

# PowerLines

August 2023

## At Summer's End

It is hard to believe that we have reached the month of August already! The unofficial end of Summer (Labor Day) is only about a month away. Included this month are a few pictures from a recent trip to the Seattle area.

**Capital Credits** - At a recent Eastern Illini Board meeting your directors took the following actions:

### 2022 Allocation

Voted to allocate the 2022 capital credits to members. This allocation represents the members' equity contribution, which helps to provide funding to operate, maintain, and upgrade cooperative facilities, while helping to reduce borrowing costs.

The amount of your individual equity contribution for the prior year is shown annually on the August bill statement. In the cooperative not-for-profit business model, current allocated margins (such as the 2022 margins) are returned to the members at a future date. The present Board approved payment cycle returns capital credits on a 25 year levelized basis.

### 2023 General Retirement Payment

Authorized a return of nearly \$1.2 million to be paid to members in late November/early December this year. These cash payments (that were previously allocated as capital

credits) apply to EIEC members that received electric service in 2002. If you have any questions about the electric service in capital credit process, or anything in general, please call us at 800-824-5102.

### Be Kind

Toward the end of June our EIEC cooperative family had two bright and shining young people called from this life much too early. Why? We do not know this answer, but we may find solace in a relevant story. A young person asks his mother why a friend died at a youthful age. The mother responded with a question – When you go to pick flowers, which ones do you pick first – the most beautiful ones.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

Rest in peace Keegynn and Joe. We trust that God had bigger plans for you than we can comprehend.

Remember to be kind to everyone that you meet. We are all created in the image and likeness of God – and we never know what another person may be going through at that particular time we encounter them.

God Bless,

*Bob Hunzinger*



**FRIDAY HARBOR, SAN JUAN ISLAND**



**WILDFLOWERS ON SAN JUAN ISLAND**

## In this issue:

- The true value of electricity
- Saving energy during the dog days of summer
- Food safety at barbecues and picnics
- Back to school safety checklist
- Electrical safety at college



- 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!**

## Energy Efficiency Tip:

Ceiling fans can make a room feel 4 degrees cooler. To save energy through ceiling fan use, remember to raise your thermostat a few degrees while fans are turned on. In the summer, operate ceiling fans in a counterclockwise direction. Remember, ceiling fans cool people not spaces, so turn them off when you leave the room.

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

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## The true value of electricity



Do you remember when “penny candy” actually cost a penny? What does a penny buy these days? Not much. The government can’t even make a penny for a penny anymore. According to the United States Mint, it now costs 2.7 cents to produce one.

About the only thing of value you can still get for a penny is electricity. The cost of electricity, for the value you receive in return, is about as good as it gets.

Let’s say the average rate for a kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity is 16 cents. So what can you get for a penny’s worth of electricity?

- 7 hours of reading using a 9-watt LED bulb
- 20 minutes on a 200-watt desktop computer
- 1.5 hours of TV on a 40-watt, 32 inch LED TV
- 11 full charges of a Smart Phone

Where else can you get that kind of value?

With inflation soaring (currently at 8.2% year over year), we are all battling record-high grocery bills, inflated loan interest rates, and unsustainable rent and mortgage increases. How many eggs will a penny buy? How much milk, bread, coffee or medicine? How far would you get with a penny of gas with the current high prices we are seeing now? The U.S. Retail Gas Price is at \$3.60 per gallon.

We are fortunate electricity is such an excellent value because we have a huge appetite for it. Electricity is not expensive. It’s that we use it for so many different things: lighting, heating, cooking, cooling, refrigeration, cleaning, washing, working, entertainment, communications, and even transportation these days.

Despite energy efficiency advancements, the average household uses more electronic gadgets and needs more power to operate them yearly. Our demand for it is higher than it’s ever been. Nearly a third of all U.S. households have four electronic devices, such as cell phones, plugged in and charging. In the past 30 years, the amount of residential electricity used by appliances and electronics has increased from 17 percent to 31 percent. More homes than ever have multiple TVs, central air, and super-sized appliances.

According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the U.S. used 3.9 trillion kilowatt hours of electricity in 2021. That’s 13 times more electricity than was used in 1950!

