



**MJM**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# ALONG THE LINES

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ALONG THE LINES

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**Holidays observed**

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

**How to report an outage**

Call 217-707-6156. 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.

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# New Hire: Operation Assistant



There is not a better time to start a new job than during a pandemic and *after* you're retired! On Monday, January 18th, MJM welcomed Sue Helm to our team as the Operations Assistant! Helm originally comes from Decatur and as a retired employee from Ameren after 31 years. She enjoyed the retired life for a little bit of time but quickly discovered it was time to do something more. MJM had a calling and Helm had an answer. Helm said that she wanted to apply to MJM because she was ready to have

another job where she could excel in a field that she's very familiar with. Helm is going to be a major asset to MJM and, especially, our Members. She is excited to sharpen her skills to better serve our Members. Helm resides now in Staunton with her husband Chad, three dogs, two cats, and nearly 20 chickens. She has four grown sons, loves to garden and spend time with her three grandchildren.

We are excited to have Helm join MJM Electric and we look forward to what she can bring to the table. Welcome, Sue!





## Ways to Stay Cuddly this Valentine's Day!

By Abby Berry

Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat.

Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this Valentine's Day:

1. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," **an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth** like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). Consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.

2. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to **keep your feet warm**. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.

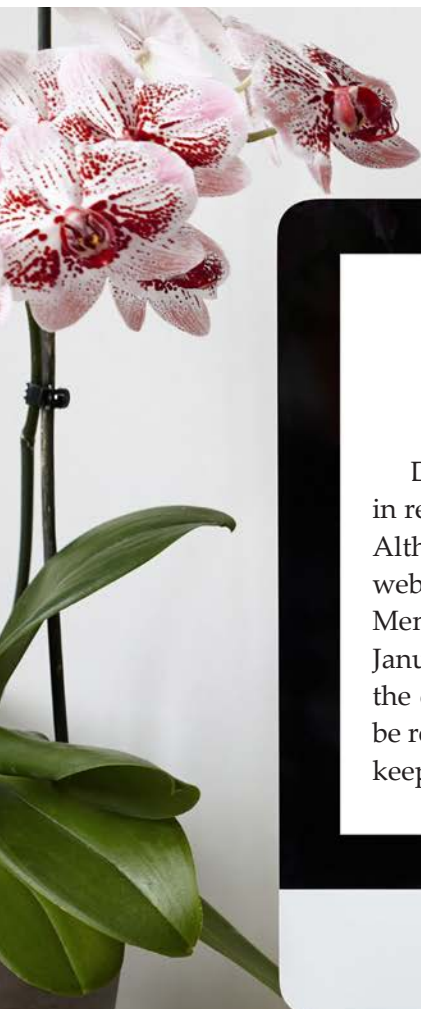
3. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and **harness natural warmth from sunlight**. Open all curtains, drapes, and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you'll be able to feel the difference.

4. Another way to make your home cozier is to **use a humidifier**. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.

5. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, **area rugs can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet** on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter *without* turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate! 🍫





## You' ve Got Mail !



Due to recent feedback, MJM Members have made it known that they are interested in receiving digital copies of the monthly newsletter. A Member's wish is our command! Although the newsletter is always going to be mailed, available on social media, and our website, Members will now have the newsletter emailed to them directly. In January, Members with an updated email address may have received the first email with the January newsletter as an attachment. If you did not get an email or wish to be added to the contact list, please call Brooke at 217-707-6028. If you do get the emails and wish to be removed from the list, simply hit 'unsubscribe' at the bottom of the emails. We want to keep in contact with you as best as we can in 2021. Help us communicate with you! 🏡

## Serving You!

At the December Board Meeting, CEO Laura Cutler recognized Robert Moore (left) for serving 20 years and Dennis Stewart (right) for serving 10 years. Their dedicated years is just one of the many examples of how our Board of Directors are willing to serve MJM's Members. 🏡





# ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Don't always believe what you hear

**MYTH**

**VS**

**FACT**



Electricity always takes the path of least resistance

Although the path of least resistance is the easiest to take, an electrical current can take any conductive path.



Voltage has to be high to kill

Although the voltage plays a role in how strong the current flows, exposure to the current itself is what's deadly. Even lower voltages can kill.



