

IN THIS ISSUE

- TRIMMING TREES AND RELIABILITY
- MAINTAINING OUR RIGHT-OF-WAY
- 2026 POLICY PRIORITIES
- PREVENTING BACKFEEDING
- LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY



HONORING OUR LINEWORKERS

*Lineworker Appreciation Day:
April 13, 2026*

Our lineworkers are the backbone of our cooperative. As I am writing this, we are monitoring the path of a spring storm that has generated tornado warnings.

This month, we proudly recognize our lineworkers for the work they do around the clock in dangerous conditions to keep the power on. I often tell people how I have seen so many changes in technology that aid us in serving our members; however, the smart meters, iPads, and databases will not clear up damage when tornadoes tear down power lines and trees fall and break poles and cross arms. In fact, sometimes we cannot even use the technology of a bucket truck if the ground is too saturated to get close to a pole. Our lineworkers must safely reach the damaged job site by truck or by foot while avoiding debris, electric hazards, and roadway hazards.

These guys face many challenges, including ice, snow, wind, darkness, heat, rain, and late nights. They deserve to be celebrated, and we do so on Monday, April 13th, National Lineworker Appreciation Day.

I think of all the incredible lineworkers I have had the privilege to work with over the years. While the faces may have changed over time, one thing that has not changed through all these men is that burning desire to build new services for our members, ensure the system is maintained, and the willingness to work in any condition, day or night, to restore power quickly and safely.

We have recently had several members of our operations department retire who served us so well, and although I was sad to see them go, I am excited to watch them move into the next season of life as we welcome young men who are ready to start their lifelong career as a lineworker. I enjoy watching our veteran lineworkers teach and train them to grow in their skills and the cooperative way of life. It is amazing the brotherhood and lifelong relationships they build. It is during the times of crisis following major weather events when this comradery and training really shine through.

I cannot tell you how proud I am when I receive a call or letter from another cooperative thanking our guys for volunteering to come help them during a disaster and when I read the encouraging comments our members share with us.

I want to also give a shout out to our support personnel as we celebrate Administrative Professionals' Day on April 22, 2026. We greatly appreciate your compassion in serving our members and your dedicated work ethic. EIEC is fortunate to have outstanding employees.

One year ago, I was honored to be elected as your President. As I reflect on this past year, I am deeply grateful for the trust you placed in me and for the on-going commitment of our staff and fellow board members for organizational excellence.

As a member-driven organization, our success is measured by the value we bring to you. We have worked hard to ensure that our operations remain reliable and that we continue to put your interests first while making safety a top priority. As I move into year two, our goals encompass operational excellence, financial strength, member engagement, enhanced technology, succession planning, and plans for growth. Thank you for your patronage and continued support.



Bradley W. Smith

BRADLEY W. SMITH
President/CEO

TRIMMING TREES ENHANCES RELIABILITY

We love trees and value them

We love trees and we know how important they are to you and your community. We also know how important it is that you have reliable electric service. That's why we regularly trim trees – to ensure your power is both safe and reliable. Our team of vegetation management experts carefully and safely trims trees away from power lines to avoid power outages.

Eastern Illini has a standard clearing width of 20 feet (10 feet on each side of the line) for overhead distribution lines. This is necessary for several reasons:

- Costs are reduced if trees and brush can be maintained at such a distance that clearing is not needed again for four years.
- Service reliability is improved if trees and brush are far enough away from lines to prevent any possible contact.
- Work crews need access to the power lines to make repairs quickly and safely.

Eastern Illini will provide, at a minimum, 21-day direct notice, by mailing a postcard to members, county, township, city or village officials, or designees of them regarding non-emergency vegetation management activities. Direct notices to members will include a statement that circuit maps of affected areas are on file with the office of the appropriate government officials.

Generally, all standing vegetation within the designated clearing zone will be removed. Even brush and shrubs that will not grow to the height of the lines will need to be removed to provide line crews with adequate access to the line for inspection and maintenance. To accomplish our goal of providing reliable electric service, Eastern Illini will not trim trees to grow around the lines. Trees need to be removed if any portion of the trunk is located within the clearing zone.

Trees and vegetation are the leading cause of electrical interruptions in Illinois and across the Midwest, responsible for roughly 20% to over 40% of power outages annually, depending on storm activity. Trees are consistently ranked as the #1 cause of power outages, particularly during high-wind or ice storms. Roughly 41% of tree-related power outages occur between June and August.

As part of our tree trimming activities, we do provide wood chips free of charge to members when they are available in the area where we are trimming trees and brush. Letters are sent to members about the upcoming availability of wood chips and members may request to be added to the list for wood chip delivery. Availability depends on a number of factors and varies by area.



TREES CAUSE MAJORITY OF POWER OUTAGES

WHY DOES YOUR POWER PROVIDER TRIM TREES?

