

# PowerLines

March 2017

## Co-op Membership

You have seen many references to our commitment to safety in my previous articles. Safety for employees, member/owners, and the general public is our highest priority. I am pleased to announce that EIEC was one of only six Illinois cooperatives to receive the 2016 Safety Leadership Award from our statewide organization. The award recognizes the demonstration of leadership in developing and implementing practices to support a culture of safety.

Thank you to our employees and board of directors for their commitment to safety!

### Member input

Our members frequently send us a note with their payment, provide input via email or phone, and occasionally correspond by letter. Many times these notes are thanks to employees for work just completed, for their hard work in keeping the lights on, and for providing good service and assistance for member inquiries.

Sometimes the notes include thoughts on how we can improve service or do a better job for our members. We enjoy receiving feedback from you. This feedback is shared with our employees, and I pick out specific items to highlight during all-employee meetings.

I recently received a letter from a co-op member and retired farmer. This letter made my day, and so I

shared it with our employees at a recent safety meeting. Mr. Alexander is 74 years of age, and he shared with me that his parents did not get electricity until 1947, the year he began school.

He remembers kerosene lamps and the old heating stove. His mother cooked on a cast iron range.



### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Weekly baths were in a tub with water that was heated on that stove. There was no indoor plumbing either – they still used an outhouse!

He and his wife appreciate the value of electricity, because they remember what it was like without it. He included an article from Reader's Digest in 1984 that talked about former President Lyndon Johnson's work to ensure electricity was brought to the Texas hill country.

He concluded his letter by thanking all the linemen who keep the power on in all kinds of weather. We very much appreciated this letter. Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander!

One of the benefits of being a cooperative member is that you are also an owner of your cooperative. I invite you to share your thoughts with me. You can email me directly at [bob.hunzinger@eiec.coop](mailto:bob.hunzinger@eiec.coop) or call me at my direct line, 217-379-0443.

Sincerely,

*Bob Hunzinger*

## In this issue:

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**SmartHub is your online and app portal to:**

**View and pay your bill  
Report an outage  
Track your electric use  
Update your account info**

**Visit [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) to get started!**

## New SmartHub Feature

You can now set a custom bill payment date using SmartHub. Visit [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) and follow the SmartHub links to register, and take control of your energy use.

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

# Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact Eastern Illini or visit [www.ArborDay.org](http://www.ArborDay.org).

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.

## LARGE TREES

**Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:**

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

## MEDIUM TREES

**Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:**

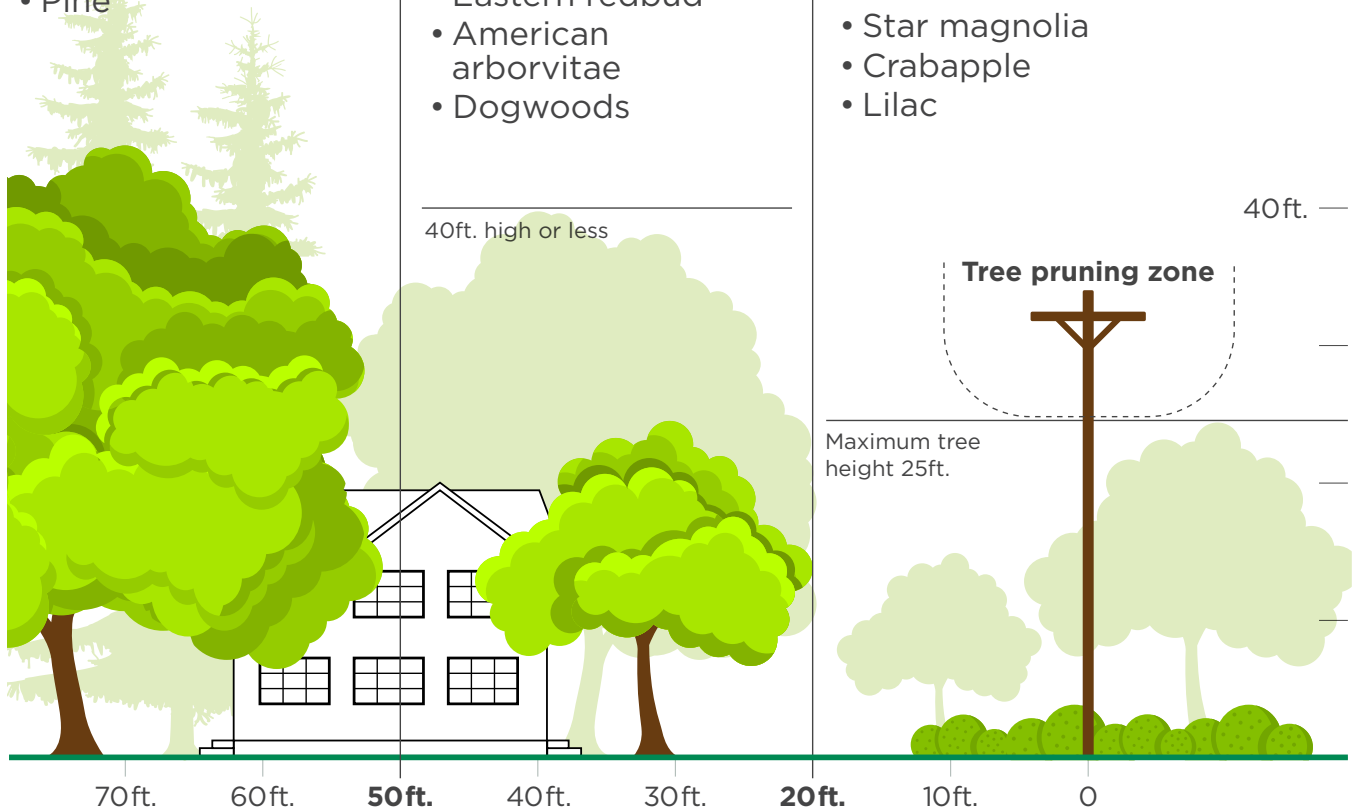
- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenraintree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

