

The SOUTHEASTERN Light

SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Voluntary and open membership • Voluntary and open membership

President's Comments



Dustin Tripp
President/CEO

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

I hope all of you had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! As we begin the new year, I would like to take this time to briefly reflect on the year 2025 and summarize your Cooperative's plans for the year 2026.

As you know, the Cooperative started the year with Winter Storm Blair, a devastating ice storm on January 5th that resulted in approximately 16,000 members without service at the height of the storm. Cooperative crews as well as assisting cooperative crews and contractors worked tirelessly for 8 days to restore service to all Cooperative members. After experiencing Winter Storm Blair, the spring season began and more severe storms, including damaging winds and devastating tornadoes, traveled through your Cooperative's service territory. In total, your Cooperative's distribution system experienced damage from seven confirmed tornadoes, including a devastating EF4 tornado in Williamson County just south of Marion.

In 2025, the Cooperative continued the necessary investments in the distribution system in order to provide members with a reliable electric supply. Some of the investments included testing poles, treating poles, replacing degraded poles, rebuilding aging infrastructure and

trimming/clearing in the vegetation management program. In fact, the Cooperative completed trimming and clearing of vegetation in the Cave-In-Rock, Christopher, Dixon Springs, Ewing, Golconda North, Golconda South and Vienna substations. As we have certainly experienced in the past with major storms, a sound vegetation management program is crucial to your Cooperative's ability to reduce risks and outages associated with major weather events and to maintain a reliable electric supply for members.

In summary, the Cooperative expects to end the year 2025 by delivering approximately 766 million kilowatt-hours to all of you as Cooperative members. Unfortunately, the severe storm damages in 2025 resulted in storm expenses that were \$3.7 million over budget which will result in the Cooperative experiencing an operating loss of approximately \$2.3 million in 2025.

In 2026, your Cooperative will continue to make the necessary investments in the distribution facilities that serve your energy by rebuilding aging infrastructure, replacing degraded poles and performing other maintenance activities including pole testing, regulator maintenance,



Continued on page 18D ▶



Auto accidents: distracted driving and downed power lines

Distracted driving

The popularity of handheld devices has increased distracted driving problems on the road. Activities like texting, talking on the phone, reading and watching a video take a driver's attention away from the road and driving conditions. It is hazardous for the driver, passengers and bystanders in the area.

Use extreme caution when traveling near roadwork or utility roadside work zones. Pay attention when you see "Work Ahead" signs or orange cones that signal work activity ahead.

Focus on potential hazards when driving after a storm — stay away from downed power poles, lines and electrical equipment. Never drive over a downed line, as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.

Downed power lines

When drivers are distracted, there is a risk of an accident with a power pole, as they often line the sides of streets and highways. If you are

involved in an auto accident with a power pole or you witness one, you must know the steps to take to keep yourself and others safe.

In accidents with power poles, it is likely the pole and power lines will sag or may fall on your car or nearby, which would energize the area around your car with electricity. If you step out of the car, your body would become the path to ground for the electricity, which could be deadly. The safest place is nearly always inside the car.

While downed lines can sometimes show they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs they are live but are just as lethal.

If you are in a car accident with a power pole:

- Stay in the car. Do not get out unless you must.
- Call 911 for help and wait until a professional from the electric utility tells you it is safe to leave the car.

- Warn those who try to come near your car to help that they must stay far away.
- Stay inside the vehicle unless there is fire or imminent risk of fire, which rarely happens.
- In the case of fire, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground simultaneously. Then hop away with feet together. That way, there will not be a voltage difference between your feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body, which could be deadly.

If you witness a car collision with a power pole, do not approach the accident. By trying to help, you could put your own life at risk. The best thing to do is call 911, stay far away and warn others to stay away from the accident.

For additional information visit safeelectricity.org.



WE WISH YOU A BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL NEW YEAR!

We remain committed to providing affordable and reliable power to your homes and businesses.
May the year ahead be filled with joy and opportunity for each of our members!

HERE'S TO ANOTHER YEAR OF MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT — TOGETHER.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

President's Comments continued from page 18A

breaker maintenance and sectionalizing in order to help ensure a safe and reliable electric supply. In fact, the maintenance work will begin in early January with the testing and treatment of approximately 6,500 poles. The Cooperative will also continue to make significant investments in the vegetation management program that is crucial to the reliability of service that you receive. Cooperative members will receive more details regarding the 2026 vegetation management program in next month's article.

Your Cooperative will continue to work diligently to improve and enhance the level of service and reliability that you receive. On behalf of the Trustees and all employees, we want you to know that your Cooperative is committed to providing reliable and quality service while keeping rates affordable. We thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

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



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

Find us on 
 Facebook.com/
 SouthEasternIllinoisElectric