Heavily insulated tools will always protect against shock and electrocution

Don't let a tool give you a false sense of security; take all precautions even if a tool is marketed as safe or insulated.



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LEARN MORE AT

Safe  
Electricity.org®

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# Who is Keeping Your Electricity On?

## National Engineer Week, Feb. 21-27

When you call MJM's number, you receive an automatic recording that is designed to direct your call. If you press option #4, it directs you to Operations and Engineering. You will then reach the voice of Jeromy Miller, Gage Gwillim, Nathan Hatalla, or Susie Bennett who are ready to assist you in any way possible! The week of February 21 – 27<sup>th</sup> is National Engineer Week. MJM would like to direct your attention to the Operation and Engineering team who is one of the groups of employees that work hard to keep your electricity on.

Jeromy Miller knows the Cooperative world inside and out. He began his journey as a linemen 20 years ago but moved into engineering 13 years ago. He's been employed with MJM for six of those years. In 2021, he keeps working on technology to keep integrating data in the Geographical Information System (GIS). He flies drones for MJM and has been working specifically with one that has thermal imagery. He plans to fly these drones across lines and substations more often to find problems before they turn into outages. This is also his favorite part of the job! He is the father of two girls and they're always keeping him busy and up to date on the latest trends!

MJM's Level I Engineer Gage Gwillim has been working in his role for four years. His hard work is always aimed at making service that much better for MJM's Members. For 2021, he hopes to improve the lines in a quick and efficient manner for the betterment of the Members and Cooperative. His favorite part about his job is trying to find a path for a project that keeps the lines in a location is easily accessible for linemen, as well as, making it cost effective for the Member. His job is a little easier when Members are so understanding and patient, especially this year since COVID restrictions made it a little more difficult to finish projects. When Gage isn't at MJM, he enjoys working on technology, reading, cooking, volunteering at his church and walking his dog.

Nathan Hatalla began working at MJM five years ago as the Communication and Member Services Coordinator. Three years ago, he made the decision to stay within the MJM family but took a job with Operations as the Staking Engineer. Each day, he finds motivation in being able to help Members get power during construction to their forever home. Hatalla also enjoys helping with service revamps for Members trying to fix up their original homesteads. His hard-working hours are paying off as he is one test away from completing the final phase of the Staking Certification Program. When he's not at MJM, he continues to work hard in his spare time. Over the last two years, he's renovated a couple of homes and purchased some rental property. He also enjoys spending time at the lake with his wife and grandparents.

In May, Susie Bennett will hold the title of Operations and Engineering Secretary for 16 years. Throughout those years, she has found that her favorite part about the job is her co-workers and working with the linemen. She said she learns something new everyday and it keeps her on her toes. She asked to place a special shout out to the Members for realizing how much hard work the linemen do every day. The Members who take time to send in thank you notes really make the hard work worthwhile. As she heads into the new year, she is looking to be more efficient and organized with her new office space.

Looking back at the Operation and Engineering (O&E) Department at the old headquarters, there was one room the entire team had to share. The old building wasn't designed to keep up with changing technology. Wires were everywhere! When COVID hit, some employees had to work from home and some work at the office to prevent the spread. This made for lagged communication and difficulties in finishing projects. After we moved to the new headquarters, O&E got the space they badly needed. All employees are able to work in their own office in the new headquarters and follow CDC guidelines to maintain everyone's health. As for O&E, there is hardly a wire in sight and the entire department is built to maintain electricity to your homes and businesses!

MJM wouldn't be able to operate like it does without each and every employee! However, for National Engineer Week, we'd like to thank those that do that particular part of the job. 🙌




*Photo from left to right is Gage Gwillim, Susie Bennett, Nathan Hatalla and Jeromy Miller*

