

PowerLines

March 2025

First day of spring is March 20

March has arrived signaling the calendrical start to the spring season. This year the vernal equinox occurs for us at 4:01 am CDT on Thursday, March 20. Remember to set your clocks forward one hour on Sunday, March 9 to reflect daylight saving time.

The National Weather Service longer range forecasts that I referenced indicate fairly normal temperatures overall through July (equal chances of above or below average levels). Their precipitation forecast through May indicated slightly above normal precipitation.

The Illinois General Assembly has been back to work in Springfield for nearly two months toward its typical approximate Memorial Day ending timeframe. It is anticipated that prior to the February 7 bill filing deadline that nearly 6000 individual bills will be filed. The good news for us is that the overwhelming majority of these bills never make it out of the committee structure to the respective chamber floors.

Co-op staff at the Illinois statewide association anticipate energy and environmental issues to be some of the bigger topics for the session, leading to the possible consideration of a larger omnibus energy bill also driven by investor owned utility related items such as battery storage procurement, energy efficiency program changes, and artificial intelligence / data center needs.

However, co-ops and municipal systems may be included in various bills that address transparency (governance) related items along with solar, other renewable energy and billing related issues. We'll keep you informed as the session progresses.

As members, you have a chance to participate in the local governance of your cooperative. Each year, three of the nine EIEC board district seats are up for election. Detailed information was provided in the February newsletter. You can also reference information on our website. Petitions can be picked up beginning February 20 and must be returned by April 4 for consideration and approval by the credentials committee. Elections will be held at the annual meeting scheduled for June 5, 2025.



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

I expect 2025 to be a typical year for your cooperative, except for the Board's choice of a new CEO in the April – May period. As always, our system is highly dependent on the weather which drives commodity energy sales in the various seasons of the year.

Please stay safe in all your activities. Take time to enjoy the longer days and warmer sunshine as the month moves toward April.

Cooperatively,

Bob Hunzinger

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March is Ladder Safety Month:

500,000 people are treated each year for ladder-related falls. The two most common ladder accidents are: 1) Missing the last step when climbing down; 2) Overreaching.

Ladders can be dangerous near electricity because they can conduct electricity and cause electrocution. To avoid this, maintain safe distances, use non-conductive ladders, and inspect ladders before and after use.



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

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Your Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

Share the road with farmers



**SHARE
the ROAD**
with Farmers

**Be safe.
Be courteous.**

Farm season means sharing the road with large farm equipment. Farmers must move slowly in large equipment, but public roads are often the only available routes.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, do the following to keep everyone safe:

- 1** Be alert and cautious, and give large farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.
- 2** Do not pass if you are in a "No Passing Zone," or in any area where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.
- 3** Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe to do so.
- 4** Do not tailgate.
- 5** Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.



Share the road with care. Farmers are just trying to get to and from their job, too.

It's planting season, so when driving on rural roads this time of year, you may encounter slow moving farm equipment headed to and from the field. It's important to slow down and stay aware of your surroundings for your safety and the safety of local farmers.

Drive defensively

Anticipating dangerous conditions is especially important during spring planting season. Driving defensively and being alert when agricultural vehicles may be present could help you avoid road accidents and incidents. Slow down. Farm vehicles often travel at slow speeds. To help reduce the risk of a collision, begin braking when you see the slow-moving vehicle. Stay a safe distance back — around 50 feet — the farm equipment driver may have trouble seeing you otherwise.

Pass carefully

Wait for a safe passing zone, watch for oncoming traffic, signal before changing lanes and return to the lane once the vehicle is in your rearview mirror. Don't pass near intersections, around curves, over railroad crossings or near bridges. If the vehicle is extra-wide, wait to pass until the driver pulls over and signals that it's safe. Understand the farm vehicle may be turning into a farm field. Look for entrances to farm fields

and consider this possibility before attempting to pass a farm vehicle.

Yield

Give a wide farm vehicle the right-of-way when it's traveling in the opposite direction. Large farm trucks or planters can't always pull over to the road's shoulder safely. If possible, pull onto the shoulder or into a field entrance to allow the farm vehicle to pass.

Be cautious

A driver may appear to be pulling to the right to let you pass when they are actually making a wide left-hand turn. Before proceeding, look for driveways, roads or fields where the vehicle might be turning. Also check for hand gestures or lights signaling the driver's intention to turn.

