Western Illinois Electrical Coop.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
NEWS
P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ www.wiec.net ■ 800-576-3125

From the Desk of the Manager

Why vegetation management matters

Todd Grotts
General Manager

There's something timeless about trees. They ground us. They remind us of where we've been, and they stretch toward what's ahead. Here in our community, we take pride in the natural beauty that surrounds us — the shade on a summer afternoon, the colors that mark the changing seasons, the quiet strength of something that grows slowly but endures.

At the same time, we share another responsibility — one that's just as essential to our daily lives: The responsibility to keep the lights on, to power our homes and businesses, and to make sure that when you flip a switch, the energy you depend on is there.

That's why Western Illinois Electrical Coop. works every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Now, it may not always be obvious, but keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. We've all seen what can happen when severe weather rolls in — strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles. In fact, nearly half of all power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That's why you may notice crews from WIEC or our trusted contractors working in your neighborhood throughout the year. Our crews are highly trained and certified, following the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it's anything but — it's a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

And it's not just good practice — it's required. Electric utilities across the country are obligated to manage vegetation near power lines. Scheduled trimming helps remove dead or weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. It's about staying one step ahead, especially as we prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events. **3931-27**

But beyond reliability and efficiency, there's another reason this work matters: safety.

Electricity is a powerful force, and when trees grow too close to power lines, that power can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines — or even come close — can carry electrical current. Children climbing trees in their own yards may not realize the

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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** — President, **Carthage**
- **Dustin Walker** — Vice President, **Burnside**
- **Janet Spory** — Secretary/Treasurer, **Sutter**
- **Kim Gullberg** — Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, **Stronghurst**
- **Landon Guymon** — Director, **Carthage**
- **Jay Morrison** — Director, **Niota**
- **Stephen Patrick** — Director, **Carthage**

MANAGEMENT TEAM

- **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.

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risk. And during storms, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our line-workers working to restore service.

There's also a financial reality we can't ignore. Preventative maintenance — like tree trimming — is far more cost-effective than repairing wide-spread damage after an outage. Left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can lead to more frequent disruptions and higher costs for everyone. A thought-ful, strategic vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When plant-ing new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees — those that exceed 40 feet — should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're landscaping near pad-mounted

transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to allow safe access.

If your area has underground lines, don't forget to call 811 before digging. It's a simple step that can prevent seri-ous accidents. **3834-61**

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. At Western Illinois Electrical Coop., we're proud to be part of that effort. Our roots run deep here, just like the trees we work to care for.

Time of Service Awards to be presented at this year's 86th WIEC Annual Meeting

LINE FOREMAN ERIC JOHNSON
40 years

MECHANIC/GROUNDWORKER MITCHELL REED
5 years

AND THE WINNER IS...

Map Location Winners – December issue

Lester & Yvonne Huls

Congratulations!

Welcome new members

March 2026

Linda Collins
Dearwester Grain Services
Grant Harrison Ososki
Corey Robinson
Korey VanFleet

Robinson selected as scholarship winner

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. is proud to announce that Corin Robinson of Illini West High School is one of 17 winners of this year's Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship program. She is the daughter of Jennifer and James R. (Robbie) Robinson of rural Carthage. Corin competed for the scholarship with 268 other students from across the state. The $3,000 awards are given each year to 16 children of electric co-op members, employees or directors. A seventeenth scholarship is reserved for a student interested in lineworker's school.

The specific scholarship awarded to Corin is one of 10 for seniors who have at least one parent who is a member of an Illinois electric cooperative. It is intended for use at a 2-year or 4-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Corin will be recognized during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on July 30, 2026, in East Peoria; during WIEC's annual meeting on June 25, 2026, in Carthage; and was also recently congratulated during Honors Night for Illini West in Carthage.

Candidates were judged on grade-point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay demonstrating their knowledge of electric cooperatives.

Come this fall, Corin will attend John Wood Community College in Quincy, Ill. Western Illinois Electrical Coop. is honored to have a scholarship recipient and is excited to see how she will represent the community.

(L to R) WIEC Board President Mark Burling and 2026 Scholarship winner Corin Robinson

Mohr selected as Youth Tour winner

For more than 60 years, Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives have given the youth of Illinois the opportunity to learn from and interact with the elected public officials from their respective areas. In March, more than 168 students from across rural Illinois represented 24 co-ops during Youth Day in Springfield, including three from Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC).

3726-3

(L to R) WIEC Board President Mark Burling, 2026 Youth Tour winner Isaac Mohr, and Kim Gullberg, WIEC Director from Isaac's home District (1)

During that Springfield trip earlier this year, at the end of the jam-packed day, the youth in attendance participated in interviews for a chance to win an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. (also known as Youth Tour). Youth Tour is an annual trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives, including WIEC.

