

# ALONG THE LINES



DEDICATED TO SAFELY PROVIDING RELIABLE SERVICE TO OUR MEMBERS.

**AUGUST 2025**

VOL.18, NO. 8

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CO-OPS & INVESTOR-  
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## AUGUST CALENDAR



August is Back-to-School Safety Month

Aug. 3-9: National "Stop on Red" Week

Aug. 11: National Safe Digging Day

Aug. 26-28: Farm Progress Show  
in Decatur, IL

### UPCOMING

Sept. 4: Office Closed-Labor Day

#### **HOLIDAYS OBSERVED:**

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



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# DIFFERENCES IN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES & INVESTOR-OWNED UTILITIES



BY MJM PRESIDENT/CEO, JOE HEYEN



Electricity is important in our daily lives, but the companies that deliver it work in different ways. Electric distribution cooperatives and investor-owned utilities (IOUs) like Ameren and ComEd both provide electricity, but they are not the same. Their ownership, goals, and the way they operate make them different. Learning these differences can help us understand how they impact customers and communities.

## Who Owns and Runs Them

The biggest difference is who owns and controls these companies. Electric distribution cooperatives are owned by the customers who use their electricity. These customers are called **members**. The cooperative doesn't aim to make a profit. Instead, it focuses on providing service to its members. Members get to vote on decisions, making sure the cooperative works for the local community.

Investor-owned utilities like Ameren and ComEd are owned by shareholders. These shareholders can be people or companies, and they might not live in the areas the utility serves. IOUs aim to make money for their shareholders. A board of directors, chosen by the shareholders, makes big decisions for the company.

## Where They Serve

Cooperatives and IOUs serve different types of areas. Cooperatives usually provide electricity in rural areas with fewer people. They were started during the 1930s and 1940s to bring electricity to places that IOUs didn't find profitable to serve. Cooperatives focus on smaller areas, often just a few counties.

IOUs like Ameren and ComEd serve large areas with lots of people. They often work in cities and suburbs. Their size lets them serve millions of customers using big networks of infrastructure.



## Money and Profits

Cooperatives and IOUs treat money differently. Any extra money cooperatives make is either used to improve the cooperative or given back to members as Capital Credits. This helps keep benefits within the local community.

IOUs are for-profit businesses. They make money from customer payments and send profits to shareholders as dividends. Their need to make money for investors can sometimes make rates higher.

## Setting Electric Utility Rates

How these companies decide on rates also differs. Cooperatives try to keep rates low for their members. Rate changes are decided by a group of members who are on the cooperative's board of directors. This helps rates reflect the community's needs.

IOUs have to work with state regulators to set rates. These regulators try to protect customers, but they also consider the utility's need to make profits for shareholders. This can lead to rates that focus more on business goals than just covering costs.

Both electric distribution cooperatives and investor-owned utilities are important for delivering electricity, but they have clear differences. Cooperatives focus on serving their members and communities, especially in rural areas. IOUs like Ameren and ComEd are profit-driven businesses that serve large regions, including cities and suburbs.

Knowing these differences can help customers understand the values and goals of their electricity providers. Whether it's the local focus of cooperatives or the wide reach of IOUs, both types of companies play a crucial role in keeping the lights on.



# ALONGTHELINES

by MJM Electric Cooperative  
www.mjmec.coop

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## OFFICE HOURS:

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.**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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# MEMBER TRADING POST

**FOR SALE:** Split Seasoned Fire Wood, pickup truck bed loads \$120 or call for delivery price. Old barn boards, metal roof, and beams, free to anyone that will tear down old barn and clean up the rubble. Call Leroy @ 618-972-4658

**FOR SALE:** A 2015 Kia Sportage, red, 140k miles, \$7,500 (OBO). A 2003 Chevy Tracker, 4-wheel drive, 176k miles, \$2,500. An 8ft Disc, heavy duty with wheels, \$1,500. A 72in, 3-point rotary tiller, like new, \$1,800. A 72in, 3-point mower, \$1,300. A 16ft hauling trailer with 3ft sides, ramp tailgate, \$2,500 (OBO). Call: 618-376-5121

**FOR SALE:** A Cub Cadet 7000 series riding mower. 24HP, 54in deck, 1 yr old, kept in garage, great condition. \$1,800. Brighton area. Call: 832-423-7812

**FOR SALE:** Empire vent free fireplace insert. Currently setup for LP gas. Includes 24-inch Charred Oak log set, universal burner set, with thermostat remote control, plus pipe nipples, and copper inlet line. Complete package, used less than 20 times. \$850.00 Call 618-251-0024. OK to leave message if no answer.

