


Norris Electric *News*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



HomE Program Extended

Money is still available for energy efficiency improvements

Good News! The HomE Energy Rebate program that began in May of last year has been refunded and money is again available for our members.

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives is distributing an additional \$1 million dollars in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or stimulus, funds to co-op members through this program. The funds are being allocated evenly to members of the 25 electric distribution co-ops in the state, which includes Norris



Electric. The program will last until funds run out.

You must be a member of Norris Electric and live in the home as your primary residence.

How it works: Contact our office by calling 618-783-8765 to set up a home assessment. We'll verify your eligibility and date your request. The program runs on a first come, first served basis until the money runs out! The cost of the assessment is \$25. We'll conduct them Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. as scheduling allows.



Norris Electric welcomes new employee

Denise Pless joined Norris Electric Cooperative on Nov. 29, 2010 taking a position in the billing department. Denise was born and raised in Jasper County and grew up on a farm with strong work ethics. Pless had worked the previous 12 years at Midland States Bank and Lewis Transportation. She shares her country home with her husband, Steve and two daughters. Denise enjoys spending time with her family and friends. In her spare time she enjoys art, photography, music, books, hiking and outdoor adventures.

HomE Rebates

- \$1,500 – Geothermal heat pumps (closed loop 14.1 EER or 3.3 COP) (open loop 16.2 EER or 3.6 COP)
- \$1,000 – Air source heat pumps (16 SEER)
- \$350 – Natural Gas or LP furnace (95% efficiency)
- \$350 – Central air conditioner (16 SEER)
- \$250 – Heat pump water heater (2.0 Energy Factor)
- 30% of cost of insulation and weatherization (max of \$500)

Insulation and heat pump water heater rebates can be combined with others. Furnace and air conditioner rebates cannot be combined. Rebates will continue until the money is exhausted.

Spirit of sharing reaches Norris Electric Employees



Employees of Norris Electric Cooperative in Newton recently presented Steve Willis of the Jasper County Ministerial Association with donations of cash and non-perishable food items that were collected during a “friendly” contest between the supervisors/office employees versus the outside employees. Henkel’s & Mc Coy Inc. (contracted by Norris Electric) along with their employee’s, Dave Burton and Cody Althoff, also made a cash donation towards this worthy cause. The employees of Norris Electric felt this would be a way to become more involved in the community and to help ease the burden of financial difficulties that many families face during the holiday season.

A different kind of retirement planning

People over 40 shouldn’t just plan for retirement, they should rehearse for it.

Because retirement can last 20 to 30 years, it’s more important than ever that “pre-retirees” (those who plan to retire in five to seven years) practice how they want to live without work as the organizational focus of their lives:

■ Try out different retirement lifestyles. For example, many people dream of selling the family home and traveling in an RV or going abroad. Practice this by renting a camper and going on the road for a long vacation. You may discover that travel is exhausting or boring. The same holds true for relocation dreams. Rent a home where you think you may want to retire to see if it really is where you’d like to move. The weather may not suit you, or the community may

not be your cup of tea. Work these details out before you commit to an expensive change.

■ Live with your spouse 24 hours a day. Most couples spend much of their early years working and, thus, spending much of their time apart. It may take some time to get used to the other person’s schedule, habits, and routines.

■ Practice living on a retirement budget. Most retirees’ income is significantly less than their preretirement income. Add up all the Social Security benefits, pension income, and 401(k) and IRA savings to calculate what you can realistically expect to live on each month. Then live on that amount for a month to determine what changes, if any, you need to make to your plans.

Allergy alert

Protect yourself from
springtime allergy attacks

The arrival of spring brings sunlight and flowers and green leaves on the trees — and seasonal allergies. Tree pollens and mold spores can wreak havoc on the 35 million Americans who suffer itchy eyes, runny noses, scratchy throats, and fatigue due to allergies.

Beyond the many over-the-counter and prescription medications available, you can take some simple steps to reduce your misery:

1. Limit your exposure. After months of cabin fever, staying inside with the windows shut tight may seem a shame on a lovely day, but consider the alternative: sneezing and wheezing and rubbing your eyes nonstop. Stay indoors when conditions are ripe for an allergy attack.