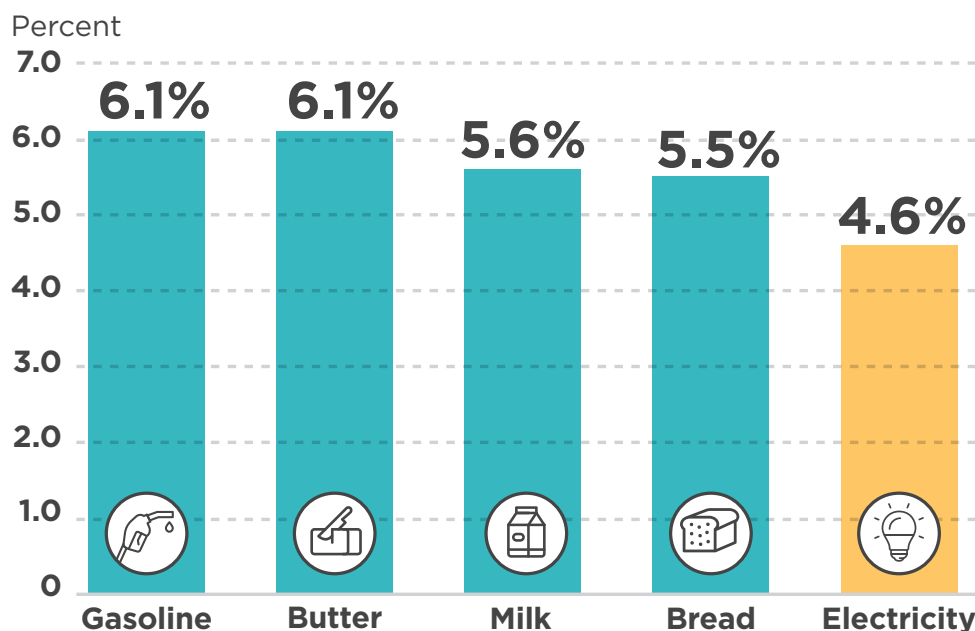
According to the EIA, the average U.S. household used 10,715 kilowatt hours of electricity in 2020, which equates to 893 kWh per month. The national average cost of electricity was \$122 per month per household.

Clearly, our appetite for electricity shows no signs of slowing down. So, the next time you flip a switch, turn on your television or run your washing machine, remember the value electricity holds. And know that employees at Eastern Illini are working hard to provide our members with safe, reliable energy solutions and exceptional service.

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

### Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



# Saving energy during the dog days of summer

Summer means long-running air conditioning, constant wash cycles of bathing suits and beach towels, and more overall energy use. With some preparation, you can minimize energy consumption and cut down on your monthly utility bills. Here are some ways you can save energy this summer.

### RAISE THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR THERMOSTAT

Though it might feel good to blast your AC in the summer, lowering your indoor temperature leads to extremely high utility bills. Consider setting the indoor temperature to at least 75°F. The smaller the difference between indoor and outdoor temperatures, the lower your cooling bills will be. When you leave the house, set the temperature even higher (preferably 78°F) or turn the air conditioner off altogether.

You can also consider investing in a smart thermostat to help regulate temperatures throughout the day. Nest thermostats, including the Nest Learning Thermostat and the Nest E, learn your habits and will automatically program themselves to save you energy.

Swapping heavy bed clothes for lighter alternatives (or even cooling sheets) can help make up for temperature, and over time, your body will adapt.

### USE FANS TO COOL YOUR HOUSE

Using a ceiling fan while a room is in use will allow you to raise your thermostat temperature four degrees. Switch you ceiling fan's blade rotation. During summer, your ceiling fan blades should rotate counterclockwise. Why? This will push cool air down, where you need it.

If you don't have ceiling fans, portable fans work just as well—they're inexpensive and readily available at any home goods or big-box retailer.

### CLEAN YOUR AIR FILTERS

Dirty air filters can overwork your cooling system, causing your HVAC to use more energy. Not to mention, dirty air filters can circulate allergens and dust throughout your home, lowering indoor air quality. It is recommended that you change your air filter at least every three months.

### HEAT FOOD IN YOUR MICROWAVE

Using your oven and stove can raise your kitchen's temperature by 10 degrees. By heating food in your microwave, you'll lower the risk of overheating your kitchen and save energy in the process; microwaves use one-third the energy of an oven and produce less heat than other kitchen appliances.

