

PowerLines

February 2026

Employees are the **HEART** of our cooperative

This month, as we celebrate Valentine's Day, I thought I would take a moment to highlight the "heart" of serving Eastern Illini members – our employees.

We have fifty-nine employees, three locations and various roles in Eastern Illini. The people who work at EIEC make our cooperative what it is. They are the "heart" of our service.

The responses to our 2025 Member Satisfaction Survey have been tabulated and the results are in. We want to thank the 1,480 members who took the time to let us know how we are doing. Your input is appreciated. We asked eighteen questions about service, professionalism, products, rates, and ease of doing business with us.

The highest rating we received, 9.6 out of ten, was for friendly and courteous employees. Historically this has been our highest score and one I am especially proud of. Across the board, from the people who take your calls, to our line crews, accounting, operations, and member relations departments, our employees are not only talented and dedicated, but they take pride in communicating the cooperative difference and providing personalized service.



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

I also want to share that Eastern Illini received an American Customer Satisfaction Index score of 89. ACSI is a well-known national customer satisfaction index model. This benchmark analyzes customer data and is a national economic indicator for customer happiness. All utilities combined have an average ACSI score of 76, so we are immensely proud of our score of 89. It is our employee's professionalism, knowledge, and willingness to solve problems that gained us such an impressive score.

On behalf of our board of directors and members, I want employees to know we value them and their contributions to our cooperative's success. The passion they bring to their jobs ensures that providing safe and reliable energy solutions and exceptional service is done exceptionally well.

We appreciate all our employees for the "heart" they bring to their work every day.

Cooperatively,

Bradley W. Smith

GO PAPERLESS IN 2026!

Turning on paperless billing is an easy way to save time, save the cost of a stamp, and save the environment. Paperless billing is convenient and easy. Your electric bill will be available in your SmartHub app when it is ready. Contact us today for more information.

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- View your bill
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SmartHub is available online or through an application on your cell phone. Sign up today!

Your Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

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HOW TO AVOID THINGS GOING WRONG BEHIND THE WHEEL

Tips for safer driving at night

Driving during the winter is tough enough with icy roads and gusty winds, but add nighttime to the mix, and you have a recipe for serious driving challenges. It doesn't matter what type of driver you are, driving at night takes a bit more effort and attention. From blinding headlights (particularly on new cars) to lower visibility, the dark presents unique hazards, especially for drivers with vision conditions or who wear glasses. Try these driving tips to help you navigate the night safely and reduce the likelihood of things going wrong behind the wheel.

Keep your windshield clean

Glare can increase when your windshield is dirty, as dirt disperses light. Certain treatments, like rain repellent, can also increase glare on your windshield at night. Keep your windshield as clear as possible to minimize glare and enhance visibility. A dirty windshield can also obstruct your field of vision. Clean both the inside and outside of your windshield and in the winter, do it once a week.

Keep your headlights clean

You can help increase visibility by ensuring your headlights are free from dirt and debris. Checking for clean headlights is especially important after a snowstorm or if you frequently drive in areas where hitting bugs are common.

Use high beams when needed

Be sure to use your high beams on rural roads. High beams can help you see deer and other wildlife on the road. Avoid using high beams in rain or fog, as they can reduce visibility. Turn off high beams when going up hills or around bends to avoid shining high beams at other drivers.

Avoid looking at headlights

It may be instinctive to look directly at a flash of oncoming headlights coming over the hill or around a corner, but practice averting your gaze. Looking into



bright headlights can temporarily impair your vision. Instead, you should train yourself to look away from the beams and, instead, keep your focus on the right shoulder of the road.

Most new cars use LED bulbs which are much brighter than the halogen bulbs used in older vehicles. Also, the increased height of bigger and taller vehicles means the oncoming headlights may point more directly into the eyes of drivers in smaller vehicles.

Check headlight alignment

Consider working with your mechanic to ensure headlights are correctly aimed. Wear and tear on your car can cause misalignment, and some cars are even manufactured with misaligned headlights. US laws don't require manufacturers to test alignment after the headlights are installed and the result can be devastating glare for other nighttime drivers, plus reduced visibility for you.

Dim your interior car lights

Interior lights should always be off or dimmed when driving at night. They make your eyes more used to light, which can reduce your night vision. If your interior

lights are on to help you or a passenger see something inside your vehicle, it may add to the existing distractions. Interior lights are also another source of light to reflect off your windshield.

Keep yourself alert for driving

Even small-time changes can leave us feeling jet-lagged. Daylight saving time can disrupt your circadian rhythm and fatigue can lead to blurred vision.

Increase your following distance

When driving at night with lowered visibility, it can be difficult to see and quickly react quickly to hazards in the road. Headlights only illuminate so far ahead, and drivers who are tired will likely react slower to unexpected obstacles. Leave more space between you and the vehicle in front of you. Whether it's a deer running out in the road or a large object that has fallen out of another vehicle's truck bed, these obstacles may require drivers to quickly brake or swerve to avoid a collision. Increasing your following distance will give you more time to react and adjust if the driver in front of you needs to stop or swerve unexpectedly to avoid an obstacle.

