

ALONG THE LINES



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

DEDICATED TO PROVIDING RELIABLE SERVICE FOR OUR MEMBERS.

NOVEMBER 2023

VOL.16, NO. 11

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1984's Capital Credits are set to retire. p.4

HOUSEHOLD WINTER PREPAREDNESS

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SAFEGUARDING YOUR HOME

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NOVEMBER CALENDAR



Nov. 5: Daylight Saving Time Ends

Nov. 7: Election Day

Nov. 10: Office Closed - Veterans Day

Nov. 10: Marine Corps Birthday

Nov. 23-24: Closed - Thanksgiving

UPCOMING

Dec. 25: Office Closed - Christmas

Jan. 1: Office Closed - New Year's Day

June 6, 2024: MJM's Annual Meeting

HOLIDAYS OBSERVED:

New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day following Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.



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WWW.MJMEC.COOP



SERVING UP SAVINGS

BY MJM PRESIDENT/CEO, JOE HEYEN



The holiday season is just around the corner and soon, festive music will flood the airwaves, sparkling lights and decorations will adorn homes and businesses, and good tidings will abound.

The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking and family gatherings, and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills. Keeping this in mind, I thought this month would be a good time to remind MJM members of a few programs and efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use.

PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU SAVE.

Winter months typically bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. Making minor, low-cost improvements, like weatherstripping exterior doors, adding more insulation where needed, and caulking around old, drafty windows can make a positive impact on energy bills.

We also offer an electric heat rate if your home's primary source of heat is electric (Geothermal, air source heat pump, baseboard, electric furnace), which can help you achieve savings by offering a lower kWh rate in the 1,000 kWh to 3,500kWh monthly usage range from November to March. Our team is available to help, so I encourage you to give us a call at 217-707-6156.

BE FESTIVE WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK.

We all know at least one person who brings the Christmas decorations down from the attic faster than most of us can finish the Thanksgiving turkey. With holiday lights adorning some homes for well over a month, deciding to make the switch to LEDs can really save energy.

LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills will typically increase by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350.

Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional benefits, such as being shock-resistant, shatterproof and cool to the touch, making them safer for the home.

You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers can help you save energy by connecting to a smart phone app or voice assistant to program lights to turn on and off at set times. If you don't use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers.

Additional easy ways to save during the holiday season include turning off overhead lights and using your Christmas tree to illuminate your home. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when you're not burning a fire to ensure heat doesn't escape through the chimney.

COOK UP ENERGY SAVINGS IN THE KITCHEN.

If you plan to have family and friends over this holiday season, you can cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers and slow cookers when possible, as they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.

When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. After all, it takes as much energy to cook one dish as it does to cook several. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. Once the food is done, leave the stove door ajar to allow the residual heat to warm the room. When using the stove top, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stove top's efficiency.

I hope a few of these tips will be helpful as we approach the holiday season. Remember, we're here to answer any questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills. With a little planning upfront, you can find efficient ways to save on everything from holiday décor to your favorite soup recipes.

From your friends at MJM, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season!



ALONGTHELINES

by MJM Electric Cooperative
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Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

HOW TO REPORT AN OUTAGE:

Call 217-707-6156 or use your **SmartHub app**.

- When you report an outage, give your **name** and **location number**.
- Before calling, check your fuses or circuit breakers.
- Check with your neighbors. Call to report hazardous conditions.

Please do not report outages on Facebook/Social Media.

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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SAVE THE DATE!

June 6th, 2024

MJM's 2024 Annual Meeting in Carlinville, IL

Please join us in thanking our Veterans for their courage and service to our country.





CAPITAL CREDITS

MJM TO RETURN \$545,393 IN CAPITAL CREDIT REFUNDS FROM 1984

In a Cooperative like MJM Electric, you are a Member-Owner of the business. One major difference between a Cooperative and an investor-owned utility is that you see an ownership in the business through capital credits. When capital credits are returned to members, you are seeing the return on your investment. This is one of the benefits of being served by a non-profit utility!

