

The SOUTHEASTERN Light

SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

President's Comments



Dustin Tripp
President/CEO

Annual meeting recap

SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative held its 85th Annual Meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024, with 912 members registered and approximately 1,200 in total attendance. For those of you who were unable to attend your Cooperative's annual meeting, this article will summarize the report members received at the annual meeting.

Your Cooperative invested \$9.2 million in system improvements to replace aging infrastructure and invested \$7.5 million to perform strategic maintenance activities in order to ensure that members receive a reliable electric supply while also maximizing the life and value of Cooperative assets. Just a few examples of the maintenance activities include the Pole Testing and Treatment program and the Vegetation Management Plan. Over the past several years, your Cooperative has performed a testing and select treatment program on approximately 61,000 poles. This program identifies poles that have met their useful life and must be replaced, ensures the integrity of other pole assets, extends the useful life of poles and saves Cooperative members millions in early replacement costs. The Vegetation Management Plan, which is crucial to electric reliability, ensures that we perform trimming and clearing along approximately 800 miles of distribution line every year.

The Cooperative sold approximately 722.1 million kwh in 2023, resulting in a decrease of 5.2% from 2022. This slight decrease in kilowatt hours sold

was due to lower large commercial sales. The Cooperative constructed 340 new services to homes, farms and businesses and upgraded 30 services to provide additional energy capacity.

Your Cooperative ended the year 2023 in sound financial condition. As a not-for-profit organization, your Cooperative does not strive to produce profits for shareholders and investors but must maintain a sound financial position for the membership. In 2023, your Cooperative's Board of Trustees approved the retirement and return of \$1.8 million of capital credits, and the capital credit checks were mailed to members in December of 2023. Over the past 14 years, your Cooperative has retired and returned approximately \$25.8 million to Cooperative members.

Your Cooperative is currently experiencing an increase in our wholesale power costs from Southern Illinois Power Cooperative, located at the Lake of Egypt, primarily due to higher priced fuels consumed to generate electricity including coal and carbon. These increased fuel costs are reflected in the wholesale power cost adjustment charge that varies monthly in your retail rate. However, the wholesale rate structure that your Cooperative pays is also currently changing. This wholesale rate structure change is partially in effect now, and the final rate structure will take effect Jan. 1, 2025. Management has reviewed this wholesale rate structure change and is anticipating wholesale cost

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READERSHIP
PRIZE WINNER:
James Randolph,
Galatia, IL

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop.



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benefits to our Cooperative members.

Your Cooperative is currently conducting a cost-of-service study and a retail rate study that will be completed later this year. At this time, your Cooperative does not anticipate the need to increase retail rates for at least the coming year.

Cooperative members learned that electric generation is becoming more vulnerable during peak demand conditions due to a rapid transition in the electric generation industry to construct more renewable energy resources (solar and wind) and retiring fossil fuel generation (primarily coal, but natural gas as well). Some of the primary reasons for this transition are public, social and financial policy changes that are providing significant financial incentives, including significant investment tax credits and subsidies, for the construction of renewable energy generation.

In addition, we are continuing to see new environmental regulations surrounding fossil fuels. In April of this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized four new environmental regulations targeting emissions from fossil-fueled generation and facilities that, if enacted, will lead to more accelerated baseload generation facility retirements.

One new regulation would require baseload coal and new natural gas plants to meet an emission standard equivalent to installing a carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) system removing 90% of the carbon by 2032. Unfortunately, the CCS technology required is not ready for full-scale, industry-wide deployment and is certainly not considered economically viable.

Attorney generals from 27 states have filed lawsuits against the EPA to block the new regulations. The fate of these new EPA regulations will be determined by the courts over the next few years.

As we look to the future, your Cooperative is currently investigating new automated metering infrastructure systems (AMI for short). The current AMI system is approaching 20 years old and has limited time left. In addition, your Cooperative is investigating the implementation of new programs that may be implemented over the next few years.