ACCOUNT INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Simplify your life with SmartHub!

Let's face it, life is busy. Between work, family, and everything else on your to-do list, keeping up with monthly bills should not be a hassle. That is where SmartHub comes in. SmartHub is our online account management platform designed to make managing your electric service easier, faster, and more convenient. More of our members are looking for ways to save time and money and be environmentally conscious. Look no further than our SmartHub service, online or through a free smart-device app.

With SmartHub, your account information is available 24 hours a day, year-round. You can see helpful graphs of your energy use, make payments, change your account details, or report an outage. And, if you choose, you can tell us to stop sending your paper bills.

Here are just a few reasons why you will love using SmartHub:

Pay Your Bill Anytime, Anywhere

With SmartHub, you are no longer tied to business hours or waiting on the mail. Whether it is first thing in the morning or late at night, you can pay your bill online in just a few clicks. It is fast, secure, and gives you full control over your payments.

Go Paperless and Declutter Your Life

Tired of dealing with stacks of paper bills? When you sign up for paperless billing through SmartHub, you will receive your statements digitally – no more paper clutter in your mailbox or on your kitchen counter. You will get an email from us letting you know when your statement is ready for viewing. Plus, by going paperless, you are helping to reduce waste and save trees. It is a win-win!

Going paperless prevents the possibility of delayed or lost bills in the mail. It keeps paper out of your trash.



And it helps Eastern Illini control costs. Between paper and postage, sending a paper bill to members twelve times a year adds up!

Stay Informed with Account Alerts

Never miss a payment or important update again. SmartHub allows you to set up alerts and notifications about your account, such as payment reminders or billing confirmations. You will always be in the loop and up to date.

Report Service Issues Quickly

Experiencing an outage or service issue? You can report it through the SmartHub app. Skip the call with just a few taps on your phone and our team will be notified right away. It is quick, convenient, and keeps you connected to the help you need.

Save Time, Save Money, Save a Tree

Life's too short to spend time writing checks or searching for stamps. By paying online and opting for paperless billing, you will not only save time but also do your part in helping the environment. SmartHub makes it simple to stay organized and eco-friendly at the same time.

Ready to simplify your life?

Sign up for SmartHub today. You will be amazed at all the information at your fingertips, and you will be glad you did!

If you already know the many benefits of SmartHub and use it to manage your EIEC electric account, now might be a great time to stop getting a paper bill and go paperless.

When you log into your account, select **SETTINGS > PAPERLESS BILLING** from the left side menu to update your paperless settings. The process is quick and easy and with the touch of a button, your electric bill will be available online and anytime. We welcome your call at 800-824-5102 to discuss signing up for SmartHub, going paperless, or to talk about any account management questions.



Cupid's guide to energy efficiency

Valentine's Day is the perfect time to show your loved one—and your energy bill—a little TLC. Here are some creative ways to celebrate the holiday while keeping energy use to a minimum:

Dim the Lights for Romance

Set the mood with energy-efficient LED candles or dimmable LED bulbs. Not only do these options create an intimate atmosphere, but they also consume far less electricity than traditional lighting. They use up to 75% less electricity than incandescent bulbs. Also consider a dimmer or limit the number of lights.

If you are looking to set a romantic mood or plan a fun dinner for the kids, consider dining by candlelight. Turning off traditional lights during peak evening hours can add up to cost savings over time.

Cook Together

Are you celebrating Valentine's Day with a special dinner at home? Make your home-cooked meal an energy-efficient one by using smaller appliances like your microwave, crock pot, or air fryer instead of the oven. Using a microwave instead of the oven or stovetop can reduce your energy used for cooking by more than 50%.

If your meal requires the oven, be sure to turn on the oven light and look through the window if you need to check on your dish. According to the Department of Energy, every time you open the oven door the temperature inside drops by as much as 25 degrees, making the oven work harder and use more energy.

If you have cooked a special meal and have leftovers to spare, be sure to let them cool to room temperature before transferring them to the fridge. Hot food will cause the refrigerator to work overtime to cool down, using more energy.

Unplug for Quality Time

Turn off the TV, put away the devices, and enjoy each other's company. Play board games, share stories, or take a walk. It is a chance to strengthen your connection while saving energy.

If you are heading out for Valentine's Day, make sure to unplug any electronics first. Many types of electronics and office equipment, including cell phone chargers, computers, printers, and game consoles continue to draw electricity while they are plugged in and turned off. You can also invest in a power strip and turn everything off at once with the push of a button.

Cuddle Up

Make your Valentine's Day celebration as comfortable and cozy as possible by adjusting your ceiling fan to rotate at a low speed in the clockwise direction. This forces warm air near the ceiling down, making your space feel warmer.

