

JAMMUP

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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Electric rate increase ... the five Ws



For months, SIEC has been preparing members for an electric rate increase by discussing details at our last annual meeting in August, and in articles published in our local newspapers, Illinois Country Living Magazine, and on Facebook and our website.

What?

Yes, unfortunately SIEC must implement an average electric rate increase of 9.22 percent for 2012.

When?

The rate increase goes into effect for members' usage this month. The increase will be seen on electric bills due in March. **Harold L. Hurst**

Why?

There are several reasons for the necessary rate increase such as increased infrastructure maintenance costs, low growth in kilowatt-hour (kWh) sales and increased wholesale power costs from Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC). For a detailed explanation of these factors, please go to www.siec.coop or call SIEC at 1-800-762-1400 for copies of recent rate increase articles.

Who?

This increase affects all of our members. The 9.22 average percent increase is just that...an average. Some members may see more or less.

Where?

The cost of generating power is rising rapidly across our entire nation. Almost everyone is feeling the impact of higher electric bills. Marketers are aware of this so please don't become scammed by companies promising lower electric rates to members who switch their power generators (not distributors). Please ignore these solicitations for two reasons: (1) Solicitations are meant for investor-owned utility customers, not cooperative members. (2) If you notice the fine print on the mailings, some of these companies will not guarantee the savings promised. Ultimately, switching could cost customers much more in the long run.

Help!

What can be done to help ease this impact on your pocket book? One of the best methods to help control monthly electric bills is to be aware of your energy usage every day. Are you using electricity during peak hours? Are you turning off lights when you leave rooms? Are your appliances energy efficient? Have you caulked around your windows? Have you insulated your home properly? Do you change your air filters monthly? To learn more, visit togetherwesave.com.

If you need financial assistance to pay your electric bills, you may be eligible through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) with Shawnee Development Council. Local county outreach offices/numbers are as follows: Alexander 734-0535; Johnson 658-6131; Massac 524-2941; Pope 683-2107; Pulaski 745-6388; and Union 833-7431.

Youth to Washington tour

Attention high school juniors!



SIEC is inviting one high school junior from each of the following schools to Youth Day in Springfield on March 28: Anna-Jonesboro, Cairo, Century, Cobden, Dongola, Egyptian, Goreville, Joppa, Massac, Meridian, Shawnee and Vienna. This event is sponsored by SIEC and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Of the 12 students representing SIEC in Springfield, two will be selected to go on an all-expense paid tour of Washington, D.C. in June.

Youth Day (Springfield - Wednesday, March 28, 2012): The day's activities will include touring

the State Capitol complex, Illinois Supreme Court, Old State Capitol and the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. Students will also have the opportunity to visit with legislators.

Youth to Washington Tour (June 15 - 22, 2012): The two local winners from Youth Day, along with Miss SIEC, will join some 50 other Illinois students, sponsored by Illinois cooperatives, and spend a week in Washington, D.C. visiting attractions such as the White House (possibly), U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian Institution, Arlington National Cemetery, Lincoln Memorial and many other

national monuments and places of interest.

If you are a high school junior and this opportunity interests you, please discuss this with your guidance counselor today. Students do not have to be sons or daughters of SIEC members to attend Youth Day. An informative brochure regarding SIEC's Youth to Washington program can be downloaded from our Web site at www.siec.coop. Names must be submitted to SIEC by guidance counselors by Feb. 13.

Keith W. Owens

Staying informed of major cooperative issues

There are certain times during the year where issues directly affecting our Cooperative, will directly affect our members. We currently have basic ways of reaching members, such as our monthly Illinois Country Living magazine center section, JAMUP; our website www.siec.coop; our Facebook page; and news releases with our local radio stations and newspapers. But, some-

times we need to get urgent information to members as quickly as possible, when the issue is "hot"! Therefore, we are developing an email and text alert campaign so members can be notified immediately of issues such as outage restoration efforts during a major storm, legislation efforts directly affecting SIEC rates, billing changes, etc.

If you are interested in receiving a

limited number of emails, letters and/or texts, with information our General Manager feels necessary to share as an immediate form of communication, please fill out the form below and mail it back with your next electric bill payment, or mail it to Jerri Schaefer, SIEC, P. O. Box 100, Dongola, IL 62926, or email the required information to siec-administration@siec.org.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

SIEC Member Account Number: _____

Primary Telephone Number: _____

Please indicate if you would rather be contacted through emails, letters or texting:

() Cell Phone Number: _____

() Email Address: _____

() Letter to Above Address

Please mail completed form to Jerri Schaefer, SIEC, P. O. Box 100, Dongola, IL 62926 or email her the above information at siecadministration@siec.org.



Be fire prevention smart - don't get burned!

Residential fires caused by electrical defects account for a significant number of total blazes each year. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, last year home electrical problems accounted for 67,800 fires, 485 deaths, 2305 injuries and \$868 million in property losses. Many of these fires are preventable. SIEC and Safe Electricity urge members to be aware of electrical hazards, take time this month and make it a regular habit to inspect all appliances, cords and plugs.