**FOR SALE:** Dadant 4-frame manual honey extracting kit, electric uncapping knife, smoker, small ventilated jacket, misc. \$400.00 OBO. Mt. Olive. Call or text: 618-444-3864.

**FOR SALE:** Two Blue Denim Jackets (Small & Medium) with beaded lady's face on the back, \$20/ea. Japanese hand embroidered ladies robe, \$20. Japanese embroidered ladies vest (Medium), \$15. In Carlinville area. Call: 314-825-1200

**FOR SALE:** Massey Ferguson 1533 Tractor. 375hrs with a Loader and 6ft Finish Mower, \$17,500. Call: 618-372-8411

**FOR RENT:** Storage space available for boats, campers, or trailers. Call: 618-334-4298

To list your free ad, email [info@mjmec.coop](mailto:info@mjmec.coop), call 217-707-6156, or mail the ad to MJM Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 80, Carlinville, IL 62626.

Each ad will run for one month. Some restriction may apply.  
No Ads in May edition/Annual Meeting Booklet





## 2025 MJM REPRESENTATIVES:

CARTER JOINER

REESE HEYEN



## LOCAL STUDENTS REPRESENT M.J.M. ELECTRIC IN D.C.

Every June, a select group of high school students from across Illinois leave their rural communities to spend a week taking in the historic sights and bustling energy of the nation's capital.

This year, 48 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives took part in the 2025 Youth Tour to visit Washington, D.C., held June 16 to 23, for an immersive weeklong experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

M.J.M. Electric Cooperative sponsored two students within its service territory. These students included Reese Heyen and Carter Joiner. They joined more than 2,000 students representing 44 states for the annual event.

"This trip is so much more than sightseeing," said Brooke Gross, member services manager and facilitator of youth programs at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. "It's about building relationships, learning leadership and showing that they have the power to shape their communities and futures."

### LEARNING BY DOING

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) headquartered in Springfield, where the students selected a co-op board. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making and budgeting — giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate.

"Being part of a co-op helps students understand what makes a co-op different," said Gross. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone — not just one person or company."

### A FULL WEEK OF HISTORY

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery and, for the first time in many years, had the opportunity to tour the White House, where the students caught a glimpse of President Donald Trump. They also toured the U.S. Capitol, strolled the National Mall, stood at the steps of the Supreme Court and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they joined hundreds of other teens from across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.

From sobering visits to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial to moments of laughter at the Museum of Illusions and team-building at Beat the Bomb, the Youth Tour experience was unforgettable.



### A TRIP THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

An important component to the trip – the students voted for one of their peers to represent Illinois on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to give a speech in front of their peers.

Adams Telephone Co-Operative's Micah Anderson was selected as the 2025-2026 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead.

The week concluded with a farewell dinner and dance, and by the time students returned home on June 23, many said they felt changed by the experience.

"I would like to thank M.J.M. Electric for giving me the chance to get myself out of my comfort zone and go to D.C.," Joiner said. "This gave me a lot of new friends and a really fun week. I'm so glad I could represent the co-op."

"Thank you for the amazing opportunity," Heyen added. "I made so many new friends and learned more about co-ops."

High school students whose primary residence is served by M.J.M. Electric can participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to [youthtour.coop](http://youthtour.coop) or [facebook.com/ILYouthTour](https://facebook.com/ILYouthTour).



# THE FARM PROGRESS SHOW RETURNS TO DECATUR

*August 26-28th*



The Farm Progress Show is back in Illinois this year, and we want to invite you there! The nation's largest outdoor farm event will once again be held at Progress City in Decatur August 26 – 28. Look for the Illinois Touchstone Energy® Cooperative's exhibit located at "Lot 217" on Second Street, between Central Progress and East Progress Avenue, near Gates 7 and 8. Look for the big American Flag hanging between two 60-foot electric poles.

Representative from MJM and several other Illinois electric cooperatives will be on hand to share information about cooperative, safety, energy efficiency, and much more. Be sure to catch the Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Live Line Safety Demo and learn how electricity gets to your home, farm, or business, and how to stay safe around electrical equipment. There will also be linemen on hand doing pole-climbing demonstrations on a 60-foot pole.

Stop by the booth and register for a chance to win a "Lectric" electric bike and climb in a bucket for a photo-op. Cooperative members who present their Co-op Connections Card or show the Co-op Connections app on their device will receive a special gift.

