

PowerLines

December 2025

Proud to power the Christmas spirit

For 88 years, we have been powering the Christmas spirit. Through cold weather, ice and snow, crews have worked tirelessly over the decades to ensure the holiday season is merry and bright for everyone on our lines – keeping households warm, meals cooked, and the Christmas lights on and we are committed to continuing the tradition this year, and for many years to come.

The cost of delivering that power to you has been steadily increasing due to rising expenses. As a result of the rising costs of providing you with safe and reliable electricity, we are raising rates by an average of 3.5 percent in 2026. As part of this rate change, your board of directors has also approved a change that will collect 100 percent of our distribution fixed costs between the base and demand billing components. This is a continuation of the efforts the board put in place in 2024. These changes are designed to cover the increasing costs of doing business and bring fairness and balance for all members.

At Eastern Illini, we approach rate adjustments with due diligence, recognizing the impact these changes have on you. Our goal is to ensure the cost of providing safe, reliable energy solutions and exceptional service is shared equitably among those we serve. The new rate structure will take

effect with January electrical use, and the new rates will be reflected on the bill you receive in early February. The monthly base charge will increase, the hourly kWh charge will decrease, and the demand charge will increase. More details will be coming soon and available at www.eiec.coop or feel free to call us at 800-824-5102 to discuss.



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

Increasing rates is never a simple or easy decision, but it is necessary to ensure the future wellbeing and reliability of our cooperative. As we look forward to 2026, we will seek to stabilize future rate impacts without compromising safety and reliability of service.

It has been eight months since I became Eastern Illini's President/CEO and it has been a pleasure and

honor to work for you, our members, fulfilling Eastern Illini's mission to provide safe, reliable energy solutions and exceptional service. Thank you for this opportunity.

From everyone at Eastern Illini, we wish you and your family a healthy, safe, and happy holiday season.

Merry Christmas!

Bradley W. Smith

THANK YOU MEMBERS!

1480 members took the time to answer the Member Satisfaction Survey and we greatly appreciate your feedback. The highest rating was 9.6 for friendly and courteous employees and that made us proud. Our employees live and work locally and strive to provide exceptional service to our members.

In this issue:

- Deck the halls safely this holiday season
- Pros and cons of space heaters
- Best time to buy appliances & electronics
- Effective holiday budgeting
- 2026 Youth to Washington trip



- View your bill
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- Compare usage by month
- Review known issues
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FAVORITE HOLIDAY ELECTRICITY SAFETY TIPS

Deck the halls safely this holiday season

It truly is the most wonderful time of the year! But all of that holiday cheer can quickly come to a halt if someone gets hurt, especially from a preventable accident. Few accidents have as much potential to cause damage to your family and your home as those arising from an electrical issue.

So, before your family starts to “deck the halls,” we want to share our favorite holiday electricity safety tips.

Use Extension Cords Correctly

Do not use any extension cords that show any signs of damage. No matter how small a frayed wire or loose plug might seem, there is no amount of electrical tape that will fix the issue. An electrical spark from a faulty cord could catch your Christmas tree or exterior bushes on fire.

Also, you want to ensure that you use the properly rated extension cord for your needs. For example, the thinner cords rated for “indoor use only” cannot and should not be used for your outdoor decorations in any capacity. Not only can they short out from their inability to transmit the necessary energy to your lights, but they aren’t made to withstand cold, snow, and wet winter weather.

Test Holiday Light Strings

If the holiday light strings or bulbs show any damage at all, replace them with newer models. They will work better, look better, and be less likely to start electrical fires. Safety ratings also exist for decorative lights. Make sure that the lights used to adorn the outside of your home aren’t supposed to be used exclusively indoors.

Check Your Surroundings

Be aware of the placement of decorations, cords, and other electricity using items around your home. Take the time to clear away anything flammable that could come in contact with indoor and outdoor lights and decorations.

Items like brush, leaves, and branches have been known to catch on fire if they stay in prolonged contact with hot Christmas lights – especially if they are not energy-efficient LED bulbs.

When decorating outdoors, know where all power lines are located before you start. Contact with power lines can result in serious injury or death. Keep your tools, ladder, lights and self at least 10 feet away from power lines. Be sure materials are completely within your control to maintain a safe distance.

