

# PowerLines

December 2018

## Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

During the end of the year as the holiday season approaches, many of us reflect on the past year and think about our community. The term community has various meanings for each of us. For electric cooperatives such as Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, community is our members, employees, and the territory in which we provide service.

### This month, we highlight the return of over \$1.1 million in capital credits to our members.

Please see page 2 for more information. The return of member equity in the form of capital credit payments is a tangible investment return to the larger EIEC community.

On page 4 we include information on our Youth to Washington Tour program.

This is a great opportunity for youth in our community to learn about state and national government while interacting with other cooperative youth from across Illinois and the United States.

In 2019, there will be elections for four of the nine EIEC Director districts. Three of these districts encompass our southern territory, and the other district includes our northeast area. We will provide more information in future issues of this publication, and on our website and other social media. If you are interested in additional information about the election, please contact us.

At our October board meeting, your Directors agreed to return any excess operating margins (over and above our budgeted levels) to members in 2018 in the last billing cycle that includes

December usage. We expect the total to be returned to members to be more than \$600,000, however the final amount will depend on the revenue and expenses for the final few calendar months.

We have preliminary results from the member survey completed during October. Overall, you rated your cooperative very highly (a score of 89 out of 100 on the customer satisfaction benchmark).

Thank you! Member feedback was also provided in a variety of other areas. This information provides us areas to further improve member service as well.



**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Recently passed Illinois legislation has provided for renewable incentives for solar and wind installations. We have been following this issue closely. Although there are presently

legal challenges as to whether cooperative members can participate in this program, EIEC continues to receive numerous inquiries relative to solar installations.

There are numerous solar developers active within Illinois and in our territory. If you are considering installing renewable energy, especially solar, please contact us early in the process, as we can help you with rate comparison information and analysis, along with helping you navigate the administrative processes.

Cooperatively,

*Bob Hunzinger*

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**SmartHub is your online and app portal to:**

- View and pay your bill
- Report an outage
- Track your electric use
- Update your account info

**Visit [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) to get started!**

## Holiday Schedule:

Eastern Illini's offices will be closed December 24 and 25 for Christmas, and on December 31 and January 1 for New Years. As always, feel free to give us a call at 800-824-5102 to report an outage.

Have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful holiday season!

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

# It Pays To Be a Co-op Member

## Capital Credits: The Power of Membership

As a member of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, you have ownership. Any excess revenue above what it costs to run the business (margins earned) is returned to members in the form of capital credits.

We are pleased to let you know that Eastern Illini is returning (retiring) more than \$1.1 million in capital credits to members, via more than 6,000 checks, that will arrive in late November.

Capital credits allocated from one half of 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 will be returned to those who were members during those years.

Any profits made by Eastern Illini are referred to as margins. Margins result when our revenue is more than our expenses. At the end of each year, any available margins are allocated back to you, our members, into your capital credit account.

When the Board of Directors has determined that the Cooperative has met its financial requirements and any other obligations, they may decide to return (retire) capital credits to members.

Eastern Illini's President and CEO Bob Hunzinger noted, "The cooperative business model is special for many reasons, but one of the main reasons is capital credits."

"The financial stake that current members and previous members have, really make Eastern Illini the successful cooperative it is. We are fortunate that our current financial conditions allow us to return a portion of our members' equity investment."

Each year we send out a capital credit



**Capital Credit checks, like the one held by Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member, Melvin Coulter, will be delivered to members in late November. Melvin lives near Paxton, IL and has been an EIEC member since 1957.**

Retirements refer to the portion of the capital credits allocation to members that is refunded every year, depending on the financial condition of the cooperative.

Typically, after utilizing capital for up to 30 years, they are retired.

Capital credits have no cash value until they are retired and refunded to you. They cannot be used to pay your electric bill.

You will want to consult with your tax professional regarding capital credits on your tax return.



## Keep a Current Address on File

Even if you no longer receive electric service from Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, you may still be entitled to receive checks from your capital credit allocation account. Keep us updated with your current mailing address, so we can mail your capital credit checks if you are no longer an active member. Should the member of record pass away, the capital credit account is payable to settle the estate. Contact us for more information.

allocation notice, so you are aware of your equity. Allocations may be made annually for each member, based upon the amount of electricity purchased during the prior year. An allocation is the amount set aside into a separate account to be used as operating capital for reliability improvements and maintenance projects over a period of years.

