

# PowerLines

January 2026

## A Bright New Year!

As 2025 closes and 2026 begins, there are feelings of hope, renewal, and possibility. The new year is not just a date on the calendar; it is a fresh start, a blank page waiting to be written. It is a time to reflect on what has passed, to learn from our experiences, and to look forward with optimism: new goals, new adventures, new chances to grow.

With the holiday rush now over, we have a moment to breathe, look back on the challenges and blessings of the last year, and consider what is most important to us moving forward. At Eastern Illini, the roadmap we use to move forward is the cooperative principles. Whenever we have big decisions to make or goals to set, we keep these guiding principles in mind and know they will keep our cooperative on course.

Many of you have heard us talk about these pillars of our cooperative. The principles guide the way our co-op works, such as open membership and democratic control by our members. Of course, concern for our community is also one of those principles. After all, each of us at EIEC is a member of our community. We shop at the same stores, go to the same churches, and have kids on the same sports teams as our members. As a result, we are invested in our communities.

Our strategic plan, guided by co-op

principles, keeps us focused on financial stability, organizational excellence, reliability, innovation and nurturing our employees and community. As we continue forward, the board will place emphasis on the importance of reinvesting in our system. These investments are critical to delivering on our values and ensuring long-term reliability for all members.



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

As you read this message, I am attending the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Close-Up conference for the first time. This annual event provides opportunities for me and other electric cooperative CEOs to learn new strategies, enhance our leadership skills, and gain valuable insights into industry challenges. I look forward to using the knowledge

I will gain at this conference to be effective at EIEC in the year ahead.

As I look to the future, I remain as excited as ever for all that we will accomplish as a cooperative. From the board of directors and our employees, we want to wish you a happy and prosperous new year!

Cooperatively,

*Bradley W. Smith*

## AUTOMATIC BILL PAYMENT

If a scammer contacts you with fake disconnection threats, you can rest easy knowing your bill is paid automatically through a pre-arranged, secure channel. Automatic bill payment also eliminates the risk of exposing checks and banking information through the mail. Call us today at 800-824-5102 to learn more.

## In this issue:

- Making your home more energy efficient
- Be a safe driver this winter
- Understanding the new electric rates
- Shopping smart in the new year
- 2026 Youth to Washington trip



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

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

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative \* 330 W. Ottawa \* Paxton, IL \* 60957

800-824-5102 \* info@eiec.coop \* www.eiec.coop \*  facebook.com/easternillini

# SAVE BY REDUCING YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S ENERGY CONSUMPTION

## Making your home more energy efficient in 2026

Making your home more energy efficient in 2026 is a smart financial move, particularly in today's cost-of-living crisis. With rising energy prices, reducing your household's energy consumption can lead to significant savings on your monthly utility bills, freeing up money for other expenses.

Here are a few practical, cost-effective strategies to optimize your home's energy use for a more efficient home that's kinder to your wallet.

### **Upgrade to energy-efficient appliances**

Despite the initial upfront cost, replacing old appliances with energy-efficient models can significantly reduce energy consumption. Look for appliances with high energy ratings, as they use less electricity and can lead to substantial savings over time.

### **Install smart thermostats**

Investing in smart thermostats allows you to have more control over your home's heating and cooling systems. By giving you the ability to control your home's temperature remotely, these systems help lower your energy costs while reducing your environmental impact. You can set automated schedules to maintain the perfect temperature throughout the day, and some models even detect when you're returning from work or school, adjusting the climate to ensure a comfortable welcome.

### **Increase insulation**

Proper insulation in walls, attics, and floors helps maintain indoor temperatures, reducing the need for excessive heating or cooling. Upgrading insulation can lead to significant energy savings in the long run, especially in older homes.

### **Seal leaks and drafts**

Identify and seal any leaks around windows, doors, and other openings to prevent heat loss. Install weather



stripping as an effective solutions to keep your home airtight. It helps keep your home insulated by blocking drafts, which can significantly reduce your heating and cooling costs. Weather strips come in various materials, including rubber, vinyl, and metal, and are easy to install. Weather stripping can reduce your energy bill as much as 30 percent.

### **Install energy-efficient lighting**

Switching to LED bulbs can cut lighting energy use by up to 75%. Additionally, incorporating motion sensors can further enhance efficiency to ensure no lights stay on unnecessarily and wasting electricity.

### **Maintain HVAC systems**

Another worthwhile investment to cut back on energy costs is ensuring your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems remain in good condition to continue to operate as efficiently as possible. Make sure to keep changing filters regularly and when needed, consider getting regular professional check-ups to prevent energy wastage through wear and tear.

### **Utilize smart power strips**

Even when turned off, appliances can draw power such as when left on standby or

in sleeping mode. Smart power strips cut off electricity to devices when not in use which can help eliminate "phantom" energy usage.

