

PowerLines

February 2025

A look back at 2024 and ahead at 2025

The EIEC board has decided to extend the CEO search process. The board has requested I continue as CEO until the point in time when a new CEO arrives. So, we will postpone for a time my farewell column and instead replace it with a review of 2024 goal attainment and other pertinent information.

2024 Summary Review

- Member electric energy use will end the year nearly 3% below budget levels.
- We met our member satisfaction goal with a score of 88 (out of 100)
- Our zero lost time safety goal wasn't met
- We met our annual reliability goal even with several weather related outages early in the year
- We met our financial related goals



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

This month's billing will complete 12 months on the new 3-part rate structure (including demand along with the base and energy charges). The overall projected average increase in rates was about 2.3%. The actual recovery of revenues has been very close to the projected amounts. The newly installed AMI metering system is working beyond vendor expectations, and it will provide flexibility and improvement in outage reporting and restoration, among many other benefits.

Based on the costs of doing business along with stagnant load growth, we are projecting minor rate adjustments to be necessary every 2 or 3 years.

No rate adjustments are anticipated in 2025. When future adjustments are necessary, most likely the demand charge component will increase slightly while the energy charges will be reduced slightly to balance the revenue requirements.

In September there were media articles about the possibility of a large fertilizer manufacturing plant (Cronus Chemicals) locating west of Tuscola. This facility would be served by EIEC, and if constructed, would positively impact the cooperative to the benefit of the entire membership.

The 2025 Illinois legislative session convened in early January. Our statewide association (AIEC) does a fantastic job of monitoring proposed legislation and representing cooperative interests. There is some thought that an omnibus energy bill may be considered during the session.

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative submitted proposals under two separate Federal programs for system reliability improvements and small renewable energy (solar) facilities. Unfortunately, our projects were not chosen to advance to funding opportunities.

Thank you for your support and loyalty as members of EIEC.

Cooperatively,

Bob Hunzinger

In this issue:

- We're ready for storm season. Are you?
- Be alert for utility scams
- Energy savings and smart technologies
- Pay your bill your way
- Nominating petitions available soon

Space Heater Safety:

Space heaters can provide extra warmth in a drafty room or chilly home, but they can also pose a safety risk. If you rely on a portable heater for supplemental heat, it's important to make space heater safety a priority. Keep the space heater 3 feet away from combustible materials. Also, establish a kid and pet free zone around space heaters. Turn them off and unplug them when you leave the room or go to bed.



- 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 Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative * 330 W. Ottawa * Paxton, IL * 60957

800-824-5102 * info@eiec.coop * www.eiec.coop *  facebook.com/easternillini

STAY SAFE DURING WINTER STORMS BY BEING PREPARED

We're ready for storm season. Are you?



BE PREPARED FOR A WINTER STORM

Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion.

In the event of a power outage, view our real time outage map at www.eiec.coop

To report an outage call: 800.824.5102

Winter storms and blizzards can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds.



Greater risk



Can last a few hours or several days



Can knock out heat, power, and communication services

IF YOU ARE UNDER A WINTER STORM WARNING, FIND SHELTER RIGHT AWAY

Stay off roads.



Use generators outside only.



Stay indoors and dress warmly.



Listen for emergency information and alerts.



Prepare for power outages.



Look for signs of hypothermia and frostbite.



Be alert for utility scams and fraud



You probably aren't expecting to be scammed by a fraudster posing as a Eastern Illini employee -- that's one reason these cons are so effective. It's unclear how many people fall victim to utility scams each year, but a 2023 Better Business Bureau scam tracker report suggests that victims lose, on average, \$463 to utility scams. To avoid losses, members are encouraged to be familiar with the most common impostor utility scams.

Disconnection deception

Scammers call threatening disconnection of your electric service, demanding immediate payment by prepaid cards purchased at a local retail store (or credit card, debit card, bank draft, wiring money, etc.), and insisting you call them back with the card information to make payment.

Eastern Illini will send you one or more disconnection notices before disconnecting or shutting off your electricity, and we offer several bill payment options without specifying the type of payment you need to make.

Bill payment or credit con

Scammers may provide you with a phony account routing number for you

to pay your electric bills, receive a credit, or obtain federal assistance. The fake number compromises your personal information and may turn into identity theft.

Overpayment trick

Scammers call claiming you have overpaid your electric bill, and you need to provide personal bank account information or a credit card number to facilitate a refund. Eastern Illini doesn't ever call and tell you you've overpaid. We allow credit balances to cover any future charges.

Power restoration rip off

Scammers call offering to restore power quickly or in a preferential order for immediate payment or an upfront "reconnection fee," typically in the aftermath of severe storms causing widespread power outages. Eastern Illini does not require payment to restore electricity after a natural disaster or other related outages.

Going phishing with smishing, vishing and quishing scams

Phishing occurs when scammers send potential victims an email to convince the recipient to transfer money, send a password or provide other personal data. While members have learned to open emails with caution, they may not be familiar with the latest versions of these phishing attempts.

