



Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

Co-ops Explore Artificial Intelligence



RECC has been providing electrical service for the last 89 years. During this time, your cooperative has endured an ever-changing industry and evolved to meet the needs of its growing community. The cooperative remains vigilant and opportunistic about AI but will use all available technology to ensure a successful future. Transitioning to artificial intelligence allows grid optimization and predictive maintenance but presents cybersecurity and infrastructural challenges. In 2026, AI's implications remain a mystery, but it will undoubtedly have its own chapter in RECC's history.

This article may not be useful for those who believe that AI will save the world or doom modern society. The intention is to demonstrate how cooperatives use technology and show how everyday tasks are accomplished. For example, the page heading and metallic logo displayed here were generated by Gemini in less than a minute. With these two samples, the only

instructions were to "Make it more modern" and "Make the logo metallic." The heading needs work but is a good start. A few years ago, these conversions would have taken a graphic artist several hours to create and would have been impossible for the average person to do. With Gemini, Copilot, ChatGPT, or Grok, anyone can copy and paste a photo and ask for a new image to be created.

The future of Artificial Intelligence is unpredictable

Does AI encourage creativity and increase production, or promote isolation and harm society? Will it marginalize independent thoughts, making people more dependent on technology? The same argument could be made for calculators, spell checkers, predictive text, and search engines, yet none of these are going away anytime soon. Public consensus is elusive, leaving everyone to determine AI's usefulness individually, which is what cooperative employees have been

doing during the last year.

We recommend trying different platforms to get more diverse results. The way a question is asked makes a difference, too. Search engines are simple and ideal for looking up general information, but AI platforms require more details. Always use as much information as possible and be very descriptive when asking questions.

Follow-up comments are essential for acquiring specific results. Here are some examples: While preparing for a safety demo, we asked the following questions of Gemini:

Explain what an electrical lineman does in one paragraph.

An electrical lineman is a highly skilled tradesperson responsible for the installation, maintenance, and repair of high-voltage power lines and infrastructure that deliver electricity from power plants to homes and businesses. Linemen work exclusively outdoors, often at great heights on utility poles or transmission towers and in various weather conditions, including extreme storms. Their daily tasks include stringing electrical cables, replacing faulty transformers, and troubleshooting system outages to ensure a reliable energy grid.

Explain to a fifth grader what an electrical lineman does in one paragraph.

Think of an electrical lineman as a real-life superhero who keeps

Continued on page 18B ►

the lights on in your house! A lineman works outside on the big poles and giant metal towers you see along the road. They wear heavy boots, thick rubber gloves, and hard hats to stay safe while they climb high into the air to fix broken wires. Even when there is a huge storm with wind and rain, these brave workers go out to repair the lines so your TV, fridge, and lights start working again. It's a very important job that requires them to be strong, careful, and not afraid of heights!

Explain to a three-year-old what an electrical lineman does in one paragraph.

An electrical lineman is a special helper who climbs way up high to the tops of those tall wooden poles you see outside! They wear a shiny hard hat and big gloves to stay safe while they fix the giant wires that bring magic power to your house. When it's dark or rainy, they go out in their big trucks to make sure your lights stay bright and your favorite cartoons stay on. They are like superheroes who keep your nightlight glowing all through the night!

Basically, all three answers contain the same information, but the AI platform has access to so many resources that it can convert general knowledge into age-specific answers. Additionally, if asked to explain to a farmer or a doctor, the answers would accommodate those comparisons as well. AI will deliver useful information and routinely give solutions, but AI data must be verified when used in a business environment. A tech instructor once said, "Treat AI as an intern and let it handle the repetitive tasks and mundane work, but verify every detail before sharing, because the final responsibility is yours."

AI is free, but your data is used to expand its platform. Never upload personal information or use facial images without permission.

Removed personal data, then copy-and-pasted billing statement with subdivision rate and a dual meter*: Explain my bill?

METER 153383808 (73383 — 72182) x 1 = 461 kWh <small>CURRENT READING PREVIOUS READING METER MULTIPLIER KWH USAGE</small>		Current Bill Information Facility Charge \$ 35.00 Energy Charge 461 kWh @ 0.1250 \$ 57.63	
METER 153389437 (2414 — 2377) x 20 = 740 kWh <small>CURRENT READING PREVIOUS READING METER MULTIPLIER KWH USAGE</small>		Facility Charge \$ 7.50 Energy Charge 740 kWh @ 0.0800 \$ 59.20	
Activity Since Last Billing			
Beginning Balance	219.89		
Payments (Received 02/24/2026)	-219.89		
Late Charge	0.00		
Adjustments	0.00		
Total Previous Balance	0.00		
MESSAGES FROM RECC Rebates are available if you recently purchased an electric: Dryer, Range, Water Heater, Heat Pump, Geothermal, or EV Charger. The rebate form is available online at recc.coop and inside the March Illinois Country Living magazine.		Demand Charge 11.342 kW @ 0.0000 \$ 0.00 Power Cost Adj 1,201 kWh @ 0.0052 \$ 6.25 Total Electric Charges \$ 165.58 Ill Pub Util Rev Tax \$ 3.85 Total Tax & Other Charges \$ 3.85 Total Charges Due \$ 169.43	
ACCOUNT #		BILLING DATE 03/05/2026	
AMOUNT DUE BY 03/26/2026		\$ 169.43	
AMOUNT DUE AFTER 03/26/2026		\$ 177.90	
AUTO PAY ON 03/24/2026			

*Always block out personal information for A.I.