### **Adjust water heating practices**

Lowering the thermostat on your water heater to 120°F or below can also help save energy. Additionally, being mindful of hot water use and insulating water heaters and pipes can contribute to making your home more energy efficient over time as well.

### **Change your ceiling fans to clockwise**

Running your ceiling fan on a low speed, spinning clockwise, can create an updraft that pushes warm air from the ceiling back down into your living space. Make sure you run it at a low setting, though, as it can cool the space off if the air is being pushed too quickly.

Implementing these strategies can reduce both your utility expenses, while making your home more energy efficient. Staying informed about the latest technologies and innovative practices in energy efficiency will also enhance your home's performance in the years to come.

# WIND, ICE, AND SNOW: BE PREPARED AND TAKE IT SLOW

## Be a safe driver this winter

Severe weather can be both frightening and dangerous for travelers. Winter storms, bad weather and sloppy road conditions are a factor in nearly half a million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths every winter. Drivers should know the safety rules for dealing with winter road emergencies. Please be cautious while driving in adverse weather. Follow guidance from local authorities during winter weather events and, when possible, stay home even after the storm passes.

Here are some cold weather driving tips to keep you safe. Have a bundle of cold-weather gear in your car, such as extra food and water, warm clothing, a flashlight, a glass scraper, blankets, medications, and other important items that you may need if you are stranded. Make certain your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

Keep at least half a tank of fuel in your vehicle at all times. Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area. Don't use cruise control when driving on slippery surface, such as on ice or snow.

If you are traveling long distances, it is important to be prepared. Have your vehicle inspected prior to hitting the road. Check the weather along your route and when possible, delay your trip if bad weather is expected.

If you get stuck in the snow, stay in your vehicle and call for help. Winter brings slick roads, fading daylight, unpredictable storms, and sometimes erratic driving by others on the road. Use common sense and remember to drive safely so you get where you are going in one piece.

## WINTER DRIVING SAFETY TIPS

To ensure you arrive at your destination safely, follow these winter driving safety tips:

**If there is snow down... Please slow down!**

**Drive at an appropriate speed** for the conditions.

**Allow more time** to arrive at your destination. Patience is the key.

**Know the road conditions** *before* traveling.

**Remove snow and ice** from all glass and lights.

**Check your tires'** tread and pressure.

**Don't crowd the plow...** provide at least 5 car lengths and do not pass a snow plow when it is actively working.

**Do not use cruise control.**

**Provide more stopping distance.**

**Be mindful of black ice.**

**Turn on your headlights.**

**Drive defensively.**

**Never drive through "white-outs".**

**Delay your trip until conditions improve.**

**No texting** while driving.

**Never leave your vehicle if stuck.** Wait for help to arrive.





# THE COST OF PROVIDING SAFE AND RELIABLE ELECTRICITY

## Understanding the new electric rates

The cost of delivering power to Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative members has been steadily increasing due to rising expenses across the industry. As a result, providing members with safe, reliable electricity will cost an average of 3.5 percent more in 2026.

As a part of this rate change, the EIEC Board of Directors has also approved a change that aims to collect 100 percent of our distribution fixed costs between the base and demand billing components. This change will also lower the kilowatt hour (kWh) billing component. These changes reflect the increasing expenses of doing business while striving to bring fairness and balance to all members of our co-op.

The latest adjustment continues the path that our board began in 2024, when we added the demand component to all rate classes. The new rate structure will take effect with January electric use, and the new rates will appear on the bills distributed in early February.

The impact on your bill depends on several factors. First, how much energy is used and when it is used. Overall, this rate increase is designed to collect 3.5 percent more revenue. This is an average and every member's rate change will be different.

The base charge will increase for Rate 1 and 7 (general single phase) members and will change from \$53 to \$60 per month. The demand charge for Rate 1 and 7 members will change from \$2.12 to \$4.89. The first 1,000 kWh will decrease from 12.47 to 10.289 cents per kWh and over 1,000 kWh will decrease from 9.47 to 8.289 cents per kWh. The base charge for Rate 5 (general three phase) members will remain at \$100 per month. The demand charge for Rate 5 members will change from \$1.96 to \$4.28. The first 1,000 kWh will decrease from 13.36 to 11.475 cents per kWh and over 1,000 kWh will decrease from 9.86 to 8.975 cents per kWh.

Rate 8 and Rate 20 classifications are being consolidated with other rate classifications. Rate 8 and Rate 20 were established more than 30 years ago and at the time those

rates were beneficial to electric heat members. Over the years, our rate structure has evolved, and the electric heat rate has run its course. Members currently on Rate 8 will be classified as Rate 5 and members currently on Rate 20 will be classified as Rate 1.