Smishing, short for SMS phishing, attempts to trick mobile phone users into giving scammers personal information, which can be used for identity theft, via a text or SMS message. EIEC typically doesn't text you unless you have signed up for a specific notification service.

Vishing, or voice phishing, is a type of phishing attack where scammers use phone calls to trick individuals into revealing personal information, such as

passwords or credit card numbers, by pretending to be a legitimate entity. This type of scam can be executed by real humans or via pre-recorded robocalls. Quishing, or QR code phishing, is a relatively new scam where fraudsters have covered legitimate QR codes with their own to guide users to websites designed to steal personal information. For EIEC members, if you are presented with a QR code in situations where payment is requested, always be cautious and call us before acting. We recommend using only EIEC payment methods to complete transactions.

Home improvement huckster

Scammers posing as Eastern Illini employees may appear unannounced at your front door offering a free energy audit, efficiency inspection, or some other service. While Eastern Illini does offer these types of programs to members, these unsolicited intruders may be pitching unnecessary expensive products or attempting to steal items from you. Unless we have talked to you in advance, or you initiated a request for such a service, exercise caution and do not let them into your home or business without verifying their identity.

Solar scammers

If you're interested in solar panels, be careful when evaluating installation offers. Scammers use misleading sales tactics to trick homeowners out of money and personal information. There are reputable solar companies and contractors out there, but before accepting an unsolicited offer from a door-to-door salesperson, you should investigate the facts. Eastern Illini does not partner with third-party solar companies for at-home solar solutions.

Members who suspect that they have been victims of fraud should contact us by calling 800-824-5102. Be sure to have all details and any supporting documents available to discuss the suspicious activity on your account.

Energy savings through smart technologies



energy-monitoring features. These devices can track your energy use and even let you control them remotely.

Smart HVAC Systems

Smart HVAC systems are extremely efficient at handling heating and cooling, normally by zoning around the house. You can set different temperatures in the various areas of the house so that you do not waste energy heating rooms that are not in use. What is more, they can be integrated easily with other smart devices for even greater control over how much energy is consumed.

Home Energy Management Systems

HEMS are your whole-house energy monitoring solution. They give you a full picture of your home's energy use and help you understand exactly where changes need to be made. Equipped with this information, you're able to make smart, educated choices that will result in real savings.

Solar Panels

Finally, there are solar panels. Installing solar panels work to convert sunlight into energy, thus reducing your reliance on the grid. Thanks to smart technology, you'll know just how much energy your panels are producing and how much you're using to maximize the benefits of using renewable energy.

Here are a few tips that will really help you make the most of your smart tech: keep new software downloads current; actually, read those energy reports and analytics; they might just amaze you with what they can tell you. Finally, let everyone in your household know how to use smart devices. The more everyone is on board, the more effective your energy-savings will be.

Smart home technology can be a real game-changer in terms of promoting energy efficiency and may be worth considering in 2025.

As we begin the new year, many of us are considering how to save energy by being aware of when we use electricity and what appliances use the most electricity as well as finding new ways to be more energy efficient. These days smart home technology is on the forefront when it comes to reducing energy consumption. Here are some smart home technology ideas to consider for 2025.

Smart home technology is all about your home working for you. Just think of adding a brain to that living space. With smart technology, systems can automate many tasks, monitor energy use, and even help inform your decisions regarding energy consumption. This automation saves you both time and effort. You can monitor remotely wherever you are, whether you are at work or on holiday. In addition, you'll have the insights you need to make data-driven decisions and make your home efficient. Therefore, the following key smart home technology has great potential regarding energy efficiency:

Smart Thermostats

Let's start with smart thermostats. These technological wonders learn your schedule and preferences, automatically adjusting the temperature to keep you comfortable

while saving energy. You can turn it up or down from your phone, which is, let's face it, super nice when you've forgotten to turn down the heat before heading out. Plus, they're good at providing energy reports showing you how much you save. It's like having your personal assistant for heating and cooling.

Smart Lighting

Next up is smart lighting. An immediate switch to smart bulbs, such as LED or color-changing bulbs, can make quite a difference. These can be scheduled to turn on and off at specific times of the day, and even the brightness can be adjusted accordingly. But adding motion sensors ups the ante by turning lights on when one enters a room and off upon leaving the room. It's an easy win for energy savings.

Smart Plugs and Outlets

Smart plugs and outlets are gadgets that turn any of your everyday appliances into smart home technology devices. With them, you'll be able to keep tabs on energy use and turn appliances off or on from afar, and that is just what one needs with devices like coffee makers or a game console that people often turn on and then forget. You have the ability to turn them off with your phone.

Appliances

From refrigerators to washing machines, most new appliances come with

Pay your bill your way: when, where, and how

Our lives are often crazy busy with running errands, taking kids to practices, stopping by a family member's home, and filling up your vehicle with gas. We understand that with your hectic schedule, time is precious, so we make it convenient for you to pay your bill by offering a wide variety of payment options—which allows you to choose where, when, and how!

