

MONROE ELECTRIC NEWS

Waterloo, Illinois • 618.939.7171 • 800.757.7433

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

When outdoor temperatures drop, electricity use naturally rises. Colder weather drives us indoors, where we rely more heavily on home heating systems, lighting and household appliances. Heating systems run longer and more frequently to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures. Combine that with the fact that most people use electricity at the same times of day — typically in the mornings and early evenings — and the result is significant pressure on our electric grid.

MCEC works closely with Southern Illinois Power Cooperative, our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, to plan for these seasonal weather patterns and changes and ensure you have reliable power every day of the year. This partnership involves detailed resource and infrastructure planning to make certain electricity is available whenever you need it. However, it's important to remember that our local system is part of a much larger regional and national electric grid.

During the winter months, when homes and businesses across the country are using more electricity simultaneously, overall demand can approach — or occasionally exceed — available supply. This is especially true during severe weather events, such as ice storms, sudden temperature drops or equipment malfunctions that reduce generation capacity. In rare cases when demand threatens to outpace supply, the regional grid operator may call for temporary, controlled outages — often referred to as rolling blackouts — to prevent broader system

failures. If such a situation arises MCEC will provide timely updates and information to members.

To prepare for these scenarios and minimize risks, MCEC and our G&T partner take proactive measures to strengthen reliability year-round. These include routine system maintenance, investments in grid modernization and comprehensive disaster response planning. These proactive steps are designed to ensure our portion of the grid remains resilient even under extreme conditions. Yet, maintaining a reliable electric system requires a collective effort — and every member plays an important role in lowering demand when the grid is under stress.

You can help by taking simple actions during periods of high electricity use, especially on the coldest days of winter:

- **Lower your thermostat slightly.** Even reducing the temperature by a few degrees can help.
- **Delay using large appliances during peak hours,** which are from

5:00pm-7:00pm. Run dishwashers, washing machines and dryers during off-peak hours — typically midday or late evening.

- **Adjust your water heater.** Setting it to 120 degrees F and spacing out showers helps conserve both energy and hot water.
- **Unplug unnecessary devices.** Power used for lighting and electronics adds up and accounts for a significant portion of home energy use. Disconnect unused items to reduce energy waste.

Understanding how winter weather impacts electricity demand is key to maintaining system reliability. By practicing simple energy conservation habits at home, you not only save money on your monthly bill — you also help strengthen the resilience of the grid that powers our community. Together, through small actions and shared awareness, we can ensure that our homes remain warm, our lights stay on, and our local grid continues to serve us reliably throughout the season.

WISHING ALL OF OUR MEMBERS
A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR!

2026

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees. Even small adjustments like these can reduce heating costs and improve comfort during the coldest months.



MCEC line outages November 2025

6 Tips for Year-Round ENERGY SAVINGS



- 1 Use your ceiling fan counterclockwise in the summer for a down breeze, and clockwise in the winter for an updraft to force warm air down into your room.
- 2 Turn off lights and unplug chargers and electronics when not in use.
- 3 Regularly change or clean your furnace and indoor AC filters as recommended, and keep the area around your outdoor AC unit clear of obstructions.
- 4 Close or lower window coverings to keep out heat or cold.
- 5 Insulate your home and weatherproof windows and doors.
- 6 Use a programmable or smart thermostat. Adjust the temperature a few degrees for overall savings.

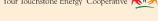
Get more tips on creating a resilient and efficient home:



Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
11/02/25	1:19	17	Kidd Lake/Regtown Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	Fults
11/10/25	0:47	86	New Athens West	Electrical Overload	New Athens
11/11/25	1:17	45	Beck Rd/L1 Rd/Harbaugh Ln	Other, Deterioration	New Athens
11/24/25	0:03	2	Kropp Rd	Maintenance	Millstadt
11/26/25	0:45	64	Coxeyville Rd	Other, Deterioration	N. Waterloo



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



www.mcec.org

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618-939-7171 • 800-757-7433

Office hours: Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Save money with a DIY home energy audit

Want to cut costs and make your home more comfortable? A DIY home energy audit can uncover hidden energy drains, like leaky windows, drafty ducts and inefficient appliances. Identifying trouble spots now can set you up for savings and comfort year-round.

