

# PowerLines

February 2016

## The power of co-ops

### Providing you with electric service is a cooperative effort.

Every day, Eastern Illini Electric Co-op is hard at work to make sure you have the electric power you need, exactly when you need it. And behind the scenes we are working with a network of cooperatives to make that happen.

Eastern Illini is a part of Prairie Power, Inc., (PPI) our generation and transmission cooperative. We, along with nine other Illinois co-ops, receive all of our electricity from PPI. We helped to create this second tier co-op so that we have more control over power supply and pricing.

It also takes much capital to run an electric co-op, so when we need to borrow funds, we turn to the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC). CFC is owned by electric co-ops throughout the country, and is among the most respected lenders on Wall Street.

As you know, each month we generate an electric bill that we send to you either electronically or through regular mail. We use National Information Solutions Cooperative to ensure we can apply the latest technology, help lower your energy costs and send timely, accurate bills to you.

No business can operate without several different types of insurance, such as general liability, auto and workmen's compensation. So once



#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

again, along with other electric cooperatives across the country, we are members of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. This allows us to maintain reliable coverage at an affordable price.

It also takes a whole lot of "stuff" to operate an electric co-op, such as poles, wires, transformers and many other items that you may not see. This is why we partnered with other co-ops to create a materials and supplies cooperative called United Utility Supply.

We are also a member of Touchstone Energy, a nationwide alliance of over 750 local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. Our participation allows us access to a wealth of information. It also allows us to benchmark our performance so that we can learn from others as we constantly strive to serve you better.

All of these cooperatives offer us - and ultimately you - economies of scale that we couldn't otherwise achieve. That helps us provide you with the best possible pricing and the latest technology.

So, while you are a member/owner of Eastern Illini, you are actually connected to many other co-ops. And being connected to this cooperative network ensures your needs are met in the most efficient way possible.

*Bob Hunzinger*

### In this issue:

- Prevent home electrical fires
- A starting point for savings
- Two spots open on co-op board
- The power behind your power
- Control your costs with SmartHub

### How do you want to save today?

#### Co-op Connections® Card



- Pharmacy discounts
- Cash Back Mall
- Healthy Savings
- Coupons.com
- Appliance rebates

Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) to get your card and start saving.

### Did you know?

You may be eligible for assistance in paying your winter electric bill.

Contact your local community action agency for more information, or call us at 800-824-5102 for a complete list of agencies.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# Prevent home electrical fires

The following checklist can help you prevent electrical fires in your home.

**Electrical outlets** – Check for loose-fitting plugs. Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed. If you have young children, cover unused outlets with safety caps or install tamper resistant outlets (TROs). TROs have a built in safety feature that won't allow any object in the outlet except for electrical plugs. If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Have an electrician check it out.

## Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)

– Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, workshop, basement, garage, and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the test and reset button monthly to ensure they are working properly.

**Plugs** – Never force plugs into outlets. Do not remove the grounding pin to make a three-prong plug fit a two-conductor outlet. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

**Cords** – Make sure cords are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs, tightly wrapped around any object, or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors, or other objects.

**Extension cords** – These are not intended as permanent household wiring, so use them on a temporary basis only. If you find you need more electrical outlets, talk to an electrician about installing more so you will not need to use extension cords.

**Light bulbs** – Check the wattage to make sure light bulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings

than recommended on the fixture. Make sure they are screwed in securely so they do not overheat.

**Appliances/Electronics** – If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker, or has given you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. Look for cracks or damage in wiring and connectors. Use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics. Make sure your appliances and electronics are placed in dry locations. If an appliance has been water damaged, be sure to replace it.

## Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs)

– Consider having AFCIs installed in your home. An AFCI is installed in a circuit breaker and monitors the flow of electricity throughout your home. If the AFCI detects any abnormality, it will shut the system off, preventing a fire.

## Electrical wiring

– Check for loose wall receptacles, loose wires, or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and then contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.

## Circuit breakers/fuses

– Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuit they are protecting.



### DANGER! Outlet Overload

Every year, U.S. fire departments respond to an estimated **25,900 home electrical fires**. These fires cause an estimated **280 deaths, 1,125 injuries and \$1.1 billion in property loss**.

