

# PowerLines

June 2020

## Heading toward a “new normal”

I hope and pray that you and your families are safe and will remain safe during these very unusual times resulting from COVID-19. It is hard to predict exactly when, what, where, and how the end of this worldwide pandemic will look like.

Hopefully, in spite of Coronavirus related operational and process changes we made at EIEC, we have been able to maintain our high level of service to you in keeping the lights on, and in restoring service quickly when there are outages. If you have perceived that things appear normal, then we have achieved that goal.

Governor Pritzker unveiled a 5-step process to return Illinois to normal, with regional differences across the state factored into the plan. Progressing through the levels will be challenging. The hurdles the Governor presented to reach the last stage seem very high, and will likely last well into the future. The last stage would allow daily life to return to as near normal as possible pre-Coronavirus.

However, how many people would feel comfortable attending a large public celebration (like 4th of July fireworks), a Chicago Bears football game, or an Illinois basketball game in a full venue? We all have many questions to ask ourselves relative to what the future lifestyles may be.

We are heading for a new normal, and there is no certainty on what that will ultimately be. All of us can help make this transition easier by continuing to practice good hygiene and being patient and considerate of everyone. We will emerge from this stronger and better prepared for the future as long as we all work together.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

### EIEC Annual Meeting

Your board voted at their April meeting to postpone – most likely until the fall – the annual meeting of members originally scheduled for June 18.

I expect that when the meeting is held, that it will be more likely to be in a business meeting format, in lieu of our traditional member appreciation event. We will keep you

advised on the future meeting date.

If you have any comments or questions, or need assistance with your electric service or billing, please contact us. Our focus is to continue to provide safe and reliable electric service to all members.

Take care and stay safe,

*Bob Hunzinger*

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- We're here to help you save
- Love the outdoors - be safe

## Important Notice:

The Eastern Illini annual meeting scheduled for June 18, 2020 has been postponed until further notice. EIEC will keep you advised on the future meeting date.



- View your bill
- Make a payment
- Compare usage by month
- Review known issues
- Report an outage
- Update account information

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# Measuring pole strength and serviceability



Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative has over 91,000 electric poles in its 10-county service area. Eastern Illini has an effective pole inspection program that places emphasis on cost-effectively extending the life of existing poles while maintaining appropriate levels of safety and reliability. Our ultimate goal is to always provide safe and reliable electricity to members and the pole inspection program is one of the many behind-the-scenes programs that contributes to the goal.

In 2020, more than 13,000 (14%) of the Eastern Illini electric poles will be inspected. These poles will be evaluated to generate the most accurate assessment of remaining strength and serviceability as well as life expectancy.

There are many variables when evaluating a pole: wood species, preservation methods and material, soil and climate conditions, insect, and mechanical damage, additional

cables, equipment, or hardware on the pole. Because of so many variables no fail-safe inspection method exists that can guarantee the condition of a standing wood pole with 100 percent accuracy. Consistent and standardized testing provides a condition score used to manage pole inspection.

There are several testing procedures.

**Visual inspection.** Many of the electric pole inspections to measure rot or strength can be performed with the naked eye, simply by looking closely enough. Is there visible rot or decay in the wood? Are there cracks, holes, burn marks or other imperfections in the structure? These things can significantly impact a pole's ability to handle stress. The pole inspector visually assesses the hardware on the pole, as well as its physical appearance.

**Hammer test.** The inspector takes a hammer and, starting at the bottom, strikes the pole sharply. This is continued every few inches, up to about six feet. The resulting sounds from the pole can indicate its structural integrity. Sturdy, solid wood will produce a clear, resonating sound. At places where there might be rot or decay, the wood will produce more of a dull thud. The hammer will also rebound more sharply on solid wood.

**Bore test.** If any points of probable decay are found, the inspector bores into them with a drill. This allows them to measure the level of decay within the pole. Eastern Illini's pole inspection program uses AppSuite. The test results are entered at the pole location into the pole database. The inspector records the type of test performed and a condition score. The score ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being a brand-new pole and 5 being the pole needs to be

replaced. The reason for pole deterioration is recorded as well. Pole data is available on the Eastern Illini Mapping System. EIEC staff have instant access to the pole management information from their i-Pad or laptop. Along with strength and serviceability information, staff know the size and specifics about the pole. Immediate access to pole information proves to be invaluable especially in an emergency situation. For example, if a vehicle takes out an electric pole, the linemen can research the pole online, determine the type and size of pole, and transport the appropriate new pole to the location, decreasing the time to repair and increasing efficiencies.

The reason for decay of treated poles is usually a gradual deterioration caused by fungi and other low forms of plant life. Damage by insect attack (termites, ants and wood borers) is usually considered jointly with decay because preservative treatment of wood protects against both fungi and insects. Most of Eastern Illini's electric poles are yellow pine. 85% of all rural electric cooperative poles used across the country are also yellow pine.

