


ALONG THE LINES



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

JANUARY 2023

VOL.16, NO. 1

GENERATOR SAFETY

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YOUR MJM BILL**

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THE WINTER MONTHS**

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JANUARY CALENDAR

Jan. 2nd: **Office Closed - New Year's**
(2023 observed date)

Jan. 8-14th: National Pizza Week

Jan. 11th: National Milk Day

Jan. 16th: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Jan. 23rd: National Pie Day

Jan. 27th: National Chocolate Cake Day

Jan. 29th: National Puzzle Day

UPCOMING

Apr. 7th: **Office Closed - Good Friday**

Jun. 8th: 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Holidays observed:

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





THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF

ELECTRICAL FIRES

- Incorrectly installed wiring
- Overloaded circuits and extension cords
- Defective or improper plugs, switches and outlets
- Misuse or poor maintenance of lighting

Safe
Electricity.org®



- If an electrical fire starts in your home, do not use water to extinguish it. Water conducts electricity, and you could get an electric shock. Use an extinguisher that is approved for use on electric fires.
- Do not overload outlets, do not use an extension cord as a permanent wiring solution, and do not use light bulbs that are not rated for the socket.
- Inspect electric plugs and cords annually. If they are frayed or cracked, repair or replace them. Do not place cords under rugs, or staple or nail them to the wall.
- Consider getting an electric inspection of your home, especially if it is an older home, or you have never had an inspection.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



SMARTHUB FEATURES:

- PAY ONLINE
- TRACK YOUR USAGE
- REPORT OUTAGES
- GET NOTIFICATIONS

[HTTPS://MJMEC.COOP/SMARTHUB-HELP](https://mjmec.coop/smarthub-help)

DEADLINE: JAN. 13TH



APPLY AT:

[WWW.MJMEC.COOP/YOUTH-DAY-YOUTH-TOUR](https://www.mjmec.coop/youth-day-youth-tour)

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 13TH, 2023

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:
INFO@MJMEC.COOP OR 217-707-6028



JUNE 16-23, 2023
WASHINGTON D.C.

Students of MJM Electric Cooperative members and MJM employees are eligible to attend the **Youth Day in Springfield, IL and the Youth to Washington Tour!**

Up to ten students will be selected to attend **Youth Day in Springfield**. In addition, up to two students will be chosen to represent MJM by attending **Youth Tour**; an all-expense paid, week-long trip to Washington D.C., with other winners from across the nation.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see our government at work and tour national sites, monuments, and museums. To be eligible, the student(s) must currently be a high school sophomore or junior and be able to attend the trip to Washington D.C. in June, if selected.



**18300 Shipman Road (PO Box 80)
Carlinville, IL 62626**

Office: 1-217-707-6156
Pay by Phone: 1-855-313-6314

Office Hours:
Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

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How to report an outage:

Call 217-707-6156 or use your SmarHub 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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PLEASE RECYCLE



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%, saving you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

The Dept. of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: energy.gov



Follow MJM on Social Media

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/MJMElectricCooperative

INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/mjm.electric/

***We do not process outages on Social Media.**



GENERATOR SAFETY

BY SAFE ELECTRICITY



When severe storms and natural disasters cause power outages, it can be an inconvenience—or even a problem—to be without electricity. Purchasing a backup generator can help with preparation for such power outages and provide peace of mind. As with all things involving electricity, the incorrect use of generators can create potentially hazardous situations. Safe Electricity outlines essential considerations in purchasing the right generator and safely operate it.

“Improper use of a standby or portable generator can lead to injury or even death,” explains Erin Hollinshead, executive director of the Energy Education Council’s Safe Electricity program. “It’s important to learn and follow all safety measures to help keep yourself and others safe.”

Decide what needs powered. What appliances, devices, and equipment are essential? Choose a generator size that can handle the full load of the estimated power needed. Keep in mind that it takes more power to turn an appliance on—its surge power—than it does when in continuous operation.

Select the type of generator, either stand-by or portable. Stand-by generators are permanently wired into a house by a professional electrician. The installation should include a transfer switch that prevents feeding electricity back into overhead lines, which can be deadly for linemen. These generators are fueled by natural gas or propane from existing gas lines and automatically turn on in the event of a power outage.

A portable generator is typically fueled with diesel or gasoline, which must be regularly refilled. Unlike a stand-by generator, these must be turned on and off manually, and appliances must be directly plugged into the generator with a suitably rated extension cord.

Be aware of local ordinances. Depending on location, there may be electrical, positioning, or noise codes that must be followed when operating or installing a backup generator. Contact a local electrical contractor or generator dealer to help choose a code-compliant generator.