Although most trees do not present a problem, some of them grow into or crowd power lines, poles or other utility equipment and cause service issues. Unruly and overgrown trees can:

- ⚠️ **Cause outages.**
- 🔥 **Create fire hazards.**
- ⚡ **Break off and land on power lines.**
- 🌀 **Cause lights to flicker during high winds.**
- ❄️ **Get weighed down with ice and cause issues.**

Proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health, although sometimes a tree must be removed. This is a last resort, but it can be necessary if there are:

- 🌳 **Fast-growing trees directly under power lines.**
- 🌳 **Trees that are leaning into lines.**
- 🌳 **Trees that are declining, cracked or split.**

Unobstructed power lines make it easier and safer for utility crews to repair or service lines.



MAINTAINING OUR RIGHT-OF-WAY

Proactive vegetation management

Eastern Illini has more than 4,400 miles of overhead and underground power lines that are operated and maintained by the cooperative. It is important to maintain the rights-of-way for safety, reliability, accessibility, fire prevention and fewer outages and blinks. We appreciate your cooperation, and we will continue to be respectful when working on your property.

Trees are an essential part of the environment. They can protect our homes from the elements, give us clean air, and make the landscape attractive. However, during storms trees can be dangerous to a member's personal property. They can fall on homes, cars, and power lines. When a tree or limb falls on the power lines it disrupts service. This is why Eastern Illini does year-round trimming and removal of trees within the service territory.

If you have a tree with a limb near the lines or plan on trimming a tree that is in danger of falling on the lines, we ask that you call Eastern Illini, and we will send someone out to look at it first. Eastern Illini trims trees year-round to ensure reliability. We heavily focus on vegetation management during the spring, summer, and after storms.

We base where we trim in the service territory off a few different factors. First, we keep records of where we trim so that we can look back and see what areas have gone the longest without any trimming. Second, lineworkers will often report any

trees that threaten the lines or areas that need attention. In all cases, we work closely with the landowners before any trimming or removal is done.

Trees and vegetation can cause power interruptions and outages when they come in contact with power lines. Trees or brush that touch electric lines create short circuits that cause your lights to blink, clocks to be interrupted, and computers to lose information.

Clearing of power lines is on-going and is an overhead cost for Eastern Illini. By permanently removing trees and tall shrubs from the rights-of-way, the ongoing cost of clearing activities is significantly reduced. Trees and brush interfering with power lines raise costs in other ways. It takes longer for line crews to find problems and make repairs if they cannot see or get to problems.

Since trees and brush contain water, they can conduct electricity. If those trees or brush touch high-voltage wires, they are subjected to voltages of up to 7,200 volts. If the tree conducted even a fraction of that energy, it could be fatal to someone touching that tree or to a child climbing in the tree.

Eastern Illini makes significant investments in maintaining an unobstructed right-of-way through our vegetation management program and that positively impacts our overall reliability of service.



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



SIGN UP TODAY!

QUICK TIP

As we prepare for the seasonal shift, remember to set your ceiling fan rotation accordingly. In summer months, blades should rotate counterclockwise, which produces a downward draft that makes you feel cooler. Ceiling fans can boost comfort and let you adjust your thermostat a few degrees for energy savings.

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2026 POLICY PRIORITIES FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Advocating for members



The National Rural Electric Association Legislative Conference happens April 26 to April 28, 2026, at the Marriott Marquis Washington DC, and it promises to be a pivotal gathering for leaders in the electric cooperative sector.

This annual event provides an exceptional platform for attendees to engage with key policymakers and industry experts on critical legislative issues affecting rural and cooperative energy. Participants will have the opportunity to attend informative sessions, panel discussions, and networking events designed to enhance their understanding of legislative processes and advocacy strategies.

Eastern Illini leadership will be there as we are responsible for advocating on behalf of our members, to make sure decisions being made at the federal level protect reliable, affordable power in our service territory. As the demand for power continues to climb and the supply of always-available power sources is at risk, smart energy

policies are more important than ever. As we move forward in 2026, electric cooperatives including Eastern Illini, are focused on a few key issues that directly impact our members:

FASTER DISASTER RECOVERY

We support the bi-partisan FEMA Act of 2025. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is a critical partner in helping electric cooperatives restore power and rebuild their systems in the wake of natural disasters, but it could be more effective and responsive to the needs of rural America. If the FEMA Act passes, it will help utilities restore power more quickly after storms and disasters—while keeping costs lower for rural families and businesses.

CUTTING THROUGH RED TAPE

Outdated and overly complex permitting rules slow down essential upgrades to power lines and substations. Streamlining these processes helps us keep up with growing demand and improves reliability. We are urging Congress to pass comprehensive permitting reforms, including the SPEED Act and PERMIT Act, both of which cleared the House of Representatives in December.

KEEPING RELIABLE POWER

PLANTS ONLINE We are advocating for realistic energy regulations that don't force dependable power plants to shut down before reliable replacements are ready. Mandating emissions limits based on unavailable technology would force critical power plants off the grid and restrict the operation of new natural gas plants.

PROTECTING HYDROPOWER

Hydroelectric dams in the Pacific Northwest play a key role in keeping

electricity reliable and affordable across multiple states. Removing them would raise costs and threaten reliability, which is why we support preserving the Lower Snake River Dams.