Many MJM members do not realize that we're a not-for-profit utility. Every month you pay your bill, you are helping to finance, not just the purchase and production of power, but improvements to the system that keep the lights on. You are investing in YOUR Cooperative. Your immediate payback is in the form of increased reliability and affordable rates.

Capital credits are the money or margins that is left over after all bills associated with doing business have been paid. Each of you are entitled to these capital credits, or a share of the refund based on your energy use. Before returning these capital credits back to you, MJM uses this capital to offset the cost of debt for the construction and maintenance of the electric distribution system. This working capital represents your ownership equity in MJM. Each generation of cooperative members contributes, builds equity in the co-op, and then is rewarded with a capital credit refund. This system is unique to not-for-profit electric cooperatives. People served by for-profit utilities do not reap these benefits.

Per cooperative bylaws, MJM's Member-elected Board or Directors determines the amount of margins retired each year based on the cooperative's financial condition and other considerations. At the September 29th, 2023, board meeting, a motion was made to retire all of **1984** cooperative's margins in the amount of \$545,393.

The 1984 general retirement will show up on member's bills as a credit on their December 1st, 2023, billing. Active members who have been named as an heir of an estate and members no longer on MJM lines are receiving this capital credit refund via check. If the refund amount is under \$10, a check will not be reissued but will be donated back to the Cooperative as permanent equity.

Remember that if you have moved away from the cooperative's service territory, you are still eligible to receive your capital credits. Always make sure that we have a current address on file.

If you have any questions, please call the billing department at **217-707-6156**.

CONGRATULATIONS

DOUG EGELHOFF LINE FOREMAN

MJM would like to congratulate Doug Egelhoff on his promotion to Line Foreman!

Doug originally joined the MJM team in October of 2006 and was promoted on September 25th, 2023, from Journeyman Lineman to Line Foreman.



LUKE WILSON APPRENTICE LINEMAN

MJM would also like to congratulate Luke Wilson on his promotion to Apprentice Lineman!

Luke was originally brought on as a Forestry Department Intern in July of 2023. He officially began his new position on October 2nd, please join us as we congratulate and welcome Luke to the team!



2023 LINEWORKER'S SAFETY RODEO



SPRINGFIELD, IL – Line personnel from M.J.M. Electric Cooperative participated in the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) on Thursday, September 21st. Eighteen teams from fourteen electric co-ops and two municipal electric utilities participated in the friendly competition, along with eight others competing individually. The rodeo highlights the skills lineworkers use to work safely and efficiently. Riley Marsh, Tanner Mullen and Andrew Wiesman represented M.J.M. at the rodeo, held at the LLCC Line School Yard in Springfield. They competed against teams from across Illinois in events using skills that focused on agility, speed and accuracy. While these skills are part of the judging criteria, above all, participants are judged on safe work practices.



Pictured L to R: Riley Marsh, Andrew Wiesman, Tanner Mullen

Line personnel competed in four team and individual events, a 40-foot climb, pole top rescue, H-structure obstacle course and a cutout change. The day concluded with a head-to-head climbing challenge.

Scores for each event are based on completion time, proper execution of the task and safety. Deductions were made to a team or individual's overall performance score due to mistakes such as slipping when climbing poles, dropping tools or executing inappropriate procedures or methods.

Congratulations to our lineworkers on their team and individual efforts.



HOW CAN YOU SAVE ON HEATING COSTS THIS WINTER?



