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Across The President's Desk

Developing a new rate structure for the future

By the time this article is published, MCEC will have already held their area member meetings. Three meetings were scheduled at MCEC's headquarters on March 11, 12 and 13. For those unable to attend, this serves as a review of the information shared during these sessions.

Our discussions centered on the necessity of the rate increase, effective on the May 1st billing, the imperative to develop a new rate structure for the future, and the decision to delay the rate structure change.

The need for a rate increase

MCEC commissioned a Cost-of-Service (COS) study conducted by consultant Toth and Associates. The COS projected the expected rate increase from our power supplier, SIPC, for 2024, along with the increases faced by MCEC over the past three years since the 2020 COVID pandemic. The COS also included a revenue requirement component that, combined with expenses, determined the necessary rate increase across all rate classes. The completed COS indicated a 5.7% overall rate increase required for MCEC to meet our financial obligations to our lender, CFC.

The need to develop a new rate structure

Following the completion of the COS, MCEC tasked Toth and Associates with developing a new rate structure to align with the rate structure changes expected from SIPC



for 2024, as well as another change planned for 2025. The objective was to design a rate that would enable MCEC to cover its necessary fixed costs. Additionally, the rate structure aimed to encourage members to shift their usage patterns from peak to off-peak hours, which would improve MCEC's load factor on its power bill, potentially leading to lower power costs.

The decision to delay the rate structure change

As previously noted in our recent publications, the rate structure change needs to be delayed. The rate increase will be implemented, but there will be no rate structure change at this time. Several factors went into this decision. First, our billing software programming will not be available to provide the

desired data until at least October 2024. Second, SIPC will be making slight modifications to their rate structure again in 2025, which should benefit MCEC. Third, with these slight modifications, MCEC concluded that it would be prudent to wait until they occur and implement a rate structure that complements them. Lastly, MCEC believes that we need to slow down the process for such a significant change to our billing structure and ensure members are well educated with the changes over the coming months. Combining member education with the necessary software changes, we deemed it wise to delay and ensure that we introduce a rate that is accurately programmed and understandable to the membership, enabling them to control their energy costs effectively.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: energy.gov



HAVING A BACKUP PLAN FOR MEDICAL DEVICES CAN BE LIFESAVING

If you depend on electric medical equipment, your power provider will do all they can to assist you during a power outage by giving your residence a priority tag. Examples of lifesaving medical devices include an oxygen concentrator or a ventilator.

If you or someone in your household depends on life-sustaining medical equipment, contact your local electric utility to let them know.

Although the utility will do all they can to help, it is best to have a backup plan in place in case of severe weather events, which can cause prolonged outages.

Backup safety tips include the following:

- Have an emergency plan in place with friends and family that outlines places you can go in the event of a long-term outage.
- Before an outage occurs, find out if the medical equipment safely runs on a backup power source and for how long (see manufacturer's recommendations).

- Keep a full charge on battery-powered devices or have extra batteries available.
- If recommended by the manufacturer, consider purchasing a portable battery pack to power devices.
- Gather related resources that will last for two weeks, including batteries, supplemental equipment and prescriptions.
- Realize that local shelters and hospitals that are also experiencing an outage may be at capacity and have limited resources, including auxiliary power.
- Think about the other special equipment you might need, such as coolers for refrigerated medicine.
- Like any important device, keep up regular maintenance.
- Keep a file that includes the device's manufacturer, serial numbers and photos of the device.

Learn more about preparing for an emergency at:



Whatever it takes: Powering life, from a lineworker's perspective

Linework is ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country.

The lineworkers at Monroe County Electric Cooperative work rain or shine, often in challenging conditions, to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024.

MCEC has nine lineworkers who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. These lineworkers are dedicated to their job. It's hard work but can be very rewarding. We hope this will give you a better look into what they face, and more importantly, why they do it.

The danger

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because lineworkers work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You have to be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. They often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when weather is the worst. They're often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what they're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but lineworkers undergo years of training before they can officially be called a lineworker. They typically start as a groundperson, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then they transition to apprentice status,

which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training under their belts, they transition to journeyman lineworker status — that's when they're considered officially trained in their field.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

The physical demand

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of them complain about that. They know what they signed up for — loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, they go places the trucks can't, so they might be hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most of them are just glad to be outside.

The sacrifices

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. They're often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating, like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. They don't know what type of situation they're going to face or when they're going to face it. They get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. They've missed a lot of ball games and family dinners, but their families

are supportive, and it pays off in the end. They make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

It's worth it

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. A co-op is a second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood (and sisterhood). In this work, they have to depend on the person beside them in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside them safe and the lights on for everybody else.

Lineworkers take a lot of pride in their work. Even when it's cold and wet, they know they are working to keep people warm. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you!" from the window after the lights come back on and seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired they are or how long they've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

MCEC and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off, too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible — so you can get back to normal life.



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Attention high school seniors!



Scholarship opportunity

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mcec.org/500-scholarships-annual-meeting
for an application.



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