## SMALL TREES

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.

**Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:**

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac



**Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.**

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

# Saving You Money: Easy Steps to Greater Efficiency

## Limited time, funds and patience can make saving on your energy bills tough.

According to the Department of Energy, a “typical American family” spends nearly \$2,000 per year on their home energy bills. Much of that money, however, is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances or inefficient heating and cooling systems.

Luckily, there are several relatively easy ways to save energy without a substantial commitment of time and money. These efforts will help you save whether you own or rent an older or newly constructed home. And, you won’t have to hire a specialist or call in a favor from someone who is handy with tools to help you.

## Where to start

Improving the “envelope” of your home is a good place to start.

Doors and windows may not close tightly, and duct work can spring leaks, wasting cooled and heated air. By placing weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors, you can keep cool air inside during warm months and prevent chilly air from penetrating the indoors during colder months.

Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and creates greater efficiency. Apply weather stripping around overlooked spaces like your attic hatch or pull-down stairs.

Replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs is one of the

fastest ways to cut your energy bill. Known for their longevity and efficiency, LED bulbs have an estimated operational life span of typically 10,000 to 20,000 hours compared to 1,000 hours of a typical incandescent. By replacing your home’s five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with LEDs, you can save \$75 each year.

## Wrapping up savings

Installing a blanket around your water heater could reduce standby heat losses by 25 to 45 percent and save you about 7 to 16 percent in water heating costs, according to the Dept. of Energy. For a small investment of about \$30, you can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets and install them in about one hour. On a safety note, the Dept. of Energy recommends that you not set the thermostat above 130 degrees Fahrenheit on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket; the higher temperature setting could cause the wiring to overheat.

Given that a large portion of your monthly energy bill goes toward heating and cooling your home, it makes sense to ensure your home’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is performing at an optimal level. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter extends the life of your HVAC system and saves you money.

Many HVAC professionals recommend cleaning the system filters monthly. A simple

task like changing the filters on your HVAC system makes your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

## Take control of your savings

Take a look at your programmable thermostat. When was the last time you checked to make sure it was programmed for the current season and family schedule? This is one of the best energy-saving tools at your fingertips. It enables you to fine tune the temperature during particular hours of the day. Many models allow you to differentiate between weekday and weekend schedules, and internet-connected thermostats can learn your schedule and make adjustments automatically. Most models come with an override option so you can make manual adjustments without losing overall programming.

Remember, there are easy steps you can take now to improve the energy efficiency of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, contact Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative at 800-824-5102 or visit the energy efficiency section of our website at [www.eiec.org/efficiency](http://www.eiec.org/efficiency).

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Warmer weather is on the way! Use energy efficient window treatments or coverings, like blinds, shades and films, to reduce heat gain in your home. These devices not only improve the look of your home but also reduce energy costs.

*Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy*



# Saving You Money: Small Steps to Big Savings

**At Eastern Illini, we're about much more than electricity. We want to help you - our member/owners - in any way we can.**

Life costs money, and the more life your income supports—like kids, pets, dependent parents, tutors, hobbies, vacations—the harder it can be to save. Fortunately, small steps can lead to significant savings. Here are a few tricks you can use to help you save your pennies now, turning them into dollars later.

## **Banking and Insurance**

### **Pay yourself first:**

If you receive your pay through direct deposit, put a workable amount of each paycheck into a savings account.

### **Value yourself as a customer:**

Move your money into accounts at a bank or credit union that offers higher interest on your savings account. Shop around for ways to save money on auto and home owner's or renter's insurance; insurers often offer discounts if you have multiple policies or based on safe driving, a student driver's good grades, being a veteran and other qualifiers. If you ever carry a balance, call all your credit card companies and ask for an interest rate reduction.

### **Pennies per purchase:**

Round up each and every purchase to the next dollar, and save that change. Some banks provide this service for their checking account customers, but you can easily do it yourself for cash purchases (toss your change into a jar each day)

and debit and credit card purchases (track your purchases, add the "round up" amounts and transfer the total into your savings account).

### **Make do:**

If you get a raise, "forget about it" by putting the difference in each paycheck directly into your 401(k). If you pay off a loan or credit card, start paying yourself that amount, either by increasing your 401(k) contribution or depositing it into your savings account.

## **At Home**

### **Cut the cord:**

Television has two purposes. One is to entertain, and the other is to sell you things. Discontinuing your cable subscription or reducing it to the bare minimum will save you money on your cable package and by reducing

the effects of advertising on your budget. And just think of all the things you can accomplish in your spare time!

### **Do It Yourself (DIY):**

Thanks to the internet and your local library, information about almost everything is at your fingertips. Whether it's mending a ripped shirt seam, making the perfect cup of coffee instead of buying it, creating activities for your kids or adding extra insulation to your home (to save on your heating and cooling bills), abundant resources exist to make your money-saving DIY project a success.

## **An ounce of prevention**

### **Remove credit cards from online accounts:**

It's a simple psychological trick, but having to find your wallet, dig out your card and enter the information is often just enough to keep you from making an impulse purchase.

**Wait a moment:** Enact a mandatory waiting period before making purchases. Whether it's 30 seconds for items you're adding to your grocery cart, 30 minutes for less expensive items you want to buy or 30 days for large purchases, living without and having time to contemplate the necessity of an item will often keep you from purchasing it.

There are many more useful tips and tricks to be found from your favorite financial news sites and magazines. Your Certified Financial Planner™, bank or credit union may also have resources or seminars to help you learn more about your finances.

## DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Don't forget to spring  
forward on **March 12!**  
Set your clocks ahead  
by one hour.



# Your Account: So, What is that Base Charge?

**The base charge on your bill is a key component of providing you with reliable electricity.**

As a member of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, you make an investment in the co-op every time you pay your bill. This collective investment in the co-op benefits you and the community immediately - and over time.

So what exactly is this monthly investment, and how do you benefit from it? The base charge is a monthly investment that helps Eastern Illini cover the expenses of maintaining the overall electric system.

Maintaining poles, wires, substations and other co-op equipment takes significant resources. The base charge essentially ensures that all equipment operates properly and staff is trained and ready so the lights turn on when you need them.

Regardless of how much electricity a particular family uses, the cost of delivering power to that house is the same from month-to-month. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we believe the operational costs should be spread fairly and equitably across all of our members, regardless of the level of electricity they use.

That is why every member pays the minimum base charge each month to cover basic operational costs. Some members, with very large service capacity and demand needs, pay a bit higher base charge to cover the costs of the increased capacity.

Your monthly investment ensures you have access to safe, reliable and affordable power when you need it. We appreciate and value the investment that you make in the co-op each month, and we strive to use that investment wisely

for the benefit of all members of our community.

To learn more about the base charge, or any of other billing elements, please contact us at 800-824-5102 or visit our website at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop).



*Everything from our substations all the way to your meter are part of our distribution network. The base charge on your monthly bill goes towards maintaining the distribution system so you always have reliable access to electricity.*



# Get paid for spring cleaning



Do you look forward to spring cleaning? Probably not, but what if you got paid for doing it? Including these simple tasks on your annual spring cleaning list will help lower your energy costs all year, and add a little jingle in your pocket:

- Change your furnace filter
- Clear dust from your dryer vent and hose, and your refrigerator grill
- Clean your air ducts
- Rake debris away from your air conditioner or heat pump

Find out how simple things you do can add up at [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com), or contact Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) or 800-824-5102.



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