Know the basics

Following the speed limit and wearing your seat belt is just as important in the country as it is on city streets.

Stay calm

It can be frustrating to drive behind farm equipment as it is often classified as a slow-moving vehicle, and travel significantly slower than typical traffic. You may not be able to pass right away, so don't risk a potential accident by partaking in aggressive driving.

Take a second look

Before you pull into an intersection or make a move to pass, be sure your path is clear in all directions.

Follow the rules

In general, farm vehicle operators must follow the same rules as car drivers when they are on the road. Farm vehicles have the right-of-way in the same situations a typical car will have the right-of-way.

Share the road with care. Farmers are just trying to get to and from their job, too. Stay safe and be courteous.

ONE IN FOUR HOUSEHOLDS HAVE MORE THAN ONE FRIDGE

Average energy consumption in your home



If you're wondering what uses the most electricity in your home, then here are the top energy users you need to know about.

more than one fridge. Due to how they operate, refrigerators must run all the time and consume a big chunk of your household energy at 7% of your electricity consumption, while separate freezers account for 1.6%.

HVAC Systems

HVAC systems are a staple in many homes, providing a comfortable indoor environment regardless of the outside temperature. However, these systems consume enormous amounts of energy to

Electronics

Modern life has become increasingly reliant on electronics, and your energy bills reflect that. In fact, it's estimated that devices such as laptops, televisions, and game consoles now make up 6.9% of the typical household's energy bills. As your home becomes ever more interconnected and digital, you are using more and more electricity to power your electronic gadgets and keep them running seamlessly.

From HVAC systems that maintain your ideal climate to refrigerators that keep your food fresh, electrical home appliances have become an essential part of modern living, but have you ever wondered what uses the most electricity in your home?

According to a survey by the Energy Information Association (EIA), heating and cooling systems are the biggest users of residential electricity consumption in the United States, followed by water heaters, lighting, and refrigerators.

How Much Energy Does the Average House Consume?

According to EIA, the average annual amount of electricity sold to U.S. residential customers was 10,791 kilowatt hours (kWh) in 2022, which equates to about 899 kWh per month. The actual amount of power a household consumes is dependent on several factors. The size of the home, the building materials used, and the number of residents all play a role in determining power consumption. Not only that but the number and type of appliances in a home, as well as how often they are used, also contribute to the amount of power needed.

maintain the desired temperature, which can contribute significantly to your monthly energy bills. The AC system alone consumes 19% of household electricity.

Water Heaters

Did you know that water heaters can account for almost 14% of your household's electricity usage? That's a significant chunk of your monthly expenses! Water heaters are essential for providing hot water for various household tasks, including showers, washing machines, sinks, and dishwashers. These appliances typically run for about three to five hours every day, consuming a significant amount of electricity.

Lighting

When it comes to energy consumption in the home, lighting takes third place on the list. It accounts for approximately 10.3% of residential electricity consumption, making it an important area to focus on when looking to reduce overall power use.

Refrigerator

When learning about what uses the most electricity in your home, refrigerators play a crucial part. They are essential household electrical appliances, with an overwhelming 99.8% of U.S. households having at least one. One in four American households has

Washers & Dryers

When it comes to monthly energy use, your washers and dryers play a significant role in determining your electricity bill. These laundry appliances tend to use a lot of electricity, especially if you run them with hot water. Doing laundry makes up about 5% of the total annual electricity use on average.

Small Kitchen Appliances

Cooking and cleaning the dishes after your meals are tasks that require energy. An electric oven, for instance, is known for its energy-intensive nature and typically contributes to around 3% of your monthly energy consumption. Similarly, a dishwasher, while an essential appliance in the kitchen, accounts for approximately 2% of your electricity use.

Idle Plugged-in Devices

A considerable amount of residential energy consumption is devoted to devices in idle power mode. You can use a power strip, which switches off electricity to multiple electronics simultaneously, ultimately resulting in significant cost savings. You can also install a smart outlet that automatically cuts the power supply to devices that are on standby.

Spring forward on March 9, 2025

SPRING Forward



Remember to change your clocks ahead one hour on the 2nd Sunday in March.

