

PowerLines

February 2020

Spring is getting closer



I thought the column needed some color added to the commentary this month. The photograph above was taken during a recent October morning prior to sunrise. I hope you enjoy it. Take time to view our sunrises and sunsets in Central Illinois – they have been spectacular recently.

Last year at this time I mentioned that we should all revisit and recommit to our 2019 resolutions. Even if you have not been able to keep your 2020 resolutions yet, it is not too late to start! Three of my five predictions from 2019 were correct:

- The Cardinals made the playoffs,
- The Packers made the playoffs (as I write this, they are in the upcoming NFC title game),
- Lovie and the Illini won six games and earned a bowl trip.

(The two that did not pan out were the Cubs and Bears not making the playoffs).

In lieu of any predictions this year, I will just note that 2020 is an election year and leave the predictions to the professionals. I recently read that early voting for the primary election in Champaign County begins on February 6 at the Brookens Administrative Center in Urbana.

The Illinois legislature has reconvened for its 2020 session. There has been a lot of recent news swirling in Springfield and Chicago around the energy industry in the state concerning another round of subsidies to keep nuclear plants open, additional renewable subsidies, and higher percentages for renewables overall. We will keep you updated on any legislation/regulations that may affect electric cooperatives and EIEC.

We will all soon become tired of the election news and coverage – but we do have hope – the spring season is not far away. A sure sign of spring is the arrival of pitchers and catchers to spring training camps in Florida and Arizona this year beginning February 11, with exhibition games starting about ten days later.

The winter weather this year has been mild to this point. Enjoy the latter stages of winter and stay safe and warm.

Sincerely,

Bob Hunzinger

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- 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!

Mark Your Calendar

June 18, 2020

The Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, June 18, 2020 at the Paxton-Buckley-Loda Junior/Senior High School.

Your Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

Keeping the lights on

We really dislike it when the power goes out, just as much as you do. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible.

At Eastern Illini we set an annual goal for reliability. The goal for 2020 is 99.5%. This goal measures power outages and the reasons for them. It could be an ice storm or a car that hits a power pole. Many times, the reasons for outages are beyond our control. What we do have control over is how fast we can restore power.

In 2019, our reliability was at 99.4%, which means the average Eastern Illini member was without power 5.4 hours last year. Here are the main reasons the power goes out.

Storms

Conditions brought on by storms such as high winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service. Lightning itself does not impact outages as much as people think, but it can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can cause a problem if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer. Strong high winds and ice that accumulates on lines can also impact distribution.

Trees and vegetation

Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines, and vegetation can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. Ice and wind can make matters worse.

We strive to address any problems as soon as they happen. Contact us at 1-800-824-5102 with questions about outages or visit our website at eiec.org.

This is why we work so hard to keep power lines clear. At EIEC we have a forestry crew who manages vegetation in our service territory. They work hard to keep the area around power lines clear of debris.

WHY IS MY POWER OUT?

A storm or a squirrel may be to blame

 Safe Electricity.org



When the power goes out, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible.

Here are some common reasons the power goes out:



STORMS:

Mother Nature can interfere with power delivery.



TREES AND VEGETATION:

This is why we work so hard to keep power lines clear.



ANIMALS:

Curious animals can cause damage, especially squirrels.



ACCIDENTS: Run-ins with a utility pole or other equipment can cause an outage.



PUBLIC DAMAGE: Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism or theft can all interfere.



OVERLOAD: This happens when demand spikes, like on a hot summer day.



EQUIPMENT ISSUES: We maintain and inspect equipment regularly, but sometimes malfunctions occur.

Animals

It is estimated that 11 percent of outages are caused by our furry friend the squirrel. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Raccoons and snakes can also interfere with service.

Accidents

Cars, trucks, and farm equipment that have a run-in with a utility pole can cause an outage.

Power delivery

interruption EIEC receives electricity from generation and transmission suppliers. When that connection is interrupted, it causes outages.

Public damage

Unsafe digging, line damage, vandalism, or theft can cause interruptions.

Overload

This happens when demand spikes, such as when too many air conditioners run on a hot summer day, causing blackouts or brownouts.

Equipment issues

We maintain and inspect all our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions. We strive to address any problem as soon as it happens.

Working for you, our member consumers

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

EIEC encourages you to keep phone numbers and email addresses current. There may be times when a land line or cordless phone may not work, so additional contact numbers like cellphones are beneficial to ensure we can reach you. Feel free to make changes to your contact information on your bill stub before sending it in, or use SmartHub as a way to update your contact information. You can always call us at 1-800-824-5102 with your updated contact information.