We're always looking for ways to manage costs. We also remain committed to providing reliable service to you. Doing so requires that system maintenance programs be continued and investments be made to train our employees, replace aging equipment, and rebuild and upgrade our electric distribution system.

EIEC uses a third-party contractor to undertake a cost-of-service study every three years. EIEC will undertake another study in 2027 and make any needed changes in early 2028. The restructuring of our rates is a more equitable approach as it distributes the costs based on system impact. Feel free to call us at 800-824-5102 to discuss the new rates in more detail.

## NEW RATES

Rate 1 & 7, General (Single Phase)	2025	2026
Base Charge	\$53	\$60
Demand	\$2.12	\$4.89
First 1,000 kWh	12.47	10.289
Over 1,000 kWh	9.47	8.289

Rates 5, General (Three Phase)	2025	2026
Base Charge	\$100	\$100
Demand	\$1.96	\$4.28
First 1,000 kWh	13.36	11.475
Over 1,000 kWh	9.86	8.975

Rates 24, Large Power (Three Phase)	2025	2026
Base Charge	\$1.10/kVa	\$1.10/kVa
Demand	\$5.02	\$5.02
All kWh: Summer	10.34	9.91
All kWh: Winter	9.34	



# Shopping smart in the new year

The new year brings questions about spending money wisely and what makes sense to purchase in January. Shopping smart is all about thinking a little bit ahead — and now is the time to stock up on certain products. Tackling these items in January sets you on solid financial footing to build on over the next 12 months.

Here are the items you should consider buying or investing in during the first month of the year.

## Winter Clothing and Gear

January is prime time for post-holiday sales. Look for discounted coats, boots, gloves, hats and scarves from last season — you may be able to update your winter wardrobe at a fraction of the cost you'd pay at other times of the year. January is also an excellent time to replace worn-out gear before the deepest, coldest parts of winter set in. Investing in some new warm layers sets you up to enjoy the outdoors all the way into spring.

## Gym Memberships & Fitness Equipment

One of the most popular New Year's resolutions is getting healthier through diet and exercise. You may think that means gym memberships and workout clothes will be marked up in January, but that's not always the case. Many gyms and fitness companies will bombard you with deals for memberships and equipment in January. Take them up on it!

Lock in a discounted gym membership to motivate yourself to stick to your workout goals this year. Or put together your home gym — look for significant savings on treadmills, weights, yoga mats, fitness trackers and more. Investing in your health is one of your best financial decisions.

## Home Goods

A white sale is a sales event where white goods like sheets, towels, linens, and other household goods are

offered at steep discounts. In January, white sales are traditionally offered, as retailers want to clear inventory after the holiday shopping season ends. White sales help sell excess sheets and towels piled up in stockrooms over the holidays. If you are considering sprucing up your home for the new year, now might be the time to stock up on new linens and household staples.

## Holiday Decorations for Next Year

When the new year arrives, holiday decorations get slashed as much as 50-75% off as stores rush to clear out inventory. While next Christmas is months away, January may be the time to stock up for the next holiday season. If you can store the items, consider buying lights, ornaments, and everything you need for this year's holiday season. Having decor on hand makes holiday prep faster, more accessible, and more affordable year after year.

## Tax Prep Services

The new year kicks off at the beginning of tax season. Though you have until April 15 to file, it is to your advantage to start planning early. Getting your tax preparation done early has multiple benefits. You can file as soon as possible and get your refund faster (or have more time to pay your bill, depending on your situation). You also have more time to contribute to retirement accounts, HSA, and pre-tax benefits to lower your tax bill.

## Flights and Other Travel Packages

After the holiday season travel rush, consider locking in a flight or vacation



package before peak season kicks in. A good rule of thumb is to book your flights out around 3-5 months before you plan to go on vacation. So, if a spring or summer vacation is in your future, book now while airline sales are hot.

## Vehicle Maintenance

January's winter weather can take a toll on vehicles, so getting your vehicle serviced and protected against the elements is crucial. Tires lose pressure and tread in cold temperatures, while shocks and struts wear out faster on ice and snow. Windshield wipers, batteries, and antifreeze may also need replacing as well. The beginning of the year is an excellent time to get on top of preventative maintenance before problems leave you stranded.

Taking care of these critical items or stocking up on certain products in January sets you on the road to financial savings and success all year.

Learn about government, explore museums, memorials, & monuments.  
Meet members of Congress and find out how cooperatives work.  
Get to know other high school students from across the country.

Sophomores & juniors who live on Eastern Illini Electric Co-op lines:



# Youth

## TO WASHINGTON

### ALL-INCLUSIVE FREE TRIP

JUNE 15 - 22, 2026

APPLY BY 01-30-26

[www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop)



Eastern Illini  
Electric  
Cooperative