

WIEC NEWS

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

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

WIEC celebrates 75 years

On May 17th, 1938, a group of local volunteers held an information meeting to see what it would take to bring electricity to the rural areas of Hancock and Henderson County. The local investor owned utilities had no interest in serving these sparsely populated areas as it was deemed unprofitable. But these farmers, farm wives and businessmen knew they needed electricity to make lives easier and more profitable. They worked tirelessly to make WIEC a reality.

As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, we invite our members to join us as we take a look back at the journey and honor those who have built (5816-42) our cooperative into the strong, stable organization it has become.



Seventy five years ago...

If you lived in the area served by Western Illinois Electrical Coop. 75 years ago, you would have experienced a darkness so complete it might frighten you. Except for the feeble orange glow from a lantern carried by a farmer tending his chores, there was no light.

It was a time of great hardship for the people living outside the city limits. If you were a rural resident back then, you were at a severe disadvantage.

Your day began and ended with the rise and set of the sun. Every chore required backbreaking labor. There was no indoor plumbing. Water had to be carried from the creek, the spring or from a shallow well. When nature called, one headed outside to the outhouse, where a daily battle was waged with wasps, spiders and snakes.

Every farm operation — from milking the cows, to putting the loose hay in the barn loft — had to be done (6728-33) by hand.

In the kitchen, it was even worse. Imagine cooking on a wood stove on a day like today. The woodstove warmed you in winter and summer, and required incredible skills to keep from burning the biscuits. Of course someone had to cut the wood, stack it, carry it inside and carry the ashes out later. Many housewives cooked with a lantern held in one hand.

Wash day meant hauling more water, heating it in an iron kettle and then boiling the clothes in the hopes of removing the grime. Then they were scrubbed on a corrugated washboard, taking care

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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**

217-357-3125
800-576-3125

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Rob Gronewold** —
President, Carthage
- **Jay Morrison** —
Vice President, Niota
- **Janet Spory** —
Secretary/Treasurer, Sutter
- **William R. Newton** —
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer,
Burnside
- **Dave Biery** — Director,
Carthage
- **Calvin Baumann** —
Director, Basco
- **Mike Ford** — Director, Lomax

STAFF

- **Paul Dion** — Manager
- **Tommie Long** —
Manager of Operations
- **Becky Dickinson** —
Office Manager

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.

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“Brothers and Sisters, I want to tell you this. The greatest thing on earth is to have the love of God in your heart, and the next greatest thing is to have electricity in your house.”

Farmer giving witness in rural Tennessee church in the early 1940's.

not to scrub knuckles as well. Most housewives of this era had perpetually red hands. Small wonder it was the women who pushed their husbands into establishing electric cooperatives like WIEC.

Electric power came to the rural areas of Hancock and Henderson counties due in great part to the extraordinary efforts of local organizers and volunteers who believed that Western Illinois rural residents *deserved* to have electricity just like their city neighbors.

An informational meeting was held on the evening of May 17, 1938 in Carthage. The meeting was the start of an all-out drive for rural electrification in Hancock County. The committee would scour the countryside trying to convince their neighbors to sign up for service. They spent hours convincing some the importance of the project. The monthly minimum payment was a detriment to progress in the early days.

It seems strange today to think that back in 1938 that they had to go out and sell neighbors on becoming

members of an electric cooperative. However, this was right after a major depression and money was far from plentiful. When a farm family was told that the minimum monthly payment for electric service would come to \$3.50, a lot of jaws would drop. That was a lot of money in those days.

To be continued...

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WIEC's Annual Meeting will be
June 27th

More details will appear in next month's issue and an Annual Report booklet will be mailed to WIEC Members in June with a complete (6616-5) agenda.

**Help us celebrate our
75th Birthday.**



Planting seeds of safety

Farming is a calling and a dangerous one at that. Every year an average of 62 good men and women working on farms are electrocuted when farm machines touch overhead power lines.

If equipment gets hung up on a power line, don't get off of the machine unless there's fire or other immediate danger. If you touch the ground and the equipment at the same time, you can become a deadly channel for electricity. If you must get off the equipment, jump clear of the vehicle and, keeping your feet close together, hop away. Call WIEC to report the problem at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. Don't touch any machine connected to a power line and keep others away until WIEC disconnects the line.

This year, plan to plant safety. For more ways to stay safe on and off the farm, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Be Prepared for Spring Storms

Lightning from thunderstorms kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes, according to the American Red Cross. As spring arrives, make sure you're prepared to handle storms that come with the changing season. Follow these tips from the Red Cross to stay safe.

