



# Clinton County Connection

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

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## Southern Illinois Power Cooperative update

Clinton County Electric Cooperative's wholesale power provider, Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC), plans to retire its largest coal-fired generator as early as this fall. A move that is expected to save \$125 million over a decade.

The tentative decision is the result of analysis and negotiations that have been ongoing since late 2019. The decision to close Unit 4, as it is known, was based on two primary factors: sustained low energy prices in the wholesale power market, and increasingly costly environmental regulations for coal-fired generators.

As a result, up to 26 of the plant's 82 employees are expected to face layoffs. Those employees are to receive a severance package under the terms of an agreement ratified by the IBEW Local 702, which represents workers.

SIPC is a generation and transmission cooperative located on the shores of Lake of Egypt, south of Marion, Ill. that provides wholesale electric power to seven member distribution cooperatives, and the city of McLeansboro. It is jointly owned and governed by the distribution cooperatives, which are Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Monroe County Electric Cooperative, SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Tri-County

Electric Cooperative and Clay Electric Co-operative.

Those distribution cooperatives have a combined 80,000 metered customers across 29 counties — which are considered member-owners — throughout rural southern Illinois.

The tentatively approved plan is awaiting final regulatory approvals, expected by late July. A formal board decision is to follow.

Though Unit 4 is likely to close, SIPC's Marion Power Generating Station will remain open and continue to operate one smaller coal-fired unit and two natural gas units. The original coal-fired generator was built in the 1960s and has a capacity of about 100 megawatts, compared to the larger one slated to be decommissioned, which has a capacity of about 180 megawatts.

Unit 4 was constructed in the late 1970s. It would take an investment of about \$20 million in order for it to meet federal and state environmental requirements for coal ash and wastewater disposal over the next three to five years. That financial requirement was a piece in the equation, but the primary driving factors behind the decision are the more competitive energy prices on the open market and a need to diversify SIPC's energy sources. Currently,



coal-fired generation accounts for more than 90 percent of its portfolio.

SIPC also owns 7.9 percent of the Prairie State Energy Campus, a mine-to-mouth, supercritical coal-fired generation station near Marissa. SIPC became a partial owner in that plant in 2007. Construction of the plant faced numerous delays and cost overruns, and when it came online five years later, it also suffered operational efficiency issues. However, many of those problems have been ironed out and the plant even set performance records in 2019.

Final decisions have not yet been made on how SIPC will replace the capacity lost with retiring Unit 4, but SIPC management does anticipate entering into several long-term contracts with renewable energy providers to help diversify its energy mix.



## Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Notions that guide all cooperatives are known as the 7 Cooperative Principles. These principles lead electric cooperatives like Clinton County Electric Cooperative (CCEC) to do business in a better way every single day.

As mentioned last month, we are taking the opportunity to explain each of the 7 Cooperative Principles one month at a time. This month we explore “Cooperation Among Cooperatives.” This principle states:

*By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.*

Although cooperatives are independent entities, they still rely on one

another to share resources, information and, in some cases, manpower. The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) takes pride in aiding the Illinois cooperatives in the “Cooperation Among Cooperatives” principle. The AIEC provides its members with the advantages of a large utility operation without sacrificing the local control and local ownership essential to the spirit of these tax-paying Illinois businesses. To achieve this objective, the association provides a variety of services for its member-systems. These include engineering services, coordination of safety programs, training of line personnel, legislative research and information, member communication programs, printing and publications, public relations, and group purchasing of materials and supplies.

Electric cooperatives have long

relied on one another to get power restored more quickly after severe weather emergencies. “Mutual-aid agreements,” works just as it sounds. When CCEC needs extra hands after an ice storm or tornado, cooperatives from neighboring towns and states help. When neighboring cooperatives need help, CCEC sends crews to them.

CCEC has been lucky that we have had no storms severe enough to have to call on other cooperatives for assistance, but we have been called on to assist other cooperatives in their time of need. In 2017, 2018 and again in 2019, we assisted cooperatives on the east coast after they were hit by hurricanes.

“Cooperation Among Cooperatives,” just another value that separates cooperatives across the country from investor owned utilities.



**In observance of  
Labor Day, the office will  
be CLOSED on Monday,  
September 7, 2020.**

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# Do ENERGY STAR appliances really save money?

If you are in the market for a new appliance, you might wonder if buying an ENERGY STAR-certified version will make a difference in your energy bills.

**The short answer is yes,** when you compare its estimated energy costs to its less efficient counterpart.

In fact, there are really two costs to consider before buying an appliance: the cost itself and the projected monthly energy costs.

The energy-conscious appliances donning the square-shaped ENERGY STAR logo use 10 to 15 percent less energy and water than standard models, according to Energy.gov. For example, ENERGY STAR clothes washers use about 40 percent less energy than conventional clothes washers while also reducing water bills.

**And the longer answer is yes,** if you consider the appliance's lifespan.

ENERGY STAR appliances and other products used throughout your home can save you a collective \$750 over their lifespan, according to Energy.gov. (Besides appliances, there are other ENERGY STAR-certified products, such as lighting and electronics).

