

## Happy New Year!

(What will 2023 bring us?)

Let us all welcome 2023 with the hope and optimism associated with a new calendar year!

### 2022 Brief Review

Member energy usage (kwh) will end the year at or slightly above budget levels. EIEC performed well relative to our four core corporate goal areas:

- Did not meet our zero lost time safety goal due to a single incident
- Exceeded our member satisfaction goal with a score of 88 (out of 100)
- Exceeded our annual reliability goal
- Met all financial goals

In addition, Eastern Illini continued to work with Nextlink to help facilitate expansion of fixed wireless Internet service in our footprint. Even with supply chain delays, EIEC is hopefully on track to complete installation of our new metering system during 2023.

### Member Rebate – LOOK FOR MONEY BACK CREDIT ON THIS BILL

In last month's column I mentioned that your Board of Directors was considering applying net operating margins above the 2022 budget towards reducing the 2023 power cost adjustment (PCA), which reflects fluctuations in wholesale power costs from our supplier, Prairie Power, Inc.

At the November Board meeting, the Directors instead voted to return these margins to members with this billing cycle. This provides an immediate one-time credit during this hectic holiday



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

period for your benefit. Please refer to the article included for additional information.

EIEC continues to review our cost of service and rates necessary to provide service to members. We plan to present information to members beginning in June (in conjunction with our annual meetings) and continuing up to planned implementation in March 2024. With the new metering system, EIEC plans to transition to a three-part rate structure that includes a demand billing component, in addition to the existing base and energy charges.

On behalf of our employees and directors, know that we are dedicated to continuing to provide excellent service and we wish you the best during 2023.

Sincerely,

*Bob Hunzinger*



**Happy New Year from the  
Golden Girls: Ellie and Ivy Hunzinger**

### In this issue:

- Wilson elected to Touchstone Energy Board
- Be proactive in preventing electrical fires
- 2023 changes to energy efficiency standards
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- 2022 Margin Rebate

### How do you want to save today?



Local Deals  
Pharmacy Discounts  
Cash Back Online  
Hotel Savings

Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) to register and start saving today.

### 2022 MARGIN REBATE

There is a line item on your bill this month called MARGIN REBATE. It is a bill credit based on your 11-month electric use from January 2022 through November 2022. The Eastern Illini board of directors voted to return \$750,000 to members as a MARGIN REBATE.

Your Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## Wilson elected to Touchstone Energy Board

Mike Wilson, the Vice President of Member & Community Relations at Eastern Illini, has been elected to the board of directors of Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, Inc.

The Touchstone Energy board of directors consists of 13 members responsible for setting policy, establishing long-term goals, monitoring general operations, approving the organizational outcomes, and allocating resources. Wilson was elected by acclamation at the organization's annual Virtual Business Meeting on Dec. 1, 2022. Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, Inc. serves the national network of Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives across 45 states by providing resources and leveraging partnerships to help its member co-ops and their employees better engage and serve their members. By working together, Touchstone Energy cooperatives stand as a source of power and information to their 30 million member-owners every day.

A 25-year electric cooperative veteran, Wilson oversees the member-facing departments at EIEC, including member services, billing, communication, marketing, and key accounts, and has also been active at the national and regional levels. He is the former chair of both the Certified Cooperative Communicator program board and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators. Wilson also serves on the board of Cooperative Balloon Associates – the organization that manages the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon and mascots program.



## 5 Ways to Save During Winter

Winter weather typically means increased energy use at home. Keep your bills in check with these tips to save energy—and money!



**Mind the thermostat.** If you have a traditional heating and cooling system, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Consider a smart or programmable thermostat for additional savings.

**Get cozy.** Add layers of clothing for additional warmth, and snuggle up under your favorite heavyweight blanket.

**Don't block the heat.** If your air vents or heating elements (like radiators) are blocked by furniture or rugs, your home isn't being adequately heated.

**Take advantage of sunlight.** Open window coverings during the day to let natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to block the chilly night air.

**Block air leaks.** Seal windows and exterior doors with caulk and weather stripping to improve indoor comfort and decrease the amount of energy used to heat your home.

Get ready to bundle up!

The forecast for January is below average temperatures, especially towards the middle of the month.

Cold weather is the prime time for heating systems. Having a technician clean and tune up your furnace, whether gas or electric, can help your systems run more efficiently in the winter months. You should also change the batteries in your smoke detectors and test your carbon monoxide detectors.

If your power goes out, call us at 800-824-5102. You can monitor outages on our website: [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)

# Be proactive in preventing electrical fires

Take steps to help prevent electrical fires by identifying possible issues before they occur. When assessing your home, the first step is to hire a qualified electrician to check all wiring to ensure it is up to code and that the electrical system can handle the demands of your electronics, appliances, lights and other electrical needs. Beyond that, watch for possible issues as they arise.