If you, or anyone you know, received electricity from Eastern Illini in the 1980s, please visit the unclaimed capital credit database and search by the last name of the member.

[www.eiec.org/your-account/unclaimedcc-search](http://www.eiec.org/your-account/unclaimedcc-search)

# Tips for Purchasing New Appliances

It's probably been quite a while since you purchased a new appliance. Most people don't buy new appliances very often, so when it is time to take the plunge, it can be somewhat overwhelming. Here are a few tips as you consider a new fridge, dishwasher or other big-ticket items.

## Remember to Measure and Measure Again!

Before purchasing new appliances, measure the space around the old appliance and then measure the new appliance to confirm the new appliance will fit in the allocated space. Measure everything – the clearance between your island and your counters, the width of your doorways, and how far a front-loading washing machine door swings out into the laundry room.

## Read the Reviews

Do your research online and read customer reviews. A good price doesn't always equal a good deal. Ask your friends and neighbors what brands they prefer and why. Know what features you really want and weigh the pros and cons. For example, french door refrigerators comprise 75 percent of all sales, but freezer storage on the lower half is limited compared to other models.

## Do your Homework on Energy Efficiency

Most new fridges are going to be a lot more efficient than the ones that were on the market a decade ago. A 1988 fridge used 1400 kWh a year, while modern energy-efficient models use only 350 kWh a year. At 15 cents per kWh, savings can be as much as \$160 a year. Review Energy Star ratings when considering the purchase of new appliances.

This link provides helpful information:  
<https://www.energystar.gov/products>

Take a look at Energy Efficiency Guide links that tell you average kWh usage and cost to run the appliance annually and compare between models. Try to stay below \$25 for dishwashers and \$40 for refrigerators in energy use per year.

## Consider Online Shopping

Shopping online for appliances is an option to consider. It gives you the opportunity to compare models regarding reliability, specifications and efficiency. Online retailers may offer coupons and some have special deals and lower prices.

## Recycle Old Appliances

Some retailers will pick up and recycle your old appliances for free. If the appliance is still functioning, you will probably come out ahead by selling it on Craigslist or at a local resale store.

## Free Delivery and Promotions

Most retailers will deliver for free from a local store which saves you gas and saves you having to haul a heavy new appliance home without damage. Watch for promotions, holiday sales and store-wide discounts and if possible, time your purchase to coincide with savings.

## When shopping for new appliances, there are two price tags you should consider:

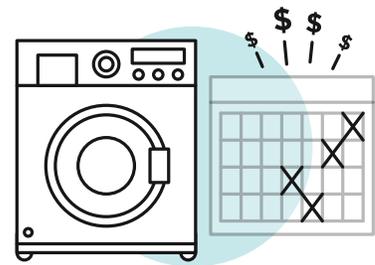
1.

Purchase price of the appliance (think of this as a down payment)



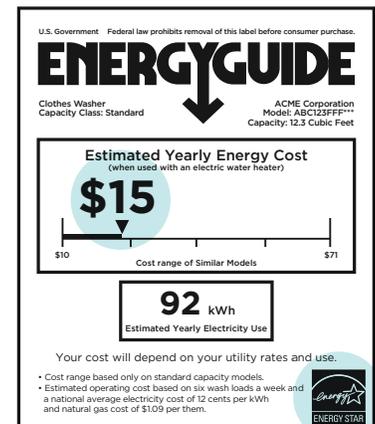
2.

Cost to operate the appliance over its lifetime (how much energy the appliance uses)



## That second price is important because you'll be paying for the appliance's energy use for the next 10 to 20 years.

- **Look for the ENERGY STAR® label.** ENERGY STAR-qualified products exceed the federal minimum standards for efficiency and quality.
- **Carefully review the EnergyGuide label on the appliance.** The label provides information about how much energy an appliance uses compared to similar models.
- **Once you choose your make and model, compare prices.** Keep in mind, many retailers will match a lower price offered by competitors.
- **Recycle or sell your old appliance.** Ask the retailer if they'll pick up your old appliance, or you can sell it yourself. Either option is better than the landfill!