Heart rot and shell rot are evaluated in the inspection of poles. Rot and decay are possible indications of the age and internal condition of the pole. The hammer test will result in a dull sound and less pronounced hammer rebound when heart rot and shell rot are present in the pole.

The electric pole inspection program at Eastern Illini assures that the 91,000 electric poles in the EIEC service territory will stand tall and strong for years to come.



## Laugh and the world laughs with you

Many of us are employing humor to soothe nerves during the Coronavirus pandemic, sharing Facebook memes about makeshift masks and putting on weight in self-quarantine. There's the mom who posted this on Facebook: "Does anyone know the phone number parents are supposed to call for a substitute teacher?" And a sign in Austin, Texas reads: Single man with TP seeks single woman with hand sanitizer for good clean fun! Twitter wisecracks and self-produced COVID-19 songs shot in shelter-in-place living rooms aim to entertain or at least distract us, even if it is only for a moment.



In many ways, we are all our own best source of humor, racked with anxiety as we sit cloistered at home, surrounded by either too few people or too many. With little contact with the outside world beyond our smartphones, our jokey Coronavirus memes and videos are the S.O.S. messages like those written in the rocks and sand by Tom Hanks in the movie Cast Away.

Tasteless or not, virus jokes are a fleeting distraction, and a needed smile, as the pandemic has put our lives on hold.

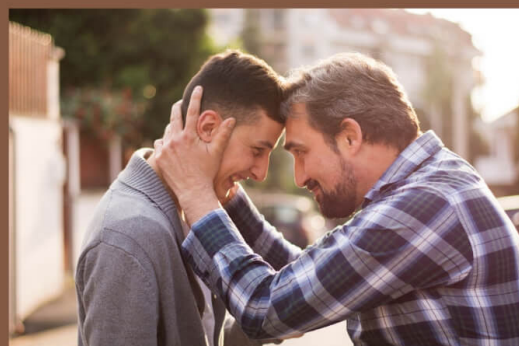
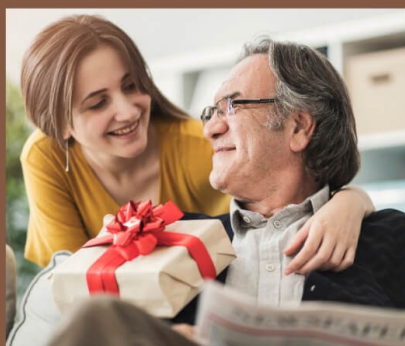
There is a reason laughter has long been considered the best medicine. It releases bursts of dopamine, a hormone and neurotransmitter that signals pleasure and reward, and studies have indicated that it also can improve blood flow, immune

response, pain tolerance and might even result in shorter hospital stays.

Comedy can serve as mental armor to ensure safe passage through tough times. It is a powerful way to manage the unmanageable. There's value in making fun of our circumstances and gaining control by laughing at it.

The beginning lines of the poem, Solitude, by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, are LAUGH AND THE WORLD LAUGHS WITH YOU, WEEP AND YOU WEEP ALONE.

In the midst of our world turned upside down, find something to make you laugh. We can all benefit from a little humor these days.



wishing you a  
**HAPPY FATHER'S DAY**

June 21, 2020

IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES

## Life after the pandemic



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness. This famous opening paragraph from Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, adeptly describes our lives as we have endured COVID-19 and are experiencing the aftermath of the pandemic.

**Crisis defines people.** Most of us never realized things could change so quickly. COVID-19 has changed us and will change how we live going forward. We will refer to time as pre- and post-COVID-19. We will change what we value, and we will prioritize different things and focus on what is truly important, our health and wellness. Financial and emotional recovery will take longer than any of us anticipated.

At Eastern Illini, we closed access to

our lobby, postponed the annual meeting, implemented work from home for some employees, and limited travel outside the EIEC service area. Keeping employees healthy was and is very important.

**We have learned that greater good eclipses self-interest in a pandemic.**

Our heroes through this pandemic are not athletes, movie stars, or musicians.

Instead, we highly

value doctors, nurses, first responders, police officers, firefighters, EMTs, essential employees, grocery store workers, truckers, and all those who stepped up and helped out.

**We have learned that we can survive life on pause** and that there is an upside to staying home. We have cooked more meals, cleaned more closets, and we have hugged our family more and told our children we love them until they roll their eyes.

**Teachers are extremely adaptive.**

E-learning, classwork packets, and homeschooling have tested our patience as parents. We have been reminded that teachers and administration are genuinely dedicated and hardworking. It has been a school year like no other and one we will not soon forget and do not want to repeat.

