



Alan W. Wattles

## Across The President's Desk

## Know the signs of a scam

It's no secret that consumers with a water, gas or electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams, but fraudsters have changed their tactics since the COVID-19 pandemic. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers noted these shifts and adapted their tactics to this changed environment.

pay immediately. Whether this is done in-person, by phone, text or email, the scammers want to scare you into immediate payment, so you don't have time to think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you're concerned about your bill, call us at 618-939-7171. Our phone number can also be found on your monthly bill and on our website,

[mcec.org](http://mcec.org). If the scam is by email or text, delete it before taking any action. If you're unsure, you can always contact us at [mcec@mcec.org](mailto:mcec@mcec.org), or use Smart-Hub to check the status of your account. Remember, MCEC will never attempt to demand immediate payment after just one notice.

Some scammers may falsely claim you have been overcharged on your bill and say they want to give a refund. It sounds easy. All you have to do is click or press a button to initiate the process. If you proceed,

you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. Instead of money going into your bank account, the scammers can drain your account and use personal information such as a social security number for identity theft.

If this "refund" scam happens over the phone, just hang up and block the phone number to prevent future robocalls. If this scam attempt occurs via email (known as a "phishing" attempt) or by text ("smishing"), do not click any links. Instead, delete it, and

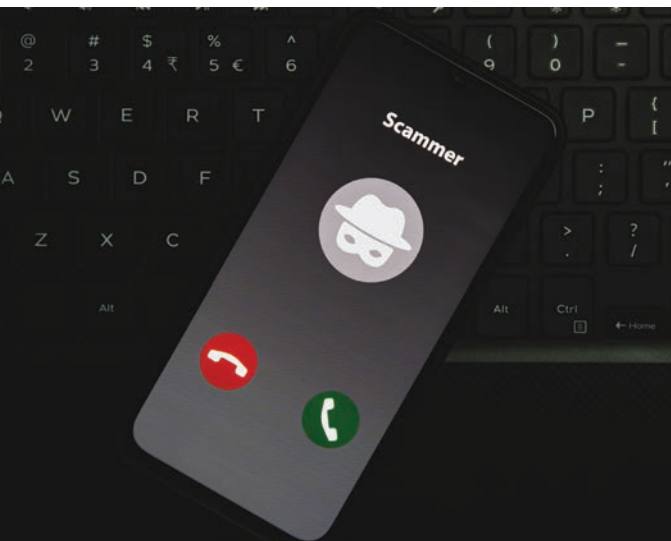
if possible, block the sender. If you do overpay on your energy bill, MCEC will apply the credit to your next billing cycle or call us and we can issue a refund. When in doubt, contact us.

### Defend yourself against scams

Be wary of call or texts from unknown numbers. Be suspicious of an unknown person claiming to be a utility worker who requests banking or other personal information.

Never let anyone into your home that you don't know unless you have a scheduled appointment or reported a problem. When MCEC employees perform work on our members' property, our employees are professionals and will always identify themselves.

We want to help protect our community against utility scams, and you can help create the first line of defense. Please report any potential scams to us so we can spread the word to prevent others in the community from falling victim.



Imposter scams are the number one type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker who works for the "power company," in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through an electronic device, via email, phone or text.

### Common types of scams

A scammer may claim you are overdue on your electric bill and threaten to disconnect your service if you don't



**MCEC  
line outages  
May 2022**

Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
5/3/2022	1:25	148	Smithton West	Lightning	Smithton
5/9/2022	1:25	70	Cedar Ridge Ln	Trees, Other	North Waterloo
5/10/2022	0:44	55	Sportsman Rd	Other, Deterioration	Poe
5/12/2022	0:41	2	Fults Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	Fults
5/13/2022	0:45	2	Knab Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	Smithton
5/19/2022	3:51	10	Suterville Rd	Trees, Other	Fults
5/19/2022	6:01	471	New Athens N/Smithton East	Wind, Not Trees	New Athens
5/19/2022	10:28	12	Il Rt 159	Wind, Not Trees	Poe
5/19/2022	2:33	148	Smithton West	Trees, Other	Smithton
5/19/2022	2:23	9	J Rd	Trees, Other	Poe
5/19/2022	9:42	5	Black Quarter Rd	Wind, Not Trees	New Athens
5/19/2022	5:20	5	Sunset Ln	Trees, Other	Poe
5/19/2022	6:36	13	Il Rt 156	Wind, Not Trees	New Athens
5/19/2022	7:26	5	Klein Rd	Trees, Other	Smithton
5/19/2022	4:47	3	Schmidt Ln	Trees, Other	Smithton
5/19/2022	11:55	0	Klein School Rd	Wind, Not Trees	New Athens
5/20/2022	5:36	1	Klein School Rd	Wind, Not Trees	New Athens
5/21/2022	0:43	52	Fountain South	Power Supplier	Fountain
5/24/2022	1:43	3	Schmidt Ln	Distribution	Smithton
5/30/2022	1:22	11	IL Rt 163	Other, Faulty Equipment	East Carondelet
5/31/2022	3:02	691	Smithton Area	Small Animals Or Birds	Smithton



Always assume a downed power line is energized. Downed lines can energize the ground up to 35 feet away.