Symptoms of issues include flickering lights, discolored outlets and switch plates, damaged cords, frequently tripped circuit breakers, or blown fuses.

Make sure to check these electrical items in your home:

- Electrical outlets: Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace missing or broken wall plates. If you have young children, install tamper-resistant outlets if your home does not have them. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

- Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs): Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, workshop, basement, garage, and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the "Test" and "Reset" buttons monthly to ensure that they are working properly.

- Extension cords: Check cords to ensure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under rugs, tightly wrapped around an object or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors, or other objects. These are not intended to be permanent solutions, so use them temporarily. If you find that you need more electrical outlets, call an electrician.

- Light bulbs: Verify that your light bulbs are the intended wattage for the lamp or fixture.

- Appliances/electronics: If an appliance blows a fuse repeatedly, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, it's time to discard it and replace it.

- Circuit breakers/fuses: Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be rated for the circuits they are protecting.

- Electrical wiring: If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Also, check for loose wires. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.

- Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs): AFCIs, which monitor the flow of electricity throughout your home, should be properly installed. If an AFCI detects any abnormality, it shuts the system off to prevent a fire. Upon inspection, an electrician can assess if your home is properly protected.

- Service capacity: If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. Use a qualified electrician to have the work done.

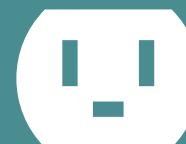
## Preventing Home Electrical Fires



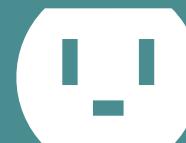
Fire departments respond to an average of 46,700 home fires each year caused by electrical failure or malfunction.

**30%** happened in cold weather months: November - February. Fires caused an average of 350 deaths and 1,070 injuries.

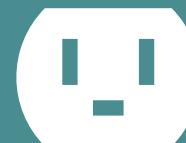
## WARNING SIGNS of electrical issues:



Damaged cords and flickering lights.



Discolored outlets and switch plates.



Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses

*Hire a licensed contractor to ensure that your home's wiring is installed to code and functioning properly.*

# NEW HVAC UNITS MUST HAVE HIGHER SEER RATINGS

## 2023 changes to energy efficiency standards

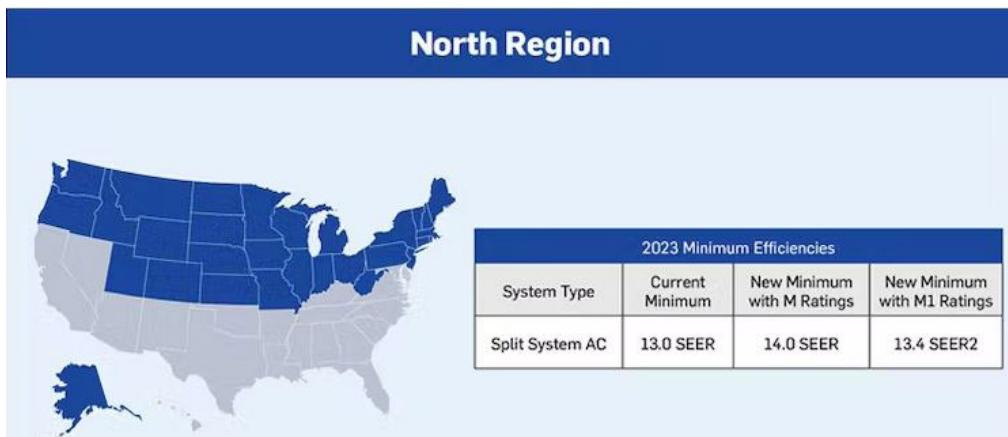
Beginning January 1, 2023, the Department of Energy (DOE) is increasing the minimum efficiencies for central air conditioners and heat pumps. The testing procedures for determining those efficiencies are changing as well. For air conditioners in the North, the minimum efficiency will increase from 13.0 to 14.0 SEER. In addition, the national heat pump minimum efficiency will increase from 14.0 to 15.0 SEER.

### What is an energy efficiency standard and who makes them?

The first big push for energy efficiency standards began in 2015 when the DOE placed ordinances on how residential air conditioning and heat pumps were regulated. DOE segmented the country into three big regions North, South, and Southwest that have region-specific restrictions. Eastern Illini members are part of the North Region.

### What is happening in 2023?

On January 1st of 2023, a federal minimum energy efficiency regulation will be implemented. When this regulation is implemented, it will change the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) for all regions by roughly a 7% increase. This rough 7% increase will equal around a 1-point increase for the regions. For example, the northern region has a SEER rating of 13 and it will now increase to 14.



### Why are energy efficiency standards important?

For homeowners, it is extremely important to understand the changes in SEER as it will help you navigate a conversation when talking to your HVAC professional.