You can also invest in a programmable or smart thermostat to easily control the temperature in your home according to your plans to be home or away, resulting in

energy savings. Instead of turning up the thermostat, grab a cozy blanket and snuggle up with your partner. This is a fun way to save energy while staying toasty and warm during a romantic movie.

Turn Off Your Heater, and Light Up the Fireplace

Instead of turning on your heater, light up your fireplace. The fireplace adds warmth and a romantic atmosphere. Use a long-lasting wood which will provide light and heat for hours. In addition, use an energy-efficient heat exchanger for your fireplace and make sure to close the damper when it is not in use.

Give Energy-Saving Gifts

Skip the traditional chocolates and flowers and opt for practical gifts like smart thermostats, energy-efficient power strips, or even cozy blankets. By incorporating these energy-saving tips into your Valentine's Day plans, you can focus on creating lasting memories with that special someone while keeping your energy consumption in check.

According to the Farmer's Almanac, Valentine's Day falls right after the midpoint of winter, so we still have some colder days ahead. It is important to continue being cognizant of your energy use until we can switch off the heat and enjoy the milder days of spring. That means you can use these tips all season long.

This Valentine's Day, leverage energy-saving strategies to create the perfect Valentine's Day and love your wallet just as much as you love each other!



Have a safe Super Bowl celebration!

The Super Bowl is one of the most exciting events of the year, bringing friends and family together to cheer for their favorite teams, enjoy delicious food, and celebrate. However, with all the festivities, it is important to keep safety in mind. Whether you are hosting a party or attending one, here are a few essential Super Bowl safety tips to ensure a fun and incident-free day.

PREVENTING TV TIP-OVERS

With all eyes on the game, your TV is the centerpiece of the party. However, an improperly secured television can pose a serious risk, especially in homes with young children or pets.

Anchor your TV: Use a wall mount or secure straps to anchor your TV to the wall or a stable piece of furniture.

Choose stable furniture: Place your TV on a sturdy, low-standing piece of furniture designed to hold its weight.

Keep cords out of reach: Tuck away cables and cords to prevent tripping hazards or curious hands from pulling on them.

FOOD SAFETY FIRST

Super Bowl spreads often feature a variety of dishes, from wings to dips to desserts. While tasty treats are part of the fun, food safety is crucial to avoid any game-day illnesses.

Cook thoroughly: Ensure meats, such as chicken wings and burgers, are cooked to the proper internal temperature.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold: Use warming trays or slow cookers for hot foods and ice trays for cold ones.

Avoid cross-contamination: Use separate utensils and cutting boards for raw and cooked foods.

Do not leave food out: Perishable items should not sit out for more than two hours. Refrigerate leftovers promptly.

DRINK RESPONSIBLY AND AVOID DUIs

The Super Bowl often includes alcoholic beverages, but it is essential to prioritize safety when it comes to drinking.

Designate a driver: If you are going out, make sure someone in your group agrees to stay sober and be the driver.

Use ride-sharing services: Utilizing apps like Uber and Lyft are a safe alternative if you have been drinking.

Host responsibly: Offer non-alcoholic drink options and encourage guests to pace themselves.

Plan ahead: If you are hosting, provide a space for guests to spend the night if they are unable to drive home safely.

AVOID SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS

With excited fans moving around, it is easy for injuries to happen.

Clear pathways: Remove clutter and secure rugs to prevent tripping.

Spill cleanup: Keep an eye out for spilled drinks or food and clean up immediately.

Limit overcrowding: Ensure your party space is not overly packed to reduce the risk of falls.

PROTECT YOUR YOUNGEST FANS

Super Bowl parties can be overwhelming for children. Take extra precautions to keep them safe.

Supervise play areas: Create a designated space for kids to play safely, away from the TV and food areas.

Avoid small objects: Keep choking hazards, like small game-day decorations or food items, out of reach.



Set boundaries: Ensure kids know where they can and cannot go during the party.

FIRE SAFETY

From candles to overloaded outlets, fire hazards can arise during celebrations.

Do not overload circuits: Avoid plugging too many devices into one outlet.

Have an extinguisher nearby: Keep a fire extinguisher within reach in case of emergencies.

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Super Bowl parties can get loud and crowded, but it is important to be considerate of those around you.

Monitor noise levels: Keep the volume reasonable, especially late at night.

Notify neighbors: Let them know you are hosting a party and share your contact information. Consider inviting your neighbors to your party.

Keep these safety tips in mind to ensure an enjoyable Super Bowl celebration. With a little preparation the only thing you will have to worry about is whether your team will bring home a win.



WE LOVE OUR LINEWORKERS



We love our lineworkers!
They keep the lights on 24/7
in all kinds of conditions –
wind, rain, sleet and snow,
all to maintain a power flow.

**Join us in thanking them for
providing safe, reliable energy
solutions and exceptional
service every day!**