

# PowerLines

October 2023

## October is National Co-op Month

October is national cooperative month. Even though there are approximately 900 electric cooperatives like EIEC, they are just a small subset of the nearly 30,000 cooperative organizations in the United States. At Eastern Illini, we continually strive to provide reliable and high-quality service to our members. We realize that our business is not simply selling electricity, but a small part of a larger family of cooperative businesses designed to help improve our members' quality of life.

The beginning of the Fall season thus far has brought us exceptional weather. Let's hope this continues through harvest. Please be safe in all your activities, especially those that are farm related. Be aware of power poles and line locations. Always treat all lines as energized and never drive over or through downed or near low-hanging power lines. Call for help if there is an accident and then wait for trained personnel to arrive for assistance. Be especially careful while traveling on township and county roads and stay alert for slow moving farm equipment.

At the August EIEC Board meeting, your Board of Directors voted to implement a demand component in the monthly billing beginning spring 2024 (to complement the traditional monthly base charge and an energy charge based on kWh used). You may be curious as to what is a demand billing component? Each member imposes a demand on the EIEC system specific to their usage pattern – which can occur at any time during the monthly billing period. The sum of the membership usage patterns also contributes to a combined peak demand on the EIEC system each month. Historically, member demand related costs have been recovered in the kWh unit energy charges. When demand billing is implemented, the energy charges will be reduced to

accommodate the third billing component. Electric demand is the maximum rate of use of electricity. A familiar analogy is automobile travel. On a given trip the total miles traveled can be equated to the total monthly energy kWh usage. The maximum speed attained during the trip can be equated to the demand. So, you may travel 1100 miles one-way driving to Tampa, Florida but you need to achieve a speed of 85 mph to pass other vehicles on the I-75 speedway! 1100 miles would be your monthly kWh energy usage, and 85 mph would be your maximum monthly demand. The EIEC system, like your vehicle, must be designed for both longevity and maximum speed, or for both the individual member's peak demand and the combined EIEC membership system peak demand during all seasons and weather conditions.

We will begin member meetings in November to explain this rate structure and provide members with more details. Information will also be available on our website and communicated on other social media platforms.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

EIEC is truly fortunate to have loyal and dedicated employees who strive every day to exceed our members' expectations. We take pride in our ability to provide you with a reliable and cost-effective supply of electricity. Please take a few minutes to complete our annual survey included in this newsletter or access it online at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop). We use the results to monitor our performance in key areas to ensure that we are doing everything possible to maintain our excellent level of service to you.

Cooperatively,

*Bob Hunzinger*

## In this issue:

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- Eastern Illini Member Satisfaction Survey



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

**SmartHub is available online or through an application on your cell phone. Sign up today!**

## YOUR CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF 10 \$25 BILL CREDITS:

The back page of the October PowerLines includes our annual Member Satisfaction Survey or it is available online at: [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop). Take a moment to complete the survey for a chance to win one of 10 \$25 bill credits.

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

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# Change your smoke detector battery regularly



A smoke detector is one of those things around your home you probably take for granted. More than likely, you don't even know it's there. Unless, of course, it's sounding an alarm or making that annoying chirping noise that signals it's time to replace the battery.

The truth is your smoke detector is one of the most important devices in your house. It can save your life in an emergency, bringing a fire to your attention so you and your family have time to get to safety. For these tiny devices to do their jobs, though, they need some very basic routine maintenance.

### When to Check Them

One surefire way to keep the smoke detectors in your house from waking you up with their chirping in the middle of the night is to put them on a regular maintenance schedule. This way, you're sure you are replacing the batteries and checking functionality before anything ever goes wrong. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, you should check your smoke detectors monthly. However, other sources say you can check them twice a year, or roughly every six months. Whichever method you choose,

the easiest way to keep up with your checks is to create a schedule. If you conduct them monthly, consider the first of the month. If you check less frequently an easy way to keep track is to check when daylight savings time begins and when it ends.

You should have smoke detectors on every level of your home, including the basement, and in or near each bedroom and sleeping area. Whatever testing schedule you choose, be sure you test every detector in your home.

### How to Check Them

Fortunately, checking your smoke detectors is a relatively simple process. There are three primary types of smoke detectors: battery operated, lithium battery operated and hardwired. Before you check anything, you should first confirm which type is in your home.