Your step-by-step efficiency guide

Before you dive in, grab a few basic tools: flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and something to take notes (your phone works great!) We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

Step 1: Adjust your thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Lowering the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. It automatically adjusts based on your schedule.

Step 2: Lower water heater temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140 F, but most households only need 120 F.

Step 3: Find and fix energy vampires

- Shut off energy vampires — devices that draw electricity even when turned off. This idle load can account for 23% of your home's energy use.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles.
- Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once — it's an easy way to stop energy waste at the source.

Step 4: Check your lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer. Lighting can account for about 10% of your electric bill.

- Add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.
- Don't overlook outdoor fixtures. Choose LEDs with features like daylight shut-off or motion sensors for even more savings.

Step 5: Review major appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new. If your refrigerator, washer, dryer or heat pump is more than 10 years old, it may be worth replacing rather than repairing. Newer appliances are more energy-efficient and can often pay for themselves in savings within a few years.
- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years depending on the type and maintenance. If yours is older, start planning ahead for an upgrade.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

Step 6: Seal leaks

Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix. Here's where to look and how to seal them:

- Check baseboards, floor edges and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors.
- Focus on where different materials meet outdoors.
- Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing and outlets.
- Use caulk for gaps around windows, doors and baseboards.
- Add weatherstripping to doors and operable windows.

Step 7: Inspect insulation

Check attic insulation:

- Grab your dust mask and tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, but you may need more depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.

- Spread insulation evenly. Loose-fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy with even coverage, while rolled batt insulation should fit snugly with no gaps.

Inspect exterior walls:

- Check insulation by turning off the power, removing an outlet cover or switch plate and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more.
- Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.



Don't forget the basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces.
- Add insulation to pipes and duct-work for an extra efficiency boost.

For renters: You may not be able to make major upgrades, but you can ask your landlord to seal leaks or start small with temporary fixes.

Enjoy your energy savings

Congratulations — you've taken important first steps toward lowering your energy bills and boosting comfort.

Winter safety for outdoor workers

How to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia this winter

When the temperature drops, so does your body's ability to stay safe. Outdoor workers — and those who enjoy outdoor sports like hunting, fishing or hiking — face added risks and must take extra steps to guard against frostbite and hypothermia.

Follow these tips and have a plan to stay safe when working outdoors:

- **Watch the weather.** Monitor the temperature and wind chill. Take frequent breaks indoors to help prevent cold stress.
- **Stay warm and dry.** Dress in loose, warm layers. Wear a moisture-wicking base, an insulating mid-layer and a protective outer layer (flame-resistant/arc-rated (FR/AR-rated) if required for your work). Use warm socks and waterproof boots. Remove any wet clothing as quickly as possible.
- **Protect your head and face.** Use a hat, hood or hard-hat liner. When required for your job, choose FR/AR-rated liners or balaclavas. Avoid bulky hats or loose scarves.
- **Keep your hands safe.** Wear insulated gloves or mittens to guard against frostbite. If working with electricity, always use voltage-rated protective gloves with approved liners — never substitute regular winter gloves in place of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **Fuel your body.** Drink warm fluids, stay hydrated and eat high-energy foods.
- **Know the warning signs.** Watch for frostbite (numbness, skin color changes) and hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech).
- **Be prepared on the road.** Keep a winter emergency kit in your vehicle with blankets, traction aids and extra PPE.



Recognizing frostbite

Frostbite happens when skin and tissue lose circulation and freeze, commonly affecting fingers, toes, ears and nose.

Symptoms of frostbite:

- Numbness or tingling in the affected area
- Skin that turns red, white or bluish gray
- Cold, hard or waxy-looking skin
- Stiff muscles and joints

Treating frostbite:

1. If possible, move indoors to a warm place.
2. Warm the affected area with warm (not hot) water, or place hands under armpits.
3. Avoid rubbing or massaging frostbitten skin, as this may cause further damage.
4. Seek medical attention for severe frostbite or skin with blisters.

Recognizing hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when body temperature drops dangerously low.