In general, the higher the SEER, the higher the efficiency which in the long run will help you save money month to month. To think in terms of dollars and cents. A 16 SEER unit is about 13% more efficient than a 14 SEER. For every \$100 you spend to cool your home with a 14 SEER, you could save \$13 on your monthly bill by upgrading to the 16 SEER unit, however; the higher efficiency comes at a cost. At the end of the day, your HVAC units may become more expensive, but they will become efficient in serving you and your household.

### Changes to come for HVAC Professionals:

Along with the mandate to change the level of SEER within the products themselves, testing will also change. Testing procedures for heat pumps and air conditioners will operate differently. Instead of working on the SEER scale, it will now operate on a SEER2 and HSPF basis. SEER2 measures how efficiently your AC cools you home throughout the season. Generally, ratings range from 13 to 23, with the highest SEER rating considered the most energy-efficient. Heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF) measures your heat pump's energy efficiency to heat your home throughout the season. The higher the HSPF rating, the more efficient the heat pump. All new HVAC units must comply with the latest testing procedures.

Every six years, the DOE reviews the effects of energy usage, sets minimum efficiency requirements, and manages the testing standards.

It's always a good idea to have your HVAC units inspected yearly. Before summer hits, make sure to get your AC serviced by a local HVAC professional. If you don't get the unit serviced regularly, you may not know there's an issue until it's a much bigger problem and more expensive to fix. Unserviced AC units lose 5% efficiency per year and use more energy and puts a strain on the system, reducing its lifespan.



# WAYNE TUCKER REFLECTS ON HIS POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

## Spotlight on Youth to Washington alumnus



It was 1981 and Wayne Tucker was a junior in high school when he wrote an essay to qualify for a trip to Washington D.C. through the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives Youth Tour. After Wayne's essay was selected, he made a presentation to leadership at the cooperative and put his public speaking skills to good use. His high school guidance counselor was influential in helping him practice his speech until he knew it well, so when he stepped up to the podium in front of a large group of people from the co-op, he was comfortable with what he had to say. He was selected as the representative to attend the Youth to Washington D.C. trip and at the time had no idea how the experience would positively impact him. His parents, who were co-op members, were there to hear his speech and encouraged him along the way.

Wayne boarded a bus that traveled to D.C. for the trip with other winners from Illinois. He had never been to Washington D.C. before, so wasn't sure what to expect. It was a whirlwind trip that included visits to monuments, museums, and iconic buildings that housed the federal government's 3 branches, the Capitol, White House, and Supreme Court. At the conclusion of

the trip, all the participants from across the country gathered for a celebration event commemorating an amazing time in D.C.

There were two highlights of the trip that Wayne remembers even today. He had the opportunity to meet Morris Udall, an attorney and Democratic politician who served as a U.S. representative from Arizona. At the time Wayne met Udall, he was serving as Chairman of the House Interior Committee, overseeing the budgets for the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. Wayne also met another Youth to Washington participant from Effingham who became his girlfriend for over a year after the trip.

As Wayne reflects on his experience, he remembers it was a once in a lifetime experience. He attended several other similar trips while in high school, but this trip was exceptional and had a positive impact on him. Even though it has been over 40 years since Wayne represented Illinois on the Youth to Washington trip, he encourages sophomores and juniors in high school to apply for the trip. He knows firsthand that taking the leap and applying for the Youth to Washington D.C. trip opens new horizons and opportunities for all participants. He feels it is well worth the effort required to apply.

Wayne went on to get his bachelor's degree in plant and environmental biology and chemistry from Eastern Illinois University and his masters degree in soil chemistry from the University of Illinois. Today he is Principal Agronomist for Bayer Crop Science. He leads the research team working on crop protection products that offer proven broad-spectrum weed, pest, and disease control. Wayne serves as the gate keeper for new product development of herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides.

Eastern Illini is currently accepting applications for the 2023 Youth to Washington D.C. trip which will take place June 16 – 23, 2023. Sophomores and juniors in high school who are sons or daughters of an Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member who currently receives electric service from Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative may apply.

Visit <https://www.eiec.org/youth-washington-program> to get more details and apply. Applications can be submitted on-line and the deadline for applying is February 13, 2023.



**2022 Youth to Washington D.C. trip participants**

Left to right meeting with Representative Adam Kinzinger are:  
Riley Klump, Sophia Stierwalt, and Lilly Lahr.

# 2022 Margin Rebate



Your Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative board of directors is pleased to return **\$750,000** of 2022's operating margins to members in the form of a rebate on this month's bill.

The bill credit is based on your 11-month average electric use from January 2022 through November 2022, and is the result of lower operating costs. You will find your credit amount as a line item on your bill and it will be listed as **MARGIN REBATE**.

