

MONROE ELECTRIC NEWS

Waterloo, Illinois • 618.939.7171 • 800.757.7433

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

Why MCEC asked members to conserve power during extreme cold

The morning of January 24th, MCEC asked members to voluntarily reduce nonessential electricity use after receiving a regional grid reliability notice. This request was prompted by extremely cold temperatures across much of the Midwest, which caused electricity demand to spike well beyond normal levels.

The notice originated from the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), the organization responsible for operating the regional electric grid across portions of 15 states and the Canadian province of Manitoba. MISO closely monitors electricity supply and demand, and issues alerts when conditions could threaten grid reliability. That alert was passed along to MCEC through our wholesale power supplier.

It's important for members to know that this request was **not due to any problems with MCEC's local electric system**. Our distribution system remained stable and reliable. The challenge was occurring at the **regional grid level**, where extreme cold drove unusually high demand for electricity at the same time that power generation resources were being stretched.

MCEC is a **distribution cooperative**, which means we do not generate electricity ourselves. Instead, we purchase power from our wholesale supplier and deliver it to homes, farms and businesses throughout our service area. When a regional grid emergency occurs, it affects all cooperatives and utilities connected to that system — not just one community.

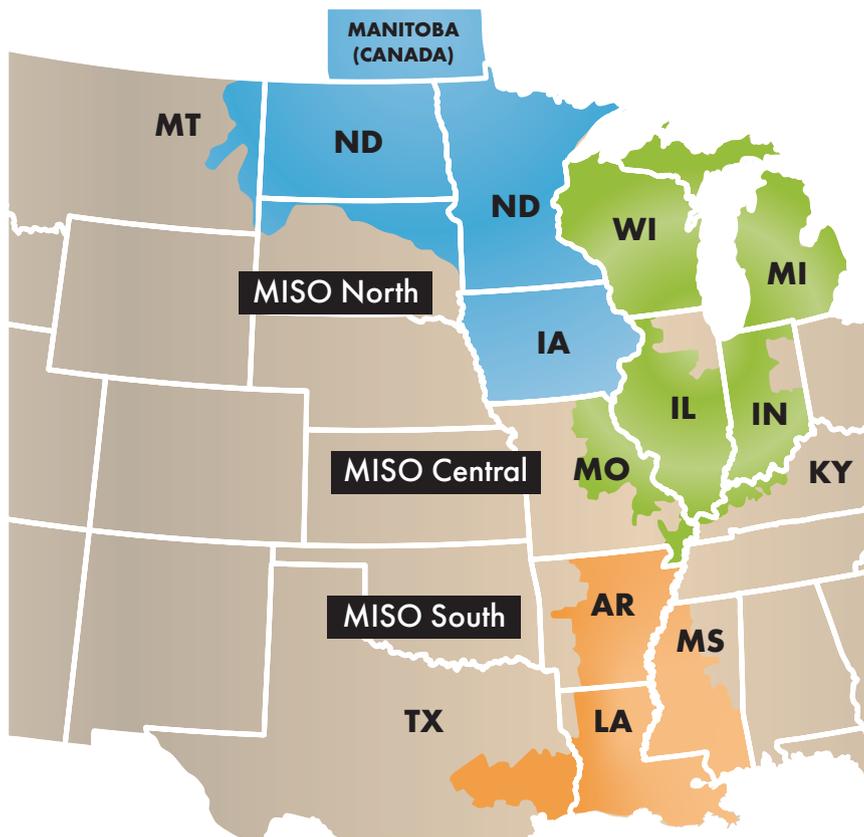
Requests like this are **rare and only made during extreme conditions**. Temporarily reducing nonessential electricity use — such as delaying laundry, adjusting thermostats slightly or limiting use of large appliances — helps ease strain on the regional grid and reduces the risk of widespread outages.

As cold weather continues, grid operators and generation teams remain focused on keeping power plants operating reliably and ensuring critical infrastructure stays online. MCEC crews also remain ready to respond

to any local service issues should they arise.

We sincerely appreciate our members' cooperation and understanding during this event. Your willingness to take small, voluntary steps made a meaningful difference and helped support grid reliability not only for MCEC members, but for communities across the region.

Thank you for being a part of the cooperative and for helping keep the power flowing safely and reliably — especially during challenging winter conditions.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home.

Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system. It's also a great time to replace dirty air filters, which helps your system run more efficiently and improves indoor air quality. As daylight increases, turn off unnecessary lights and rely on natural sunlight when possible. Small seasonal adjustments like these can reduce energy use, lower monthly bills and help keep your home comfortable as winter transitions into spring.



TORNADO SAFETY

& Electrical Hazards

BEFORE THE TORNADO:

- Prepare an emergency kit and keep your devices charged.
- Know your utility company's contact info.

