

PowerLines

December 2017

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Whew! We just finished with one month of holidays and family gatherings over Thanksgiving, and now we have another month to prepare for and worry about. Oh, and let's not forget about the shopping lists, parties, commitments, and the constant motion of the Christmas holiday season!

We should consider ourselves fortunate to be able to participate in the mirth and festivities. I mean, really, how many of us just can't wait for the 100th rendition on the radio of "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer"?

On a more serious note – the holiday season can be a special time of reflection. It can be as simple as taking a few moments to relax, to step out of the fast lane, and to consider what is important. Our definition of important will vary due to our backgrounds and lifestyle.

For many of us, we consider three main categories to be important; family, faith, and community. Family and faith tend to be more private considerations. But we can all recognize the importance of community. Community involvement is magnified during the holiday season. We are seemingly more aware of people in need of assistance.

We see this in the bell ringers, the donation trees with names attached,

the food pantry requests, free holiday meals, clothes drives and special collections, the list is unending.

This holiday season, please consider how we as individuals can help to improve the lives of someone, or a group of people, within our

community. It may involve a simple smile or helping hand, donating to a charity of your choice, volunteering our time, or giving in our own unique way. We all possess the ability to make a positive impact in our communities.

Your cooperative takes pride in being able to help support and to be involved in the

communities and the rural area in which we provide service. Over the past few months, our employees have organized a local blood drive, a fundraiser for breast cancer, and a program to provide gifts for children in need, to name a few.

From our Board of Directors and all of us at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, thank you for allowing us to provide service to you. It is our sincere hope that you will all have a very Merry Christmas, a safe and joyous holiday season, and a Happy New Year.

Cooperatively,

Bob Hunzinger



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

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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 to get started!

Happy Holidays!

Our office in Paxton, and our facilities in Gilman and Pesotum will be closed December 22 and 25 for Christmas. We will also be closed December 29 and January 1, as our employees celebrate the holidays with their families.

Your Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative

Twelve days of energy savings

As the temperatures drop and the holiday season quickly approaches, you may find yourself with not only Christmas credit card balances, but also higher energy bills. Right now, weather forecasters are predicting more precipitation than last winter and average home heating costs at a higher level as well.

Don't worry, the holiday spirit is still strong and we have twelve ideas for saving energy and taking a bite out of Ole' Man Winter and your electric bill.

DAY TWELVE: This holiday season, light up your home with LED lights. In addition to being sturdier and more resistant to breakage, LED holiday lights last longer and consume 70 percent less energy.

DAY ELEVEN: When decking your house with holiday lights, use timer controls to lower energy consumption and save money. Timer controls allow you to turn lights on and off at specific times, while staying in the holiday spirit.

DAY TEN: Open curtains during the day to allow sunlight to naturally warm your home, and close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

DAY NINE: Between holiday baking and meal preparation, your oven is probably working overtime. Cooking alone accounts for 4.5 percent of your home's energy use, and when factoring in other kitchen appliances, your kitchen's energy use can be as high as 15 percent. Using the right-sized pots on the stove burners will save about \$36 annually for an electric range or \$18 for gas.

DAY EIGHT: Purchase rechargeable batteries and an ENERGY STAR battery charger which is a more cost effective option than disposable batteries.

DAY SEVEN: Plug holiday decorations



into power strips. Even when you aren't using lights and electronics, they still draw small amounts of energy at an average cost of \$100 a year. A power strip ensures electricity is only used when you need it.

DAY SIX: Before you curl up on the couch in front of the window this holiday season, be sure to take steps to reduce heat loss. Weatherize your windows to reduce drafts. Installing storm windows can help reduce heat loss through your windows by 25-50 percent.

DAY FIVE: Keep warm air in your house and cold air out with proper chimney maintenance. Seal your fireplace flue damper, caulk around your hearth, and install a heat-air exchange system to blow warmed air back into the room.

DAY FOUR: Install a programmable thermostat so you can lower your thermostat 7 - 10 degrees when you are not home or sleeping. A lower

temperature setting for eight hours can save 5 - 10 percent per year on your heating bills.

DAY THREE: Change your furnace filter, so when cold weather hits, your furnace is running at peak efficiency.

DAY TWO: Install an energy efficient shower head. You could be saving five gallons of hot water per shower by making this simple switch.

DAY ONE: Call EIEC at 800-824-5102 and schedule an energy audit with one of our energy specialists. As a free service to our member/owners, they will help you evaluate how you use energy and suggest ways to save.



Warm up to safety this winter



Smoke alarms save lives. Three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom. They should also be outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement.
- It is best to use interconnected smoke alarms. When one smoke alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Test smoke alarms once a month. Press the test button to be sure the alarm is working.
- There are two kinds of alarms. Ionization smoke alarms are quicker to warn about flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms are quicker to warn about smoldering fires. It is best to use both types of alarms in the home.
- A smoke alarm should be on the ceiling or high on a wall. Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. They should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from the stove.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These customized alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an estimated 45,210 home fires happen annually that involve electricity and lighting. 40 percent of these fires happened during cold weather months from November through February.

