line are interrupted, such as when a tree falls in it or a car strikes a utility pole and the line falls.



Much like a GFCI is to a ground fault, the AFCI breaks the circuit when it detects an arc or abnormalities in the flow of electricity. That safeguard or break in circuit helps prevent a fire or other arc-related electrical damage. The temperatures of an arc can exceed 10,000 degrees.

An AFCI can distinguish between insignificant, harmless arcs and the undesirable kind that could start a fire or cause damage. Benign or uneventful arcs can be an everyday byproduct of using switches and plugs in good working order. **671-63**

What are arcs and ground faults, again?

In review, an arc fault is the unintended result of current flowing through an unplanned path. A significant arc can cause burning particles that can easily ignite the materials around it (drywall, insulation, wood). A ground fault happens when stray electricity takes an unintentional pathway and the current flows directly to the earth (to the ground). The result, if you become part of that path, could be shock or electrocution.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Welcome New Members

Bowling, Kaci & Dustin
Carroll, Aaron & Jessica
Fawcett, Brittany
Fox, Blake W.
Hopp Farm C/O Tom Hopp
Jones, Mindy & Lucas
Pickering, David & Elizabeth
Pullen, Michelle
Swisegood, Joseph I.
Voss, Jeff

April 2020