

Co-ops power communities with purpose

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. is deeply committed to our consumer-members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community. **3818-56**

This October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For WIEC, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects,



youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Western Illinois Electrical Coop., are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

- 1. Open and Voluntary Membership:** Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.
- 2. Democratic Member Control:** Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.
- 3. Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute money to the co-op to

make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Western Illinois Electrical Coop., this happens through paying your energy bills.

- 4. Autonomy and Independence:** Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.
- 5. Education, Training and Information:** Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.
- 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.
- 7. Concern for Community:** All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people — the local communities we're proud to serve.



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OFFICE HOURS

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Monday - Friday

BUSINESS OFFICE

217-357-3125

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

800-576-3125

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Mark Burling** —
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- **Dustin Walker** —
Vice President, Burnside
- **Janet Spory** —
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- **Todd Grotts** — General Manager
- **Ryan Biery** — Manager
of Operations
- **Wendi Whitaker** — Finance and
Accounting Manager

MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four members' map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.



Map Location Winners – July issue

Ronald & Teresa Read

Congratulations!

Member Appreciation Day is October 25th.

To celebrate Cooperative Month in October, WIEC will have Member Appreciation Day on the 25th from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Because we are owned by the members we serve, electric cooperatives have strong commitments to the local communities they serve. The better we know you as individuals, the better we can serve you and attempt to align our goals with your changing needs. Please stop by the office to say hello or ask questions and have a cookie and some cider. 283-1-1

Both sizes of the 2025 pocket calendars should also have arrived, so remember to pick one up while you're there!



Welcome new members

July
2024

Braxton and Nicole Boyer
U.S. Free Press, LLC (James
Helenthal)

Matthew W. and Kendra L. Ramsey
Jesse and Tiara Smith
Juliana N. Weinreich

Did you know ...?

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. offers multiple autopay options to its members.



What is autopay?

It is simply an automated way for you to make your electric payment each month on the due date. You still receive a monthly bill for information purposes, but there is nothing more for you to do. There is no need to stop by the office to drop off a payment, no monthly check to write out, nothing to mail in, and there is no need to log on to our website or that of your bank or credit card company to schedule a monthly payment. This service is designed to save WIEC members both time and money, and it is absolutely free to utilize.

What are my autopay options?

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. allows automated monthly payments from either a bank account (checking or savings) or from a debit or credit card.

If each of the autopay options is workable for you, please consider using the bank account option. It is the “no cost” option for the co-op. The credit/debit card companies charge interchange fees, whereas there is no similar charge for the use of bank accounts.

How do I get started?

Just give us a call at 217-357-3125 during business hours. You will need to provide the account and routing number information for bank accounts, or the name on the card, card number, expiration date and 3-digit code information for debit or credit card use. **3531-1**

What if I change my mind after I set up autopay or don't like it for some reason?

That is not a problem at all. You are not “locked in” to using autopay for any specific time period after you sign up. Simply give us another call, and we will be happy to change the account back to the way it was prior to the autopay request.



Give us a call today and let us help simplify your hectic life!
217-357-3125

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you recently made or plan to make energy efficiency upgrades to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 empowers homeowners to save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the cost of efficiency upgrades by up to 30%. A few upgrades covered through the IRA include new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment and other major appliances. If you have completed or are considering an efficiency upgrade, visit www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits to learn if you qualify for tax credits.

Source: energystar.gov



\$1.6 million in FEMA funding received in August 2024



The light at the end of the tunnel finally came shining through for Western Illinois Electrical Coop. on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024. As many know, a derecho caused massive damage to a majority of the WIEC territory in Hancock County last year during the afternoon of June 29th. Additional smaller storms over the next couple of days added to the devastating effects. WIEC lineworkers, aided by mutual aid crews from throughout the states of Illinois and Missouri, worked almost nonstop for nine days to restore power to the vast majority of impacted WIEC members. **3510-42**

The State of Illinois and the federal government acknowledged the severity of the storm by issuing Disaster Declarations. These declarations

opened the door for WIEC to apply for assistance to recoup 75% of submittable expenses related to permanent restoration work from the storm. Western Illinois Electrical Coop. employees worked closely with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) representatives to navigate the large and very cumbersome federal reimbursement system. In addition, since the co-op's request was greater than a million dollars, it had to go through additional, more stringent rounds of approval, including Congress and the Department of Homeland Security.

Without these federal dollars, WIEC members would likely have seen a storm-related increase in rates

and/or the monthly facilities charge for the next 20 to 30 years, as the co-op worked to repay the outside loans that would have been necessary. The ability to apply for these federal dollars is yet another advantage of being a cooperative. Since WIEC operates under the cooperative business model of returning margins to members, the federal government views a majority of cooperatives as private nonprofit organizations. Tribal, local, state and territorial governments, and private nonprofit organizations are the only entities eligible for reimbursement by FEMA. On the other side, for-profit entities like Ameren are not eligible to apply for FEMA dollars. August 6th sure felt like a good day to be part of a cooperative!

FEMA timeline of events

- **6/29/2023** – Derecho impacts majority of WIEC territory in Hancock County
- **7/11/2023** – Illinois governor issues a Disaster Declaration
- **8/2/2023** – Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) – IEMA/FEMA reps in Hancock County
- **8/15/2023** – Presidential Major Disaster Declaration (DR-4728-IL) – very few counties included
- **8/21/2023** – State of Illinois (IEMA) concludes all Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs)
- **9/15/2023** – Hancock County added to the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration
- **9/20/2023** – WIEC submits initial Request for Public Assistance (RPA)
- **9/28/2023** – Applicant Briefing conducted by IEMA
- **10/18/2023** – FEMA Program Delivery Manager (PDMG) assigned to WIEC
- **10/26/2023** – Exploratory Call (EC) with PDMG – introductory call with very general information
- **11/15/2023** – Recovery Scoping Meeting (RSM) with PDMG – define scope of damage and process
- **12/31/2023** – WIEC determines restoration work is complete and starts gathering final information
- **3/5/2024** – WIEC's completed project request including supporting documentation submitted to FEMA
- **5/10/2024** – FEMA specialist reviews and further develops the project description, scope and cost
- **6/6/2024** – Project clears all FEMA reviews (hazard mitigation, insurance, quality assurance, etc.)
- **6/7/2024** – State of Illinois (IEMA) reviews and signs off
- **6/11/2024** – WIEC performs final review and signs off
- **6/25/2024** – Recovery Transition Meeting (RTM) – FEMA hands project off to and pays State
- **8/9/2024** – Funds deposited into WIEC's bank account by the State of Illinois