Take steps to help prevent accidents by identifying possible safety problems before they happen.

Electrical wiring: If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Have an electrician check it out. Also check for loose wires and loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind the walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and have them repaired.

Electrical outlets: Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace any missing or broken ones. If you have young children, install tamper resistant outlets. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs): protect against electrical shock and should be installed in your kitchen, bathroom, laundry, garage and outdoor outlets.

Appliances/Electronics: If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse or has given out an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. It's best to use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics.

Plugs: Do not remove the grounding pin (third prong) to make a plug fit.

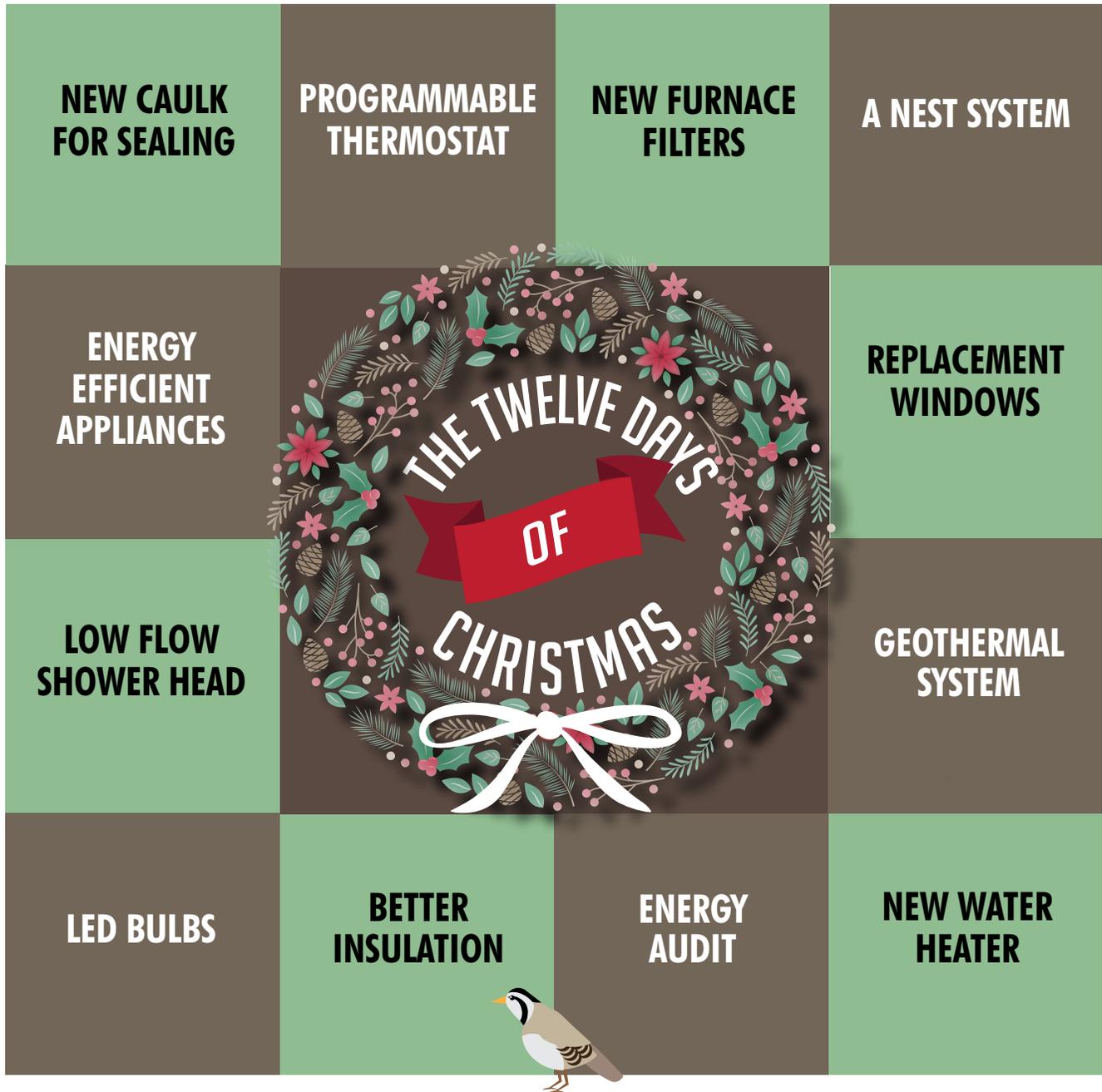
Circuit breakers/fuses: Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuit they are protecting. If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service.