Based on the statement provided, here is a breakdown of your electric bill from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative (RECC) for the billing period ending March 5, 2026.

- 1. Usage Breakdown:** Your total energy consumption is split between two different meters: Meter 153833808: This meter recorded 461 kWh of usage. It appears to be for a standard service, with a facility charge of \$35.00 and an energy rate of \$0.1250 per kWh. Meter 153889437: This meter recorded 740 kWh of usage. Because it has a "Meter Multiplier" of 20, it likely serves a larger load or specific equipment. It has a lower energy rate of \$0.0800 per kWh.

2. Current Charges: The "Current Bill Information" section details how your total is calculated:

- Facility Charges: \$42.50 (Combined total for both meters).

- Energy Charges: \$116.83 (The cost of the actual electricity used).
- Power Cost Adj: \$6.25 (A standard adjustment for fluctuating fuel/ power costs).
- Taxes: \$3.85 (Illinois Public Utility Revenue Tax).
- Total New Charges: \$169.43

3. Account Balance & Payment:
 Previous Balance: You started with a balance of \$219.89, which was paid in full on February 24, 2026, leaving a starting balance of \$0.00 for this period. Total Amount Due: \$169.43.
 Auto Pay: Your account is set to Auto Pay on 03/24/2026. Late Fee Note: If payment is not received by March 26, 2026, the amount due increases to \$177.90.

When prompted for a comparison of this electric bill to other utilities in Illinois:

The average residential electricity rate in Illinois as of March 2026 is approximately 16.96¢ to 17.07¢ per kWh when all delivery fees and taxes are included. Your total bill of \$169.43 for 1,201 kWh averages out to about 14.1¢ per kWh, which actually places your total cost below the current state average.

When asked to compare RECC's facility charges to those of other cooperatives in the state:

RECC essentially trades a higher per-kWh rate for one of the lowest fixed facility charges (\$39) in the state, which often benefits members with lower-than-average monthly energy usage. Others argue that a higher facility charge is the most equitable and would reduce rates for those who consistently use more electricity.

Most of the information generated is correct; however, AI struggles with number placement when comparing non-identical categories, resulting in figures being occasionally ordered incorrectly. Another important aspect is where the information is obtained from and what weight is given to each resource.

Will unplugging my electronics when not in use save money on my electric bill?

Unplugging your electronics can save you money, as many devices consume "phantom" or "standby" power even when turned off. While individual savings per device are often small, the cumulative effect for an entire household can be significant over

time. Average Household Savings is estimated between \$100-\$200, or 5% to 10% per year of a residential electric bill.

The savings seem overly generous for electronics that consume so little power when they are actually turned on, so we asked about specific devices: How much can I save by unplugging my phone charger?

Unplugging a single modern phone charger typically saves less than \$1 per year. It draws between 0.1 and 0.5 watts when idle, costing roughly \$0.15 to \$0.74 annually based on average electricity rates.

Show a disclaimer to publish in our newsletter using one-paragraph:

This newsletter was created with the assistance of artificial intelligence to help research, outline, or draft content. While we prioritize providing valuable insights, AI can occasionally produce inaccuracies or biased information. We review and edit all AI-generated material to ensure it aligns with our standards, but we encourage readers to verify critical details independently. By reading or subscribing, you acknowledge that this content is provided for informational purposes and may contain AI-integrated elements.





Inspect your fire extinguishers

We used a picture of our fire extinguisher for a safety topic. With AI, we were able to produce more dynamic content by asking for the image to be expanded, dated, and made to look futuristic.



NOTICE: RECC is looking for lost members who earned a share of the co-op's equity in 1993 but did not provide an up-to-date address to receive their capital credit checks. Help us find them by visiting recc.coop to see if you recognize any of the names on the list. Please let them know if they have unclaimed funds or pass along their new address to the cooperative.

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

 3973 W. State Route 104
 P.O. Box 19 • Auburn, IL 62615
 (217) 438-6197
 e-mail: recc@recc.coop
 www.recc.coop

Find us on 

Board of Directors

Chris Wilcox, Chairman
 Clayton Bloome, Vice Chairman
 Jimmy L. Ayers, Secretary/Treasurer
 Garry Niemeyer, Asst. Sec./Treasurer
 Neil Bryan
 Cassie L. Eigenmann
 Andy Goleman
 Thomas Hart
 Mel Repscher

President/CEO

Sean Middleton

Editor

Jeff Lancaster

See our web page for monthly board meeting reports.

Our office will be closed on May 25th for Memorial Day.

RECC Annual Meeting



Erin's Pavilion
 4965 S 2nd St
 Springfield, IL

June 8, 2026
 Reg. 5:30 p.m.
 Mtg. 7:00 p.m.

Notice: Monday Night

RECC line crews working on substation upgrade near Harvel



**Obtain permission before entering person's image into A.I.*

*Modernized & metallized logo first, then combined with linemen's photo**



First attempt created an impressive piece of equipment that doesn't exist



Another nonexciting apparatus, but space is filled with futuristic signage