Most smoke detectors are powered by 9-volt batteries. To check these, climb up on a step stool, remove the plastic cap from the detector, replace the battery and press the test button. If you hear an alarm signal, all is clear.

Smoke detectors that are wired into your

your home's electrical system still have backup batteries to ensure they continue working in the event of a power outage. These should be checked in the same manner as those with 9-volt batteries. Press the test button and replace the battery as needed.

Lithium batteries are long-lasting, and if your smoke detector uses these, you don't need to replace them. You should, however, check your manufacturer's instructions and make sure you replace the entire unit accordingly.

Another important thing to note – most smoke detectors last a maximum of 10 years. When you do your checks, remove your units from the ceiling and check for a date stamped on the back. You'll need to replace the detector by this date – if not sooner – to ensure it works properly. Of course, before you conduct any tests, make sure everyone in your home is aware, and be sure to secure any pets that may be startled by the noise.

### Why it's Important

Smoke detectors are simple devices that can save the life of you and your family. The U.S. Fire Administration and National Fire Protection Association offer some sobering data to underscore their importance:

- Three out of five home fire deaths result from fires in properties without working smoke alarms.
- More than one-third (38%) of home fire deaths result from fires in which no smoke alarms were present.
- The risk of dying in a home fire is cut in half when homes have working smoke alarms.

Failing to check your smoke alarms regularly increases the chances they'll fail if a fire erupts in your home. Maintaining your smoke alarms takes minutes, and it's worth it for the peace of mind it provides.



ATTENTION TEACHERS!

# Apply for an Empowering Education Grant

## \$500 GRANTS



3RD GRADERS AT CLARA PETERSON ELEMENTARY IN PAXTON  
USED THEIR GRANT MONEY TO BUILD A LEGO WALL

EASTERN ILLINI ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## EMPOWERING EDUCATION GRANTS

Eastern Illini supports our schools, teachers, and students by funding projects that inspire and engage students and provide valuable learning experiences.

Each school district in the Eastern Illini service territory has a chance to earn a **\$500 Empowering Education Grant**. Teachers may complete the application on-line at **[www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)**. Previous winners may apply again every three years. Grant winners will be notified in March 2024. Up to **40 grants** will be awarded.

APPLY AT:  
**[WWW.EIEC.COOP](http://WWW.EIEC.COOP)**



APPLY BY  
**DECEMBER 8, 2023**

## Safety tips teen drivers need to know

Eight people die in distracted-related crashes on American roads each day, according to the National Safety Council (NSC). National Teen Driver Safety Week is being observed October 15 - 21, 2023. This is a great time to have that talk with the teens in your life about safety when driving including the hazards of distracted driving and what to do if your vehicle comes in contact with downed power lines.

### Distracted driving

There were 3,522 people killed by distracted driving in 2021, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Lead by example and, as the National Safety Council touts to teens and adults as well, "Just Drive."

Texting while driving is the most alarming distraction behind the wheel, since sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the

road for approximately 5 seconds. Other distractions include sifting through music, checking social media, using navigation, eating, talking on the phone, taking selfies, drinking a beverage or using an app.

Distracted driving is preventable. Teens and adults alike can follow these five easy tips to help them concentrate on just driving:

- That text can wait.
- Do not text while driving.
- Make responding less tempting by blocking texts while behind the wheel.
- Don't eat while you drive.
- Rely on playlists instead of searching for music.
- Set up navigation before you leave or have a passenger navigate.

- Do your multi-tasking outside the car. Focus on the road and the drivers around you.

- If you are a teen, limit the number of passengers as well as the level of activity in your car.

The overwhelming majority (75%) of serious teen driver crashes are due to "critical errors," with three common errors accounting for nearly half of these crashes: lack of scanning to detect and respond to hazards, going too fast for road conditions and being distracted by something inside or outside of the vehicle.

### Downed power lines

Although no one wants to think about teens being in car accidents, it does happen. Severe storms can damage utility equipment, such as power lines, poles, and padmount transformers (green boxes). Have discussions with teens about what to do if there is a downed power line or damaged equipment.