While selecting energy-saving designated appliances could have a slightly higher price tag, they don't always. Compare prices and don't assume they cost substantially more than less efficient models.



The biggest bang for your energy-savings buck might be your refrigerator, especially if it is 15 years old or older. By replacing your old fridge with a new ENERGY STAR-certified model, you can save more than \$200 over a 12-year lifespan.

Tip: EnergyStar.gov offers a "Flip Your Fridge" calculator to estimate savings depending on the size and age of your largest kitchen appliance.

**Bottom line?** The typical U.S. family spends around \$2,200 a year on home utility bills. Switching to ENERGY STAR products can help lower these costs over time.

## What's Your Appliance Safety IQ?



**Clothes Dryer**

Children have been electrocuted when hiding behind dryers; some pets also like to nap there.

Install a childproof lock on the laundry room door, as well as on your washer and dryer—especially front-loading models.

Clean lint screen between loads, and thoroughly clean the vents and duct system at least twice a year.

Make sure hoses, seals and connections do not leak and are secure.



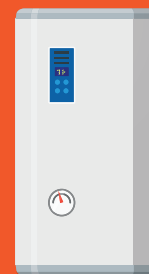
**Refrigerator**

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance.

Clean the coils every six months to a year.

Keep an eye out for dust or lint under or behind your fridge and remove it to let your refrigerator breathe.

If you have young children in your home, make sure your refrigerator is not a tipping hazard. Consider using an appliance anchor that secures your tall appliance to the wall.



**Hot Water Heater**

Make sure your hot water heater is well-maintained.

Make sure it does not have excessive pressure buildup by testing the relief valve (or have it tested) at least once a year.

Ensure vents are connected securely and that the correct parts are used to avoid carbon monoxide production.

Have all components of the appliance inspected regularly (at least once a year) by a technician.





# Thinking about solar? Be 'bright' and do your homework

Considering purchasing a photovoltaic (PV)/solar power system to help supply your home's energy needs? Just as you would for any major home-improvement project, doing your own research and finding the right contractor is key to a successful outcome. Will the product be of high quality and will it perform as it should? What is the company promising and has it proven to be true with past clients?

Beyond those obvious questions, here are some other aspects to consider before signing on the dotted line:

- ★ Know all the costs, not just those for equipment and installation. There are also "soft costs," which will set you back for more than the system itself according to Energy.gov.
- ★ Those soft costs include permitting, financing and "pass along" costs for marketing, advertising and research.
- ★ Thoroughly research the solar installation company you are considering. Is it a local company? Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? How long has it been in business? Is it contracted to do business in Illinois?
- ★ Are the people installing the system employees or subcontractors?
- ★ Have they been properly trained and are they certified in solar installation?
- ★ Will there be a master electrician on site?
- ★ Does the company hold at least a \$1 million general insurance policy for possible worker's compensation and liability claims, among other types?
- ★ Is the company skilled at and does it have a solid track record of advising the appropriate/most advantageous type and size of system needed?
- ★ If there are incentives, who completes the paperwork for the potential tax credits, rebates and other incentives? What are the tax credit requirements?
- ★ How much energy will the system provide and is it enough? Too much?
- ★ How will the installer consult staff from my electric cooperative? Does the installer have experience coordinating/integrating solar systems with the electric grid?
- ★ What does the bid include, exactly? Is it just for equipment? Does it include labor and installation? What about other costs?
- ★ Does the bid and contract include break-down costs for every component/part, as well as labor and other fees, and projected start and end dates?
- ★ What are the complete short- and long-term costs and what will it save in the long run?
- ★ What do objective (not stacked) reviewers say about their experience with the company? About the pros and cons of solar versus electric?
- ★ What happens to my power supply when it's cloudy?
- ★ Do savings vary depending on geographic location?
- ★ Does the company promise savings that sound too good to be true?
- ★ Who maintains the equipment and how much does that cost?
- ★ What are the safety issues surrounding solar? How is the power safely disconnected if needed?
- ★ Should I buy or lease the system and what is the difference?
- ★ What happens if I move?
- ★ Does your electric utility require any additional insurance for operating a solar array?
- ★ What happens with the renewable energy credits produced from your solar array?

These are only some of the details to consider. Be sure to do your homework before agreeing to any major home project, including a solar/PV system installation. Please contact us prior to signing up for solar install so we can coordinate energy grid hookup and answer any questions you may have. For more information about electrical safety and renewable energy, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Considering Solar? Call us first!

As interest in "green" energy and ways to save money on utility bills continue to grow, some cooperative members may be considering the installation of a solar array.

Since these types of systems have the capability of returning electricity back to the electric grid, there are some major safety considerations to sort through before a system is installed.

Before deciding to buy a solar array, examine the economics to determine if such a system will lower your monthly electricity costs. If you do decide to install a solar array, contact our office as early as possible in the process.

A CCEC representative will provide information on our interconnection process and policies, as well as answer any questions you may have. That way, you and your installer will have the information needed as you progress with your system.

*For more information on CCEC policies and requirements, please contact our office Monday through Friday, between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. at 800-526-7282.*