McDonough Power Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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The Wire
McDonough Power Cooperative • Macomb, Illinois 61455

Mike Smith
President and CEO

Electricity brings everyday value

Although I work in the energy industry, like most people, I still don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and the coffeemaker to work each morning. Because electricity is so abundant, we don't think much about it. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the past few months, we have likely been using more energy. Yet, we still expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we worry about electricity is when the power goes out or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our modern lifestyle every day, it's a great value, especially when compared to other common services and expenses. For example, think back to the cost of a gallon of gasoline 20 years ago. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat, unlike most other consumer goods.

Many people have a cell phone to stay connected and subscribe to cable channels to enjoy more viewing options. Many of us consider these necessities for modern day life. We can see what we're getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services. In contrast, when we use electricity, we don't necessarily "see" all that we're getting for our money.

But considering what electricity does for us, it's a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets. For comparison, consider that the average rent increase was nearly 4 percent (from 2014-2019) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of medical care was increased 3 percent during this time, and education was not too far behind at 2.6 percent. Where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4 percent.

The bottom line: electricity brings everyday value. In fact, McDonough Power Cooperative members experience a minimal number of outages each year; 99.96 percent service availability in 2019. Considering that electricity is something that we all use around the clock, I'm proud of our track record. At the same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options where possible. **532RM413-900C**

McDonough Power provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. As your trusted energy advisor, we want to help you save you energy and money.

We recognize that the past few months have been challenging for many of our members and we're here to help. If you have questions about your account or are looking for ways to save energy at home, please give us a call. McDonough Power Cooperative is your electric co-op and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of our community. That's everyday value.

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All Co-op Electric Outages 837-1400

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 end product be of high quality and will it perform as it should? What exactly 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? **6225C4-162A**
- 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. Visit our Distributed Generation & Net Metering page online at mcdonoughpower.com for full details.

For more information about electrical safety and renewable energy, visit SafeElectricity.org.

HELP KEEP OUR CREWS SAFE

Orange road signs are not just for highway construction zones; they also apply to utility work zones. Slowing down before entering work zones helps save lives, including the lives of our crew members, who must often work roadside to maintain or restore power. **8116D2-858C**

Cars or trucks that go too fast not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or not moving over can also put a lineworker who is working high up in a bucket in serious danger by causing it to move or sway into high-voltage lines.

Please, take extra care in work zones. Our crews and their families thank you.

What's Your Appliance Safety IQ?

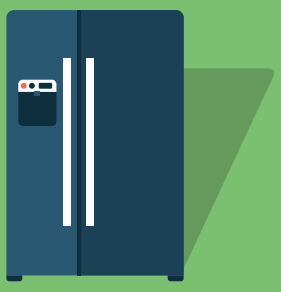
Clothes Dryer

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.

SafeElectricity.org

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.

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. **8212C3-802B**

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.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Installing a smart power strip is a quick and easy way to start saving money while making your home more energy efficient. Smart power strips can actually cut power off to save energy since they are able to detect when a device is in standby mode.

Source: energy.gov

Member Prizes

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a $10 credit on your next electric bill.