



Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

Exploring Broadband Fiber Opportunities



President/CEO
Sean Middleton

I am honored and humbled to serve at a cooperative that shines in member engagement. One with a history of innovation that prioritizes the needs of

its members. Recently, some of our members have voiced their concern with the lack of quality internet service in their rural communities, expressing the need as important and even a necessity.

While exploring the availability of broadband in RECC's service territory, we had to ask. Is broadband where it should be for rural residents in 2024? Has the digital divide already been crossed for our members? Do they have the speed, reliability, resiliency, and affordability necessary to compete with our in-town neighbors?

Your cooperative wanted answers, too, and began polling members last year. This spring, we continued the polling to see how things stood. The bottom line is that those in town have several options, including fiber optics connectivity. Unfortunately, this is not true for those in the country in our rural

areas. These members are being left behind and are all too aware of that reality.

Our board of directors and I have been diligently researching pathways to help with this endeavor. We determined that with the right amount of grants or financial incentives, it could be possible for the cooperative to bring fiber optic broadband service to rural members. Proposed amendments to RECC Bylaws and the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation were put to a vote at the annual meeting and approved by the membership. The changes will create a pathway to provide these services if additional funding can be obtained. The federal government has earmarked \$42.45 billion, and Illinois has access to \$1.04 billion in the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant program. Of course, the coop still has to be successful with its grant application to attain funds in order to enter this business space.

I have personally been involved in these types of projects both at my former co-op and in the consulting business I worked in. I've seen how broadband can change things for the better, allowing more work-from-home job options and

access to telemedicine. I've seen how better broadband at home allows children to keep up with in-town residents when it comes to homework and interactive learning. We also live in a community that is completely dependent on agriculture, and it's just not good enough for those focusing their livelihood on farming to put up with lesser options due to lack of adequate broadband.

We know that better broadband in our area could create the aforementioned personal benefits, but the potential to spur additional economic development is unbelievable. Statistics already show that areas with fiber optic connectivity do better, retain more young people, and help foster greater levels of entrepreneurship and business development. It is a tall order, but your cooperative is up for the challenge and knows that innovative steps like bringing high-speed broadband to rural areas will continue to support the mission of improving the quality of life for our members and our communities. While exploring these options, your cooperative will continue to provide the safe, reliable, resilient, and affordable services that our members deserve.

Meeting Update



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting was held at Erin's Pavilion on June 6, 2024. Andy Goleman, Neil Bryan, and Cassie Eigenmann were reelected to three-year terms. Members approved a proposed amendment to the cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and the bylaw changes outlined in the Annual Meeting Report. Full coverage of the membership meeting will appear in the August center section of the Illinois Country Living magazine.

Electric Co-op Lobby Day



Representative C.D. Davidsmeyer



Representative Wayne Rosenthal



State Senator Steve McClure



Representative Mike Coffey





Our office will be closed on Thursday, July 4th to celebrate Independence Day.

**Satisfaction Survey:
We need your thoughts**

Random members will be receiving a satisfaction survey this summer. Members who complete the survey will be entered in a drawing to win \$250. The survey results will be used to help improve your service.

**YOUR
OPINION
COUNTS**

**Deadline
July 31st**

**WORKFORCE
INSTITUTE**



RECC's ID.4 EV made an appearance at the LLCC campus. Manager of Member Services Jeff Lancaster spoke with approximately 25 students from three classes, discussing EV technology and the potential impact it may have on the transmission and electrical distribution systems.

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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board meeting reports.

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

When Thunderstorms Appear LIGHTNING IS NEAR

Every thunderstorm produces lightning, according to the National Weather Service. A storm with the presence of lightning is sometimes called an electrical storm.

Learn more at:
 Safe Electricity.org®

When thunderstorms are imminent or you get caught in an electrical storm, here are some safety tips to remember.

- ⚠ Do not stand near tall objects, such as tall trees or poles.
- ⚠ Do not stand on a hilltop or in an open field.
- ⚠ Take shelter inside a house, large building or hard-topped vehicle.
- ⚠ If your hair stands on end, lightning is about to strike you.
- ⚠ If you feel hair strands rising, drop to your knees and bend forward.
- ⚠ If you are swimming or near water, get out of the water and away from it.
- ⚠ Do not use an umbrella and stay away from metallic objects such as metal fences.
- ⚠ Stay away from appliances, heating ducts, radiators and plumbing.
- ⚠ Do not use electrical equipment, such as hair dryers or appliances.



A person whose heart stopped after being struck by lightning can often be revived.

Take lightning seriously. It can be deadly.