

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative

THE GRID

**P.O. Box 709
(104 Dewitt Ave., East)
Mattoon, Illinois 61938**

Phone: 217-235-0341
or **Toll-Free:**
1-888-661-CMEC (2632)
Office hours:
Monday-Friday
7:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

Chairman

Kent Metzger..... Gays

Vice Chairman

Thomas Sherman... Humboldt

Secretary

Andrew Fearn.... Charleston

Treasurer

Mike Love..... Mattoon

Directors

Jeffery Hudson . Charleston

Ed Voltenburg Sullivan

President & CEO

Jim Wallace

**To Report an Outage
call #888-661-2632**

Find Your Name and Win \$50

Find your name hidden inside this issue of The Grid and receive a **\$50 bill credit**. Credit must be claimed by the end of each month in which this newsletter is published.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

2026 Lineworker's Safety Rodeo

Line personnel from Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative participated in the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) on Thursday, Sept. 24. Twenty-two teams from 15 electric co-ops, two municipal electric utilities and four line school students participated in the friendly competition. Five competed individually.

The event was held at the LLCC Line School yard in Springfield.

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative personnel Gavin Bennett, Grant Cooper, and Shane Ruppert competed as a team, and Drew Pals competed individually in events using skills that focus on agility, speed, and accuracy. While these skills are part of the judging criteria, above all, participants are judged on safe work practices.



Line personnel competed in an egg climb, a cutout change, an H-structure crossover, the hurt man rescue, and a transition climbing challenge.

Scores for each event are based on completion time, proper execution of the task, and safety. Deductions were made to a team or individual's overall performance score due to mistakes such as slipping when climbing poles, dropping tools, or executing inappropriate procedures or methods.

At the end of the day, Cooper placed second in both the individual H-structure crossover and the individual egg climb, and third in the individual hurt man rescue. The team also took home first place in the H-structure crossover, egg climb, and cutout change, as well as second place in the hurt man rescue, and was named overall best team. Congratulations to our lineworkers on their efforts.



Scholarships

At CMEC, we believe the key to a brighter future lies in empowering the next generation. That's why electric cooperatives across Illinois are committed to investing in youth through scholarships that honor the legacy of our cooperative family while fueling the dreams and goals of tomorrow's leaders.



IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

POWERING YOUR FUTURE

The electric cooperatives of Illinois will award **20 scholarships of \$3,000 each** to outstanding students as part of the **Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program**.

This program is about more than financial aid — it's about empowering students. While honoring those who came before us, we are investing in the future. Illinois' electric cooperatives are always looking for ways to spark positive change in our communities, and supporting youth through scholarships is one of the most impactful ways we can help shape tomorrow.

IEC Scholarships Available:

- **Twelve scholarships** will be awarded to high school seniors whose parent(s) are members of an Illinois electric cooperative.
- The **Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship** will be awarded to a student whose parent is an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director, honoring a legacy of service within the cooperative family.
- **Six scholarships** will be awarded to students enrolling full-time at an Illinois community college whose parent(s) are electric cooperative members.
- The **LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship** supports students pursuing a career in linework through enrollment in the lineworker program at Lincoln Land Community College. Eligible applicants include children of cooperative members, relatives of employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces or National Guard.

The general scholarship **application deadline is Dec. 31, 2026**, and the **lineworker scholarship** is due by **April 30, 2027**. For more information, contact Summar Smith at ssmith@cmec.coop, call our office at 217-235-0341, or visit **our website at www.cmec.coop**. You can also find information at www.aiec.coop.



Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative Scholarships

CMEC will once again be awarding six \$500 scholarships and the Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship for \$1,000 in 2027! The Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship honors long-time CMEC employee and Navy Veteran Randall Beasley.

Scholarship applications are now open, and the deadline to apply is March 31, 2027. Forms can be found on our website, in our office, or can be requested by emailing ssmith@cmec.coop.

Tree trimming

By Bob Schafer, Director of Operations & Engineering



Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative is committed to providing dependable electric power to our member-owners. While we

cannot control the weather, the will of small animals, or traffic, one thing we can control is vegetation growing near power lines. Just like storms and squirrels can cause power outages, plants can knock power out to individual homes, neighborhoods, and even whole substations. Growing branches can make contact with primary wires, causing flickering lights and brownouts. Volunteer trees can grow from directly below the neutral and push it into the phase wire, causing a direct short and opening a protective device. Weeds in substations attract wildlife and create potential fire hazards in addition to potentially making contact with energized equipment. For all of these reasons, CMEC actively pursues a year-round vegetation management program which includes substation and right-of-way spraying, trimming and mowing, and clearing operations.

