

# PowerLines

March 2019

## Building Cathedrals

Next month's national cooperative annual meeting will mark the end of the two-year tenure for Board President Phil Carson, who is a member of the Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Phil is a super person, who is very humble, with many redeeming qualities (perhaps the best of which is that he is an avid St. Louis Cardinals fan). Phil has also never met a stranger. He is the first person from Illinois to lead the national organization – quite an honor. Below is a portion of his last column published in the national cooperative magazine.

"At last year's Annual Meeting, I talked about *Cathedral Thinking*, a philosophy based on the workers who helped build the world's magnificent cathedrals but weren't alive to see the final product.

Instead, they found satisfaction in their legacy - in the knowledge that they were part of something bigger than themselves. Our cooperative movement began 80 years ago to improve the quality of life for people in rural communities, and we continue to advance that mission every day, though it may look slightly different as our world evolves.

And as things change, we should remind ourselves what makes up the rock-solid foundation of our co-op cathedral: transparency, honesty, and doing things right. These will serve as the base for our cooperatives no matter what the future holds. They, along with an ongoing commitment to good governance and regular self-examination will help ensure we're living up to the principles on which our movement was founded.

Remember that governance is not something you ever finish."

Phil, on behalf of the members, employees, and directors of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, thank you for your commitment and service to the nation's electric cooperatives.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

Indeed, governance is something that is continual. EIEC undergoes an annual audit from an outside accounting firm. The auditors are just completing their work reviewing calendar year 2018 financials and performance. If each of us were to undergo an audit of our lives to this point – what would the audit reveal?

Using Phil's analogy above, let us reflect on the cathedrals that each of us are building.

What will our legacy be? Eastern Illini directors and employees are working hard and considering the future to leave the best possible legacy for future members.

As the calendar turns to springtime, stay safe and enjoy the spring growth and vibrant colors.

Cooperatively,

*Bob Hunzinger*

## In this issue:

- DIY Projects that save energy & money
- Your electric bill will have a new look
- Electrical inspection: pass or fail?
- People to know: Paul Crutcher
- Benefit of Membership: Co-op Connections



**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!**

## Seven Cooperative Principles:

- Voluntary & Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member's Economic Participation
- Autonomy & Independence
- Education, Training, & Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

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

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# THE AVERAGE FAMILY SPENDS \$2,000 PER YEAR ON ENERGY

## Three DIY projects that save energy & money

**Winter weather can have a big impact on your energy bills, hitting your pockets a little harder than you would have liked.**

Now that spring is just around the corner, it's the perfect time to tackle a few DIY efficiency projects for your home. The good news: You don't have to be an energy expert to do this!

There are several easy ways to save energy, but if you're willing to take a hands-on approach, here are three projects you can do now to start saving.

### **Make the Most of Your Water Heater.**

Let's start with one of the easiest projects: insulating your water heater. Insulating a water heater that's warm to the touch can save 7 to 16 percent annually on your water heating bills. If your water heater is new, it is likely already insulated. But if your water heater is warm to the touch, it needs additional insulation.

You can purchase a pre-cut jacket or blanket for about \$20. You'll need two people for this project. Before you start, turn off the water heater. Wrap the blanket around the water heater and tape it to temporarily keep it in place. Use a marker to note the areas where the controls are so you can cut them out. Once the blanket is positioned correctly, tape it permanently in place, then turn the water heater back on. If you have an electric water heater, do not set the thermostat above 130 degrees to avoid overheating.

### **Seal Air Leaks with Caulk.**

The average American family spends \$2,000 annually on energy bills, but unfortunately, much of that money is wasted through air leaks in the home. Applying caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing can save energy and money. Silicone caulking is the most popular, because it is waterproof, and won't shrink or crack. Before applying new caulk, clean and remove old caulk. The area

should be clean and dry before you apply the new caulk. Apply the caulk in a continuous stream, and make sure it sticks to both sides of the crack or seam. Afterwards, use a putty knife to smooth out the caulk, and wipe the surface with a dry cloth.

### **Weatherstrip Exterior Doors.**

One of the best ways to seal air leaks is to weatherstrip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Make sure the weatherstripping you select can withstand temperature changes, friction and the general "wear and tear" for the location of the door. You'll need separate materials for the door sweep and the top and sides. Measure each side of the door, then cut the weatherstripping to fit each section. Make sure the weatherstripping fits snugly against both surfaces so it compresses when the door is closed. These simple projects, you can save energy and money.