Sunday

March 9, 2025

Start at

2 AM - 3AM

More light in the evening
and **less** light in the morning



Daylight saving time is set to begin on Sunday, March 9, 2025. In the early hours, time will jump forward by one hour from 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. This marks the shift to local Daylight Saving Time. Many devices, such as phones and computers, will automatically change to DST, but non-smart devices, such as microwaves and some car radios, as well as any clock with hands, will likely need to be changed manually. In

recent years, Congress has faced the opportunity to stop changing clocks. In 2022, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved the Sunshine Protection Act, which would make daylight saving time permanent, but the House never passed it.

If you're tired of turning the clocks forward and back every year when the start and end of Daylight Saving Time rolls around, you might be in luck. Currently, 62% of

Americans would like to do away with Daylight Saving Time. President Donald Trump is aiming to end that process, according to a post on Truth Social in 2024. He feels Daylight Saving Time is inconvenient and costly to our Nation. It isn't just the federal government that has been mulling a change. According to the Bureau of Transportation, 29 states have introduced legislation to abolish the twice-yearly switching of clocks.

Daylight Saving Time was first enacted in 1918, as a measure to save on fuel costs during World War I. Daylight Saving Time didn't become federal law until 1966. The law has since been tweaked several times. In 1973, during the oil embargo, to study its effects on energy consumption. But after public outcry, it was quickly amended to allow for a return to standard time during the winter months. In 2007, Daylight Saving Time was extended to its present form, from the second Sunday in March through the first Sunday of November.

Regardless of how you feel about Daylight Saving Time, remember to Spring Forward and change the clock on your microwave on March 9, 2025.

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Safety precautions before starting a DIY project

Handling projects yourself is a great way to save some money, learn new skills, and increase the resale value on your house. However, working with tools comes with a fair share of risks, especially if you're trying something for the first time, so it's smart for DIYers to focus on being cautious. Follow these safety guidelines while getting jobs done around the house and you'll keep out of harm's way.

Wear proper gear

Invest in equipment that will protect you from injuries whether from an accident or simply from prolonged exposure to tools or materials. For example, when operating a chainsaw, it's recommended that you don safety glasses and noise-reducing ear muffs, protective headgear, chaps, and thick gloves. When cutting lumber with a miter saw, eye and ear protection might be all that's required. The one thing that all DIYers should own is a pair of work boots. Not only will they provide more stable footing on a construction site, but they will offer a better barrier against punctures, lacerations, and other scenarios than a pair of sneakers.

Don't use broken tools

There isn't a pro or DIYer out there that hasn't taken a risk on a shabby or damaged tool, but it's a bad idea. Cracked handles, chipped blades, missing components, and frayed wires are all potential safety hazards, and it's not worth taking a chance. The best course of action is to replace any broken tools before the job starts. If you're on a budget, reach out to friends and family and ask to borrow the tool rather than spending money.

Maintain good footing

Whether it's on a ladder, pushing a board through a table saw, or cutting lumber to length with a circular saw, it's important to keep your balance. Don't attempt to balance on items underfoot, and don't step over tools or boards while cutting, drilling, or tightening.



Make sure blades are sharp

This might seem counterintuitive, but the sharper a cutting or carving tool is, the safer it will be to use. The reason chisels, hand planes, hand saws, utility knives, circular saws, table saws, and miter saws work better with sharper blades is because the user doesn't have to apply nearly as much force to slice through wood fibers. Conversely, dull blades will require more force, creating the opportunity for slips and mistakes that could end in injury.

Use the right tool for the project

DIYers don't get paid to do work around their house. For this reason, they might not invest in the appropriate tool and may try to make do with something else to get the job done. This can often lead to using a tool improperly—one of the main causes of DIY injuries. Always use the tool for its intended use.

Keep guides and guards in place

Many power tools feature guides and guards to make them safer to use. Occasionally, these guides can get in the way, but it's important to learn to work with them rather than against them. For example, retractable blade guards on circular saws can make certain cuts hard to achieve. But a DIYer can learn to position them without removing them altogether,

such as holding the guard back with one hand while using a circular saw at an awkward angle.