DURING THE TORNADO:

- Take shelter in a basement or windowless room.
- Unplug appliances to avoid power surges; leave one light on to signal power return.
- Avoid power lines if outside or driving; seek shelter immediately.

AFTER THE TORNADO:

- Avoid basements and other flooded areas that are in or near electrical outlets or appliances.
- Do not use water-damaged electrical items until a qualified electrician has inspected them and ensured they are safe.
- Stay at least 50 feet away from downed power lines and any debris they touch.
- Call 9-1-1 for electrical injuries; don't touch victims of electrical contact.

GENERATOR SAFETY:

- Use outdoors, 20+ feet from the home and away from windows and doors.
- Keep the generator dry by placing it under a canopy.
- Never plug it directly into wall outlets. This could energize power lines and injure you, neighbors or utility workers.

 Safe
Electricity.org®

MCEC line outages January 2026

Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
01/26/26	1:52	37	Live Oak Dr	Electrical Overload	New Athens
01/23/26	0:32	5	Harley Ln	Other, Faulty Equipment	New Athens
01/14/26	0:10	506	Rt 3, South Waterloo	Other, Deterioration	Poe
01/14/26	0:33	511	Rt 3, South Waterloo	Unknown	Poe
01/04/26	1:21	7	Kropp Rd	Small Animals Or Birds	Millstadt

Classroom grants awarded to support local educators

Fifteen local teachers and classrooms have received \$500 classroom grants to support innovative projects and learning opportunities for students. These grants are designed to help fund ideas, supplies, and programs that may not have otherwise been possible through traditional classroom budgets.

The awarded projects span a variety of subjects and grade levels, all with the shared goal of enhancing student engagement and educational experiences. By easing the

financial burden on educators, the grants allow teachers to focus on creativity, hands-on learning and meaningful classroom impact.

Supporting educators and students remains a priority, and these classroom grants are one small way MCEC invests directly in the success of local schools and the future of our community.

View the full list of Touchstone Energy Empowerment Grant recipients on 18D.



www.mcec.org

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

Safety first

MCEC recognized for outstanding workplace practices

Safety leadership and training were the focus of the 2026 Safety and Energy Conference, held Jan. 28-29 in Springfield. The two-day event brought together electric cooperative professionals, safety leaders and industry partners for educational sessions, networking and recognition of outstanding safety performance.

The conference, which was held by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, covered a range of topics focused on leadership, safety and workplace culture, including personal influence and leadership, technical safety training, and the role of safety culture in the workplace.

Safety awards were also given, recognizing cooperatives for exemplary safety performance over the past year. Monroe County Electric Cooperative (MCEC) earned the 2025 RESAP Certificate of Achievement.

This certificate indicates that the co-op completed the Rural Electric



Pictured from left to right: Dakota Holcomb - Tree Trimmer, Rachelle Fizer - Member Services Representative, Chris Scott - Director of Operations, Cindy Myrick - Engineering Service Coordinator, Austin Donjon - Tree Trimmer

Safety Achievement Program, a program that was developed to maintain a culture of safety at cooperatives. By participating in the program, cooperatives commit to safety as an organizational value through training,

educating and assessing its workforce.

As the electric industry continues to evolve, safety remains a top priority. MCEC will always be committed to a strong safety culture for both employees and cooperative members.

Continued from 18C

Touchstone Energy Empowerment Grant recipients

Amanda Bandy, Columbia Middle School
Enhancing Digital Art Curriculum for Middle School Students

Elizabeth Wilson, Columbia High School
MicroBit

Laura Simoneaux, New Athens High School
Interactive Art with Makey Makey: Bringing STEAM into the Art Room

Debbie Castillo, New Athens CUSD 60
Virtual Reality Headset

Jessica Shepherd, Freeburg Community High School
Neuro Nest

Anthony Thoel, Freeburg Community High School
Multicolor Topographical Maps

Brittany Ronney, W.J. Zahnow Elementary
A Place to Call Home

Heather Kurth, Waterloo Junior High
Standing tables

Clay Moehrs, Waterloo High School
Duck habitat nesting boxes

Tim Gould, Waterloo High School
Student Athlete Leadership Team (SALT) Book Study

David Clark, Valmeyer CUSD 3
Afterschool Ping Pong Club

Kristin Sachtleben, St. John's Lutheran School, Red Bud
Building Thinking Math Classrooms

Tessa Menefee, PEP, Perandoe
Creating Connections: STEM for All

Becky Rasmussen, Millstadt Consolidated School
Supply Creativity

Charlene Heggemeier, Millstadt Consolidated School
Hands-on Panthers