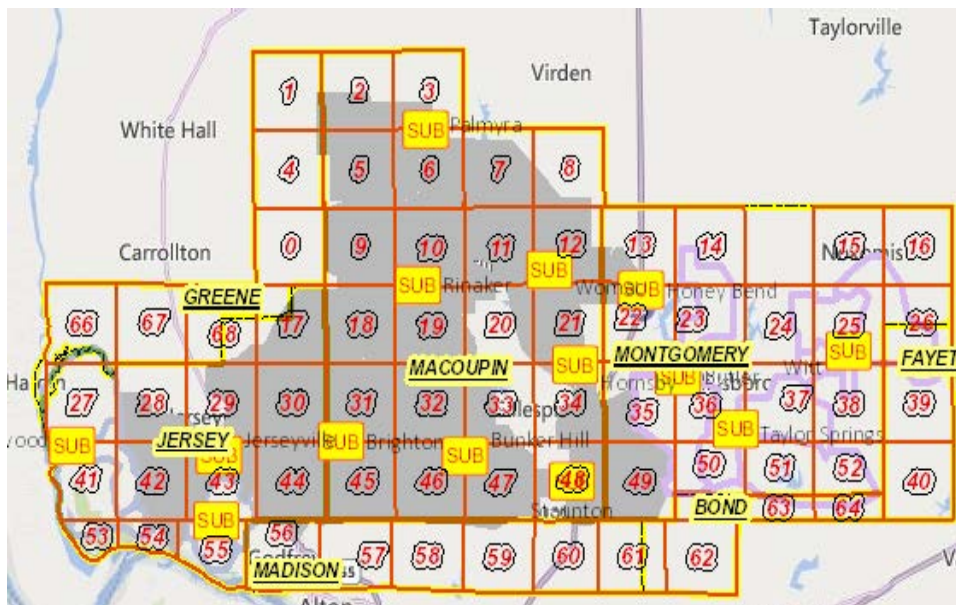
# ROW Clearing Begins!

Beginning in mid-January, MJM employees or their contractors can be found off the Nutwood and Newbern substation performing necessary maintenance on the power line right-of-way (ROW). This may consist of tree trimming, brush clearing, and/or the use of herbicides to control incompatible vegetation.

The most common cause of power outages is related to trees that grow or fall into power lines. The goal of MJM's Vegetation Management Program is to provide safe and reliable electric service while respecting the environment. Typically, the year following brush removal we will do an herbicide application. This allows for a transition of tall, overgrown brush and trees to become a diverse environment of low, growing grass and plants. All herbicides used are registered with the Illinois Environmental Protective Agency. Additionally, professional applicators will take special care to assure safe handling and precise application.

For your convenience, a Vegetation Map Viewer has been set up on MJM's website at [www.mjmec.coop/vegetation-management](http://www.mjmec.coop/vegetation-management). This map gives Members the ability to look up their account number/service location number to view where they are in relation to the vegetation management that is being done in their area. Directions are included on the website to assist Members on using the Vegetation Map.

If you have any questions concerning the MJM Vegetation Management program, please do not hesitate to contact the Cooperative at 217-707-6156. 



► The screenshot above is an example of what the Vegetation Management Map looks like. Please see [www.mjmec.coop/vegetation-management](http://www.mjmec.coop/vegetation-management) for more details.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer.

Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

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





## Member Trading Post

**FOR SALE:** 36 inch metal dog crate - \$25. Two drawer metal file cabinet - \$15. (2) Eight foot Christmas trees. One green and one white. Asking \$50 for each. Please call 618-635-2391.

**FOR SALE:** 10ft, 3-point brush hog. Very good condition. Please call 618-420-4744.

**FOR SALE:** Homestead Quilting Frame from Hinterberg Design. \$75. Instructions are included. Call 217-532-3206. Photos are available by contacting [greeves@consolidated.net](mailto:greeves@consolidated.net).

**FOR SALE:** Nine sets of Ashton Drake heirloom doll ornaments, all in original cartons of three each with certificates of authenticity. The names of the dolls in each

set that I have are: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Heather, Sweet Carnation, Emily, Todd, Jason, Chrsity, Meagan Rose, and Michael. \$10 per set of 3.

**WANTED:** Cheap in price typewriter to help communicate with tremors. Located in Chesterfield, area. Please call 618-753-5693.

**WANTED:** Local building with high ceilings for use as auto repair and storage. Call 630-414-2376. Located in Carlinville area.

**FOR SALE:** ATN Thor-HD Thermal Imaging Rifle Scope. Call for more information and details at 618-535-5825.

To list your free ad, email [brookeg@mjmec.coop](mailto:brookeg@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. Thank you.