Never position decorations near power lines or electrical equipment, like pad-mounted transformers. If a decoration or other object contacts electrical equipment, do NOT attempt to remove it. Call Eastern Illini or 911 immediately.

Do not hammer tacks or nails into the electrical cord when hanging lights. Instead, use clips to safely attach lights to the house.

Review Your Electrical Setup

Before you flip the switch and win that neighborhood lighting contest, you should review your setup one last time.

Ensure all plugs are GFCI rated and in good working condition. Secure any cords in walking areas with tape or a rug. Do not overload your outlets. Use top-rated power strips that allow for higher levels of electricity. You want your home to be a beautiful winter wonderland, both inside and out.

Use lights that have been approved by Underwriters Laboratory, indicating they



have been inspected for potential safety hazards. Look for the “UL” mark on the tag. Red UL marks indicate the lights are safe for indoor/outdoor use, and green UL marks indicate the lights are only safe for indoor use.

Use Timers

We encourage you to use timers with your holiday decorations. Turning off your lights once everyone has gone to bed is an excellent way to ensure that an electrical accident doesn’t happen in the middle of the night. While you can always opt for a classic timer plug with a dial you set manually, you can also purchase a smart plug that gives you remote control via a smartphone app. With this device, you can set a traditional schedule, but you can also flip your lights on and off at times that don’t coincide with that schedule.

Nearly 5,000 people visit the emergency room each holiday season due to indoor and outdoor electric decoration mishaps, according to the United States Consumer Product and Safety Commission, so please deck the halls safely this holiday season. May your Christmas be merry, bright and safe.

The pros and cons of space heaters

During chilly Illinois winters, co-op members are always looking for ways to save money while maintaining comfort. Electric space heaters, which are readily available at department and home improvement stores, require little more than a suitable electric receptacle. But there are other considerations to consider in determining whether a space heater is right for you.

It is best to use a space heater for a single room and turn down the heat for your whole house. Using a space heater for a single room while lowering your central thermostat can be more cost-effective. It avoids heating unoccupied areas. However, using multiple space heaters to heat an entire home is more expensive than simply increasing the central heating.

A 1,500-watt space heater uses about 1,500 watts of power and can cost around \$48 - \$54 to run for a month..

Almost all the electricity consumed by a space heater is converted to heat, so the units themselves are nearly 100% efficient. However, the only scenario in which a space heater is eco-friendly or energy efficient is when it's used to reduce the amount of energy a central heating system uses. For example, if you work from home, using a space heater can be a good way to keep your office comfortable without heating the unused rooms in the rest of the house.

Government regulations limit space heater output to 1,500 watts, which is not nearly enough to heat an entire home. In

general, one square foot of space requires about 10 watts of electricity to heat, which means that a space heater operating at its maximum output can heat a room no larger than 150 square feet.

Space heaters and heating stoves were responsible for the largest share of losses in home heating equipment fires from 2018-2022, accounting for nearly half of the fires. Nearly half of all home heating fires happen in the months of December, January, and February.

Here are some of the most important considerations to reduce the risk of injury and property damage.

- DO choose a space heater with built-in safety features.
- DO keep the space heater away from flammable objects.
- DO exercise caution if you share your home with children, pets, or elderly members of the family who may be unsteady on their feet.
- DO place the space heater on a hard, level, nonflammable surface.

- DON'T leave a space heater running when you aren't in the room, and never leave it on overnight.
- DON'T use extension cords or power strips with an electric space heater.

While it's important to only operate space heaters at a time and in a place where they can be monitored by a responsible adult, there are several safety features that can give you additional peace of mind. Features to look for are:

- A tip-over switch that will automatically turn off the unit if it's not in an upright position.
- Automatic shut-off in the event of overheating.
- A thermostat that monitors the indoor temperature.
- Independent certification indicates that the product has been tested and meets certain scientific safety, quality, or security standards.
- Cool-touch housing, to prevent accidental burns.

It goes without saying that you should ensure your smoke detectors are in good working order before using any alternative heat source.

When it's not cold enough for a heater, but still chilly in your home, there's no substitute for a cozy blanket and a hot cup of coffee or cocoa.

We encourage everyone to consider warming yourself with non-electrical means before employing energy.

Keep these tips in mind when staying warm this winter to ensure that you stay safe when using your space heaters.



