Western Illinois ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
NEWS
P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ www.wiec.net ■ 800/576-3125

ASCI Satisfaction Survey

At the WIEC Annual Meeting, members heard about the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ASCI) survey that WIEC participated in last fall. We took part in this survey to determine member satisfaction, perception about WIEC's performance, attitudes regarding energy efficiency, technology use, communications and member demographics. Survey questions were mailed randomly to 1,250 WIEC members. Over 20 percent of those surveys were completed and returned, either by mail or online. We thank you for your feedback.

WIEC's ACSI score was 86. To put this in perspective, the statewide cooperative score was 85, and the national cooperative score was 80. These scores were higher than the investor owned (74) and the municipal utilities (73).

We wanted to hear what was on our member's minds concerning WIEC. One of the highest marks on the survey was the section concerning customer service. Responding members viewed WIEC employees as knowledgeable, competent and thought we responded promptly to outages.

Although we appreciate our member's kind words, we also were interested to hear what our members' thoughts were on ways we can improve.

Overall, members responded that outages were a concern. One member felt that every time a storm blew through, they had an outage. We hear you. We understand your frustration.

WIEC does not own the transmission lines or substations. We rely on Ameren's transmission lines to get our power to each of the six substations. When that electrical feed is lost, due to weather, auto accidents or equipment failure, our members lose power. Then we have to wait on the transmission lines to be restored. "It is frustrating for WIEC as we cannot give our members the quality service they deserve," says WIEC Manager Tommie Long. "We also cannot give them the answers as to when their power will be restored, since we are not the ones who are repairing the lines."

Last year WIEC had an unusually high amount of outages due to transmission feed failures, especially for our members who live in Henderson County.

Ameren has only one feed to the Lomax Substation. It is a radial feed or one-way feed from the north. The other five substations are looped feeds – some getting their transmission feeds from the west and others getting their feed from the east. This forms a large loop which means these subs can be connected physically and fed from either direction by alternate transmission lines. Unfortunately, the Lomax Substation does not have this flexibility.

Although we can't fix the transmission feeds, there are certain things WIEC can do to help reduce outages. As a way to reduce storm related outages, we have resumed our pole testing program as a way to find and replace damaged poles. WIEC has over 23,000 poles over 1,219 miles of line, so this will be an ongoing process that won't happen overnight. We continue our brush spraying and tree trimming programs as a way to keep lines clear of debris that can get into the lines and cause an interruption of power. Our vegetation management program can help reduce outages caused by things such as branches falling on lines during storms, shrubbery interfering with voltage **(6716-40)** levels or weeds in right-of-way areas making access to equipment difficult.

In coming months, we'll concentrate on different sections of the ACSI survey and the results.

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OFFICE HOURS
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

BUSINESS OFFICE
217-357-3125

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE
800-576-3125

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MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four members' 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.

Congrats, Jacob!

Congratulations to Jacob Lionberger of the LaHarpe 4-Leaf Clovers who won the 2016 Best Electricity Project at the Hancock Co. 4-H Fair. WIEC sponsors **(6618-17)** the award as a way to encourage youth to explore the possibilities when working safely with electricity.

Tick-Tock, the clock is ticking

What are you waiting for?

For our members who are considering installing a new Geothermal HVAC system, now is the time to act. The Federal Tax credits are 30 percent of the cost and are good for all ENERGY STAR rated geothermal systems. Visit energystar.gov for more details. The deadline for **(5617-13)** this credit is Dec. 31, 2016.

And, don't forget these other incentives.

- WIEC offers a rebate of $1,000. This can be applied to trenching, new electric water heater or can be applied as a credit right on your electric bill.
- WIEC offers loans (5-year term at a 5 percent rate) to members with approved credit. The payments are added to your current electric bill so you have just one payment. How simple is that?
- Kilowatts used for geothermal heating and cooling are at 7.5 cents instead of 12.75 cents regular rate.

The differences between overhead and underground power lines

By Tom Tate

There are two methods of installing the power lines that carry electricity to your home, overhead and underground. WIEC members sometimes ask why we use one versus the other, or more to the point, why all power lines are not installed using the underground construction method. Isn't one method better than the other? These are great questions, and the answer is that each method has its place.

Overhead line construction starts with the setting of utility poles. Poles can be set in nearly any type of terrain, even rocky. In the case of heavy rock, special equipment is used to augur out the hole. If placement occurs in boggy or wet terrain, many techniques are available to set poles securely. Once the poles are in place, wires can be strung and then equipment—like transformers, **(7513-64)** fuses and reclosers—are installed. Power can now flow.

Underground line construction requires digging a trench that is deep enough to keep the lines well away from surface activities. Where the terrain is extremely rocky, underground lines may not be an option. Next, wires are laid in the trench directly or placed in conduits for protection. The trench is filled in, and the surface is restored to its original condition. Padmount transformers and additional equipment are installed as needed, now the system is ready to deliver electricity.

Let's take a look at some the advantages and disadvantages of each construction method, beginning with overhead.

Overhead construction

Pros:

- Lower cost, quicker construction, easier to spot damage and faults, less expensive to repair and upgrade, can be built anywhere, any voltage can be placed overhead.

Cons:

- Susceptible to wind, ice and snow; more vulnerable to damage from trees and vegetation, which requires right of way trimming; vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines; susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions.

Underground construction

Pros:

- Not vulnerable to damage from tree branches; no right of way trimming required; less susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions; not impacted by wind, ice and snow; less vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines.

Cons:

- More expensive to build; susceptible to flooding; difficult to locate faults; expensive to repair; fed by overhead lines at some point, making the lines vulnerable to outages and interruptions; limitations on voltages that can be buried underground; can be vulnerable to dig-ins.

The ultimate mix of underground and overhead construction used by WIEC provides our members with the quality of service at the lowest possible price. Cost, reliability, maintenance and future upgrades will drive which is the better approach, overhead or underground.

Welcome New Members

Ryan Alred, Carthage
William Joe Ashby, Cana, VA
Edgar Allen Jenkins, Niota
Stephen S. & Cherie McRae, Nauvoo
Jasper Palmer, LaHarpe
Lori A. Patterson, LaHarpe
G. Lyle Polson, Burlington, IA
Loren & Jennifer Reed, Carman
Michael P. Rundle II, Nauvoo
Jorge A. Solano V & Lilian Gomez Lopez, Carthage
Drue & Jodie Waterman, Stronghurst
Shannon & Brian Whittaker, Burlington
Virginia & Don Williams, Warsaw
Dalton David Wyant, LaHarpe

What to do when your car hits a power pole

A car accident can happen so quickly, yet the final seconds may seem to be in slow motion as the car and its passengers jolt upon contact. Such an accident can inflict serious injury and damage, and when the car wreck involves power poles, there is an added danger.

Knowing what actions to take to stay safe can make the difference between life and death. After a car wreck, it is natural for people to want to get out of the car to assess damage to themselves as well as the vehicle. However, when the wreck involves power poles and lines, that is the exact wrong thing to do.

Should you be involved in an automobile wreck with a power pole, remember these tips:

- Stay in the car. Call 911 to have the utility notified.
- Do not leave the vehicle until utility professionals have de-energized the line and they advise you that it is safe to do so.
- If you must exit the vehicle because it is on fire, jump clear of it with your feet together and without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" to safety. Doing this will ensure that you will not have different strengths of electric current running from one foot to another.
- Be aware that, after an accident with a pole, wires can fall at any time.
- Downed lines can sometimes show they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity, but this is not always the case. Treat all downed wires as though they are energized.
- Remember, most power lines are not insulated. The coating on the lines is for weather proofing and will not offer any protection from the electrical current.
- The tires of the vehicle do not insulate it from electrical dangers. Follow the above safety precautions even if the car has rolled and is upside down or on its side. The vehicle is the path to ground for the electrical current. So while you remain in the car, you are safe. If you step out of the car, you are in danger of becoming the path to ground.

Also be cautious if you witness an accident involving a vehicle and downed lines. Stay back, and warn others to stay away. Make sure the occupants of the car stay inside the vehicle until the utility has arrived to de-energize the lines.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Consider insulating your water heater tank, which could reduce standby heat losses by 25 to 45 percent and save you about 4 to 9 percent in water heating costs. You can find pre-cut jackets or blankets available from around $20.

Source: energy.gov

WIEC will be closed on September 5 in observance of Labor Day.