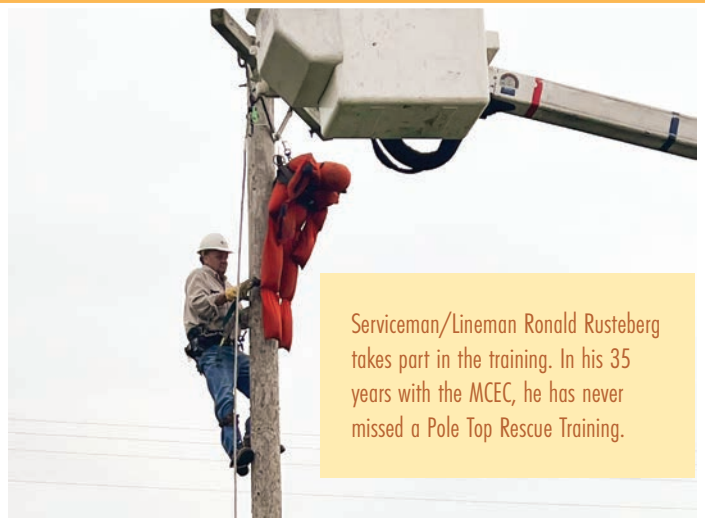
# Pole top rescue training

Recently, our lineworkers received training from the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) on rescuing a fellow lineman in the event that they are injured and cannot get down the pole by themselves. This could result from electrical contact, heart attack, allergic reaction to a bee sting or many other possible scenarios.

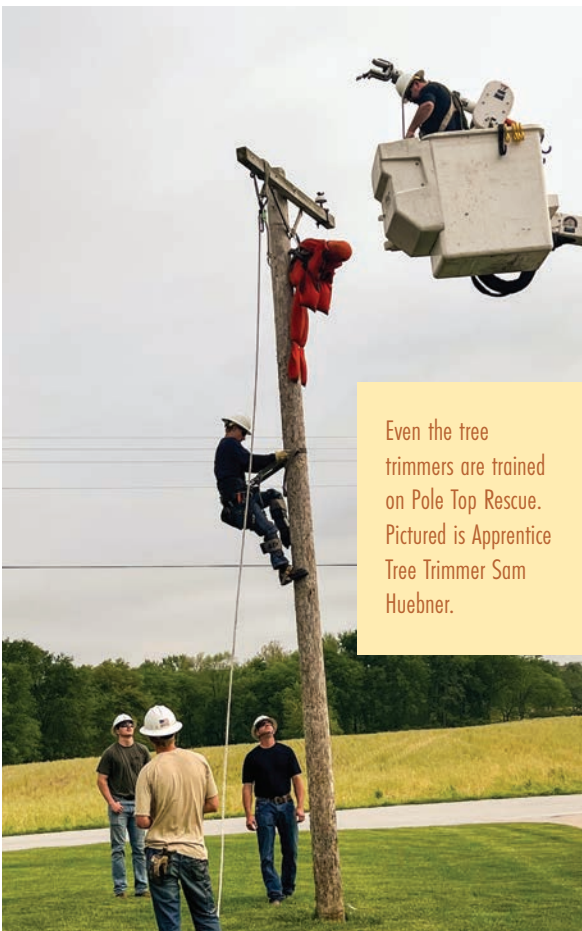
This training helps them determine how to protect themselves as well as helping their injured co-worker by releasing their safety harness, then safely lowering them to the ground. They train for this possibility but pray and hope they never have to use these skills.



A 180-pound training dummy is hung from the pole to simulate an injured co-worker. Chris Deterding, foreman, climbs the pole to rescue his "co-worker."



Serviceman/Lineman Ronald Rusteberg takes part in the training. In his 35 years with the MCEC, he has never missed a Pole Top Rescue Training.



Even the tree trimmers are trained on Pole Top Rescue. Pictured is Apprentice Tree Trimmer Sam Huebner.



Drew Goff participated in his first Pole Top Rescue.

# Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$18 billion to members since 1988 – \$1.3 billion in 2019 alone.

Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues (called margins) are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation



[www.mcec.org](http://www.mcec.org)

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**Office hours:**

Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know the combined use of large appliances like dishwashers, clothes dryers and washing machines account for the largest percentage of electricity use in the average U.S. home? Take small steps to save energy when using these appliances.

Only run full loads in the dishwasher, and thoroughly scrape food from dishes before loading. Dry towels and heavier cottons separate from lighter-weight clothing, and clean the lint screen after every use. Wash clothing in cold water to save energy used to heat water.

Source: EIA and DOE