Thirty-nine percent of home electrical fires involve outlets and receptacles, and other electrical wiring.

To ensure safety, you should only use about 80 percent of the available current for each electrical outlet in your home.

Are you overloading outlets?  
Use this formula to find out:

**WATTAGE/VOLTS=AMPS**

#### Example:

Let's say you are using 2,000 watts of power (for one outlet). Divide the watts by the volts in your home (typically 120), and you come up with 16.6 amps of current being used. With a 20 amp electrical outlet, you are using about 80 percent of the available current.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration, Home & Garden

# A starting point for savings

**The top five energy users in your home offer the best place to look to lower bills.**

While most people would like to be more energy efficient and save money, often it feels overwhelming because many folks don't know where to begin.

To help jump start your effort, it is useful to know what the top energy users are in your home. With this knowledge, you can choose a path that works best for your family.

## Adjust the temperature

Together, home heating and cooling use the most energy and take the biggest bite out of your energy budget. On the bright side, there are ways you can achieve at least 10 percent savings by taking a few simple low-cost or no-cost steps.

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter and 78 degrees in the summer.
- Cleaning the filters of your HVAC system can cut costs from five to 15 percent. Do it every few months.
- Clean the coils around your electric baseboard heater to maintain maximum efficiency.
- Caulk and weather-strip around windows and doors to prevent heat from escaping to the outdoors.
- Use a programmable thermostat to save up to 10 percent on your utility bills.

## Shine the light on savings

Take a fresh look at the lighting in your home. If you still use incandescent lighting, your light bulbs are operating at only 25 percent energy efficiency. Replacing your home's five most frequently used bulbs with Energy Star-certified LEDs can save you \$75 per year. Another easy way to save is to always turn lights off in rooms that are not being used.

## Water heating efficiency

Just as it is energy-wise to insulate your roof, wall or floor, it also pays to wrap your hot water heater with an insulating blanket. This is all the more critical if you have an older unit. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. For additional efficiency and savings, insulate exposed hot water lines and drain one to two gallons of water from the bottom of your tank annually to prevent sediment build-up.

## Cold hard cash in your wallet

If your refrigerator was purchased before 2001, chances are it uses 40 percent more energy than a new Energy Star model.

Regardless of the age of your fridge, there are additional steps you can take to save energy and money. For example, don't keep your refrigerator too cold.

The Department of Energy recommends temperatures of 35 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees Fahrenheit for separate freezers (used for long-term storage).

By understanding how your home uses energy, you can determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet. For additional ways to save, contact Eastern Illini's energy experts at 800-824-5102.