Keep the job site clean

Professional construction crews have the benefit of safety personnel who survey sites and make sure hazards are managed. DIYers don't have that luxury. Instead, they need to be their own safety manager and clean up after every step of the process. Pick up items like scraps of wood just cut from the ends of lumber or small pieces of pipe cut from a plumbing job to prevent slips and falls.

Don't rush the job

For most homeowners, DIY projects need to happen on the weekend when they're off from work. Friday evening effectively kicks off a 48-hour clock, and the crunch is on from there to get as much done as possible before heading back to the office. Resist the urge to scramble to finish. Rushing will cause careless mistakes and can also lead to unnecessary injury.

Regardless of how prepared you might be, accidents do happen. You can drastically reduce the risk of injury by using tools properly, and protecting yourself with the right gear.

2025 EMPOWERING EDUCATION GRANTS



TEACHER	TOPIC	SCHOOL DISTRICT
Destiny Gray	Cross Curricular Ag Science	Armstrong Township High School
Melanie Courchaine	Butterfly Explorers	Bement Elementary School
Mallory Ames	Christmas Floral Arrangements	Bismarck-Henning Rossville-Alvin High School
Jessi Schwartz	Morning STEM Buckets	Cissna Park Elementary School
Kaelannie LaFond	Self-Management	Donovan Elementary School
Irene Lago	Learning through Sensory Tools	Donovan Elementary School
Benjamin Verswijver	Bucket Drumming	Donovan Elementary School
Jon Donovan	Castles for Kids	GCMS Elementary School
Keri Dornbusch	Bridge Building	GCMS High School
Courtney Hemker	Enchanted Hallway Library	Georgetown-Ridge Farm High School
Ashley Knowles	Broadcast Journalism	Heritage High School
Sophie Small	Bah Drumbug	Hoopeston Area Middle and High School
Jennifer Nitsche	Foods Cooking Camp	Iroquois West High School
Heather Benard	Building a Love of Reading	J.L. Nash Middle School
Emily Fernandez	Action-based Learning Lab	Middletown Prairie Elementary School
Emily Tuttle	Lego Kits: Simple Machines on the Farm	Milford Grade School
Matt Crook	Drone Education	Monticello High School
Ronald O'Hearn	Geological Dig	North Ward Elementary School
Carol Moore	Enhancing Math Skills through Games	Oakwood Grade School
Amanda Nichols	Breaking the Mold: Stained Glass	Oakwood High School
Audra Nuckols	Trade Career Exploration	Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School
Michelle Esteppe	Incubator	Pine Crest Elementary School
Casey McCullough	Digital Photography & Technology Skills	Prairie Central High School
Raquel Lawrence	Curriculum Night 2025	Prairie Central Upper Elementary School
Nancy Stewart	PowerPoint 101	Prairieview-Ogden South Elementary School
Shana Calhoun	Eagle Swag Shop	Rantoul Township High School
Danielle Sage	Greenhouse	Rantoul Township High School
Tracy McCoy	Overbooked: Funding a Book Club	Ridgeview High School
Heather Webb	Reading Novels	Salt Fork South Elementary School
Kimra Anderson	Una Biblioteca Para Todos	St. Anne Community High School
Shannon Baer	Bring on the Books!	St. Anne Community High School
Chad McDaniel	Pickleball	St. Anne Grade School
Melinda James	Shark Tank	St. Joseph Grade School
Stephanie McCall	Holocaust	St. Joseph Middle School
Patricia Worthington	Expanding Music Education	St. Malachy School
Ana Vieira	Sphero BOLT Robots	Tri-Point High School
Susan Lemke	Field Trip: Museum of Science & Industry	Unity East Elementary School
Janna Zummo	Vending Machine Job Skills	Unity High School
Emily Smith	Reading Leads to Exploring!	Villa Grove Elementary School
Shane Phebus	Indianapolis State Museum Field Trip	Villa Grove Junior High School
Claire Henneike	Project Pen Pals	Watseka Community High School
Erica Miller	Veterans Day Breakfast & Assembly	Watseka Community High School
Kory Moyer	Chompsaws	White Heath Elementary School

We value our schools and teachers, because their students are tomorrow's leaders, scientists, inventors, entrepreneurs and engineers. Each year, Eastern Illini awards up to \$20,000 in grants to school districts in our service territory. We are pleased to award these grants to educators who inspire students and provide them with memorable learning experiences.