**We need to save more** – The rainy-day fund probably needs beefed up going forward. It has become evident we need to spend less and save more.

**We drive our vehicles way too much** – If virtual team meetings have taught us anything, it is that we really do not need to be driving to work every day. Work from home is a viable option.

**Washing hands and general cough and cold hygiene is not just for germaphobes anymore!** We have learned to properly wash our hands, sanitize our grocery carts, sneeze into our elbows, wear a glove when pumping gas, and put on the face mask. The days of handshaking are a thing of the past and hugging is reserved for immediate family.

**Healthcare and the people who work in the medical field are heroes**, but how it was done in the past will not be how it is handled in the future. Virtual doctor visits, on-going social distancing at hospitals, and calculated purchases of PPE will become a high priority.

**COVID-19 has changed us.** Time will tell if it is for the better or for the worse. Let's learn from what we did not do, from what we did right, but above all, when we look back, let's remember how much we have, and appreciate it.

The closing line of Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* is *"It's a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done..."* uttered by a character about to sacrifice his life for a better world. We need not make that sacrifice to make the world a better place. We only need to change our view of each other and always appreciate the people and the simple things in our lives.



# CONSIDER AN ENERGY AUDIT

## We're here to help you save

Eastern Illini is here for you and given the challenging times we've all experienced the last few months, we want to share some information and ideas to help you save energy and money.

Now is a great time to conduct an energy audit of your home and identify ways to boost energy efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help you determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

An energy audit is one of the best ways to determine how energy efficient your home is—an audit can also identify areas for potential energy savings. Try ENERGY STAR's do-it-yourself online audit. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started.

### Putting power in your hands

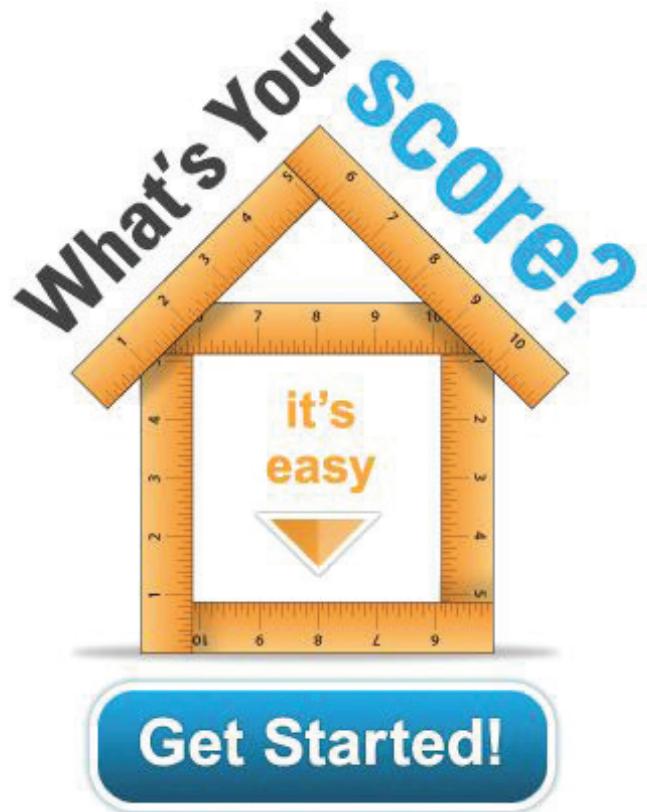
Prepaid metering is intended to aide in budgeting your monthly energy costs. Eastern Illini members can pay for electricity before it is used, then

use the electricity until the credit expires.

During the time period you've paid for, you will receive regular feedback on your balance. Industry studies show that members who participate in prepaid metering plans use up to 10% less electricity.

Signing up for SmartHub is a great way to manage your account online and it's free. Through SmartHub you can view your bill and monthly electricity use, make a payment, update account information, and report an outage.

Lastly, if you have recently purchased a new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliance or product, make sure you are taking advantage of any special offers or rebates that are available to you. EIEC is your trusted energy advisor, we're here to help.



[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

If you have questions about your bill or additional ways to to save energy, please let us know. Learn more at [www.eiec.org](http://www.eiec.org) or give us a call at 800-824-5102.



The health and safety of our members and employees is our highest priority. The board of directors has decided to postpone the annual meeting until further notice.

## Eastern Illini Annual Meeting POSTPONED

Call us at 800-824-5102 with questions.

# LOVE THE OUTDOORS?

## BE **SAFE** OUT THERE



**2/3**

of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor **recreational activities**.



Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating**. Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder**.



**Do not use generators in enclosed areas.** The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.



**Look up** for power lines while fishing or sailing.

**FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.**



**Going for a hike?**

If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**



**Tent camping?** Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.