# NEW DESIGN AND BILL ENHANCEMENTS

## Your electric bill will have a new look



Eastern Illini  
Electric  
Cooperative

P.O. Box 96  
Paxton, IL 60957-0096  
800-824-5102  
www.eiec.coop



Account #5663032710 Billing date: 10/30/2018

Budget amount due 11/17/2018 \$245.00

Total due after 11/17/2018 \$245.00

### ! Important Message from your Cooperative

Eastern Illini wishes you and yours a very Merry Christmas. Our offices will be closed on Monday, December 24 and Tuesday, December 25 for Christmas. As always, please feel free to call us at 800-824-5102 to report an outage. Have a safe and joyous holiday season.

NICHOLAS ANDERSON  
8604 EAST 600 NORTH  
LODA IL 60948-9668

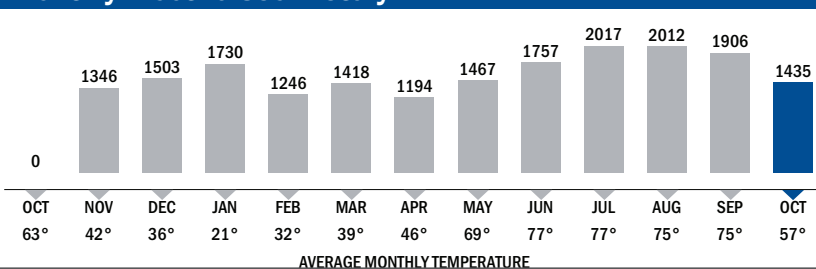
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### Average Daily Electric Use (kWh)

TIME PERIOD	AVG. DAILY USE	AVG. DAILY COST
Current month	46	\$7.54
Last month	64	\$9.40
Last year	0	\$0.00

### Monthly Electric Use History



### BUDGET BILL

Eastern Illini members shared with us they want to see more in-depth information about their electrical use including average temperatures compared to daily electric use. We agreed and gathered members' thoughts and good ideas and incorporated them into a redesigned electric bill that more clearly provides the information in a concise and easy to read format.

Prior to the bill being distributed, we want to answer some upfront questions related to the bill redesign.

### Why is EIEC redesigning its bill?

The last major redesign of EIEC's bill occurred more than 20 years ago. A minor change to the way information was reported saw modifications to the EIEC invoice six years ago, so we felt it was time for some enhancements and improvements that benefit members.

Using member feedback, we wanted to update the bill with a modern

look and feel and provide useful information that is easier to find and understand.

### How did Eastern Illini come up with the new bill design?

Through a series of focus groups involving members, employees, and others, we gathered feedback.

The redesigned bill combines this valuable input, and industry best practices, resulting in a new bill that makes it easier to understand and manage your energy costs.

### What are the key enhancements that have been made as part of the bill redesign?

- More color has been incorporated throughout the bill to improve readability and highlight important messages.
- Key information like your balance, due date, and payment options are prominently displayed. Historical data and daily electric use are prominently displayed.

- The new bill design is accessible through **SmartHub**, so you can pull it up on your phone, computer, or tablet wherever and whenever. We encourage you to sign up for **SmartHub** at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop).

- In-depth graphs in color will provide monthly temperature information, so you can see your daily use in comparison to average temperatures.

### Will my account information change as part of the bill redesign?

No, member account information will NOT change. Your account number and meter number(s) will remain the same.

### Will I still be able to pay my bill the same way?

Yes. How you pay is your choice. We offer many convenient ways to pay your electric bill. Those numerous options are still available.



## PASS OR FAIL?

# Would your home pass an electrical inspection?

If you're getting ready to sell your home or just wondering how electrically sound it is, there are some general guidelines out there to assess the condition of your home's wiring and electrical bones. Although it varies depending on where you live, most local codes follow the National Electric Code (NEC).

The NEC is an industry-specific document that outlines required practices for all aspects of residential and commercial electrical installation.

Local code always wins out when there are variances, so be sure to check with a qualified electrician or local building department for specific code requirements.

- Overcrowded wires producing excess heat or spliced wires that were illegally installed (they must be installed by an approved method).

- Broken or missing carbon monoxide detectors or smoke alarms.

- Non-insulated/non-contact-rated recessed lights that touch attic insulation, which is a fire hazard.

- Improper overcurrent protection, which means the breaker or fuse is too large for the wire rating.

- Improper grounding and bonding of electrical panels and devices.

Here are some other kitchen and bathroom specific things to consider:

- Does your electric range, cook top or oven have a dedicated 240-volt circuit?

- Does your microwave, refrigerator, and garbage disposal each have its own circuit?

- Are outlets GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters)? GFCIs are designed to protect people from electric shock around water.

- Does your combination fan and light have its own 20-amp circuit?