2. Plan your outings. Rainy and non-windy days are best for keeping pollen at bay. Remember, too, that pollen counts peak in the midday hours. Avoid grassy and wooded areas. Check your local news source for pollen counts.

3. Park strategically. Pollen can coat your car on heavy days. Keep your car in the garage as much as possible. When you park outside, try to avoid parking under a tree. Your car may be cooler when you get into it, but you’ll be less likely to get a nose full of pollen in the process of opening the door.

4. Scrub up. When you come back into your home, remove your shoes, or at least do a thorough job of wiping residual pollen from them. And wash your hands (you may even want to shower and get into some pollen-free duds). When you wash your clothes, use a dryer, rather than an outdoor clothesline.

5. Avoid “pollen magnets.” Pollen can cling to carpets and linens, so vacuum your rugs and change your sheets more frequently than at other times of the year. That goes for bath towels, too. An in-home air filtration system can help remove irritating particulates.

Power Quality

Reliability and quality of electric service is a top priority with your cooperative. There are many different aspects of power quality. Describing an electrical problem is sometimes difficult for the homeowner. In this article various problems will be identified and defined.

Blinks

Blinks are a common problem with most residential services. A blink occurs when the lights go completely out and then back on after a few seconds. Blinks are usually the result of a breaker operating between the residence and the substation. Other blinks are caused by the operation of breakers on the transmission line that feed our substations.

Sometimes a breaker in the substation operates and everyone on that particular circuit experiences the blink. The breaker opens the circuit, de-energizing the line for a brief moment and hopefully the tree branch or animal will be clear of the line when it is re-closed. While this may be an annoyance, it is less annoying than a lengthy outage due to a blown fuse. If a fuse blows on the system, a linemen must be dispatched to replace the fuse before power can be restored resulting in an outage of an hour or more.

Your cooperative has an aggressive forestry program in place to reduce the number of blinks. Trees are the number one cause of power interruptions and clearing must be maintained to insure reliable electric service. Precautions are also taken by placing wildlife protection on equipment poles. You may have noticed the black plastic wrap on your transformer pole. This is a hard slick plastic that does not allow varmints to get traction while trying to climb a pole. Blinks are typically not harmful to most appliances. Computers can be protected by installing a device called a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply). These devices contain battery back-up circuitry and cost approximately \$150 to \$200 for a size adequate for a home computer.

Voltage Dips

Voltage dips are usually a result of electric motors starting. Almost every home experiences a voltage dip of some kind. It is usually well tolerated if the voltage remains near 95% during the starting of the motor. Air conditioners and washing machines are the most common motors causing voltage dip. If the lights dim while the air conditioner starts and stay dim after the air conditioner is running, changes to the electrical service are in order. While the dimming of lights is annoying, it is not hazardous providing the voltage doesn't drop more than 5 percent.

Low Voltage

Low voltage is experienced when the voltage remains below 110 volts. This sometimes is experienced when one phase of the three phases is interrupted or a voltage regulator malfunctions. While this cannot be completely eliminated, the homeowner should unplug appliances and all electronics until the voltage returns to the proper level. The sooner your electric equipment is disconnected from the low voltage the less likely you will have equipment damage. Low voltage is easily recognized because the lights will be noticeably dim. Low voltage problems are not as common as voltage dips and blinks.

Surges

The most common cause of a surge is lightning. Your cooperative takes precautions against surges by installing lightning arrestors on transformers and line equipment. The homeowner should further protect his service by installing a good quality surge arrestor in the home. No amount of surge equipment can eliminate damage from lightning, but any additional protection will help reduce the chance of having damaged equipment.

Light Flickering

If the lights flicker quickly for short periods of time, connections both inside and outside of the home should be examined. Light flickers usually occur without relation to motor starting.

Call your cooperative if you are experiencing this type of problem. A

serviceman will check the cooperative's connections outside the home, and the homeowner should have a qualified electrician check the connections inside the home.

Bright and Dim Lights

If you notice the lights in the home becoming bright and then dim, or if you notice that the lights in one room of the house are bright and the lights in another room of the house are dim you may have a loose neutral connection. This is a serious connection problem that needs to be addressed soon to prevent significant appliance damage.

