

# The SOUTHEASTERN Light

SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## President's Comments



**Dustin Tripp**  
President/CEO

## October is National Co-op Month

Since 1964, October has been designated as National Cooperative Month, providing cooperatives with an opportunity to explain the cooperative difference to their members. In this month's article, I would like to explain some of the cooperative differences and how they benefit all of us as cooperative members.

As the electric utility industry continues to evolve and face continual change, we can all be proud that we are part of the electric cooperative program. Electric cooperatives have a unique business model that provides many benefits for members and has proven the test of time for over 86 years. Your electric cooperative is a not-for-profit, member-owned business and exists for the sole reason of serving members. Your electric cooperative sets the rates just high enough to cover the cost of doing business, unlike investor-owned utilities that strive to maximize profits for investors or shareholders. Any money that is collected by the cooperative above the cost of operations is allocated back to you as capital credits. This allocation becomes your equity ownership in the cooperative, and when the financial condition of the cooperative permits, the capital credits are returned to you in the form of cash. Over the past 14 years, your cooperative has paid back approximately \$25.8 million in capital credits as cash to members.

Electric cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by the members who actively participate in electing

representatives, setting bylaws and making decisions. The members of a cooperative have equal voting rights — one member, one vote. Each customer of the cooperative is a member and owner of the business with an equal say as every other member, unlike investor-owned utilities where the amount of governance is determined by the number of shares held in the company.

Electric cooperatives and their employees support the local community and local economy in various ways. Commitment to community is a founding principle of electric cooperatives, and as a local business, your cooperative is staffed by your friends and neighbors, who work hard for you. Whether the employees are working through storms to restore your power, volunteering their time to help install lighting on local ball fields or finding ways to help provide grants for local schools, your cooperative employees are finding ways to make a difference in your community.

In summary, your local cooperative has a unique business model that benefits all of us as cooperative members. As the utility industry continues to evolve and explore different ways to serve its customers, all of us can be very proud to be member-owners of our electric cooperatives, what we stand for, how we operate and how we truly make a difference in our very own communities.

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

READERSHIP  
PRIZE WINNER:  
Carl Sullivan,  
Thompsonville, IL



**NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY  
WEEK IS OCT. 20–26, 2024.**

## Teen driver safety: As a parent, you're in the driver's seat

**P**arenting teens can be challenging. While some battles aren't worth fighting, protecting your teen behind the wheel is.

And, although no one wants to think about teens being in car accidents, it does happen. Protecting your teen behind the wheel is crucial due to their inexperience, which makes them more susceptible to crashes. Car accidents are a leading cause of death for teens in the U.S., with the highest risk in the first year of driving. Common hazards include additional passengers, speeding, drowsy driving and using phones.

Distracted driving is a major issue, with 3,308 people killed in distraction-related crashes in 2022, including 2,613 teens, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. That's approximately seven teens per day.

Teen drivers often lack the skills and experience needed to avoid fatal crashes, and distractions such as texting can be particularly dangerous. For example, reading a text at 55 mph is like driving the

length of a football field with your eyes closed. For this reason, many states have laws against texting, talking on the phone and engaging in other distractions while driving.

### **There are three types of driving distractions to discuss with your teen:**

- Visual, when you take your eyes off the road.
- Manual, when you take your hands off the wheel.
- Cognitive, when you take your mind off driving.

### **To prevent distracted driving, teach your teens (and model) these tips:**

1. Do not text while driving.
2. Block texts and keep your phone out of sight.
3. Avoid eating while driving.
4. Use playlists instead of searching for music.
5. Set up navigation before driving or have a passenger navigate.

Teen drivers report pressure from families and friends to use phones while driving. Many drivers

continue to use phones even when they are aware of the crash risk. Technology can help prevent cell phone use while driving. Use built-in features on your smartphone or cell phone blocking apps to prevent distractions. For the greatest safety benefit, change your phone settings to block calls and text messages.

### **Stay safe around power lines**

Ensure your teen knows what to do if they encounter downed power lines: stay in the vehicle, call 911 and stay at least 50 feet away from the scene if they witness an accident.

Make sure they realize that downed lines or other damaged utility equipment can look lifeless and harmless yet still be energized. They do not have to be sparking, moving or sizzling (like you often see in movies) to be energized.

For more safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org) and consider downloading a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

# LOOK UP

## Before You Climb

*Using a ladder near overhead power lines could cause electrocution.*



### WHEN USING A LADDER:

1. Keep yourself and your equipment 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
  - Electricity can arc or jump if a ladder gets too close.
  - Or a ladder could make direct contact with the line.
2. Use a ladder during ideal weather conditions.
  - Rain can make the ground slippery.
  - Wind could blow a ladder into a power line.
3. Do not trim trees/branches that are near power lines.
  - It is dangerous to trim near overhead power lines.
  - By law, only certified line clearance tree trimmers can do so.
4. Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near overhead lines.
  - All power lines can cause electrocution, including those feeding your home.
  - Always follow the 10-foot distance rule when working or playing outside.

Follow all manufacturer's safety recommendations when using a ladder. Look up before you climb.

Learn more at:  Safe Electricity.org®



# Attention Local Teachers!

## Apply for your 2024/2025 Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grants.

Does your school or classroom need new materials? Can your students benefit from new programs and educational resources? We thought so.

**SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative** is once again coordinating this grant program with Touchstone Energy for our local teachers and administrators. The grants will be provided for innovative, unfunded projects or materials. Qualifying projects are those that improve the learning environment or increase educational resources for the school.

A panel of judges will determine which projects will be awarded grants. Grant applications are due by **Nov. 8, 2024**. Grant awards will be announced on **Jan. 29, 2025**. For a grant application and guidelines, please visit our website at [www.seiec.com](http://www.seiec.com) or contact Stefanie Tripp at 618-273-3806. It only takes a few minutes to apply.

Since 2006, SEIEC has distributed a total of \$73,000 Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grants throughout the cooperative's service area.



# 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

**SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

100 Cooperative Way • Carrier Mills, IL 62917-2275  
618-273-2611 or 800-833-2611 • Office hours: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. M-F

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SouthEasternIllinoisElectric