- Do the light fixtures in the shower or tub area have a "lens" cover? Are they moisture resistant?

- Does each room have a wall switch installed beside the entry door?

- Are outlets installed no farther than 12 feet apart?

- Are ceiling fixtures controlled by a wall switch and not just a pull chain?

There are also hallway, staircase and garage code requirements, as well as those for the electrical service panel and wiring. It's always a good idea to have an electrician inspect your home.

Electrical malfunction is dangerous. U.S. fire departments respond to more than 45,000 home structure fires annually that involve electrical failure or malfunction. Home fires result in 420 deaths, 1,370 injuries and an annual \$1.4 billion in direct property damage.

In general, here are some all-house guidelines that an inspector would look for. Remember they may or may not align with your local electrical code but they are NEC-mandated. If your home has any of the following defects, it may not pass an electrical safety inspection:

- Old knob-and-tube, along with BX cable wiring, common from 1880 to 1930.

- New lights installed into old wiring.

## Home Electrical Inspection:

### Pass or Fail?

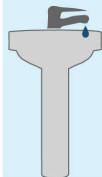
Would your home pass an electrical inspection? Local electrical codes vary, so check with your qualified electrician, but here are **five things your home should have**:



Wiring should be sound (not overcrowded or knob-and-tube wiring used in old homes).



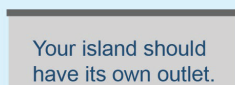
Ceiling fixtures should be controlled by a wall switch and not just a pull chain.



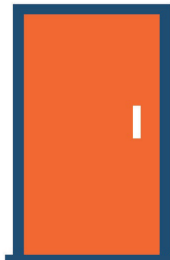
Outlets near water should have GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters).



Your refrigerator, microwave and garbage disposal should each have its own circuit.



Your island should have its own outlet.





## PEOPLE TO KNOW AT EASTERN ILLINI:

# Paul Crutcher, Electrical Engineer

Many of us have seen the movies Hunt for Red October and Crimson Tide, and other submarine films, but very few of us can say we've lived in a submarine.

Eastern Illini electrical engineer, Paul Crutcher, spent six years in the Navy and he lived aboard the USS Charlotte, a 360-foot-long, 6,900-ton submarine. Paul was a nuclear field electrician who managed electrical aspects of the nuclear power plant on the USS Charlotte. His stint in the Navy had him stationed for most of the time in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Paul is from Fairbury, Illinois and graduated from Prairie Central High School. He joined the Navy right out of high school and followed in the footsteps of many family members who served in the military. After serving in the Navy, Paul graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in electrical engineering.

These days, Paul spends his time as an electrical engineer for EIEC. He joined the cooperative in June of 2018 after spending seven years working for Ameren.

Paul uses his technical abilities to enhance and maintain a well-designed, soundly constructed and reliable electrical system for EIEC members. He is responsible for overseeing long and short-range distribution system planning, design, inspection and reliability. Paul has oversight of the engineering services department personnel, managing mapping and system engineering software operations, and analyzing opportunities and new technology to improve overall system reliability and operations.

Paul reports to Brad Smith, Vice President of Operations and Engineering and together they work to enhance and improve the electrical infrastructure of 4,500 miles of line in a ten-county service territory. Safe and reliable electricity 24/7 is the mantra in the operations and engineering department of Eastern Illini.

Paul also works with Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and smart grid efficiencies including prioritization of electrical system improvements. He is just finishing updating an electronic mapping system that interacts with the technology used



by linemen and servicemen and provides accurate, robust, and easy to use data that enhances the ability to predict outages. The electronic mapping data is updated monthly to keep information current.

In his role at EIEC, Paul is involved in renewable energy. He works with policies, procedures, and processes regarding solar installations. He assists with savings estimations, service quality assurance, and third party installation crews.

Paul really likes the hands-on aspects of his position and enjoys the ability to make a difference with members. He always strives to make a positive impact on their interaction with the engineering department.

Paul and his wife, Rachel, reside in Paxton and have three children: Timothy, age 4; Joseph, age 2; and Lori, age 10 months.