After reviewing the interviewers' suggestions, the WIEC board of directors voted to select Isaac Mohr as this year's WIEC Youth Tour winner. Isaac is the son of Lewis and Amanda Mohr of Dallas City, Ill., and will begin his final year of home schooling at the end of the summer.

This year's D.C. trip will be held June 15-22. During the weeklong trip, Isaac and all of the other participants get to meet their elected officials, see historic sites, learn firsthand how cooperatives work, and gain valuable leadership skills.

Can't make it to WIEC's Annual Meeting?

You can still make your vote count! We NEED as many members as possible to vote.

If you can't come to the annual meeting on June 25th, you can still make your vote count! You'll also help WIEC meet the requirements set by its bylaws for participation. Please consider giving another co-op member your signed proxy card or sending/bringing your signed proxy card to the office directly. We can then give it to an attendee the night of the meeting to cast your vote. Either way your vote will count!

All members who sign and return their proxy to be used at Annual Meeting will be entered into drawings for one of five bill credits.

Power across the grid

Article provided by NRECA

When you flip a switch, electricity is there — instant, reliable and ready to power your day. But behind that simple moment is a carefully coordinated system made up of many "grid power players," all working together to keep the lights on.

At Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC), we think it's important for members to understand how this system works and who's involved in delivering the electricity you depend on every day.

It all starts with generation owners and operators. These are the facilities that actually produce electricity. Power plants convert energy from a variety of sources — such as natural gas, coal, nuclear energy and renewables like wind or solar — into electricity. These facilities may be owned by electric utilities, government entities or private companies. In most regions, a diverse mix of generation sources helps ensure reliability while also supporting affordability and sustainability goals.

Once electricity is generated, it needs to travel — often across long distances — to reach local communities. That's where transmission owners and operators come in. Using high-voltage transmission lines strung along massive towers, they move bulk electricity from power plants to local areas. You've likely seen these lines along highways or across open land. Because electricity can't easily be stored in large quantities, this system must constantly move power from where it's produced to where it's needed, all in real time.

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. is a member of Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI), our local generation and transmission partner. PPI is a private, not-for-profit wholesale power provider that generates and transmits electricity to WIEC and other electric cooperatives in our state.

Coordinating the flow of large amounts of power is a complex job, especially across multiple states or regions. In many parts of the country, organized wholesale markets, managed by Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs) or Independent System Operators (ISOs), handle this responsibility. These entities don't typically own power plants or transmission lines. Instead, they act as traffic controllers for the grid — balancing supply and demand every second of the day and directing which power plants should generate electricity at any given moment. Western Illinois Electrical Coop. and PPI work with the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) to help ensure reliable service and cost-effective energy for our members.

Then there's the part of the grid most people are familiar with — your local electric utility. That's where Western Illinois Electrical Coop. comes in. We take electricity from the high-voltage transmission system and deliver it directly to your home, farm or business through lower-voltage distribution lines. We also maintain utility poles, power lines, electric substations and other essential equipment in our community.

When storms roll through or outages occur, our crew is the one working to restore power safely and as quickly as possible. At WIEC, we're proud to serve around 3,575 accounts across parts of rural Adams, Hancock, Henderson and McDonough counties, and we're committed to providing reliable, affordable electricity you can count on. **5528-26**

Finally, there's you — the end user. Homes, businesses and industries all play a critical role in the grid. Your energy use directly influences how much electricity needs to be generated and delivered at any given time. During periods of high demand — like hot summer afternoons or cold winter mornings — the grid must work harder to meet increased usage. Simple steps, like adjusting your thermostat or running appliances during off-peak hours, can make a meaningful difference.

Beyond these key power players, there are additional organizations working behind the scenes to ensure our grid remains reliable and secure.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) develops and enforces reliability standards through a collaborative stakeholder process that includes utilities, regulators and industry experts. NERC also monitors the grid, trains personnel and assesses risks to help maintain a strong and resilient electric system across North America.

Meanwhile, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) provides federal oversight. FERC regulates interstate transmission of electricity and oversees wholesale energy markets to ensure they operate fairly and efficiently. It also plays a role in hydroelectric licensing and energy infrastructure development, helping ensure safe and reliable energy delivery nationwide.

From generation to transmission to your local utility, it takes a coordinated effort to power your everyday life. At Western Illinois Electrical Coop., we're proud to be your trusted energy partner — and to play our part in keeping the grid strong for the communities we serve.