Here is how the ground or objects can become energized without any visual indication:

- The energy spreads like ripples on a pond and it happens very quickly.
- If you touch something at one voltage and step on or touch something at a different voltage, your hands (or your hand and foot) experience a difference in voltage (called touch potential).
- Your body becomes electricity's path to ground when electrical current enters your body at one point and exits at another.

### What to do

If you are in a car accident, stay inside your vehicle, call 911 and report that there is damaged electric utility equipment. If you are a bystander, do not approach the scene to help. Stay at least 50 feet away and do not lean on or touch anything. Downed power lines or other damaged utility equipment can look lifeless and harmless and still be alive. Downed lines may not have to be sparking, moving, sizzling, or giving off flames to be energized.

## 4 SAFETY TIPS

### TEEN DRIVERS NEED TO KNOW



# 1

## THAT TEXT CAN WAIT

When texting while driving, the shortest amount of time a person takes his or her eyes off the road is five seconds. At 55 mph, that is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.

# 2

## DON'T GET OUT

If you are in a car accident involving a power line or padmount transformer ("green box"), stay inside the vehicle and call 9-1-1. Unless the car is on fire or giving off smoke, do not get out. If there is a fire, make a solid jump from the vehicle without touching it and hop with your feet together as far away as you can.

# 3

## RESPECT WORK ZONES

One work zone crash occurs every 5.4 minutes. Remind teen drivers to consider anyone doing their job in or near the road as someone they know and love. Encourage them to move over and slow down for workers.

# 4

## DON'T DRIVE DISTRACTED

Texting is not the only form of distracted driving. Driving and doing anything else is multitasking. Eight deaths occur EVERY DAY due to drivers who drive distracted.

## Play it safe online

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identity, banking and health records and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to pumpkin-spice lattes, crisper air and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, we use this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders.



Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, we want to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Eastern Illini is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

**1. Implement multi-factor authentication** (also known as two-step verification) on all of your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled. One extra step may be enough to deter hackers.

### **2. Update your software**

This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that

created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.

### **3. Think before you click.**

Most successful cyber attacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.

### **4. Create strong passwords that are at a minimum 15 characters that are unique and include complex phrases.**

Consider using a password manager. It saves time, protects your identity and notifies you of potential phishing websites.

### **For the young people in your household:**

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know early on that what is shared online stays online and that it's difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent,

help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

### **Keeping the electric grid and your data secure**

We're doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Eastern Illini reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues. Our new meter installation project is an example of one way we are enhancing our system and improving reliability.

We also work together with co-ops across the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, learn from each other and keep the grid's network secure.

While we can't stop a storm, as a cooperative, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone.





# MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY

**COMPLETE AND RETURN FOR A CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF 10 \$25 BILL CREDITS**

**YOU CAN COMPLETE THE SURVEY ONLINE AT [WWW.EIEC.COOP](http://WWW.EIEC.COOP)**

**OR MAIL IT IN WITH YOUR ELECTRIC BILL PAYMENT.**

We'd love your feedback. We created this survey to find out what's important to you. Take a moment to complete the survey and let us know what you think. We appreciate your input.

Please rate your satisfaction with Eastern Illini on each of the following	not at all satisfied						very satisfied			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Providing excellent customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to resolve issues or problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conducting business in a professional manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly and courteous employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledgeable and competent employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing valuable programs and services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community involvement and support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering good value for the money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing energy efficiency information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charging reasonable rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a minimum of outages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restoring power quickly after an outage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**For the following questions, rate your answers based on a scale of 1 to 10**

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

Considering all your experiences, how satisfied overall are you with Eastern Illini?

**NOT AT ALL SATISFIED** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **VERY SATISFIED**

To what extent has Eastern Illini fallen short of or exceeded your expectations?

**FALLS SHORT** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **EXCEEDS**

Imagine an ideal utility company. How well do you think Eastern Illini compares?

**NOT VERY CLOSE** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **VERY CLOSE**

If you could choose your electric company, how likely is it that you would choose Eastern Illini?

**VERY UNLIKELY** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **VERY LIKELY**

How do you view your relationship with Eastern Illini? **MEMBER** ☐ **CUSTOMER** ☐

**FIRST AND LAST NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR ACCOUNT #** \_\_\_\_\_

**SO WE CAN CONTACT YOU IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE 10 WINNERS OF THE \$25 BILL CREDIT.**