AVOID SCAMS

Eastern Illini continues to remind members to be aware and vigilant in protecting themselves from potential scam artists. Scams may include such modes as phone, email, postcards, and even personal contact. Eastern Illini will never call you asking for personal information. All co-op employees carry IDs and all vehicles are clearly marked with the co-op logo. When in doubt, call us at 1-800-824-5102. If you believe you have been a victim of a scam or any other type of fraudulent schemes, contact your local police department or state's attorney.

BILLING

Your monthly bill is due on the 17th of each month. You will be billed on or about the same date monthly. This may vary due to holidays and weekends. Payments may be made by mail, online through SmartHub, through the automated phone bill payment system, recurring credit card, night drop box in front of the building in Paxton or stop by the office in Paxton during business hours: Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m. If paying by mail, do not send cash. Write your account number on the check or money order to ensure your account will be correctly and promptly credited and enclose the payment stub from the bottom portion of your bill.

CAPITAL CREDITS

When someone becomes a member of EIEC and begins purchasing electricity, they also earn capital credits. Capital credits are the retained margins left over at the end of the year. Your capital credit account is specific to you. In 2019, EIEC returned over \$1.5 million in capital credits to members who received electricity from 1992 - 1993.

We encourage you to visit the unclaimed capital credit database and search by last name: www.eiec.org/capital-credits

ANNUAL MEETING

All Eastern Illini members are invited to the Annual Meeting which will be held on Thursday, June 18, 2020 at the PBL Junior/Senior High School in Paxton. The event begins at 3 p.m. and includes a meal, entertainment, seminars, kids activities, and bucket truck demonstrations. The business meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

Eastern Illini, a not-for-profit business, exists to provide safe and reliable electricity that improves the quality of life for our members. We are committed to service excellence guided by the seven cooperative principles:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member's economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training, and information
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for community

For more information contact us at:

www.eiec.org
1-800-824-5102
info@eiec.coop



AVOID FIRE RISKS AND ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Tips for winter safety

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, members are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700

home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips:

1. Don't overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or

multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged.

Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many members will use portable generators to power their homes. We advise that you never connect a portable generator into your home's electrical system.

For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

DO: Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.

DO: Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.

DO: Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

DO: Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.

DO: Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.

DON'T: Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.

DON'T: Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.

DON'T: Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.

DON'T: Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.

DON'T: Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.

KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

Slow down in work zones

HELP KEEP LINEWORKERS SAFE

Lineworkers take great pride in providing safe and reliable service, but their job involves working around high-voltage power lines in all kinds of weather conditions.



DO YOUR PART TO HELP KEEP LINEWORKERS SAFE



Never plug a generator into an indoor or outdoor wall outlet, which can cause voltage to back feed.



Workers need to efficiently and safely restore power when it goes out; please be patient.



Do not post signs on a utility pole, especially with staples and nails, which can puncture protective gear.



Slow down and move over in utility work zones. Crowding workers can cause accidents.

It's nearing 5 p.m. on a workday. Your boss wanted that last-minute report completed and your kids needed to be picked up from soccer practice. You jump in your car and are going over the speed limit, so you won't be late. On the way to pick up your kids, you approach a work zone. You know you should slow down, but you just don't have time, so you rush through it and ignore the orange work zone signs.

You're having a garage sale and you've made all your signs to post around town.

You bring the stapler and attach signs to several utility poles. What can it hurt? Everyone does it. Either of these scenarios could injure or kill one of our lineworkers.

The job of an electric lineworker is not easy. Their job often involves working long hours on and around live power. Many times they are required to repair power during inclement weather and less than desirable climate conditions. It's been said when the lights go out so do they.

Lineworkers take great pride in providing safe and reliable service and we ask that you do your part to keep them safe:

1. Slow down and move over in work zones. Cars or trucks that go too fast not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or not moving over can also put a lineworker who is working high up in a bucket truck in danger by causing it to move or sway.
2. Do not post anything on a utility pole, especially with

staples, nails, or tacks. These can puncture insulated gloves or other protective clothing and expose workers to high voltages.

3. Never plug a generator into an indoor or outdoor wall outlet. The power that back feeds into the electric line could electrocute a utility worker.
4. Please be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to efficiently and safely restore power. We appreciate your help in keeping our employees safe, especially lineworkers.



Take a lesson from Cupid.
Don't miss the mark on
Valentine's Day savings.

This Valentine's Day, let **Co-op Connections** from Eastern Illini help you cover the cost of flowers, chocolates, dinner, and everything else you need for a romantic evening.

Find all the ways to save at Connections.coop