### CLEAN BEHIND YOUR DRYER

The back of your dryer is connected to a vent. This builds up with lint over time which causes your dryer to work longer and harder to dry the clothes, which increases your energy bill. It is recommended that you clean out this dryer duct at least once a year—summer is the perfect time to perform this task.

### SKIP THE DRYER ALL TOGETHER

Use the warm weather to your advantage and hang your clothes outside to dry. You'll save energy and avoid raising the temperature of your home with heat-generating appliances.

### SWITCH TO LED BULBS

Incandescent bulbs can turn 90% of the energy they use into heat, making rooms in your home considerably warmer. LED bulbs operate at a lower wattage and



produce half as much heat. They also use 75% less energy and last 50 times longer than traditional bulbs, saving you money on energy costs.

### SEAL CRACKS AND OPENINGS

To prevent warm air from leaking into your home, inspect your windows and doors for small openings and seal them with caulk or weatherstripping.

### TURN DOWN THE WATER HEATER TEMPERATURE

You're probably not looking forward to a hot shower on hot summer days, so use this as an opportunity to turn down the temperature of your water heater. Some manufacturers set their default water heater thermostat temperature to 140°F, but most households can get by with them set at 120°F.

Summer brings tons of heat, along with a spike in electricity bills. It is only normal to expect higher energy costs in the summer, because we are inclined to stay indoors and we use the A/C to keep our body temperature cool. Everyone is home and there's more need for electronics. If you send the kids out to play, there will be a need to wash more clothes, swimsuits, and towels. And, more showers will be taken. Try implementing some of these ways to save energy tips, so you can keep within your budget and still enjoy summer.





# TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR FOOD STAYS SAFE

## Food safety at barbecues and picnics



Outdoor barbecues and picnics are a great way to connect with family and friends. However, careless food handling could cause food borne illness and quickly make you an unpopular host. Taking just a few simple steps can greatly reduce the risk of sickness. These tips will help ensure that your food stays safe and your guests stay healthy.

### **STAY OUT OF THE DANGER ZONE**

Just like humans, bacteria thrive in temperatures that are not too hot or too cold. The “danger zone” is 40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Dangerous bacteria are more likely to grow in this temperature range. Keep cold foods below 40°F and hot foods above 140°F.

### **THAW APPROPRIATELY**

The best way to thaw meat safely is to plan ahead. Defrost it overnight on a plate in the fridge. Frozen meat should never be thawed at room temperature. Instead, thaw in the refrigerator ahead of time. If it's at the last minute, submerge sealed packages in cold (not warm or hot) water, or thaw in the microwave. Thoroughly cook foods immediately after microwave thawing.

### **USE COOLERS PROPERLY**

When picnicking or tailgating away from home, use a cooler to store anything that was refrigerated. Fill it just before leaving home, add plenty of ice, and don't open the cooler repeatedly; it makes the ice melt faster. Consider having a separate tub or cooler for drinks to avoid repeatedly opening the cooler with perishable foods. Always separate any raw meat from ready-to-eat foods like salads and desserts. Try to keep the cooler in a shaded area to maintain temperature more efficiently.

### **COOK TO TEMP**

Digital food thermometers can be purchased for around \$10, and they're easy to use and read. Consider them an easy and inexpensive way to both prevent food borne illness and make sure you don't overcook your steaks. The thermometer should be placed in the center of the food, not touching bones or big pieces of fat or gristle. Use the cooking temperatures chart to determine when different meat products are safe.

### **SERVE SAFELY**

Keep cold foods cold by placing the bowl of food inside of a slightly larger bowl filled with ice. Keep hot foods hot on the grill (not directly over the coals) and with

crock pots, chafing dishes, or “liquid baths.” To make a liquid bath, fill a pan with juice, broth, or other liquid, and place it on the grill; after cooking burgers, chicken, or brats, place them in the hot liquid to keep the food hot and add extra flavor.

A general rule of thumb is never to leave perishable items out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours, or for more than 1 hour when the outside temperature is above 90°F. Also consider adding nonperishable items to your picnic. Whole fruits like grapes, apples, bananas, oranges, peaches, and cherry tomatoes, along with crackers, pretzels, nuts, chips, breads, and cookies can be added to the menu and don't have to take up valuable cooler space. However, cut or pre-peeled fruits and vegetables should always be kept cool, and you should follow the same handling guidelines for other refrigerated items.

