SPOON RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
NEWS

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President's Report

Josh DeWees
President/CEO

Our office will be closed Monday, September 4 for the Labor Day holiday.

What to consider before saying yes to home solar

Energy use generated by residential solar panel systems grew by 34% from 2.9 gigawatts (GW) in 2020 to 3.9 GW in 2021, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). (In case you are wondering, there are one billion watts in one GW. Also, 3.125 million photovoltaic [solar] panels are equivalent to one GW of power, according to the EIA.)

U.S. homeowners surveyed by the Pew Research Center in January 2022 demonstrated a strong interest in installing residential solar panels for their homes, with 8% stating they had already done so and 39% stating they had given it serious thought. Anyone seriously considering a residential solar panel system should do their homework first, as it is a big investment.

Benefits of home solar

According to energy.gov, the potential benefits of having a residential solar panel system include:

- Cost savings on energy bills
- Increased home value
- Reduction of carbon dioxide, water consumption, greenhouse gases and other pollutants

The benefits of solar can vary drastically based on:

- Electricity consumption
- Solar energy system type and size
- Whether a system is purchased or leased
- Direct hours of daily sunlight
- Size and angle of the roof
- Local electricity rates

Drawbacks of solar

The major drawback of home solar panel systems is the upfront cost. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), the average cost of installing a residential rooftop solar array is $19,000. Additionally, every time your roof needs to be replaced, the solar array must be removed, reinstalled and often repaired, adding to the costs of both your solar panel system and roofing projects.

However, since the lifetime of a solar panel array and a roof are both roughly 25-30 years, energy.gov recommends that individuals consider replacing their roofs at the same time that they install the solar panel array to avoid staggered reinstallation and repair costs. For example, the NREL estimates that when installing a roof and a solar array together, it costs approximately $25,000 as opposed to $30,000 when installed separately (the price varies depending on the size of the home and other factors).

Involve your utility early on

If you are considering a solar system, let your utility know, since most residential systems are tied to the power grid. The utility will be able to provide information about connection requirements and fees, reliable contractors, relevant policies, accurate rates and other resources.

Are there tax breaks/incentives?

There is a federal tax break available to those who qualify. The federal residential solar energy credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of income tax otherwise owed. For example, claiming a $1,000 federal tax credit reduces federal income taxes by $1,000.

The residential tax credit can be claimed on federal income taxes for a percentage of the cost of a home solar panel system paid for by the taxpayer (e.g., a 30% tax credit). The best way to find incentives is to visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency website at www.DSIREUSA.org.

Homework assignment

In addition to contacting your utility, do the following:

- Review energy bills for the past 12 to 24 months to calculate the average monthly kilowatt usage.
- Assess the age, size and condition of your roof, as well as available ground

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space. This will help determine the best location for solar panel arrays.
- Hire qualified installers who are trained and certified to install solar.
- Get several quotes from multiple installers and ensure that all costs are factored into the quotes, including equipment, permitting, installation and inspection fees.

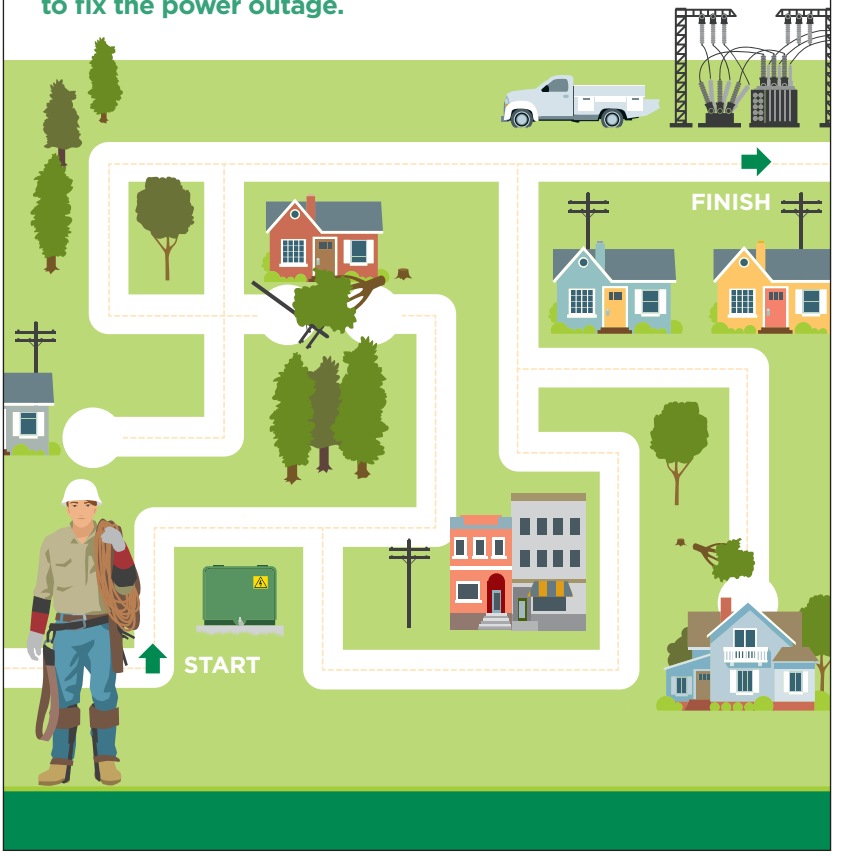
Going solar is a great way to harness energy from the sun; however, assess where it would be located, the size of the array required and the costs versus savings before considering having a home solar array installed.