Similar to the flickering lights, call your cooperative if you are experiencing this type of problem. A serviceman will check the cooperative's connections outside the home, and the homeowner should have a qualified electrician check the connections inside the home.

Homeowner's Insurance

I would like to add that it would be beneficial to check on your home owner's insurance to see what your policy covers regarding electrical related damage. Many homeowners and renters find out too late that their homeowners or renters insurance does not cover damage caused by artificially generated electrical current. This means that they will not cover any electrical related damage with the exception of lightning, which is natural electrical current.

Sometimes a member thinks that Norris Electric Cooperative should be responsible for damages when a transformer fails or a line goes down and the member suffers some damage. Most outages are caused by storms, equipment failure or accidents. The damage caused by those occurrences cannot be prevented by Norris Electric and the cooperative is not liable for damages. In actuality, the only time that the cooperative or its insurance company would be liable would be when there was negligence on the part of Norris Electric. Negligence could be something like the cooperative knowing there is a problem but fails to fix it in a timely manner. In most situations this is not the case and the repair or replacement cost falls entirely upon the member.

Keeping the family safe a top priority

Whether indoors or outdoors, Safe Electricity encourages families and caregivers to learn about electrical safety and to use that information to educate their youngsters about the threat of electric shock.

“At this time of year children are often restless and bored from being cooped up inside during the winter. This might inspire them to be just as curious and adventurous indoors as they are outside,” Safe Electricity Executive Director Molly Hall said. “Luckily there are some really affordable and convenient ways to make a home less hazardous.”

Safe Electricity recommends investing in the following measures to protect your loved ones:

Tamper Resistant Outlet Receptacles-

These receptacles have built-in shutter systems that prevent single-pronged objects like hairpins and paper clips from being inserted. Unlike plastic outlet caps, the new receptacles are permanent, automatic and reliable. They install just like standard outlets and are marginally more expensive.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)-

These devices are used in interior outlets of the home in rooms with high water use such as the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and basement. GFCIs should also be installed on exterior outlets as well. GFCIs stop the flow of electricity instantly if there is a problem and should be professionally installed. When properly used, they save lives. It's important to know how to test and re-set them. Portable GFCIs are available for use on outdoor outlets if they do not have them.

Professional Electrical Inspections –

Hiring an electrical professional ensures home safety by making certain home electrical systems and wiring is adequate to support increased electric

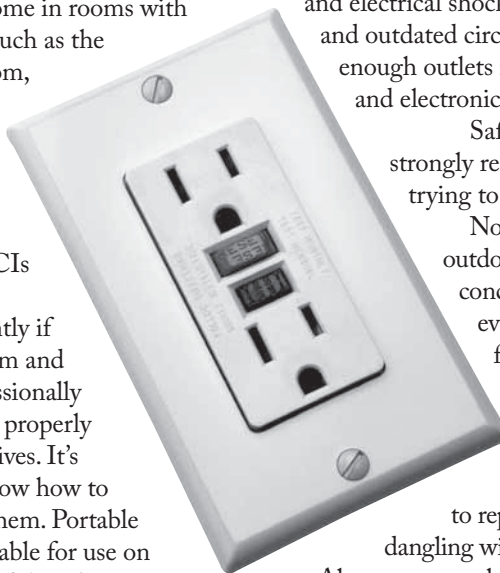
demands of a growing and active family. An older home may be inadequately wired for today's electrical consumption, putting your family at risk for fire and electrical shock. Replace worn and outdated circuitry and add enough outlets for appliances and electronics.

Safe Electricity strongly recommends not trying to do this yourself.

Nonetheless, safety outdoors is always a concern. Make sure everyone in the family knows to stay away from downed power lines and wires, and tell children to report any fallen or dangling wires to an adult.

Always assume that any power line is fully charged and stay far away. Call your local electric company immediately if you or your child encounters a downed power line.

“It's a good idea to include utility emergency numbers with other posted emergency phone numbers and instruct children how to call for help in an emergency,” advises Hall.



MY APPLIANCES AREN'T THE ONLY ENERGY STARS IN MY HOUSE.

I'm saving just by using more efficient settings on my ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

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