



Western Illinois Electrical Coop. holds annual meeting

Members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) heard how the co-op is “weathering the storm” of COVID-19 and its quest to keep electric power reliable and affordable during the organization’s 81st Annual Meeting held Thursday, June 24 at the University of Illinois Extension Center in Carthage. **6723-35**

In his report, Manager Todd Grotts said while the pandemic has been

challenging, WIEC has been well-equipped to handle it. “The pandemic has required everyone to rethink the way we live, work, do business and connect with one another. At WIEC, we responded by prioritizing the health and well-being of our employees, members, and others around us, while minimizing the impacts on daily business operations.”

Electric reliability and affordability were other issues Grotts addressed.

Decisions made by our elected leaders are forcing the closure of many coal mines across the country. The Prairie State Generating Campus near Marissa was the last coal burning plant erected in the country and is the fifth cleanest coal burning plant nationwide. Governor J.B. Pritzker is calling for a closure date well before the plant is fully depreciated. If this

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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
- **Kim Gullberg** —
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer,
Stronghurst
- **Rob Gronewold** —
Director, Carthage
- **Jay Morrison** —
Director, Niota
- **Dustin Walker** —
Director, Burnside

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.

Annual Meeting - Continued from page 20A

occurs, co-ops and municipalities that have ownership of it will still owe approximately \$188 million, a cost that would be passed to members and customers of those electric entities.

While renewables are increasingly used to generate electricity, coal is still heavily relied upon for power. Although electric co-ops support renewable energy, the stability of the electric grid depends on coal. During cold weather in February, coal generation provided approximately 75 percent of Illinois' power supply mix. Grotts explains, "America has developed the electric grid, a complex network of electricity generators and tens of thousands of miles of electrical lines that work together to try to ensure enough electricity is available every day of the year when you need it."

He explained if there is not enough generation available, grid operators will deliberately cut electricity supply to reduce demand to prevent an all-out grid collapse, such as what happened in Texas in February. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation sent out an announcement warning of potential energy shortfalls this summer for California, Texas, New England, and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, which allocates power to WIEC members. **5612-1**

Duane Noland, president/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield representing 24 distribution electric co-ops and five generation and transmission cooperatives across the state, echoed Grotts' concerns.

"The world is moving toward cleaner energy," he said. "In some ways, policy ahead of technology is very clear and happening as we speak in Springfield." He explained that the legislature is looking to pass a major clean energy bill, a key component of which is decarbonization – eliminating carbon-emitting sources such as coal and natural gas. It would close all coal-fired generation by 2035 and natural gas-fired generation by 2045. "The dilemma we have as cooperative members is that our largest source of power comes from the Prairie State Generating Campus east of St. Louis," he explained, "That plant has debt on it until 2042. By closing it prematurely, you're going to have nearly \$200 million in stranded debt, an asset with no way to generate power to pay for it." If the bill is passed, replacing that power will likely bring a 20-25 percent rate increase for WIEC members.

Noland urged those in attendance to visit voicesforcooperativepower.com or send a letter to Governor Pritzker and their local elected officials to vote against the bill. In closing, Noland said, "This is your cooperative. You own this cooperative. We need you to make your voice heard and help tonight."

Treasurer Janet Spory reported that WIEC had a strong year with margins of just under \$462,000. Profits made by the co-op are referred to as margins, which are allocated to each member in proportion to the value of the electricity they purchase.



Spory explained, “Margins are reinvested into the co-op for a period of time prior to being returned to the members to avoid or reduce interest charges related to borrowing other funds. The retirement of capital credits is a tangible demonstration of the financial value of your ownership in WIEC.”

Earlier this year, the board authorized the return of capital credits to those members on WIEC lines during 1988 and 1989 totaling just under \$263,000.

“In the past five years, we have authorized almost \$1.2 million in general capital credit retirements plus another \$318,000 in early retirements to estates for deceased members,” said Spory.

Board President Kent Flesner honored Bill Newton for his dedicated service to the board of directors. Newton served 28 years and resigned from the board earlier this year due to health



issues. Dustin Walker of Burnside was elected to fill his seat. Re-elected directors included Kim Gullberg of

Stronghurst, Jay D. Morrison of Niota, Robert M. Gronewold of Carthage, and Janet Spory of Sutter.

2021 Annual Meeting Prize Winners

- **Rotation and balance from J&R Tire Service** – Doris Holtsclaw
- **\$25 Walmart gift card from Fletcher-Reinhardt Co.** – Robert Bowman
- **\$20 Visa gift card from Marine Bank** – Art Hartweg
- **\$75 Amazon gift card from CRC** – Keith Bruns

\$50 Farmhouse Meat Co. gift card:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Janet Faulkner | • Tom Jefferson |
| • Darla Fisher | • Diana Shults |
| • Don Flesner | • Wayne Humphrey |
| • Larry and Linda Teel | • Merlin Redenius |
| • Charles Kost | • Larry Buckert |
| • David Neill | • Leola Wilson |
| • Jonathan Fecht | • Becky Dickinson |
| • Kim Weaver | • Tori Buckert |
| • Dave Poland | • Edward Jacquot |
| • June Beeler | • Dave Wetzal |

GRAND PRIZES of 1000 kWh of electricity:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| • Cecil Shipman | • Allen & Carol Shay |
| • Raymond Siegrist | • Carlene Scheuermann |
| • Elizabeth Shipman | • Darlene Neill |

Affordable electricity powers quality of life

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the “light bill.”

Electricity powers quality of life

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. At home, in schools and business, and

in commercial sectors such as transportation, the need for electricity is increasing. **6613-20**

Typically, when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity. Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses.

Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4 percent; medical care increased 2.8 percent; and education increased 2.2 percent. But the cost of electricity only increased 1 percent. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie, consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity—it's a necessity. That's why Western Illinois Electrical Coop. will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

Understanding power surges and blinks

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts—this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment. Surges can be caused by internal sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers.

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events. In fact, when it comes



to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme. In 2019 alone, squirrels were responsible for more than 1,200 outages nationwide.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, the Western Illinois Electrical Coop. crew will be on its way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage. And you can help too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. **7512-58**

WIEC welcomes new employee

Dustin "Dusty" Waddell joins WIEC

On June 1, Dusty Waddell joined the WIEC linecrew as a groundman. He will start the first year of his apprenticeship with WIEC this Fall. Dusty grew up in Carthage, graduated from Illini West High School, then earned his electrical distribution certification from Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield. He then honed his manual and bucket line clearance skills as a top trimmer with Wright Tree Service for the next 4 years.

Dusty enjoys hiking, camping, hunting ... basically, anything where he can be outside. He also serves as a sergeant in the Illinois Army National Guard and believes it is important to give back to your local community in whatever ways you can.



Welcome to the WIEC family, Dusty.

Welcome New Members

Bavery, John & Geri
Campbell, Gregory E.
Day, Dustin & Teresa Deane
Durkee, Laura & Kendall
Graham, Kathy
Housewright, Alan
Keough, Shaun & Kelsey
Nelson, Melissa
Pearson, Rebecca
Pittman, Corey & Kimberlin
Schwerer, Doug
Sallee, Robert D.

May
2021