HELP THE LINEWORKER RESTORE POWER

Energy Explorers

Occasionally, severe weather can cause power disruptions. When outages occur, our lineworkers get to work! They restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

Help the lineworker reach the transformer to fix the power outage.



Spoon River Electric Cooperative

930 South Fifth Ave, PO Box 340,
Canton, IL 61520
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
309-647-2700 • www.srecoop.org

Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,272

Number of members served: 5,022

Number of power poles in territory: 29,361

Firing up one portable generator is like starting a parking lot full of cars

Firing up one fuel-powered portable generator produces as much carbon monoxide (CO) as hundreds of combustion-engine cars, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Using a portable generator in a home, garage or too close to an enclosed area is like starting a parking lot full of cars and letting the CO poison seep into that area. The devastating result is almost immediate: The CO from one generator can kill in minutes.

CO facts

CO is colorless and odorless. Poisoning can happen so quickly that exposed persons may become unconscious before recognizing any symptoms.

Each year in the U.S.:

- Approximately 85 individuals die from CO poisoning.
- Most deaths (81%) occur in residential locations.

African Americans are at greater risk of CO poisoning, accounting for 23 percent of generator-related CO deaths, nearly double their estimated 13 percent share of the U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census.

Safety tips

To use a portable generator safely:

- Always use a portable generator at least 20 feet away from your home.
- Never operate one inside a home, on a porch or near windows and doors.
- Apply the 20-foot distance rule to other locations, such as a shed, cabin, camper or trailer.
- When shopping for a generator, look for one that gives off reduced emissions.
- Also look for one that shuts off automatically when high levels of CO are present.
- Keep your generator well-maintained and follow all manufacturer's instructions.
- Operate it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot pool underneath.
- Ensure CO detectors are installed on every level of your home and near or in bedrooms.
- Test CO alarms monthly; also track their age. They need to be replaced every seven years.

A portable generator is usually gas-powered and movable. A generator should have more output than the wattage of the electronics plugged into it. This way, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure there is nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on.

Besides portable generators, there are also standby generators. The standby versions are attached directly to the house and are typically powered by natural gas or propane. These generators start automatically when the power goes out.

To prevent feeding power back into the power grid and endangering electric line crews and others, standby generators should have a transfer safety switch installed by a professional. Never plug a portable generator directly into a home outlet or electrical system for the same reason.

For more electrical safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a tune-up for your heating system? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment.

Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

Source: Dept. of Energy

Preparing to serve you better

Providing reliable power to you is and will always be top priority for Spoon River Electric. These days, power reliability seems to be making news, now more than ever.

As the energy industry continues to transition and more segments of the economy are becoming electrified, such as vehicles, machinery and even lawn equipment, additional pressures are being placed on our nation's electric grid.

With summer storm season upon us, I thought it would be a good time to tell you about a few measures we're taking to ensure you continue receiving the reliable power you depend on and deserve.

Let me be the first to say I love trees and the charm they add to our communities, and I know you do, too. While trees provide shade and add beauty to our area, you may be surprised to learn that overgrown vegetation accounts for about half of all power outages.

That's why we strive to keep the co-op's power lines clear in right-of-way (ROW) areas. A ROW area is the land a co-op uses to construct, maintain, replace and repair underground and overhead power lines. This ROW enables Spoon River Electric to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder distribution power lines. The overall goal of our vegetation management strategy is to provide reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our area.

Modernizing vegetation management

Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keep lines clear to improve power reliability. However, traditional vegetation management is costly and time-consuming. It entails on-the-ground, labor-intensive efforts involving dozens of workers assessing vegetation and overseeing the quality and completion of contractor work. Although this approach has worked for decades, advances and improvements in technology have allowed us to reduce our costs and improve efficiency.

Planned outages improve reliability

Although it may seem counterintuitive, we also maintain power reliability through planned, controlled outages. By carefully cutting power to one part of our local area for a few hours, Spoon River Electric can perform system repairs and upgrades, which ultimately improve electric service. Planned outages can also be used to balance energy demand, but only in rare circumstances.

Vegetation management is an essential tool in ensuring power reliability and minimizing the risk of outages. As advancements become more accessible and costs drop, we anticipate using additional technologies to ensure a consistent energy supply while managing the environment.

Lastly, I encourage you to follow Spoon River Electric on social media so you can learn about the latest co-op updates.