Symptoms of hypothermia:

- Shivering
- Confusion or slurred speech

- Drowsiness or exhaustion
- Slow, shallow breathing

Treating hypothermia:

1. If possible, move indoors to a warm place.
2. Call 911 immediately, especially if the person is unconscious.
3. Provide warm fluids, avoiding caffeine and alcohol.
4. Remove any wet clothing and warm the torso with layers of blankets or clothing.
5. Wrap the body and head, leaving the face uncovered.
6. If layers are not available, add body heat.

Cold weather brings unique challenges, from icy roads to freezing winds that make outdoor work even more hazardous. Lineworkers and other outdoor professionals face these risks daily to keep essential services running.

When temperatures drop, look out for one another and take steps to stay safe. Prevention matters — limit your time in the elements, wear proper protective clothing, and stay alert. Working smart in the cold helps ensure everyone makes it home safely.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

87th Annual Meeting of Members

Saturday, June 13th
at the cooperative headquarters

Board petitions can be picked up starting February 6th



Mark your calendars! The **2026 Annual Meeting of Members** will be held at the cooperative office headquarters on **Saturday, June 13th, 2026**. The cooperative office is located at **6132 State Route 3, Waterloo**. We will have additional parking near our back entrance off Old Red Bud Road.

Eighteen \$500 scholarships will be drawn for high seniors who are sons or daughters of cooperative members. Visit our website for the application and future publications!

2026 Board of Directors Nominating Procedure:

(Sections taken from official cooperative by-laws)

Section 4.06 Nominations. It shall be the duty of the Board to appoint, not less than ninety (90) days nor more than one hundred fifty (150) days before the date of each meeting of the Members at which Directors are to be elected ("Voting Meeting"), a Credentials and Election Committee ("C & E Committee") consisting of five (5) Members in good standing from each Area in which a Director's term expires or vacancy occurs; provided that no such committee need be constituted to fill a vacancy in accordance with Section 4.02 (d).

(d) Nominations to be by Petition. Candidates (including incumbents whose terms are expiring) who desire to run for election for a Director position scheduled for election at the next Annual Meeting shall deliver to the President/CEO, or his delegate, at least sixty (60) days before the Annual Meeting,

- (i) lists, on each page of the Nominating Petition, the name of the candidate ("Nominee");
- (ii) indicates, on each page of the Nominating Petition, the Area in which the Nominee resides (or in which the Entity Member designating such Nominee pursuant to Section 4.02(a) is located), and the Directorate District position for which such individual is being nominated, which must be the same; and
- (iii) contains the printed names, addresses, and telephone numbers, and original dated signatures signed within sixty (60) days of the first signature, of at least twenty
- (iv) Members who reside in the Directorate Area for which the Nominee is being nominated.

- (v) No Member may sign a Nominating Petition for more than one (1) Nominee in a single election. If a Member does sign a Nominating Petition for more than one (1) Nominee, the Member's signature shall not be valid on any of the petitions signed by the Member.
- (vi) If a membership is jointly held, all of the persons holding such joint membership shall be treated as one Member and only one of such persons may sign a Nominating Petition for any single election. If more than one such person signs a Nominating Petition, for different Nominees, none of the signatures for such Member shall be counted. If more than one such person signs a Nominating Petition, but all for the same Nominee, only one of such signatures shall be counted.
- (e) Display of Petitions. After verifying that a Nominating Petition complies with this Bylaw, the C&E Committee shall display the Nominating Petition in public view at the Cooperative's headquarters and on the Cooperative's website. Such display and listing shall be arranged by Directorate Area and listed within each Directorate Area in the order received in qualifying form by the Secretary of the C&E Committee.
- (f) No Nominations from the Floor or Written-In. Nominations of an individual to run for election to a Director position scheduled for election at an Annual Meeting will not be accepted from the floor at such meeting, nor will write-in votes naming persons not properly nominated in accordance with the foregoing be counted.

Members may pick up a written Petition of Nomination form at the co-op office starting Feb. 6, 2026.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Beware of "winter bill relief" energy scams. Scammers often exploit high winter bills by offering fake discount or relief programs to unsuspecting consumers. They may ask for upfront payments or personal details to lower your rate. Legitimate utilities never demand gift cards, wire transfers or payment through apps like PayPal or Venmo. Always verify offers directly by calling your utility's phone number located on your energy bill—do not call any phone numbers provided in a suspicious email or text. Remember to take time to confirm before you pay; real savings programs won't pressure you for immediate action.