SMARTER LAND MANAGEMENT

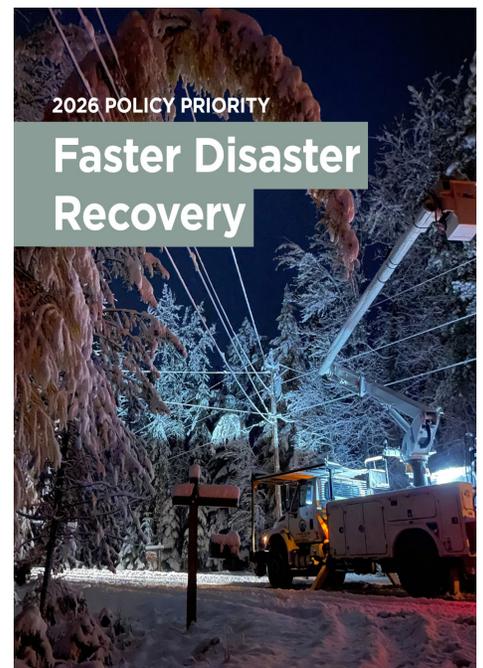
POLICIES We're advocating for smarter land-management policies like the Fix Our Forests Act that would allow electric cooperatives to better maintain power lines on public lands and mitigate wildfire risk.

MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR GRID

INNOVATION AND INVESTMENTS

Federal loan and grant programs help co-ops strengthen the grid, prepare for extreme weather, improve cybersecurity and explore new energy technologies—without shifting costs to members.

Electricity is essential and underpins nearly every aspect of modern life. Understanding today's evolving energy landscape is important as it shapes how electricity is produced, delivered and consumed. Advocating on behalf of Eastern Illini's members is a critical part of our commitment to you. These policy priorities all come back to the same goal: making sure our members have safe and reliable energy solutions, now and into the future.



PREVENTING BACKFEEDING

Generator safety tips

We know that buying a new generator is more than a purchase, it is an investment in reliable power, peace of mind, and operational continuity. But even the most advanced generators can pose safety risks if not used correctly, especially when it comes to a hazard called backfeeding. In this article, we will explain what backfeeding is, why it is dangerous, and how to prevent it with proper generator setup and use.

Whether you are powering a remote site, supporting critical systems in a business, or preparing for emergencies at home, safe generator operation is non-negotiable. Backfeeding occurs when electricity flows in the opposite direction to its intended path, from your generator back into the utility grid. This typically happens when a generator is connected to a building's electrical wiring without being isolated from the main power grid.

Imagine plugging your generator into a household socket to power your home during an outage. If the main breaker has not been turned off or a proper transfer switch is not in place, electricity from the generator can flow backwards through the power lines. This unexpected voltage can be dangerous for linemen and anyone who comes into contact with lines presumed to be de-energized.

Backfeeding puts both people and equipment at serious risk:

- **Lineworker Safety:** Lineworkers protect themselves from potential backfeed by assuming all lines are energized until proven otherwise.
- **Damage to Equipment:** Backfeeding can overload both the generator and electrical infrastructure, leading to severe damage or even fire.
- **Legal Liability:** If someone is severely injured or even killed due to improper generator use on your property, you could be held legally responsible.

Understanding how to use your generator safely is essential. Here are some ways to prevent backfeeding:

ALWAYS USE A TRANSFER SWITCH

The most crucial step in preventing backfeeding is to install a transfer switch, which safely isolates your generator from the grid. This device allows you to:

- Automatically or manually switch between utility and generator power
- Ensure power only flows in one direction
- Avoid electrical feedback into the mains

NEVER PLUG YOUR GENERATOR INTO A WALL SOCKET

This is often referred to as “backfeeding through the dryer outlet” or “suicide cord” connection, and it is both illegal and incredibly dangerous. This kind of setup bypasses essential safety features and



makes backfeeding highly likely. Instead, generators should always be connected via a transfer switch or direct wiring system approved by a certified electrician.

FOLLOW MANUFACTURER GUIDELINES

Each generator model has its own setup and safety instructions. Every model includes detailed documentation to help ensure safe use. Always follow manufacturer guidelines.

USE OUTDOOR-RATED EXTENSION CORDS AND CONNECTIONS

When connecting appliances directly to a portable generator, only use heavy-duty, grounded extension cords and cords rated for outdoor use along with sockets with GFCI protection if possible.

DON'T OVERLOAD THE GENERATOR
An overloaded generator can malfunction; damage appliances or cause a fire. Know your generator's wattage capacity and plan your energy use accordingly.



EASTERN ILLINI ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

APRIL 22, 2026

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL DAY

THANK YOU to the unsung heroes who keep the gears turning, the paperwork flowing, and the office humming with efficiency.

READY WHEN IT
MATTERS MOST

LINeworker
APPRECIATION DAY
APRIL 13, 2026

When the lights go out, lineworkers are ready to answer the call, day or night, to safely and quickly restore power.

Lineworkers take pride in powering the places we call home. Today and every day, we thank them for their service & commitment.



Eastern Illini
Electric
Cooperative