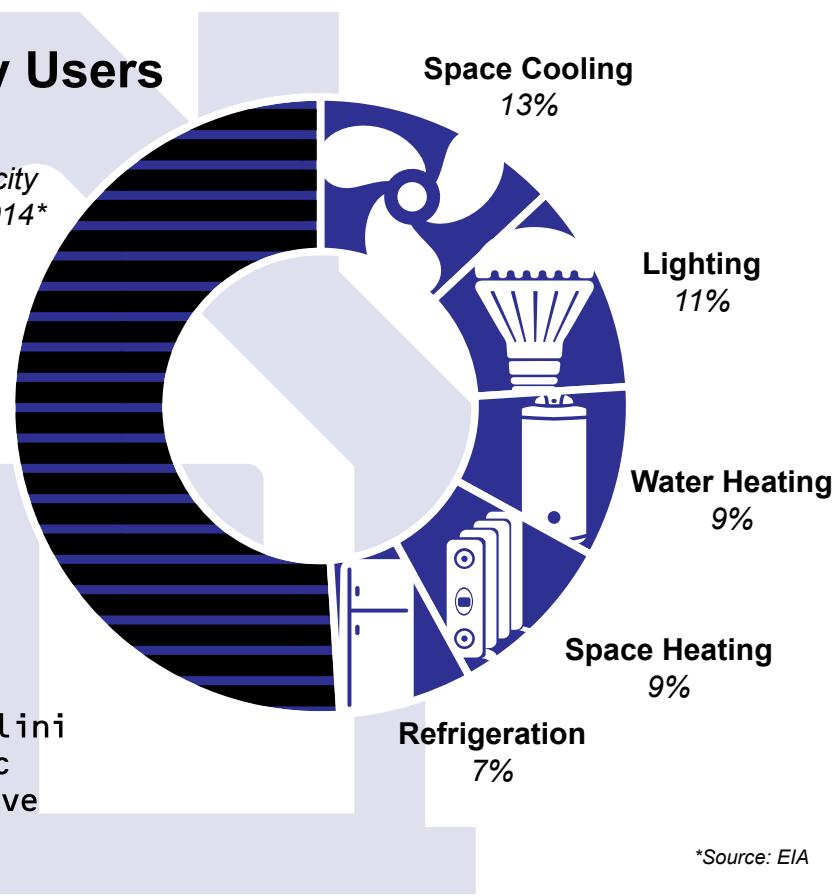
## Top Five Energy Users in U.S. Homes

*Estimated residential electricity consumption by end use, 2014\**

**Other uses** include TV, set-top boxes, home entertainment and gaming systems, monitors and networking equipment, clothes dryer, small electric devices, heating elements and motors.



Eastern Illini  
Electric  
Cooperative



# Two spots will open on co-op board

**Two current board members have indicated they will not seek re-election in June.**

Herb Aden, of Newman, and Kay Horsch, of Dewey, have both announced that they will not seek re-election at Eastern Illini's 2016 Annual Meeting of Members.

Aden was elected as a director of Illini Electric Cooperative in 1979. Illini Electric consolidated with Eastern Illini Power Cooperative in 1987 to form Eastern Illini Electric Co-op. Aden has served on Eastern Illini's board since then.

He currently represents board directorate district 8, which includes all of the cooperative's service area in Douglas County,

and then moves west to include the rural areas around Atwood, Ivesdale, Bement and Monticello.

Horsch, of Dewey, was elected as a director of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative in 2001.

She represents board directorate district 7, which includes the northern and western portions of Champaign County, and all of the cooperative's service area in Piatt County. District 7 includes the rural areas around Rantoul, Ludlow, Fisher, Mahomet, Mansfield, Champaign (to the west), Tolono, and Savoy.

Eastern Illini's President/CEO Bob Hunzinger noted, "We are extremely grateful for both Herb

and Kay's service on Eastern Illini's Board of Directors. Their contributions have been a great asset for all of the members/owners of the co-op."

While we will offer a more formal farewell to both Aden and Horsch in the coming months, we wanted to give everyone ample time to decide if they were willing to serve Eastern Illini's member/owners by running for a seat on the board.

For more information about running for Eastern Illini's Board of Directors, please see the box below, or call our office at 800-824-5102. Additional information about the election will be in the PowerLines in the coming months.

## Eastern Illini's Board of Directors

One of the many benefits of receiving electric service from Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative is that - since we are a member/owned co-op - we are governed by a local board of directors. The board is made up of member/owners just like you.

Three of the nine directors are elected each year during the annual meeting.