Stay away from down power lines. Electricity could still be flowing through them. Report them to Western Illinois Electrical Coop. at 217-357-3125 immediately.

Hear thunder? Head inside. If you can hear it, you could be in danger from lightning. Stay indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder—a recommendation from the National Weather Service. If you're outside and can't seek shelter indoors, avoid high ground, water, tall isolated trees, and metal objects like bleachers or fences.

Unplug your electronics. Avoid using electrical items and telephones, which can carry power surges. Keep a

battery-powered TV or radio on hand for weather updates.

Delay outdoor activities. If conditions are right for a thunderstorm, postpone the baseball game and stay inside—it doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike.

Assemble an emergency preparedness kit with:

- Water—one gallon per person, per day;
- Non-perishable food;
- Flashlight;
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (preferably NOAA weather radio) and extra batteries;
- First-aid kit;
- Seven-day medicine supply;
- Copies of personal documents;
- Cell phone with chargers;
- Emergency contact information; and
- Cash.

Source: American Red Cross

Welcome New Members

Scott Caruthers, Moundville AL
 Janet Clarkson, Nauvoo
 James Ford, Carthage
 Dennis Garofoli, E. Alton, IL
 Jason Jones & Kristee Fritz, Lomax
 Amy McVeigh, Carthage

Gary L & Julie Miller, Pontoosuc
 Gretchen Ridgeway, Nauvoo
 Sean Simpson, Nauvoo
 Timothy Allen & Ann Frances Walker, Nauvoo
 Darren Williams, Carthage



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Properly installed shades can be one of the most effective ways to improve windows' energy efficiency. Lower them during summer; in winter, raise during the day and lower at night on south-facing windows. Dual shades, with reflective white coating on one side and a heat-absorbing dark color on the other, can be reversed with the seasons and save even more energy. Learn more at EnergySavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

An explanation of capital credits

What are capital credits?

Capital credits are the allocation of margins to cooperative members. These capital credits may be returned to members.

What are margins?

Margins rather than profits is the term used by non-for-profit businesses (Including WIEC) when referring to money left over after the cost of doing business. These margins are allocated to those who were WIEC members during a specified time.

When are capital credits allocated?

Capital credits are allocated every year, but not necessarily paid back every year. WIEC members are notified each year that capital credits were allocated for the previous year.

When are capital credits returned?

There are only two times when capital credits are refunded:

1. when the board of directors determines the financial condition of the cooperative will allow.
2. when a person with a single membership dies, or both persons of a joint membership die, capital credits are refunded at a discounted value.

Capital credits cannot be refunded at any other times or for any other reasons.

Why are capital credits not returned every year?

Electric utility businesses require large amounts of capital to provide service and to operate. The electric utility industry is considered one of the most capital-intensive industries.

Electric cooperatives typically reinvest capital credits in the business operations. This reduces the need for WIEC to borrow money and also reduces the amount paid by the cooperative in interest payments. (5510-29)

Your board of directors is very cautious when it comes to returning capital credit. An unexpected ice storm, tornado or other act of Mother Nature can be very expensive.

How are capital credits figured?

WIEC starts by determining the allocation factor -which is margins divided by total revenue. That produces the allocation factor. The allocation factor is then multiplied by the member's total annual electric cost less utility tax. This number will be the member's capital credit amount for the year.

If you move....

If you move off our lines, please notify WIEC of your new address each time you move. The capital credits that are earned are kept on file until they are refunded. Any capital credits that you're entitled to can be sent to you when they are refunded.

WIEC's 2012 Allocation of Margins

Notices to be mailed out around May 1

One of the major differences between a cooperative and an investor-owned utility is that any monies left over after expenses are paid belong to the members in the form of capital credits. Each year, WIEC sends notification to our members explaining what their share of the previous year's margins would be. This year, members will be receiving their Allocation Notice in the mail around the first of May. This will tell members the dollar amount of the capital credits they have earned for 2012.

Remember, capital credits are held by the cooperative and will be returned to the member when Western Illinois Electrical Coop's board of directors decide that the coop. is strong enough financially to do so. This is for our members' information only and does not need any action on their part. Please do not pay the allocation amount or subtract this amount from the bill. If there are any questions, please call our office.

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MEMORIAL DAY

WIEC's office will be closed May 27th in observance of Memorial Day.