


# MONROE ELECTRIC NEWS

Waterloo, Illinois • 618.939.7171 • 800.757.7433

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



Alan W. Wattles

## Across The President's Desk

### This November, let your voice be heard

**L**ow voter turnout has been a topic of conversation for the last several election cycles. Since the 1960s, voter turnout during presidential elections has seen a steady decline – with the occasional uptick here and there. In the 2016 primary election cycle, voter turnout in most states was only 21 to 30 percent, and this was a record year for primary voter turnout. In Illinois, we saw a voter turnout percentage of 38.9 percent, but that still leaves a large number of voters that aren't making their voices heard.

Some speculate the reason for the decline is because the average American is not as engaged in politics as they have been in the past. And who can blame us really? Often times, we may feel like candidates are not speaking to the issues we care about. Or perhaps we don't feel like we understand enough about the candidates' stances on the issues, or even the issues themselves. But we can change this.

Here at Monroe County Electric Cooperative (MCEC), we want to see

civic engagement in our rural communities increase. We want to give you what you need to make informed decisions about candidates at all levels of government, not just the presidential race. And we want you to know more about the issues that could impact our local communities.

America's electric cooperatives are doing their part by informing co-op staff and members through Coops Vote, a non-partisan campaign with one simple goal: increase voter turnout at the polls this November. By visiting vote.coop, you can learn about your candidates, access voter registration information and more.

The future of rural economies depends on their ability to keep up with today's global economy, which is why access to broadband internet is a key topic of discussion this election season. Just 55 percent of rural Americans have broadband at home. Quick access to information is crucial in finding a job, getting a better education and even gathering the information needed to

make major health decisions. But there is a barrier: expensive costs.

With the right state and federal policies, broadband technology can become available to all rural Americans, allowing families and businesses to communicate in new and faster ways.

Electric cooperatives are already committed to providing affordable electricity to our communities, so helping provide affordable broadband access is a natural next step.

We encourage you to visit [vote.coop](http://vote.coop) and take the pledge to learn more about the issues that impact us locally. Let's work together to improve our communities by increasing voter turnout and changing our country, one vote at a time.

*Meghaan Evans writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*

## 2016 Area Meetings – Dates and Locations

(All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.) All memberships in attendance will receive a \$5 bill credit.

Monday, November 14 Hecker Community Center

Tuesday, November 15 Millstadt VFW

Monday, November 21 Monroe County Electric warehouse (back entrance)

## Ten 2017 Memorial Scholarships available

President/CEO Alan Wattles has announced that the Illinois electric cooperatives in 2017 will award nine academic scholarships to high school seniors through a memorial scholarship fund designed to financially assist deserving students in the “electric cooperative family.” In addition, a tenth scholarship – to assist with costs in attending an electric line worker school – will again be offered.

The total of ten scholarships of \$2,000 each will be awarded in 2016 through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Five scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the cooperative. A sixth scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative employee. Three additional scholarships are reserved



for students enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college who are the sons or daughters of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

The tenth annual scholarship, the “LaVern and Nola McEntire Line-worker’s Scholarship,” was awarded for the first time in 2011. This \$2,000 scholarship will help pay for costs to attend the line worker’s school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield,

Ill. LaVern McEntire served as a lineman for McDonough Power Electric Cooperative from 1949 until 1991. He and his wife, Nola, endowed the new scholarship to financially assist deserving individuals in becoming trained line workers. Sons and daughters of co-op members; relatives of co-op employees or directors; and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard are all eligible for the line worker’s scholarship.

For more information regarding the scholarships, contact Allan Masterson, Director of Member Services at 939-7171, 1-800-757-7433 or by email at [amasterson@mcec.org](mailto:amasterson@mcec.org). Students must apply online. Go to our website at [www.mcec.org](http://www.mcec.org) and under “Scholarships:” hit “Click Here to Apply” where they will go to a “Downloads” page. There is a Question & Answer page along with an “Official Rules” page. When ready to apply, click “Apply OnLine” to begin.