Purchasing Appliances and Electronics: **Best Times to Buy**

Product Type	Best Time to Buy for Discounts
 Refrigerators and Freezers	Late winter to early spring (March/April); New models arrive in spring, and older models are discounted; Holiday sales (Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day).
 Washers/Dryers, Dishwashers, Ovens and Ranges	September and October when new models are released and older models are discounted; Holiday sales (Labor Day, Black Friday, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day); End-of-year clearance.
 Large Home Electronics (TVs, home theater)	Holiday sales (Black Friday and Cyber Monday); Amazon Prime Days; Late fall/early winter; Other promos, like Super Bowl sales for televisions.
 Smart Assistants and Other Smart Devices	Holiday sales (Black Friday, Cyber Monday); Other sales events, like Amazon Prime Days.
 Air Conditioners, Heaters and Other Seasonal Appliances	Off season (purchase AC units in fall or winter, heaters in summer); Retailers offer bigger discounts when demand is low.

Additional Purchasing Tips:

- When possible, bundle major appliances for significant savings.
- Be on the lookout. When new models arrive, older models drop in price.
- Retailers typically clear out inventory at the end of the year, which mean big discounts.
- Local retailers typically try to meet end-of-month/end-of-quarter sale quotas, which could mean flexible prices and/or negotiating.



Plan ahead for effective holiday budgeting

The holiday season is a time of joy, giving, and celebration. However, it can also bring financial stress as we try to make the season perfect for our loved ones. To help you stay on track with your holiday spending here are some practical tips to make your holidays budget-friendly and stress-free.

Creating a holiday budget is essential for managing your expenses. Start by listing all potential costs, such as gifts, decorations, meals, and travel. Then, set a spending limit for each category based on your income and savings. Determine how much you can afford to spend overall. Allocate specific amounts for gifts, entertainment, and other expenses. Save a little each paycheck to fund your holiday budget. Tracking your expenses ensures you stick to your plan. Use a notebook or spreadsheet to monitor spending in real-time. Log each expense immediately to avoid overspending and regularly check your progress and if necessary, adjust.



Saving money during the holidays starts with prioritizing your purchases. Focus on meaningful gifts and look for discounts wherever possible.

- Take advantage of holiday promotions and discounts.
- Purchase holiday cards or wrapping paper in bulk for savings.
- Create thoughtful, handmade gifts for a personal touch without the hefty price tag.

When holiday shopping, prioritize what truly matters. Begin with gifts for immediate family and close friends. Then, consider charitable giving or smaller gestures for extended acquaintances. Avoid the holiday rush to secure the best deals and prevent last-minute overspending. Consider gift experiences like a shared meal or a movie night instead of costly items.

A holiday budget keeps your finances on track and prevents debt. By setting limits, you can avoid financial stress and enjoy the season without worry. Consider giving creative gifts that can be meaningful and affordable. These include DIY crafts or

baked goods, personalized photo albums or framed memories, and experience gifts like cooking classes or local tours.

Reducing expenses doesn't mean compromising on joy. Hosting potluck-style gatherings can save you money as well as limiting your gift list to family and friends.

If you are planning holiday travel, those expenses can quickly add up. Book flights or accommodations early or drive instead of flying to closer destinations. Planning ahead ensures you will avoid last-minute stress and overspending. Expenses can

really get out of hand when you overspend on non-essentials, or you wait until the last minute to shop.

When discussing holiday gifts with family and friends, open communication is key. It is important to set clear expectations for gift-giving, agree on spending limits for group exchanges and suggest alternatives gifting ideas like Secret Santa or shared meals.

American shoppers are expected to spend more during this holiday shopping season than last year despite economic uncertainty and rising prices. Shoppers will collectively spend \$1 trillion this

holiday season which is an increase of 3.7% compared with last year's spending.

The average American will spend around \$1,000 on holiday gifts, food and decorations. The top purchases for Christmas gifts this year include clothing, gift cards, electronics, toys, food and beverages.

Many people are blending online and in-store experiences to find the best

value, price, and discount. The Christmas shopping season started right after Halloween this year with stores piping Christmas music overhead in November. 21% of Americans begin shopping in October followed by another 22% who start in early November.

This holiday season use these tips to stay on track with your holiday spending. We wish for you an enjoyable, stress-free and financially sound holiday season. Start planning today to make your holidays merry and bright without breaking the bank!



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