The change in the rate structure that was mentioned earlier will allow your Cooperative to implement new technologies to allow members to voluntarily participate in demand response programs. These voluntary programs may include things like smart thermostats, smart water heaters, backup generators, time-of-use rates, off-peak rates and other programs to help reduce energy demand during peak alert conditions. Through participation in these programs, members may be able to reduce their energy demand and save money while helping to reduce the strain on the electric grid during peak demand times.

Your Cooperative was formed 86 years ago to bring electricity to rural areas of southeastern Illinois. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and we want you to know that your Cooperative is owned by the people it serves and will continue to be an electric cooperative that is truly operated "for the people and by the people."

See you next month, and as always, "We'll keep the lights on for you."



Harvest workers urged to use caution to decrease electrical accidents

Harvest season can yield higher numbers of electrocution, shock and burn injuries. Nationwide, an average of 60 agricultural workers are electrocuted, and hundreds more are injured in electrical accidents each year.

“Equipment contacting overhead power lines is the leading cause of farm electrocution accidents in the Midwest,” says Bob Aherin, University of Illinois Agricultural Safety Specialist. “Many of these accidents occur near grain bins, when augers make contact with power lines.”

Dustin Tripp, General Manager at SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, says, “All farm workers need to be sure to keep equipment 10 feet from power lines at all times. That’s 10 feet above, below and to the sides of the lines. Lower all equipment you can before moving it, and use a spotter for large equipment.”

Some equipment safety considerations:

- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level — under 14 feet — before moving or transporting; use care when raising them.
- When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter, or someone to help make certain that contact is not made with a line.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting larger modern tractors with higher antennas.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path!

If equipment comes in contact with power lines, stay inside the cab and call for help. Tell others to stay away until a co-op lineman arrives at the scene to make sure power is

disconnected. If there is a risk of fire and you must leave the area, the proper action is to jump — not step — with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Continue to hop or shuffle to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Many electrocutions occur when the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment.

It is very important that all farm workers and seasonal employees are informed of electrical hazards and trained in proper procedures to avoid injury. For more information on farm and home electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.



POWER OUTAGE

If your power goes off, we offer these suggestions

- 1.** Check the fuses or circuit breakers in your service panels. If you have breakers, make sure they are in the "ON" position.
- 2.** If you have a meter pole, check the main breaker panel just below the meter socket. If the breaker is in the "OFF" position, check all of your wiring from the meter pole to your various buildings. If the wiring appears to be okay, reset the breaker to the "ON" position.
- 3.** If you still do not have power, check with neighbors to see if they have power.
- 4.** To report a power failure or other emergency, please phone 1-877-399-8405. This phone number is monitored around the clock, 365 days per year to accept your outage and emergency calls.
- 5.** Your phone call will be handled by SouthEastern's automated outage reporting system and will be identified automatically through ANI (Automatic Number Identification). An outage record will then be generated for your location. Please note that the phone number

from which you place the call will be the number used to generate the record. If the system fails to recognize your phone number, members having touch-tone phones may simply enter their seven-digit phone number (without area code) in order to report the outage. Members not having touch-tone phones will be asked to leave a message. It is important you leave your name, phone number and location of the outage. Retrieving messages and entering them into the system is time consuming; therefore, please leave only a message that will help in restoration of electric service. Do not remain on the line for an operator because a live operator is not there to respond. In order to keep a current listing of all numbers, it is important that you notify the Cooperative of any changes in your telephone number.

6. Handling outage calls electronically allows you to report power failures very quickly. Once your outage has been reported, it will be dispatched to repair personnel who will restore your outage as soon as possible. Calling back repeatedly will not shorten the length of the outage, but may hinder the efforts of other members who are trying to report outages.

OUTAGE CALLS ONLY 1-877-399-8405

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618-273-2611 or 800-833-2611 • Office hours: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. M-F

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