## Our Office will be closed

**Veterans Day**

Friday, November 11

**Thanksgiving**

Thursday & Friday, Nov. 24 & 25



### **Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc.**

6132 State Rt. 3, P.O. Box 128, Waterloo, Illinois 62298 • 618-939-7171  
Office hours: Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. • 800-757-7433

# MCEC line outages - September 2016

Date	Duration	# Out	Location	Cause Desc	Substation
9/7/2016	5:25	18	Stemler Rd	Other, Deterioration	Millstadt
9/7/2016	1:31	18	Stemler Rd	Other, Deterioration	Millstadt
9/7/2016	1:49	19	Dori Ln	Other, Deterioration	Millstadt
9/8/2016	3:39	19	Bohleystville Rd	Other, Deterioration	Millstadt
9/9/2016	0:55	2	Brandt/Suterville Rd	Lightning	Fults
9/10/2016	5:53	33	Triple Lakes Rd	Trees, Other	East Carondelet
9/11/2016	1:39	7	Country Acres Ln	Small Animals Or Birds	East Carondelet
9/12/2016	2:01	123	Konarcik Rd	Vehicles or Machinery	Waterloo
9/17/2016	3:20	58	B Rd	Vehicles or Machinery	Fountain

## MCEC linemen participate in Lineman's Safety Rodeo

Three electric linemen from your cooperative participated in the 19th Annual Linemen's Safety Rodeo held up at Lincoln Land College in Springfield on Friday, September 30th. Participating again this year were Journeyman Linemen Gary Gilbert, Chris Deterding and Matt Kish.

The rodeo coincided with a series of courses designed to help electric line personnel improve their work skills in safe and efficient ways.

Line personnel competed in five team events and three individual events. Team events included hurt man rescue, egg climb, single phase capacitor changeout, switch operator with S & C load break tool, and H-structure obstacle course.

Gary Gilbert place second in the Egg Climb event. The lineman climbs a pole holding a basket with an egg in it. When he gets to the top, he removes the egg, places it in his mouth and drops the basket. He then climbs down the pole trying not to break the egg. You can see a video on Gary doing the climb on our Facebook page. We thank the linemen for representing our co-op at this event!





# Busting the myths about “smart meters”

By now, most Americans have likely heard of the “smart grid.” This phrase is being used to describe the computerization of America’s electrical infrastructure. The purpose of this computerization is to improve the reliability, efficiency, resiliency and security of the electric grid.

A key component of the smart grid is an advanced metering infrastructure, also known as AMI in the utility world. AMI systems utilize digital meters as well as computer technology to measure electric use at homes and businesses more precisely than was possible with analog meters. The digital meters communicate via radio or the existing power lines and have been loosely termed as “smart meters.” AMI benefits electric co-op members with greater accuracy in billing, faster outage restoration, operational savings versus manual meter reading and detailed data that you and your co-op can use to manage electric use much more accurately.

Unfortunately, a number of myths have developed over the years concerning smart meters. These myths can be classified into three categories: privacy concerns, security and health effects. Let’s take a look at each, starting with privacy.

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative (MCEC) takes great pains to keep your information private – and that information includes the details of your electric use. The only people who see that data are co-op employees and you. Your co-op will not



release this information to anyone else without your specific permission. The myths are that the data collected can tell when you are home or away and exactly what you are doing when you are there and that this data is being given to the government. Naturally, the data will show when you are home because for most families, energy consumption is higher then. But having said that, the current smart meter cannot identify what activities are taking place down to the specific appliance in use. This myth is simply unfounded.

What about the myth that these meters actually make the electric grid less secure by providing an avenue for hackers to break into systems through the smart meter and wreak havoc? While hackers continually attempt to break into electric systems, their focus is at higher levels in the operation. Hacking a meter is unlikely for a variety of reasons. Hackers like to work remotely via the

Internet, and smart meters don’t offer that option. Radio-based smart meters require the hacker to be nearby to catch the weak communication signal, break the proprietary communication protocol and to be there for extended periods of time to collect the short burst of data sent. Therefore, smart meters are an unlikely and unprofitable target for hackers.

Finally, there are the myths surrounding smart meters and ill effects on health. These concerns state that having the radio-based smart meter is the equivalent to having a cell tower attached to the side of your home. Again, this is unfounded. Let’s look at why. Number one is that they communicate intermittently for as few as five minutes a day. These devices are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, and their output is well below the levels this Federal agency sets. As one doctor observed, the radio waves emitted are more like those of a cordless phone or wireless router. Radio waves emitted by smart meters are much weaker and less frequent than other sources we use on a daily basis. We will all benefit from the continued development of America’s smart grid and can rest easy with the knowledge that the rumors surrounding radio-based smart meters don’t hold water.

*Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Heating your living space uses more energy than any other system in your home – typically making up about 42 percent of your utility bill. By combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30 percent on your energy bill.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)