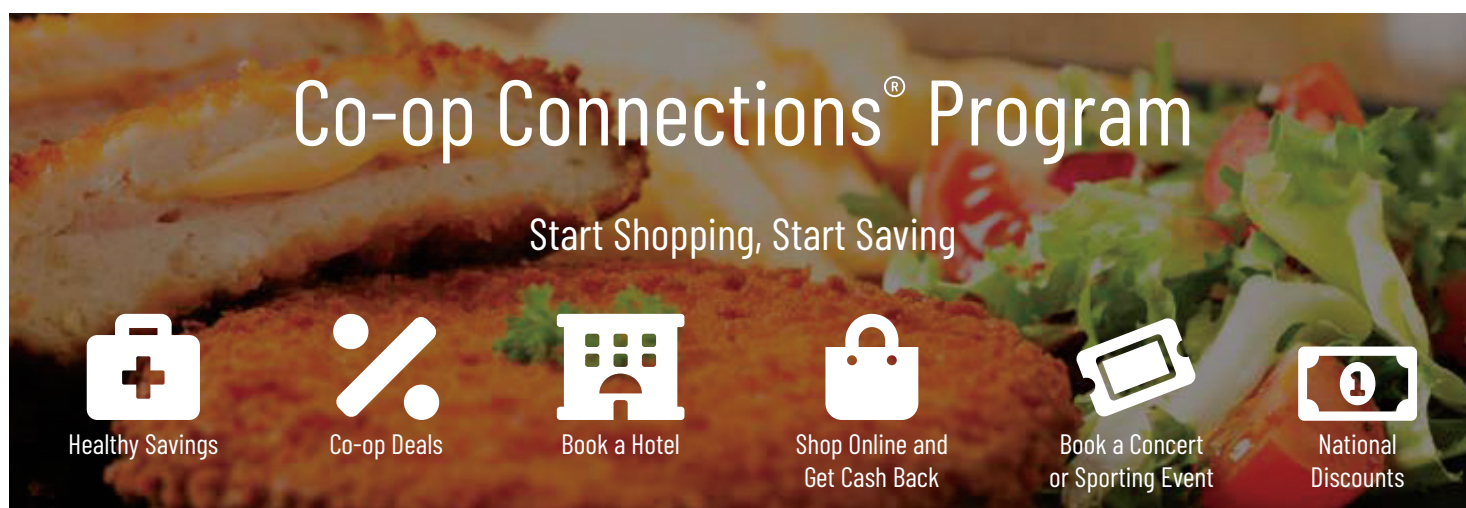
# START SHOPPING, START SAVING!

[www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop)

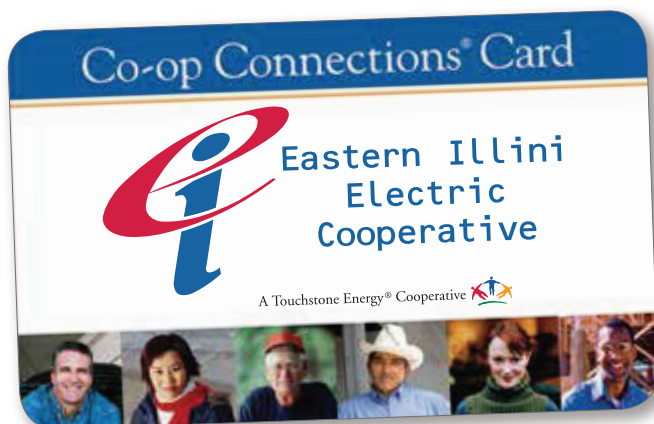
## Welcome to Co-op Connections®!

This **FREE** program provides EIEC members with discounts on everyday expenses.

- Co-op local deals in and around your community
- Healthy savings discounts for prescriptions, dental, and more
- Cash Back online shopping at over 3,000 retailers
- Hotels savings at over 400,000 hotels
- Save 10% on concerts, sporting events, and theaters
- National discounts to help you save money wherever you travel



*"Membership has its privileges."* This 1980s American Express slogan still applies at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, because as a member you have earned your own privileges through the Co-op Connections Program. You and your family can utilize Co-op Connections to save money at local retail stores, service shops, and restaurants located within our ten-county service territory, as well as throughout the country.



### Here are 3 easy ways you can start saving today:

- **Website** - Go to [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) and click "Sign Up Today." Once you've created an account, click on "Co-op Deals" at the top of the page and enter the zip code where you want to start shopping and saving.
- **Mobile App** - Search "Co-op Connections" in your App Store and take the savings with you wherever you go.
- **Co-op Connections Card** - If you don't have a card, let us know and we can drop one in the mail. In addition to national discounts with Jiffy Lube, Steak n Shake, Claire's, AAA, Hobby Lobby and more, we have personally visited with hundreds of local businesses who have offered some great deals for EIEC Members. Save money in your own hometown today on flower arrangements, vet visits, antiques, dining, gifts, printing, coffee, truck tires, building supplies, vacations, prescription drugs, movie tickets and more. It's a win for you, it's a win for local businesses, and when our members are happy, it's a huge win for us at Eastern Illini.