Want to have fun, meet students from across the country, talk with your legislators, and spend a week in D.C.?

**SAY YES!** and apply for the Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative 2019 Youth to Washington Trip, June 7-14, 2019.

More information at [www.eiec.org](http://www.eiec.org).

- Sons or daughters of an Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member currently receiving electric service from the cooperative are eligible to apply.
- Available to students who are sophomores or juniors in high school.
- Up to six applicants will be selected as finalists and will attend Youth Day in Springfield.
- Following Youth Day, four of the finalists will be chosen to represent EIEC on the 2019 Youth to Washington trip that takes place June 7 - 14, 2019.
- The application deadline is January 31, 2019.
- Contact Gayle Ford, at [gayle.ford@eiec.coop](mailto:gayle.ford@eiec.coop) or call 800.824.5102 for more information.



Eastern Illini  
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# An Enduring Family Business: Power Planter

**Drill, plant and backfill with Power Planter Earth augers. They make easy work of planting and digging projects.**

Greg Niewold is an Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member from Loda. He is part of Niewold family farms and owns and operates Power Planter, a third-generation family business, that manufactures Earth augers for home gardeners, landscapers, golf course greenskeepers and commercial outdoor maintenance personnel.

Power Planter began 30 years ago, as a diamond in the rough, when a local university's groundskeeper asked Wayne Niewold, Greg's grandfather, to create a more efficient way to plant trees, shrubs and flowers on campus. With that, the idea of the Power Planter was born, and today Greg leverages the rich history from the past to forge new and innovative uses for the Power Planter as well as expanding the market internationally and online. Power Planters are now sold in Australia, Canada, Europe and New Zealand as well as through distributors in the U.S. Power Planters can also be purchased on Amazon and Ebay.

Today, Power Planters are used by real estate agents to install "for sale" signs in client's yards and by oceanfront resorts when they need to install beach umbrellas and sand fences. Of course, Power Planters come in very handy for ambitious gardeners and landscapers who are ready to plant 50,000 flower bulbs quickly. Power Planters come in two colors: black and pink.

Most gardeners consider digging a necessary evil and Power Planter is a garden-friendly auger that connects to a cordless drill to dig holes and create conditions for healthier plant growth. Because the auger pulverizes the soil, roots can quickly settle in. Looser soil allows for better absorption and



nutrients and reduces the risk of runoff or erosion. Some Power Planter owners use them to install moisture probes in their farm fields. Another unique use of the Power Planter is by farmers to mix talc and graphite into seed boxes during the planting season.

Power Planter has had the same phone number since 1989: 217-379-2614. When you call it, chances are you'll personally talk to Greg or Grace. Greg enjoys speaking to customers. During the conversations, he gathers information about their use of the Power Planter and their level of satisfaction with the product.

Power Planter comes with an unconditional guarantee on parts, materials and craftsmanship, so Greg has been known to overnight replacement parts to customers, if necessary. Customers are often taken aback that the owner answers the phone, but that's how they roll at Power Planter. Customer satisfaction is high on their priority list and decision-making and product development center on customer wants and needs.



The augers are made 100% in the U.S. They feature high quality, durable craftsmanship. Seven employees make the parts and assemble, weld, paint and ship the product from Loda to locations worldwide.

It is a family affair at Power Planter. Greg's Aunt Grace is an integral part of the business and she keeps the front office day to day operations running smoothly. Greg often brings his kids into the office, so they can see how the business is run and know more about entrepreneurship.

Greg is a graduate of PBL High School and the University of Illinois. He taught agriculture and industrial technology at a local high school before returning to run the family business. He and his wife, Lisa and three children make their home in Loda.

More information on Power Planter can be found at <https://powerplanter.com/>.





Eastern Illini  
Electric  
Cooperative

# MERRY CHRISTMAS



**WISHING YOU A  
JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON AND  
A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH PEACE AND HAPPINESS**