Once the generator is installed and ready to go, follow these safety guidelines to ensure the safe operation of the backup generator:

- Thoroughly read and follow all manufacturer instructions to properly ground the generator before turning it on.
- Do not connect portable generators directly to a home’s electrical system. Doing so could re-energize overhead powerlines and endanger the lives of utility linemen working to restore power.
- There should be nothing plugged into a portable generator before starting it to prevent a surge from damaging the appliance.
- When running a portable generator, always use properly rated extension cords (length and load) when connecting appliances.
- Always operate portable generators in a well ventilated space to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning and other harmful fumes. Never run a generator indoors.
- Generators can pose an electrical risk when operated in wet conditions. Make sure the generator stays dry during its operation, and never touch electrical equipment with wet hands.
- Exercise caution around portable generators, which have exposed engine parts that could burn or injure an individual. Keep children and pets away from a running generator.
- Use care when refueling portable generators to prevent potential fires and spills.
- Properly shut down portable generators by turning off and unplugging all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- Remember to perform regular maintenance before and after each use. For portable generators, inspect oil and fuel filters, oil level, spark plugs, and fuel quality. Stand-by generators require less maintenance, but should still be inspected before and after power outages.

For more information about choosing and safely operating a backup generator, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org).





LIVE LINE SAFETY DEMONSTRATION

THANK YOU TO OUR PRESENTER, STEVE HANCOCK

On November 16th and 17th, MJM hosted a live line safety demonstration event. Steve Hancock of Live Line Demo USA gave an in-depth look at safety around utility lines and what to do and not do in emergency situations. Steve has over 46 years of experience in the electric utility field, working at several IL Co-ops and utility companies. Steve brings a lot of experience and a lot of life-saving knowledge with him when he leads these demonstrations.

MJM Employees, local emergency responders, and MJM members were among those who joined us for these sessions. There were five, one hour to hour and a half daytime sessions, and one evening session that was three hours. The three-hour evening session was mainly for emergency responders, it was a very in-depth session that covered the vehicular accident topics of the program in greater detail.



7200 volts vs Hotdogs: presenter Steve Hancock

them every 30 days. GFCI outlets/breakers should be in kitchens, bathrooms, connected to pool pumps, and most especially, on boating docks.

Here are some of the key safety takeaways:

- Keep a minimum of 50ft away from downed lines, you cannot see, hear, or smell electricity so always make 100% sure power is disconnected in any electrical safety situation.
- Volts don't kill you, the current/amperage/load does. It only takes 5mA (5 one thousandths of an amp) to stop the heart. This can happen even at lower voltages.
- Electricity is always trying to find the path of least resistance to the ground; finds the best conductor (energy will flow through) to get to the ground we stand on.
- Insulators (resist electricity) can be broken down over time, electricity continually tries to break them down to find that path to ground.
- Fuses and breakers protect the system, **not us**. GFCI outlets/breakers will protect us and we should test

- #1 cause of electrical fires in homes (50k+/year) is loose connections. If a fuse/breaker continually trips, there may be a loose connection that is arcing somewhere on that line, or the breaker needs replaced.
- **Electric Car** collision/wreck safety: If there is a white powder (much like an air bag's dust) or a cherry bubblegum smell, the EV car's batteries have been compromised so get away as quickly as possible.

Car wrecks that involve power lines key points:


- Stay in the car if possible and try not to touch any other object outside the vehicle, call 911. Do not exit until the utility company has given everyone the all clear. Make sure others know to stay back as well.
- If you are the first on the scene to an accident (not involved in it), call 911, do not go towards the vehicle and stay out of the ditches and away from fences.
- If you need to escape (car on fire, etc), you must make a clear jump from the vehicle, feet together, do NOT touch anything else. Hop (feet together) or shuffle away 50+feet and do not go back until the all clear. The ground could have electrical leakage (much like a water ripple effect) around the vehicle, voltage could vary per foot causing you to be the connector between two different voltages (producing a current).





UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

POWER SUPPLIER ENERGY CHARGE

This charge is the wholesale power cost which covers the cost of generating and transmitting power from the power plant to MJM substations. MJM does not generate its own electricity. Instead, we purchase it wholesale from a generation and transmission cooperative in Indianapolis. Like other electric companies, MJM bases its power supplier energy charge on kilowatt hours (kWh). One kilo-watt hour is equal to 1,000-watt hours. A watt hour is the amount of energy used by a one-watt load drawing power for one hour. For example, a 100-watt light bulb uses 100 watts of power in one hour.

If your home uses electricity as its primary heating source, you may be eligible for a discount on your rate during the winter months of November, December, January, February, and March.

POWER SUPPLIER DEMAND

This charge is for the maximum amount of electrical energy consumed at any given time during a billing period and is measured in kilowatts (kW).

DISTRIBUTION ENERGY CHARGE

This charge recovers a portion of the cost to get the power from the substation to the meter and is based on kilowatt hours.