BY SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

- Get your heating system regularly maintained and serviced by a HVAC professional so that it is working at peak efficiency. Keep your furnace clean and change the filter.
- Regularly vacuum or clean vents.
- If you have a fireplace, keep the damper closed when not in use. If you do not use your fireplace, plug and seal the flume.
- Do not heat an empty home. A programmable or smart thermostat can help this become automatic. According to the Department of Energy, lowering the temperature by 7 to 10 degrees for 8 hours a day can reduce energy costs by up to 10 percent.
- A leaky house is expensive to heat. According to Energy.gov, sealing uncontrolled air leaks can save from \$83 - \$166 a year. Weather stripping double-hung windows can save \$42 - \$86 annually. Windows, doors, attics, attic access, outlets, walls, and chimneys, as well as pipes entering or exiting your home are common sources of air leaks.
- Let the sun shine in your home during the day to use Mother Nature's warmth. Close window coverings after dusk, however, to reduce heat loss.
- Run your ceiling fans in a clockwise direction. Doing so will push down and redistribute warm air that naturally rises.
- Consider turning down your water heater to 120 or 125°F. Also install a water heater blanket to help insulate it to give it a step up in warming your water.
- When it comes time to replace your furnace or any part of your HVAC system, consider replacing it with an energy efficient version by looking for the EnergyStar designation.
- Decrease the use of the built-in ventilation fans in your kitchen and bathrooms. In the colder months, they do a good job of transferring heat from inside your home to the backyard. Use the fans only when needed and turn them off as soon as you can.
- Bring in the moisture with a humidifier or research other ways to do that (e.g. well-watered plants, containers of water throughout the home). Dry air makes the air feel colder and increasing moisture in the air causes indoor air to retain more heat.
- Ditch the space heater. Space heaters are energy hogs and should only be used for short amounts of time in a small "space". They are not designed for large area use.

FIVE WAYS TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

BY MJM COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR, ERIC COOPER



As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months. Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.

2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of power strips...

3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the

electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

MJM wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season. Visit www.mjmec.coop/stay-safe for additional safety tips.



SMARTHUB BILL PAYMENTS MADE EASY

The easiest way to pay your bill is in the SmartHub App, although you can pay through SmartHub web, as well. Pay with debit/credit or E-check. It's fast, it's easy and the payment applies to your account immediately.

See your daily electric usage on SmartHub through the purple button on our website or through the SmartHub App. Why wait to see your bill and THEN make changes? See your daily use and make changes RIGHT AWAY to lower your next bill.

You can also report outages with the SmartHub app! To see all the features and how to set the app up: www.mjmec.coop/smarthub-help





BE SAFE DURING THE HO·HO·HOLIDAYS

10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY JOLLY



Before you plan out your new holiday lighting scheme or repeat last year's festive design, keep these 10 safety tips in mind when decorating outdoors:

- 1 Do not toss light strands up into the air. They could get too close to or come into contact with a power line.
- 2 Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.
- 3 Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.
- 4 Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.
- 5 Do not use staples or nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.
- 6 String together no more than the number of strands recommended by the manufacturer.
- 7 Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.
- 8 Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.
- 9 Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.
- 10 Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.



Safe Electricity.org®

LEARN MORE AT:

LEADING THE WAY

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN AN IMPORTANT & VITAL LEADERSHIP ROLE AT MJM?



MJM follows the basic principle of Democratic Member control: one Member, one vote. Did you know that as a Member of our Co-op, you are eligible to run for a Board of Director position?

Board of Directors are your friends and neighbors. The decisions they make for your Cooperative affects their electric service the same as yours.

To know which Board of Director represents you, refer to the MJM bylaw booklet (Articles IV – Board of Directors; V – Meetings of Director; and VI – Officers, Misc.) available online at:

www.mjmec.coop/how-were-governed.

For participation details, contact us at **217-707-6156** or email us at info@mjmec.coop.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy





MEMBER TRADING POST

FOR SALE: Firewood seasoned & Split, 6' Pickup Bed \$100, can deliver for a bit more.
Call Leroy 618-972-4658

FOR SALE: Full cover for a 2021 CFMoto 800. Never been opened. See if you can cross reference it may fit others. \$100
Call: 217-827-7690

FOR SALE: Zero turn Hustler-Raptor lawn mower. 144hrs. 60in cut. Excellent condition. \$2,900.
Text: 217-827-7690 for pics.

FOR SALE: 2009 Dodge Ram 1500 Pick-up. 2 full seats. Has a matching camper shell on it. Just been serviced, have all papers to show you. 197,000 miles.
Text: 217-827-7690 for pics.

FOR SALE: Hayrite 16' Square Hay Conveyor 220V. 10 HRS use. Like new: \$1500 OBO
15 EA Horse Round Pen 10' Panels & 7' Ride Through Gate. Good condition: \$1500 OBO
Call: 618-779-2078

FOR SALE: Predator portable generator 9000 starting watts, 7250 running watts, electric start, never used, \$500
Call: 217-473-6283