Over the last several years, CMEC has further prioritized vegetation management by arranging for outside contractors to bid on substation circuit trimming. This process keeps our in-house tree crew free to respond to individual events as well as member-initiated projects, including tree removals that would not otherwise be on the vegetation control radar. When companies bid on tree trimming, they agree to trim the entire circuit for a set price, which means the membership is not going to be charged extra money if it takes more time than the contractor

expects. The oppressive heat this summer, for example, made progress much slower as the trimmers needed to take frequent breaks and stay hydrated. Since they were operating under the bid system, they could take all the breaks they wanted without costing the membership an extra penny.

One of the downsides to hiring contractors is that we don't have a lot of control over who they bring in to complete the work. Any employees brought on to CMEC property are expected to be qualified trimmers or trimmer trainees, licensed to operate any equipment or motor vehicles, authorized to work in the U.S., and dues-paying IBEW members. Any other discerning characteristics are outside our purview — meaning the contractors may not be local residents, they could potentially live anywhere else and just be here to get this job done. One of the chief complaints we received this past year has been that some of the contractors had a hard time directly communicating with members, and that the only way to talk to each other was through translating apps on cell phones. In light of that concern, one of the main requirements for a successful bid this next go-round will be English-speaking employees physically in the area who are able to respond promptly to member concerns. **Richard Grice**

Another common complaint this past season has been the leaving of brush along rights-of-way as well as within members' yards for extended lengths of time. We find that to be an unacceptable practice, and when we were alerted to it, made every effort to contact crew and general foremen to promptly clean up messes. To that end, another main requirement

for the contractors in 2027 will be to clean up any cut brush at the time it is cut, and certainly by the weekend when members tend to be home and doing mowing and other yard work. We don't want system maintenance to interrupt the day-to-day activities of our members, and certainly don't want members to feel the need to clean up someone else's mess in order to enjoy their own properties.

Finally, it seems we fell short of notifying the membership adequately before 2026 trimming began on the Bruce and Bethany substations. We attempted to reach out via mail, as well as on social media, but there were still some members who didn't get contacted. While we will still utilize those methods, we are going to make a greater effort this year to install door hangers with a brief overview of the project, contact numbers, and the name of the contract vegetation management company so members can verify that tree trimmers are authorized to be working on CMEC property. Hopefully we can successfully reach any and all members before circuit trimming begins, thereby reducing the surprise when large trucks and chippers start showing up on the rural roads.

It is important to understand that Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative has not only the right to maintain our facilities, but also an obligation to keep lines clear of vegetation. Historically, a handful of members have had great objections to crews trimming trees on their property, but ultimately are able to understand that such trimming is truly for the greater good. Clear lines help minimize flickering lights across the entire circuit while

- Continued on page 18D

also reducing the available landing platforms for squirrels and birds. Additionally, fewer trees making contact with power lines reduces line loss, which is electricity that the membership ultimately pays for but no one gets to use. When trees contact primary wires, electricity travels from the substation to the ground through the tree, and since it never passes through an individual meter, the cost is necessarily distributed across all members.

As we begin to receive bids for 2027 tree trimming, hopefully we will be able to learn from and address the issues from 2026. As always, we at CMEC are here to serve the membership and are ready to listen to your comments and concerns. If we receive a large volume of calls, it may take some time, but I will personally guarantee that any calls that get to my desk will be returned. We look forward to working with you to enhance the reliability of our system and keep the lights on!

Welcome to our Team!



Please join us in welcoming Jason Vogel to CMEC. Jason joins us as our new Journeyman Lineman, and we are excited to have him on board.

Welcome, Jason!

HONORING CMEC EMPLOYEE VETERANS



Dennis Ray



Heather Hakman

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SERVICE!**

**Daylight saving time ends
November 1st.**



*Don't forget to
set your clocks
back one hour.*



Happy Thanksgiving

We are thankful for you, our members!

CMEC will be closed Nov. 26 and 27.

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes can be viewed on our website: www.cmec.coop