

PowerLines

A monthly publication for member/owners of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

December 2014

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Holiday Schedule

Our office in Paxton, and our warehouse facilities in Gilman and Pesotum will be closed December 24 and 25 for Christmas, and December 31 and January 1 as our employees celebrate the holidays with their families.

As always, please call us at 800-824-5102 if you experience an outage or other issue.



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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Community Involvement

This holiday season, let's all remember to be thankful.

As a member-owned electric cooperative, we're committed to powering our communities and empowering you to improve your quality of life. It doesn't have to stop there, though.

Just think how much we could improve the lives of those around us if we took the time this holiday season to help others.

While there are plenty of worthwhile organizations in our area that are worthy of your donations, sometimes volunteering our time is even more important than giving our dollars. Something as simple as visiting a

nursing home to spend time with the folks who built our community is a great place to start.

This holiday season, can you think of any simple ways you can help make a difference for someone?

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!

Bob Hunzinger



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative recently presented a \$510 check to the Illinois Special Olympics. Jackie Walk, an area director for the organization, accepts the check from Eastern Illini's Bob Hunzinger (left) and Bob Dickey. The funds were from a Touchstone Energy Balloon event in Penfield.

How renters can fight the winter chill

These simple, low-cost tips can help everyone save on winter utility bills.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 33 percent of Americans lease their homes. Unfortunately, many lease agreements forbid major alterations to rental properties. But don't worry, renters! Consider using these low-cost,

energy-efficient tips to improve the efficiency of your home this winter.

Hot savings

Heating the home typically makes up about 48 percent of your utility bill. Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter – Energy.gov recommends 68 degrees Fahrenheit to boost energy efficiency.

heater is set too high – which is a waste of energy. Older models of water tanks are often not insulated, which can be easily remedied by covering them with an insulating jacket.

Bright ideas

Lighting is one of the easiest places to start saving energy, and savings are not strictly limited to winter months.

Did you know?

Heating your home accounts for up to 48 percent of your utility bill.

A few tips to help you save:

Clean or replace your furnace filter once a month (or as recommended).



Caulk and seal windows to avoid air leaks.



Keep draperies and shades open during the day and closed at night.

During the winter months, take advantage of heat from sunlight. Open draperies and shades during the day to allow natural light to heat your home. Remember to close them in the evenings as the temperature drops and windowpanes become chilly.

Does your home have window air conditioning units? This winter, remember to insulate the units from the outside with a tight-fitting cover, available at your local home improvement center or hardware store. This keeps heated air from escaping outside. If desired, you can remove the window unit during winter months to prevent energy loss.

Another way to save on heating is to make sure your water heater is set at the lowest comfortable setting.

Have you experienced scalding hot water when taking a shower? If so, it's likely that your water

Try replacing a few of your most frequently used light bulbs with ENERGY STAR-qualified lights, and save more than \$65 a year in energy costs. ENERGY STAR-qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use 75 percent less energy and last several times longer than incandescent light bulbs, saving money on energy bills and replacement costs.

LED lighting is also getting more popular. LEDs are even more efficient than CFLs and will last even longer. The price for LEDs has also come down quite a bit recently.

Practicing energy-efficient habits is another great way to reduce energy use. Always turn off your lights when leaving a room.

Other ways to save

Leasing an older home or apartment? Odds are you have single-pane windows and old or missing caulk. Don't let the winter chill seep indoors! Apply caulk around window frames, sashes and door panels to combat air leaks. Also, be mindful when using electronics at home. Unplug devices when not in use, and use smart power strips to save on energy use.

To learn more ways to be energy efficient around the home, visit the energy efficiency section of our website at www.eiec.org/efficiency.

Visit www.energy.gov for more ways to save!

Winter preparedness

Are you ready for winter's cold grasp?

Snow and ice are inevitable when dealing with winter storms, but being prepared can make a world of difference. Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative recommends the following tips to help you prepare for wintry blasts.

Winterize your home

Winter storms wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for extreme cold and hazardous conditions. Remember to maintain and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year to ensure they're working safely and properly.

Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to make the most of your heating system.

Freezing temperatures often cause water pipes to burst. Remember to insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to avoid frozen pipes.

Consider installing storm windows for better insulation. You can also cover windows with plastic (from the inside) to keep the cold out.

Make sure everyone in your family knows where the home's fire extinguisher is located and how to use it properly. House fires occur more frequently during winter months, as people tend to use alternative heating methods that may not be safe.

Prepare a winter survival kit

Severe winter storms often bring heavy accumulation of ice and snow, which can lead to downed power lines and extended outages. Eastern Illini crews will work hard to restore power, but having a winter survival kit on hand is a smart idea.

Food

Store food that does not require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, dehydrated meats and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand. Ready.gov recommends five gallons per person.