MONROE COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

POLICY 130

MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING

OBJECTIVE:

To develop a standard of defining what is accepted as a "Member in Good Standing" as stated in the cooperative by-laws and policies. These standards will be used in determining the ability of members to qualify for director elections, participate on advisory committees, continued service from cooperative and any future action that the board of directors deem appropriate.

PROCEDURE:

1. These guidelines will be used to determine the status of members in participating in any actions as follows:
 - A. Member must have taken service for at least three (3) years before eligibility to qualify for running for a director seat.
 - B. Member must have a credit rating point total of eight (8) points or less. This point total references Policy 303 regarding credit rating for security deposits.
 - C. Member must have paid all appropriate fees and any services provided for by the cooperative. No outstanding invoices.

Adopted: August 25, 2015

Amended: March 24, 2020

Gary Gregson, Secretary

Policies Referenced Herein: 303

2026 Nominating Procedure

Board of directors whose 3-year terms are due to expire in 2026 represent Seats C in North-Area 1, Central-Area 2, & Southern-Area 3, and the district areas are illustrated below.

If you are interested in running for a board seat and are not sure of the district your account is in, just call our office at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433 and ask one of our member service representatives.



Richard Neff
North District



George Obernagel
Central District

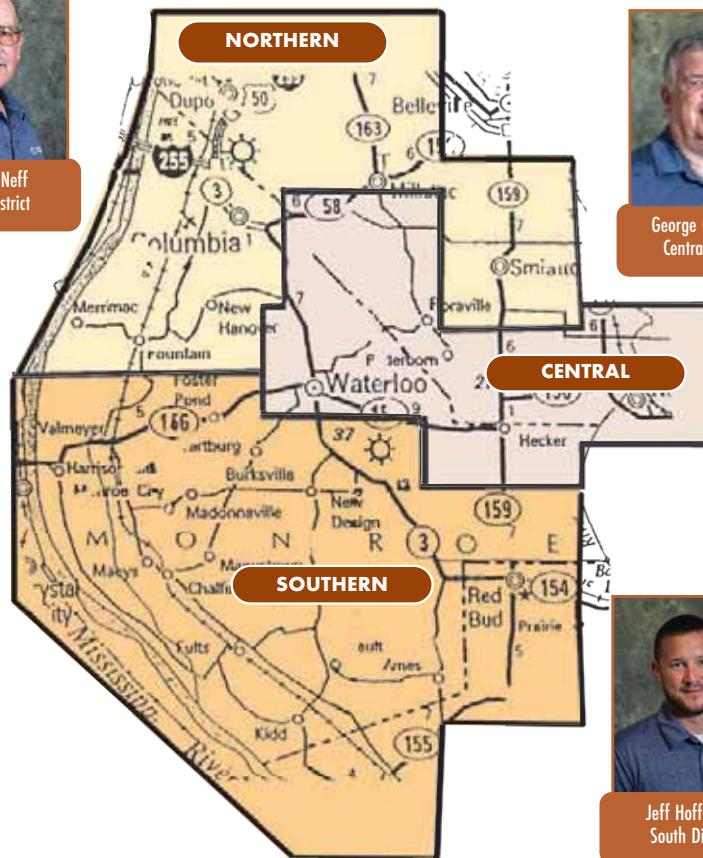


Jeff Hoffmann
South District

Northern District –
Richard Neff

Central District –
George Obernagel

Southern District –
Jeff Hoffmann



A good director must:

- Receive electric service from the co-op at their primary residence within the district, be a member in good standing, and not have conflicting business interests. (They pay the same rates for service and follow the same policies as all other members.)
- Be able to spend adequate time on board work and attend most regular board meetings held the fourth Tuesday morning each month for several hours at the co-op office.
- Attend our annual meeting each year and other special board meetings, committee meetings, director's conferences and educational seminars as necessary.
- Be accessible to members within your district and willing to represent all members of the co-op.
- Acquire knowledge about the electric utility including finances, management and public issues. (It takes time to learn the system and for that reason our directors have made long-term commitments to serving the co-op.)
- Establish policies and employ a general manager who is responsible for all operational details.

Additional details can be found in our bylaws, which are located on our website at mcec.org