Published for members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop.

WIEC NEWS

P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ www.wiec.net ■ 800/576-3125

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Youth to Washington trip may provide answers for your future

OK. So you aren't really into politics. As a junior in high school, you're thinking about college and where you're going to come up with more than $100,000 to pay for higher education. You're also trying to decide what you want to work at the rest of your life to make that college experience pay off.

Oddly enough, the very people who may have answers to those questions are wearing the title of state legislator or seated in chambers of the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C.

Before you know it, you will be voting in your first election and the weight of the country's decisions will partially belong to you. Will you support a Congressman who wants to pass Cap & Trade? Will you be in favor of farm subsidies? As you approach what was once "draft-age," do you think we should send more troops to Iraq and Afghanistan or should the military be strengthening our borders? Oh, and when you get the opportunity to meet your Congressman, in addition to these questions will you ask: What has Congress done to make higher education more affordable and will I be able to find a job when I graduate?

Electric and telephone cooperatives in 44 states believe that young people deserve a first-class opportunity to educate themselves in the government

process. Each year, the cooperatives across the nation sponsor more than 1,500 high school students to make the trek to Washington to get that personal initiation, and they have a lot of fun in the process.

It all begins in Springfield on April 6, 2011 during the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperative Youth Day where nearly 300 students will visit the State Capitol and spend much of the morning meeting with legislators. You will tour the Supreme Court and spend the afternoon touring local sites. **(5517-33)**

This year marks the 52nd trip to the nation's capital and promises to be as exciting as ever. Students learn the principles required to keep cooperative members working together for the cooperative's success by establishing their own "chip and pop" cooperative while on the bus trip.

While in Washington during the week of June 10-17, in addition to meeting with Congressman from Illinois, students are treated to tours of historic sites, given the opportunity to make life-long friends and receive information to help determine career paths.

The future of the country depends on the youth of today getting involved.

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. is participating in this program as a way to build strong citizens for the future. Besides, we hope they have a great time and make new friends from around the state of Illinois.

Any son or daughter of a WIEC member may enter by completing a Web Quiz and return it to the WIEC office by February 15, 2011. Six entrants will be chosen to visit Springfield IL and the top entry will be awarded the free trip to our nation's capital. For entry information: visit our website at wiec.net, contact Becky Dickinson at Western Illinois Electrical Coop. or see your high school guidance counselor.

Western Illinois
ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

524 North Madison | P.O. Box 338
Carthage, IL 62321
www.wiec.net | 800/576-3125

OFFICE HOURS
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday

DURING OFFICE HOURS, OR AFTER HOURS TO REPORT OUTAGE
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MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four member's 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.

Theft of co-op copper costs lives and more

Ameren employees, sent out on assignment in October to repair an outage, found the cause - a dead man, who while attempting to steal copper wire, cut into a hot wire. His two accomplices fled the scene.

In August, a 23-year-old man broke into a North Carolina electric co-op's substation to steal copper wire. He was perched atop a high-voltage regulator when he apparently cut a wire. The jolt of electricity knocked him 10 feet away from the regulator and he was dead at the scene.

The members of Oklahoma Electric Cooperative are facing an estimated $1 million repair bill because copper thieves wrecked a substation for just $100 worth of copper. The thieves hit at 5 a.m. on Oct. 17 and the damage caused an outage and destroyed regulators and a large transformer valued at $600,000. Given the fire and destruction, co-op officials are amazed they didn't find a burned body in the substation, too.

In West Virginia two people are facing first-degree murder charges because of a botched copper theft attempt in an Appalachian Power substation. Three thieves broke in and were stealing copper wire when one was severely burned. The current left a large hole in his leg where it left his body. He was surrounded by copper wire. He died a day later and his accomplices, who were engaged in the felony that resulted in the death, are facing murder charges.

Even though copper theft is becoming more and more prevalent, you can help prevent it along with the damage and death it may cause.

If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc. contact WIEC immediately. If you see anyone around electric substations or electric facilities other than utility personnel or contractors, call the police.

Thieves across the country are damaging electrical equipment like these transformers for the copper they contain. Some thieves are paying for the theft with their lives.

Why does my electric bill go up during the holidays?

The holiday season is over and forgotten. However, after receiving your January power bill, you might notice a higher than normal bill and wonder why? No, WIEC did not raise our rates. It is the Electrical Usage Ghost of Christmas Past still haunting you. Here are some steps you can take now so next year's ghost of a higher electric usage won't come back.

This year - Holiday lights and lighted decorations use energy.

Next year - Save energy by switching to LED holiday lights. You can keep all the festivities for much less energy. You might even get them on clearance sale to save even more.

This year - Holiday entertaining involves non-stop cooking and baking, which means ovens and dishwashers were used continually.