Weather permitting; the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will be flying the American flag the first two mornings of the show.

For over 70 years, the Farm Progress Show has celebrated agriculture by bringing tradition and businesses together from all over. It is where people come to gather, meet, observe, and learn. Major manufacturers roll out their newest offerings, and it is the best place to see what's next for agriculture. The show rotates annually between Decatur, Illinois and Boone, Iowa.





## Welcoming New Faces and Celebrating Success

We're thrilled to welcome several new team members to the MJM family! Please join us in extending a warm welcome to our newest team members and celebrating the achievements of our promoted colleagues. It's an exciting time for MJM, and we couldn't be prouder of the dedicated individuals who make up our team.



### **Madison Niemeyer - Cross-Functional Support Specialist**

Originally from Gillespie, IL, Madison previously worked at RP Lumber in Staunton assisting customers. She started her role on June 16th, 2025. Madison's position is a new role at MJM, providing crucial support for daily operations in the Operations, Engineering, and IT Departments.



### **Chuck Mathewson – Journeyman Forester**

Chuck, who lives in Hillsboro, IL, brings over five years of experience as a tree trimmer to MJM.



### **Dean Pinkerton – Journeyman Forester**

Dean, from Eldred, IL, also has five years of forestry experience.

Both Chuck and Dean began their MJM Forestry positions on July 7th, 2025. We're excited to have Madison, Chuck, and Dean on the MJM team!

### **PROMOTIONS & TRANSITIONS**

We would also like to congratulate our employees who have earned promotions and stepped into new roles!



### **Brian Page – Forestry Foreman**

Brian, from Morrisonville, IL, starts his new role on August 1st, 2025. Joining MJM in fall 2024 as a Forestry Journeyman, Brian has more than 16 years of experience in line clearance trimming. His hardworking attitude and strategic planning skills make him an excellent fit.



### **Zach Porter – Apprentice Lineman**

Zach, from Jerseyville, was hired as a Forestry Journeyman in spring 2023. Zach's experience and knowledge of the tree service industry have proven to be invaluable assets to the team. His new role begins on August 1st, 2025.



### **Tyler Strack – Apprentice Lineman**

Tyler, from Plainview, IL, started his new role on July 1st, 2025. He joined MJM as a Forestry Intern in spring 2024 and was promoted to Apprentice Forester after completing the 1,000-hour internship.



### **Andrew Biernath – Forestry Intern**

Andrew, a graduate of Southwestern High School (class of 2025), originally joined MJM part-time in August 2024 as a Mechanic Intern. His new role began in May 2025.

We are proud of all our promoted employees and look forward to seeing their continued growth and success!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)

# THREE SMART HOME TECHNOLOGIES TO HELP YOU SAVE ENERGY

by Eric Cooper, MJM Communications & Member Service Coordinator



Smart technologies make our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient. By connecting your home Wi-Fi network, smart devices automate everyday tasks like lighting, heating, cooling and home security—they can even communicate with other smart devices in the home. While not all smart home products are specifically designed with energy savings in mind, there are several smart technologies that can help you lower home energy use. Here are the top three smart home devices to help you save.

## Smart Thermostats

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats allow you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats include learning capabilities and will adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce heating and cooling bills by more than 8% annually, and with models as low as \$65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

## Smart Lighting

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smart phone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes, brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart lighting, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range from \$70 to \$300+ depending on how many bulbs you need.

## Smart Plugs

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when they are turned off (known as "phantom load"), which can take a toll on your energy bills. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected



to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use and a set of four can be purchased for as little as \$25.

If you're looking for new ways to save energy, try these budget-friendly, convenient smart home technologies.

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Delete deceptive emails. If you receive an email that appears to be from your electric utility but you are unsure about it, delete it. Never click on a link, open an attachment or send a reply to an untrusted source. When in doubt, contact your utility directly to report suspected email scams.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams





# CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG

AUGUST 11TH IS NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING DAY

Dial 811 from anywhere in the country at least three days prior to digging, and your call will be routed to your local 8-1-1 center.

Tell the operator where you're planning to dig, what type of work you will be doing and your affected local utilities companies will be notified about your intent to dig.

In a few days, they'll send a locator to mark the approximate location of your underground lines, pipes and cables, so you'll know what's below – and be able to dig safely.

Remember, always call 811 before you start any digging project! You'll avoid injury, expense, embarrassment – and a very inconvenient day in the dark.

For more information or to request underground location services, visit **call811.com**.