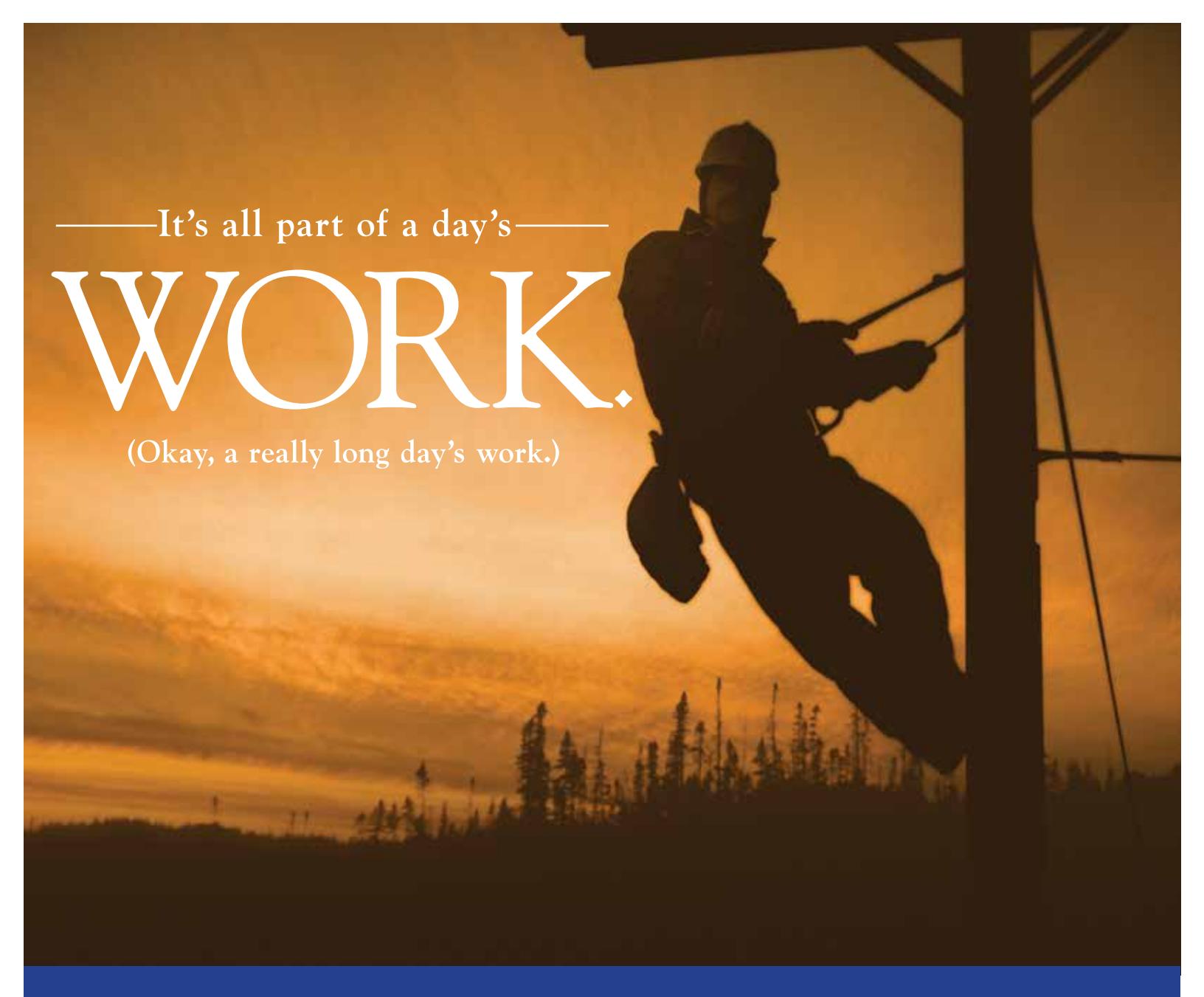
To be eligible to serve as a director, you must be a member/owner of the cooperative, and live in a board directorate district that is up for election.

You then need to collect at least 25 signatures on your nominating petition (which will be available from the co-op in the spring), and return it to the co-op not less than 45-days prior to our June 9 Annual Meeting of Members.



Kay Horsch and Herb Aden have both indicated that they will not run for re-election at the 2016 Annual Meeting. The pair has a combined 52 years of service to Eastern Illini's member/owners, and their contributions and expertise will be missed.

—It's all part of a day's—  
**WORK.**

A silhouette of a utility worker in a hard hat and safety harness, working on a utility pole. The background is a warm, orange and yellow sunset or sunrise over a forest of pine trees. The word "WORK." is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

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

We'd like to thank you for helping us score an "88" in the recent American Customer Satisfaction\* Index. Your feedback puts Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative a full 13 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.



## Take control, and save

February is traditionally one of the coldest months of the year. By keeping a close eye on your electric use and changing some habits, it doesn't necessarily have to be the costliest. Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative lets you check your kilowatt hour (kWh) use online or on your phone so you can take proactive measures to reduce it.

Simply visit [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) and click on the SmartHub link to get started. Then visit [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com) for valuable energy-saving tips and resources.