SERVICE DELIVERY CHARGE

This charge covers the cost of maintaining the equipment used to send electricity to your home. This includes the cost of transformers, meters, lines, and poles. Your service delivery charge remains the same each month and is based on your power needs.

POWER COST ADJUSTMENT (PCA)

This is a line item on the bill that adjusts regularly to help the co-op recuperate fluctuating purchased power costs.

TAXES & ADDITIONAL SERVICES

The remaining charges on your bill are taxes and any additional services you may have with MJM, such as a security light.

OPERATION ROUND UP

The mission of the Operation Round Up® Program is to assist in strengthening the communities served by MJM Electric. Through this innovative program, the “small change” is earmarked for community betterment groups and other programs in need of financial assistance. This is an optional program so if it may not appear on your billing statement.



MJM is a distribution cooperative. It constructs and maintains the power lines and substations necessary to deliver power to their rural members but does not generate that power. MJM purchases its power wholesale from Wabash Valley Power Alliance (WVPA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. WVPA is a cooperative organization that has an alliance with more than 20 member distribution co-ops. WVPA makes and transmits the electricity from the power plants to MJM for distribution to our Members.



KEEPING COMFORTABLE WHILE SAVING ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

When cold weather hits, energy use often increases. Fortunately, there are ways to cut heating and other energy costs and still keep our homes comfortable as the weather gets colder. Here are some ways to start conserving energy and electricity at home:

Adjust your day-to-day behaviors

To reduce energy consumption in your home and increase your energy savings, you do not necessarily need to go out and purchase energy efficient products. Energy conservation can be as simple as turning off lights or appliances when you do not need them. You can also minimize the use of energy-intensive appliances by performing household tasks manually, such as hang-drying your clothes or washing dishes by hand. The behavior adjustment that has the highest potential for energy savings is turning down the heat on your thermostat in the winter.

Replace your light bulbs

Traditional incandescent light bulbs consume an excessive amount of electricity and must be replaced more often than their energy efficient alternatives. Consider purchasing light-emitting diode bulbs (LEDs) because they use anywhere from 25-80 percent less electricity and last 3 to 25 times longer than traditional bulbs. Although energy efficient bulbs are more expensive off the shelf, their efficient energy use and longer lifetimes mean that they cost less in the long run.

Use smart power strips

"Phantom loads," or the electricity used by electronics when they are turned off or in standby mode, are a major source of energy waste. In fact, it is estimated that 75% of the energy used to power household electronics is consumed when they are switched off, which can cost you up to \$200 per year. Smart power strips eliminate the problem of phantom loads by shutting off the power to electronics when they are not in use.

Install a programmable thermostat

A programmable thermostat can be set to automatically turn off or reduce heating and cooling during the times when you are asleep or away. When you install a programmable thermostat, you eliminate wasteful energy use from heating without upgrading your HVAC system. On average, a programmable thermostat can save you \$180 per year.

Purchase energy efficient appliances

On average, appliances are responsible for roughly 13% of total household energy use. When purchasing an appliance, you should pay attention to two numbers: the initial purchase price and the annual operating cost. Although energy efficient appliances might have higher upfront purchase prices, their operating costs are often 9-25% lower than conventional models.



Reduce your water heating expenses

Water heating is a major contributor to your total energy consumption. Other than purchasing an energy efficient water heater, there are three methods of reducing your water heating expenses: you can simply use less hot water, turn down the thermostat on your water heater, or insulate your water heater and the first six feet of hot and cold-water pipes.

Install energy efficient windows

Windows are a significant source of energy waste - they can add up to 10-25% of your total heating bill. To prevent heat loss through your windows, replace single-pane windows with double-pane products instead.

Upgrade your HVAC system

An HVAC system is composed of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment. Heating alone is responsible for more than 40% of home energy use. ENERGY STAR furnaces are up to 16% more energy efficient than baseline models. This translates to average savings of \$94 per year.

Insulate and weatherize your home.

Insulation plays a key role in lowering your utility bills through retaining heat during the winter. The level of insulation you should install depends on the area of your house. Your attic, walls, floors, basement, and crawlspace are the five main areas where you should consider adding insulation. Weatherizing, or sealing air leaks around your home is a great way to reduce your heating expenses. Use caulk to seal leaks.

Sources:

Touchstone Energy & Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

Visit our website for additional energy-saving tips:

<https://mjmec.coop/saving-energy-101>





2023 RATE INFO COMING SOON



The deadline to submit this newsletter for printing arrived prior to the decision being made by the Board of Directors for 2023 electric rates. In order to make the best decision for MJM's Members, the Board has been reviewing detailed rate study information provided by a third-party. Please look for updated rate information in the February newsletter.