Safety is a top consideration when using space heaters. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with the use of space heaters, resulting in more than 300 deaths and 6,000 burn injuries. Follow these guidelines when using a small space heater:

- Only purchase newer model heaters that have all the current safety features.
- Select a thermostatically controlled heater, because they avoid the energy waste of overheating a room.
- Buy a unit with a tip-over safety switch, which automatically shuts off if the unit tips over.
- Locate the heater on a level surface. Locate heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn including paper, bedding, clothing and rugs.
- Plug space heaters directly into wall outlet.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Keep children and pets away from heaters.



On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me ...



... and a partridge in a pear tree!

The partridge can't help you save money on your energy costs, but at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, we have energy experts on staff to assist you. Give us a call at 1-800-824-5102 or visit www.eiec.coop to learn more.



People to know at Eastern Illini: Scott McTaggart

On a bitterly cold November morning near Gilman, Illinois, with flurries forecasted to start any minute, it's time for Scott McTaggart to head out to his job as an electric serviceman for EIEC.

He wakes before the sun, pours a steaming cup of coffee, tells his family goodbye and swings by the Gilman facility to check the iPad for his priorities of the day. He touches base with other EIEC team members - Cliff, Doug and the Gilman crew, then he climbs into his truck and heads out.

Some work orders need immediate attention. Power restoration takes precedence on his to-do list along with a myriad of other member/owner requests. Eastern Illini has close to 100,000 electrical poles that connect 4,500 miles of electrical line.

It's a big job that McTaggart takes very seriously. His territory covers four substations: Donovan, Papineau, Watseka, and Woodland. Most days you'll find McTaggart helping member/owners in Service Area 5, located in Iroquois County.

McTaggart, along with a team of highly skilled, well trained and extremely responsive professionals, stays on top of some challenging and complex electrical situations. To do his job, with accuracy and efficiency, McTaggart completed a four year apprenticeship along with a significant amount of on-the-job training.

"Both linemen and servicemen are always focused on safety," said McTaggart. "It takes a combination of technical knowledge, electrical expertise, and excellent equipment to do what we do."

McTaggart is proud to carry on a long standing tradition of going above and

beyond for member/owners. "I learned from the best," said McTaggart. "People like Doug Vaughn showed me the ropes and I am carrying on the heritage of the craft of taking care of member/owners passed on to me by people like Burly Bargmann."

These days, McTaggart uses innovative technology, to pro-actively address electrical issues sometimes even before a member/owner knows they have a problem.

Digital technology and electronic metering have provided significant enhancements over his career. Pole testing, pole wrap guards and equipment that identifies overheated connections have significantly decreased outages, giving McTaggart more time to focus on meeting member/owner needs.

"My job is extremely rewarding," said McTaggart. "You get to work with some great guys and at the end of the day, especially after a big storm, people are thankful for us getting their lights back on. That makes you feel good, like you've really made a difference."

One of McTaggart's most memorable moments in his career is when he spent two weeks in Picayune, Mississippi restoring power to an area hit hard by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. He saw first hand the massive destruction of the Category 5 hurricane. He along with many others from Eastern Illini, worked 16 hour days to rebuild an electrical infrastructure.

McTaggart has worked at Eastern Illini for over 15 years. He has been a serviceman for the past three years. He



likes his job as a serviceman because he can make a difference every day in the lives of Eastern Illini member/owners.

McTaggart wants member/owners to know that being part of an electric cooperative really is valuable. He wants them to call, ask questions, and voice concerns. Getting to know the people in his territory is one of the most enjoyable parts of his job.

"At EIEC, you're not a number, you're a member/owner and that means we respond quickly to resolve your issues," said McTaggart.

McTaggart, grew up just west of Gilman and currently lives in the area with his wife, Jenni and three children: Max, Madison and Hudson.

McTaggart makes it better for member/owners one day at a time and hopes to continue that legacy for years to come.

Picture yourself in our nation's capital



I learned more about my government, how a cooperative functions, and made amazing friends. Thank you for sponsoring me. Miranda Fairbanks

June 8 - 15, 2018
2018 Youth to Washington

Winners will receive a free trip!
Apply at www.eiec.coop

High school sophomores and juniors, who are sons or daughters of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member/owners are eligible to apply at www.eiec.coop. The deadline to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is **January 31, 2018**. Four winners will be selected.

Six semi-finalists will be selected for

**YOUTH DAY TO
SPRINGFIELD**

hosted by
**Association of Illinois
Electric Cooperatives**



2017 winners from left to right, Claire Bossong, Watseka Community High School; Bridget McMullin, Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School; Jacob Rietz, Iroquois West High School; Renae Spannagel, Villa Grove High School; Miranda Fairbanks, Unity High School.

Contact **Debbie Laird**
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