### **HANDLE LEFTOVERS CORRECTLY**

Put food in the refrigerator, freezer, or cooler within 2 hours if the temperature outside is less than 90°F, or within 1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F. If food stays out for too long, or if you are unsure whether it is safe, discard it.

### **CLEAN THOROUGHLY**

Never put cooked meat or other foods on the same plate that held raw meat. That raw meat juice contains bacteria that will cause recontamination of your food. Always wash your hands after handling raw meat and before you touch cooked meat.

If you are away from home, make sure you have a potable water source for cleanup, or bring containers from home if necessary. Supplement water with antibacterial wipes for cleaning tables and other surfaces, and consider using disposable containers and utensils, especially for raw items.

# HERE'S TO A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR

## Back to school safety checklist

Whether children walk, ride their bicycle, or take the bus to school, it is extremely important that they take proper safety precautions. Here are some tips to make sure your child safely travels to school:

### WALKING TO SCHOOL

Review your family's walking safety rules. Do a practice walk with your child.

- Walk on the sidewalk, if one is available; when on a street with no sidewalk, walk facing the traffic
- Before you cross the street, stop and look left, right and left again to see if cars are coming
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing and always cross streets at crosswalks or intersections
- Stay off your phone and remove earphones so you can stay alert

### RIDING A BICYCLE TO SCHOOL

Teach your child the rules of the road and practice riding the bike route to school with your child.

- Ride on the right side of the road, with traffic, and in single file
- Come to a complete stop before crossing the street; walk bikes across the street
- Stay alert and avoid distracted riding
- Make sure your child always wears a helmet and bright clothing

### RIDING THE BUS TO SCHOOL

Teach your children school bus safety rules and practice with them

- Go to the bus stop with your child to teach them the proper way to get on and off the bus

- Teach your children to stand six feet (or 3 giant steps) away from the curb
- If your child must cross the street in front of the bus, teach them to walk on the side of the road until they are 10 feet ahead of the bus.

### DRIVING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

Stay alert and avoid distracted driving

- Obey school zone speed limits and follow your school's drop-off procedure
- Make eye contact with children who are crossing the street
- Never pass a bus loading or unloading
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children, stop far enough back to allow them to safely enter and exit the bus

### TEEN DRIVERS

Car crashes are the No. 1 cause of death for teens. 2,600 people were killed in crashes involving a teen driver in 2021. Fortunately, there is something we can do.

- Teens crash because they are inexperienced; they need lots of practice before and after they get their license
- Be a good role model. Remember that your child looks to you as a driver, so practice safe driving yourself.
- Sign the NEW DRIVER DEAL: This is an agreement from the National Safety Council that helps define expectations for parents and teens. This is an excellent conversation starter: <https://www.nsc.org/road/resources/dih/new-driver-deal>



### SCHOOL SAFETY

Many school-related injuries are completely preventable. Follow these steps to ensure your child's safety while they are at school:

- Prevent backpack-related injuries by choosing a backpack for your child carefully; it should have ergonomically designed features to enhance safety and comfort
- Ask your child to use both straps when wearing their backpack to evenly distribute the weight on their shoulders
- Don't over stuff a backpack; it should weigh no more than 5 to 10 percent of your child's body weight
- Rolling backpacks should be used cautiously since they can create a trip hazard in crowded school hallways

Take time before the new school year starts to discuss safety with your children. Make sure your children know your phone number, address, and how to get in touch with you at work. Here's to a safe and successful year!







High school grads leaving home for the first time have a lot on their minds.

**Make sure electrical safety is, too.**



- Use power strips with overcurrent protectors. This will shut off the power if there is too much power being drawn.
- Only purchase and use electrical products tested for safety. Some common approved safety labels include UL, CSA, and MET.
- Keep all electrical appliances and cords safely away from bedding, curtains, papers and other flammable material.
- Make sure outlets around sinks are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) before use. If they are not, contact the resident assistant, campus housing staff or landlord.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use and all electronics when away for extended periods.
- Always use microwave-safe containers. Glass, ceramic containers and plastics labeled “microwave-safe” should always be used. Metal and aluminum foil can damage the microwave or start a fire. If the microwave is damaged in any way, do not use it.
- Never disable a smoke detector, and never ignore a fire alarm or assume it is a drill. Every time a fire alarm sounds, residents should calmly and quickly follow practiced procedures and immediately exit the building.