Next year (or sooner) - Try using your microwave for smaller dishes while saving your oven for larger items, like turkeys. Also make sure you've cleaned your refrigerator's coils and checked to make sure its seals fit tightly when the doors close. This will help ensure that just because you are working hard in the kitchen, your appliances won't be doing overtime.

This year - Holiday guests mean more hot water for showers, laundry and dish washing; more heating and lighting in guest rooms; and more cooking.

Next year (or sooner) - Consider installing a thermal wrap around your water heater. Also, try washing your clothes **(5818-1)** in cold water and remember to clean the inside lint filter before each drying cycle.

This year - We can't change the fact that shorter days and longer nights mean lights stay on longer, both inside and out.

Next year (or sooner) - A standard 100-watt lamp costs roughly a penny an hour to operate, so consider replacing it with an energy-saving compact fluorescent light bulb and always remember to turn the lights off when you leave the room.

This year - Again, we can't change winter and the colder temperatures, but space heaters are often used in garages, basements and other places to provide warmth.

Next year (or sooner) - Remember to turn these units off whenever you are not using them and check the seals around any pipe penetrations coming through the walls.

Air that transfers in and out of homes through cracks, crevices and holes increases energy consumption so caulk or add weather stripping around doors, windows and any other openings.

This year - Even if you don't use electric heat, many heating systems use electricity to power fans and functions. It is a fact of life.

Next year (or sooner) - clean or replace your filter and have an HVAC technician check carefully for duct leaks and inspect your system to make sure it is working properly. Also keep inside and outdoor coils clean and free of debris.

Source: Touchstone Energy website www.togetherwesave.com.

Preparing food during a power failure

No one plans for the electricity to be out, especially for more than a few hours. It just happens when least expected. However it is wise to realize that during a power failure, cooking and eating habits must change to fit the situation. You may have no heat, no refrigeration and limited water. In addition, health risks from contaminated or spoiled food may increase.

Conserve fuel

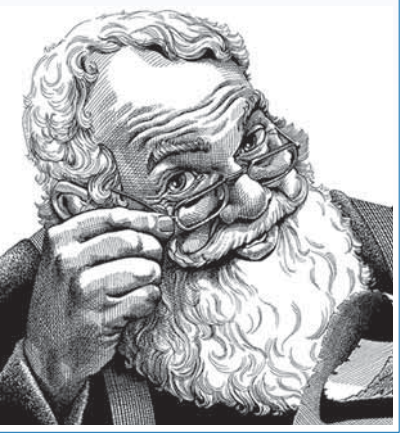
- Consider the amount of cooking time needed for particular foods. If you have limited heat for cooking, choose foods which cook quickly. Prepare one-dish meals or serve no-cook foods.
- Commercially-canned foods can be eaten straight from the can. Do not use home-canned vegetables unless you have the means to boil them for 20 minutes before eating.

Alternative cooking methods

- Charcoal or gas grills are the most obvious alternative sources of heat for cooking. NEVER USE THEM INDOORS. In doing so, you risk both asphyxiation from carbon monoxide and the chance of starting a fire that could destroy your home.
- Likewise, camp stoves that use gasoline or solid fuel should always be used outdoors.
- Wood can be used for cooking in many situations. You can cook in a fireplace if the chimney is sound. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open.
- If you're cooking on a wood stove, make sure the stovepipe has not been damaged.
- If you have to **(6617-18)** build a fire outside, build it away from buildings, never in a carport. Sparks can easily start a house fire.
- Never use gasoline to get a wood or charcoal fire started.
- Make sure any fire is well contained. A metal drum or stones around the fire bed are good precautions. A charcoal grill is a good place in which to build a wood fire. Be sure to put out the fire when you are through with it.
- Small electrical appliances, such as electric skillets, electric woks, hot plates or coffee makers, can be used to prepare meals if you have access to an electrical generator.
- Devices using candle warmers, such as fondue pots or chafing dishes, may be used if no other heat sources are available.

Were new appliances or electronics on your Christmas list?

Did Santa bring new electronics, appliances and even new lighting to your home this past Christmas? With all these new electrical devices, your home's electric service capacity may be come overburdened. If the fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. A qualified electrician can determine the appropriate service requirements for your home.



Welcome New Members

Paul Bennett, Burlington IA
Joey Bolander, Carthage
James L & Mary H Cox, Champaign
Garrett Fisher, Stronghurst
Scot Flora, Niota
Kenneth Ralph, Nauvoo
James A Voorhees, Keokuk IA

Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*

Feel around doors and windows for air flow. Adding weather stripping or caulk around a leaky door or window can lower energy bills by keeping your heating system from working too hard to compensate for air **(6729-6)** leaving your home.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy