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Employee spotlight

Co-op Board Election - Things to Know

For EnerStar members interested in running for the co-op board of directors, the April 2, 2024, deadline to submit petitions is quickly approaching.

Prior to receiving a petition, candidates should verify with cooperative personnel that they reside within an open Representative District. Below you will find geographical descriptions of the open seats. Petitions require the signatures of 15 EnerStar active members who live in the candidate's Voting District.

The role of director is a significant commitment – of time, energy and education – more than most members realize. The petition packet provides more information about the role of the director and the election process.

Results of the director election will be announced at the Annual Meeting of Members on the morning of Saturday, June 1, 2024. To receive a petition packet or for questions regarding the petition process, contact EnerStar at 800-635-4145.

Representative Board District Descriptions 3 year terms

2024 elections

✓ Voting District A2

District 2 - Currently served by Kevin Julian, Brocton

The Townships of Carroll and Love in Vermillion County, Illinois; the Townships of Young America, Ross, Prairie, Edgar, and Brouillets Creek in Edgar County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Shiloh lying north of the 1800th Road in Edgar County, Illinois

Highway 1 in Edgar County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Symmes lying south of the 300th Road and east of Illinois Highway 1 in Edgar County, Illinois

✓ Voting District C7

District 7 - Currently served by Julie Higginbotham


The Townships of Parker, Casey, Auburn, and Martinsville in Clark County, Illinois; all that portion of the Township of Dolson lying south of the 2000th Road in Clark County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Marshall lying north of Interstate Highway 70 in Clark County, Illinois

✓ Voting District B4

District 4 - Currently served by Darin Griffin, Paris

The Townships of Kansas and Grandview in Edgar County, Illinois; all that portion of the Township of Symmes lying south of the 400th Road and west of Illinois



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

11597 Illinois Highway 1
Paris, IL 61944
800-635-4145
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

2024 Annual Meeting of Members

April 2, 2024 - Last day to turn in petition • June 1, 2024 - Annual Meeting of Members

Member news: Rate increase planned



Over the past decade, EnerStar has strategically maintained low costs, resulting in only limited rate increases. This approach follows the adage, "Watch the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves."

Yet, we are facing difficulties avoiding a rate increase due to a significant rise in the costs of materials required to construct and maintain our electric infrastructure. The cost of basic materials has increased from 16% to 93%. Additionally, we are also facing the challenge of rising interest rates.

Previous articles in this magazine have discussed the rising cost of wholesale electricity. Many factors are responsible for this increase, but one of the major causes is the closure of baseload power plants in favor of renewable energy sources. We want to emphasize our belief in an all-options approach to power supply. Renewable energy is important to the power mix. Still, baseload power, typically generated from coal or natural gas, is critical to keeping costs down and meeting the demand for electricity.

By controlling costs, we have been able to hold off on a rate increase for as long as possible. However, the cooperative will increase rates effective April 1, 2024, to remain financially stable.

The average residential account will see a 6% increase in their monthly bill. Other rate classes will see a comparable amount. Updated rate schedules are available on our website at www.enerstar.com. If you have any questions about rates, please call us at 1-800-635-4145.

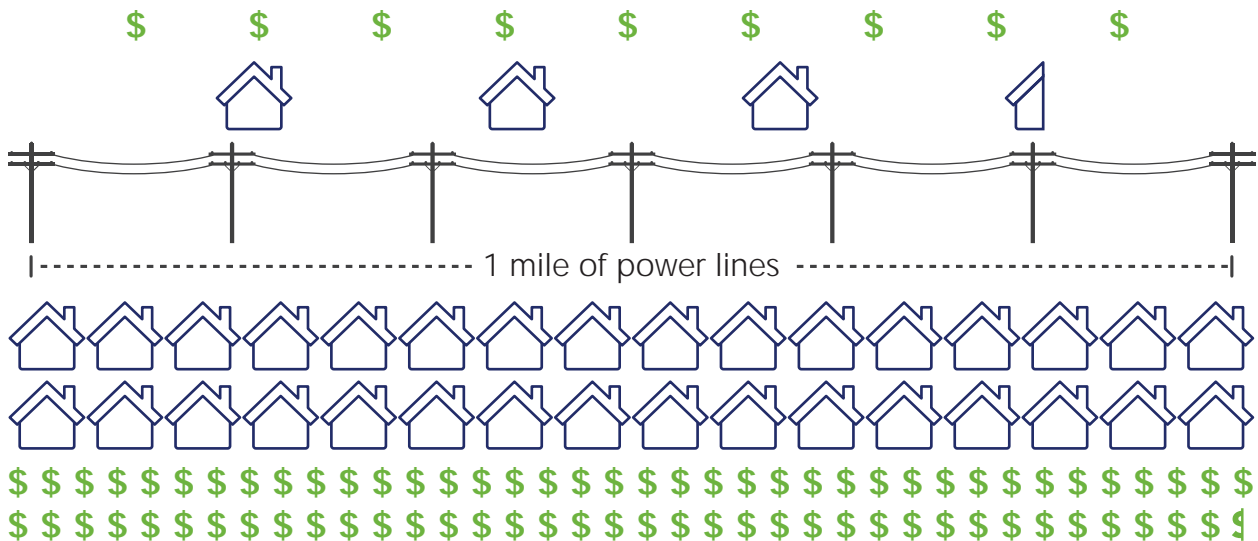
We understand that rate increases can be frustrating, and we share your sentiment. However, we want you to know we didn't take this decision lightly. We had several working sessions over many months to approve this rate increase. We considered various financial tools, including our most recent Cost-of-Service Study, which an independent consultant prepared. Both the management staff and board

UNDERSTANDING THE GRID ACCESS FEE

A common question members have about the Grid Access Fee is why the monthly minimum is higher than other utilities. It really comes down to simple economics.

ENERSTAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Due to the rural area, EnerStar serves only 3.5 customers per mile and collects just under \$9,000 for the same mile.



INVESTOR-OWNED ELECTRIC UTILITIES

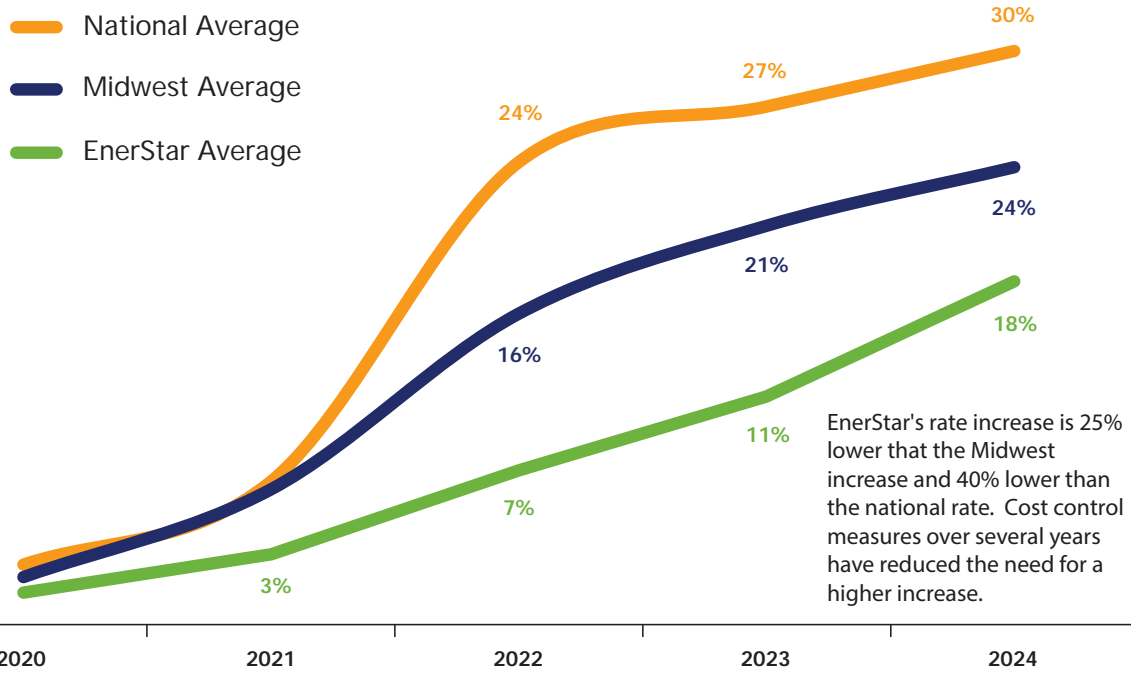
IOUs serve on average 34 consumer per mile of line and collect about \$75,000 for that same mile.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, March 2023

CUMULATIVE RATE INCREASES

Total Increases Over Five Year Period

Information Provided by Bureau of Labor Statistics



members actively participated in the rate review. After completing the process, we all agreed that the rate increase was necessary for the cooperative's long-term financial health. However, we were still able to keep the rate increase below the recommended rates suggested by the Cost-of-Service Study.

Earlier, I emphasized the importance of maintaining financial stability. The word "remain" is crucial here because your co-op's strong financial

position enabled us to withstand the unexpected cost of around \$400,000 caused by last year's Derecho. In addition, we have reduced our long-term debt by \$2

million since 2020. Over the past few years, we have consistently worked to improve our distribution system and fleet, resulting in noticeable service reliability improvements. Your locally controlled cooperative accomplished all this with minimal rate increases.

We all believe any increase is too much if it can be avoided. But when forces beyond our control require increases, we do everything we can to make sure they are the smallest possible.

However, we have reached a point where we must take action to remain financially stable.

With the closing of this article, I encourage you to look at the graph above.

Despite this increase, EnerStar's total rate increases for the last several years are worth noting. We are 25% below the average cumulative increase for the Midwest. Even better, we are

40% below the average cumulative increase for the nation.

While we all believe any increase is too much if it can be avoided, when forces beyond our control require increases (inflation, power costs, etc.), there may be comfort in knowing we are holding the line more than most in the region and nation.

Safety Tip

Know how to open your powered garage door manually after a power outage. Refer to manufacturer's instructions and teach other drivers and older kids in your home how to operate an electric garage door during a power outage, especially if there is an emergency.

Getting to know your co-op employees

Russ Camp and Ryan Haddix

As part of our ongoing series to introduce you to our co-op employees and their roles, this month we are highlighting a department that tends to interact more directly with our membership. While all employees are crucial in ensuring uninterrupted service, we will turn the spotlight on Construction Foreman Russ Camp and Assistant Construction Foreman Ryan Haddix.

These two men oversee the line crews responsible for providing reliable electric service and maintaining the infrastructure of the co-op. During a power outage, their goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. While Mother Nature can sometimes be unpredictable, you can always count on the EnerStar crews to show up whenever they are needed, regardless of the weather conditions or time of day.

Leading the operations crew is Russ Camp, a journeyman lineman who began his career at EnerStar in 2009 after graduating from Northwest Iowa Lineman College and working for two other Illinois electric cooperatives. One thing Russ emphasizes is the team's dedication to keeping the lights on for the members. "Each crew member takes this responsibility to heart. It means a lot to the guys," said Russ. "We take pride in the work we do every day to strengthen the electric system and to increase reliability. Appreciation from members is a gratifying aspect of the job," he added.

Thanks to Russ and Ryan for going above and beyond for the co-op membership!



Russ Camp (left) and Ryan Haddix lead line crews with a dedication to service.

Ryan Haddix graduated from Lincoln Land Community College in 2008 and worked at Duke Energy before joining EnerStar in 2022. For some people, transitioning from a larger utility to a local electric cooperative could be a culture shock, but not for Ryan. "I enjoy working at my hometown cooperative, where I grew up and where I am raising my family," said Ryan. "At a large investor-owned utility with multiple layers of management, it is easy to lose sight of how decisions affect the front-line workers. This is not the case at the co-op, where upper management works closely with the boots on the ground."



EnerStar Electric Cooperative powers the lives of more than 5,300 homes and businesses in east-central Illinois. Our not-for-profit cooperative operates over 1,500 miles of lines in Clark, Coles, Douglas, Edgar, and Vermillion counties.

We have proudly been serving the communities for 85 years. It was July, 1939, just north of Paris, when the cooperative energized its first power line!