Medication

Be sure to keep all your prescriptions filled in case of a major power outage.

Identification

Keep all forms of identification handy, such as driver's licenses, photo IDs and social security cards. Bank account information and insurance policies are also good to have on hand.

Other items

Don't forget basic necessities like a first aid kit, blankets, flashlight, battery-powered radio and extra batteries.

We can help:

The energy efficiency specialists at Eastern Illini now offer two options to get you on your way to energy efficiency savings.

Our basic walkthrough is offered at no charge. With this option, one of our energy advisors will visit with you at your home about ways you can lower your energy bill.

Our more advanced energy evaluation is only \$50, and includes items like a blower-door test, infrared photography analysis, duct blasting, and more.

Contact us at 800-824-5102 for more information or to schedule your visit.

Stay warm and safe

If an outage occurs, you should plan for an alternate heating source. A fireplace, propane space heater or wood-burning stove could be sufficient. Fuel and wood-burning heating sources should always be vented, and make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. Always practice extreme caution when using alternate heating sources.

If you decide to use a portable generator during an outage, make sure it is placed outside the home for proper ventilation. Be careful not to overload the generator. Use appropriate extension cords that can handle the electric load.

Follow these tips, and your family will stay warm in the event of a power outage. For more information on preparing for winter storms, visit www.ready.gov.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Be merry and bright, but don't let your holiday lights shine all night. Save money on your electric bill by installing a light timer for your decked out home. It can help lower your electric bill and reduce energy consumption. Use a manual timer plugged into an electrical outlet to automatically turn lights on and off as scheduled.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Scholarship contests announced

Eastern Illini Electric Co-op is proud to offer two separate scholarship programs for graduating seniors.

The first scholarship opportunity involves students from all of the electric cooperatives in Illinois. The second one is exclusively for Eastern Illini member families.

In 2015, ten scholarships, of \$1,500 each, will be awarded to eligible high school seniors through the Illinois Electric Cooperative (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Five scholarships will be awarded to students who are children of Illinois electric cooperative member/owners. All Eastern Illini member families are eligible. A sixth scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director.

Three scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college who are

children of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

The IEC scholarship applications are due by December 31, 2014 and can be found at www.aiec.coop.

A tenth scholarship, of \$1,500, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship, will be awarded to help pay for costs associated with lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield.

Students who are children of an Illinois electric cooperative member/owner, or are related to an employee or director at an Illinois electric co-op are eligible, as are individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard. Applications for this scholarship must be postmarked by April 30, 2015. See the official rules for complete details on all of the IEC scholarships.



Youth to Washington Scholarship

Eastern Illini's scholarship contest, the Youth to Washington \$1,000 Scholarship, offers two graduating seniors the chance to win a \$1,000 college scholarship, and earn an expenses-paid trip to our nation's capital in June.

While in Washington, D.C., the winners will have the opportunity to see government in action while visiting historical landmarks like the U.S. Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Smithsonian Museums.

One of last year's winners, Morgan Hotaling of Watseka noted, "The youth tour was truly a once-in-a-lifetime, inspiring trip that I know I'll never forget. I learned so much about our country's history!"

The application deadline for the Youth to Washington Scholarship contest is January 31, 2015.

The online application and official rules are available on our website at www.eiec.coop > Community Involvement > Educational Programs > Scholarships.

For more information, students should contact Debbie Laird at Eastern Illini. She can be reached at debbie.laird@eiec.coop or 800-824-5102.



Eastern Illini's 2013/2014 scholarship winners visit the United States Capitol during the Youth to Washington tour. Applications for the 2014/2015 contest are available at www.eiec.coop.

—It's all part of a day's—

WORK.

(Okay, a really long day's work.)

We'd like to thank you for helping us score an "86" in the recent American Customer Satisfaction* Index. Your feedback puts Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative a full 11 points higher than the utility industry average.

Even though ACSI recognizes "customer" satisfaction, Eastern Illini members are in fact "owners." That's an important distinction. And it's why we strive to provide a level of service that's second to none.

Naturally, we're honored. But it won't go to our head. We'll remain the dependable source of electricity you never have to think twice about. Unless, of course, you're being surveyed by the ACSI.



Looking out for you.



*Touchstone Energy ACSI member ratings using the ACSI customer satisfaction survey questions are compared to the ACSI ratings of residential customers of the U.S. largest investor-owned energy utilities.



The lively sound of carols and storytelling around the table, the familiar smell of pine and grandma's freshly baked cookies, the sparkle of softly falling snow and the little ones' breathless anticipation of Santa's arrival.

Let the sounds, aromas and visions of the season be the memories you cherish.

Merry Christmas from our cooperative family to yours.