Pay with SmartHub: View and pay your bill with your Smartphone or other device. You can find this FREE app in your app store. The app is easy to use and allows you to pay your bill from anywhere and at any time using a checking account or credit/debit card. Sign up today at www.eiec.coop

SmartHub also gives you valuable information about your electric use. It provides account management at your fingertips. You can view your billing history and see your current bill. Using SmartHub you can report an outage. Reporting service issues is also a snap with SmartHub.



Pay by phone: Call 800-824-5102 and “PRESS #1” to make a payment. From there you have several options to keep your payment preferences up to date:

PRESS #1 to check your account status

PRESS #2 to make a payment

PRESS #3 to edit stored payment information

PRESS #4 to edit recurring payment information

PRESS #5 to update your pin number

PRESS #6 to update your phone number



Pay by mail: A return envelope is sent with your bill. It can be returned with your payment to P.O. Box 96, Paxton, IL 60957

Automated payment: You can have funds automatically deducted monthly from your checking, savings, or credit card.

Pay now: A quick and simple way to pay your bill on-line. All you need is your account number and a payment method. To pay now, go to www.eiec.coop and under My Account, select Payment Options. Press the red rectangle that says Pay Now and enter your information.

Pay in person: Stop by our office at 330 West Ottawa in Paxton during office hours, which are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. On holidays and weekends, feel free to use our night deposit drop box located in the front of the building.

Budget Billing: The budget billing program lets you manage your electric bill by paying the same amount each month. This is a great way to avoid seasonal fluctuations in your bill. Members are eligible to sign up for budget billing after they have been a member for 12 months and have historical information about their electric use.

Prepaid Advantage: This pay-as-you-go plan offers the opportunity to manage

payments in the amounts and time frame you want. Electric use is calculated and billed daily. Members using Prepaid Advantage must keep a minimum credit balance. Contact us at 800-824-5102 to sign up.

Offsite payment locations: You can pay your EIEC electric bill with cash at these local retailers: Dollar General, Family Dollar, CVS, Walgreen's or Walmart. An electronic or paper copy of your bar code is needed which can be found in SmartHub. The retailer will scan the bar code and take your payment. A service charge is assessed by the retailer for using this payment method.

Eastern Illini bills are due on the 17th of every month. Paperless billing is available to members. It's very easy to use, as you will receive your bill electronically. Eastern Illini is mindful that there are some situations where members may need assistance paying their electric bill. Whether it is making a payment arrangement or helping members leverage energy assistance programs like Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) and our own Neighbor to Neighbor (NTN) program, we regularly work with members who need an arrangement or assistance.

NOMINATING PETITIONS AVAILABLE SOON FOR EIEC BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S ELECTION

Nominating petitions will be available on Thursday, February 20, 2025 for the June 5, 2025 director election. Nominating petitions can be obtained by stopping by the Eastern Illini headquarters in Paxton between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Each member who desires to be elected to the board of directors must have a petition signed by not less than 25 members of the co-op. Petitions should be returned to EIEC by Friday, April 4, 2025 at 4 p.m.

Directors in Directorate Districts 1, 7, and 8 will be elected at Eastern Illini's annual meeting in June. Incumbent directors Tyler Finegan, Ashkum, District 1; Steve Gordon, Rantoul, District 7; and Chad Larimore, Bement, District 8; have indicated they will seek re-election.

We'd be happy to answer questions you may have about nominating petitions or the election process. Please give us a call at 800-824-5102.

The Credentials Committee will meet at Eastern Illini's headquarters to review the qualifications of all candidates who file nominating petitions. The Credentials Committee will determine the eligibility of the candidates to serve as an Eastern Illini director.

Members of the 2025 Credentials Committee are:

- Tyler Babb, Penfield, District 6
- Sam Brandenburg, Tuscola, District 8
- Michele Coe, Loda, District 3
- Karie Frake, Clifton, District 1
- Marie Monk, Ashkum, District 1
- Josh Shelmadine, Tuscola, District 8
- Christopher Stroh, Anchor, District 2

The nominating process is conducted in accordance with the following provisions of the EIEC Bylaws, Article III, Section 3.5: Nominations: *Any member of the Cooperative*

in good standing who desires to be elected to its Board of Directors may be nominated by petition signed by not less than twenty - five (25) members and filed with the Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative not less than sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting of members.

Nominations from the floor shall not be permitted. The Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative shall cause to be prepared and posted at the principal office of the Cooperative at least forty-five (45) days before the annual meeting, a list of the nominations for Directors thus filed with him or her.

A specimen ballot marked "Ballot for Directors" containing the names and addresses of all candidates listed in the order of priority determined by the date and time when the Cooperative received the respective completed candidate information shall be printed in or mailed with the notice of the meeting.

In the event that multiple candidates' completed information is received on the same date and at the same time for the same directorate district, the ballot order shall be determined by lot conducted by the Board of Directors.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall also have printed in or mailed with the said notice of the meeting or separately not less than seven (7) days prior to said annual meeting, a statement of the number of directors to be elected and the district from which they are to be elected.

If a particular directorate district does not have a contested election, that director can be elected by a voice vote as provided in Section 2.6 of Article II of the Bylaws. In such case, the name of the candidate for that specific directorate district shall not be required to be placed on the specimen and actual ballots.