Check for loose wall receptacles, loose wires or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. Immediately shut off, then professionally replace light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that spark and flicker.

Electrical plugs and cords usually deteriorate gradually, making damage difficult to detect. Inspect all appliance cords and plugs for wear at least once a year. Make sure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

Overloaded electrical systems can be a dangerous prelude to fire. Dimming lights when an appliance goes on, a shrinking TV picture, slow-heating appliances, fuses blowing or circuits tripping frequently are signals of overloaded circuits.

Overloaded electrical outlets or circuits that supply power to several outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Overloaded outlets and circuits carry too much electricity, which generates heat in undetectable amounts. The heat causes wear on the internal wiring system and can ignite a fire.

To prevent overloading:

- Avoid using extension cords on a permanent basis and never plug more than two home appliances into an outlet at once.



- Use only outlets designed to handle multiple plugs. Each outlet or circuit should not exceed 1500 watts, so give special consideration to appliances that use 1,000 or more such as refrigerators, hot plates, irons, microwave ovens, dishwashers, heaters and air conditioners.
- Avoid plugging large appliances into the same outlet or circuit. If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows frequently, immediately cut down on the number of appliances on that line.

When looking over electrical wiring and fixtures, look at light bulbs as well. Check the wattage to make sure light bulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings than recommended. Make sure they are fastened securely so they don't overheat.

Know where your circuit breakers and fuse boxes are and how to operate them. Check the circuit breakers and fuses to make sure they are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuit they are protecting. If you don't know the correct rating, have an electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. Always

replace a fuse with the same size you are removing. *Michael W. Vick*

If an electrical fire does occur, take these steps:

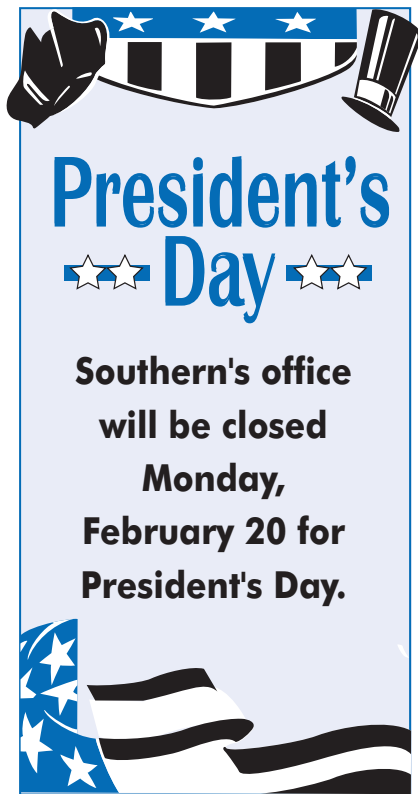
- Call 911 or another appropriate emergency service
- If you must attempt to put out an electrical fire, use a dry fire extinguisher or baking soda. Never try to extinguish an electrical fire with water!
- If the fire is large try to turn off the main power source. Do not try to handle the fire yourself.

A simple way to protect your family is to check the operation of the smoke alarms every month and replace the batteries twice a year. The National Fire Prevention Agency reports that roughly 60 percent of reported home fire deaths happened in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoking alarms.

Also develop and practice an escape plan twice a year in case of a fire. A good plan is known by all household members and includes an outside meeting location away from danger of the fire.

The tragedies of electrical fires do not have to happen. These problems can be difficult to detect, but relatively easy to prevent. Take these precautions to protect you, your home and your loved ones.





President's Day

**Southern's office
will be closed
Monday,
February 20 for
President's Day.**

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**For Outages Call:
800-762-1400 * 618-827-3555**

Did you notice that your December bill wasn't as high as you expected? If so, you may have received part of the \$650,000 in Capital Credits which were distributed to over 8,300 people who received electricity in 1984 from SIEC. The distribution of Capital Credits is a unique benefit of being a Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative **member**.



Please be aware of two changes on your electric bill next month. (1) The Customer Charge is now being called a **Facility Charge**. This is not an additional charge, but there is a necessary increase. (2) There is a new line item (but not an additional charge) called an **Environmental/Regulatory Compliance Charge**. Although these costs have always been included in your rates, this line item will now show you how much it costs our power generator, SIPC, to comply with environmental regulations in generating your electricity.

Member prize

In this issue of the JAMUP, we printed the names of three SIEC members who are eligible to receive a \$10 credit toward their utility bill. If you find your name printed in this center section and it's not part of the story, call Jerri with your account number at **800-762-1400** to claim your prize.

Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

7420 U.S. Highway 51 South • P.O. Box 100 • Dongola, Illinois 62926
618-827-3555 • Office hours: 8 a.m. — 4 p.m. • Web address: www.siec.coop

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