



**MJM**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# ALONG THE LINES

Vol. 14, No. 3

March 2021

[www.mjmec.coop](http://www.mjmec.coop)

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**JUNE 4, 2021**

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**MJM Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

18300 Shipman Road, Carlinville, IL 62626

Office 217-707-6156

Pay by Phone 1-855-313-6314

Office Hours

Mon-Fri 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.



**Board of Directors**

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Vice Chairman

Dennis Stewart..... Nokomis

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William R. Heyen..... Gillespie

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Jeremy Pattillo..... Director of

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Jennifer Peterson..... Executive

Administrator

**Editor**

Brooke Gross..... Communications and Member Services Coordinator

**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.

MJM Along the Lines (USPS 854-620) is published monthly for \$3.00 per year by MJM Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 80, Carlinville, Illinois 62626. Second-class postage paid at Carlinville, IL. POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to MJM Along the Lines, P.O. Box 80, Carlinville, IL 62626.

# Focus on the Basics

## Four Steps to Securing Your Electronic Devices


Often the easiest way to connect to and configure your Wi-Fi device is while connected to your home network. Point your web browser to the specific IP address documented in your device's manual (an example of this would be https://192.168.1.1), or use a utility or mobile app provided by your Wi-Fi device vendor.

1. **Change the Admin Password:** Your Wi-Fi access point was most likely shipped with a default password for the administrator account that allows you to change the device configuration. Often these default passwords are publicly known, perhaps even posted on the Internet. Be sure to change the admin password to a unique, strong password, so only you have access to it.

2. **Create a Network Password:** Configure your Wi-Fi network, so it has a unique, strong password as well (make sure it is different from your device admin password). This way only people and devices you trust can join your home network. Consider using a password manager to select a strong password and to keep track of all of your passwords for you.

3. **Firmware Updates:** Turn on automatic updating of your Wi-Fi access point's operating system, often called firmware. This way you ensure your device is as secure as possible with the latest security options. If automatic updating is not an option on your Wi-Fi access point, periodically log into and check your device to see if any updates are available.

4. **Use a Guest Network:** A guest network is a virtual separate network that your Wi-Fi access point can create. This means that your Wi-Fi access point actually has two networks. The primary network is the one that your trusted devices connect to, such as your computer, smartphone, or tablet devices. The guest network is what untrusted devices connect to, such as guests visiting your house or perhaps some of your personal smart home devices. When something connects to your guest network, it cannot see or communicate with any of your trusted personal devices connected to your primary network.

5. **Use Secure DNS Filtering:** DNS is an internet-wide service that converts the names of websites into numeric addresses. It is what helps ensure your computer can connect to a website when you type in the website's name. Wi-Fi access points typically use the default DNS server supplied by your internet service provider, but more secure alternatives are available for free from services such as OpenDNS, CloudFlare for Families, or Quad9 that can provide extra security by blocking malicious or other undesirable websites. 



# Pay Ca\$h on Your Account at Designated Stores!

MJM is now offering a convenient way to pay your bill with cash without having to travel to our Carlinville headquarters. There is a convenience fee of \$1.50 but this makes up for the time and fuel you save if it is not a necessary trip. Note the TERMS & CONDITIONS below and where you can make a cash payment.

## Dollar General

280 N Broad St, Carlinville  
939 S State St, Jerseyville  
14 Shopping Plaza Ste 3, Litchfield  
1281 S Washington St, Bunker Hill  
3884 Fosterburg Rd, Alton  
101 S Maple St, Brighton


## Walgreens

705 S State St, Jerseyville  
1202 W Union Ave, Litchfield

## CVS Pharmacy

303 South State St., Jerseyville

## How Do I Pay Cash at a Store?

- When you log into MJM's SmartHub app, go to the **Billing and Payments** tab then click on **Pay by Cash**.
- The store clerk will need to scan the barcode, or you may print off the barcode before coming to the store. 

### Pay by Cash

Create a single barcode per Account to pay your bills with cash at a VanillaDirect retailer.

#### View Barcode

A convenience fee of \$1.50 will be applied to your payment.

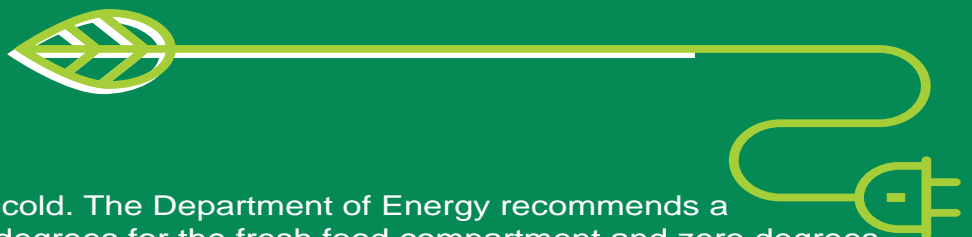
Select Account: 16 [Account Name] ER RD

Print Barcode



**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** By accepting or using this barcode to make a payment, you agree to the full terms and conditions, available at [vanilladirect.com/pay/terms](http://vanilladirect.com/pay/terms). After successful payment using this barcode, you may retrieve your full detailed e-receipt at [vanilladirect.com/pay/ereceipt](http://vanilladirect.com/pay/ereceipt). The majority of Pay by Cash participating stores will accept cash payments up to a maximum amount of \$500.00.

## 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.

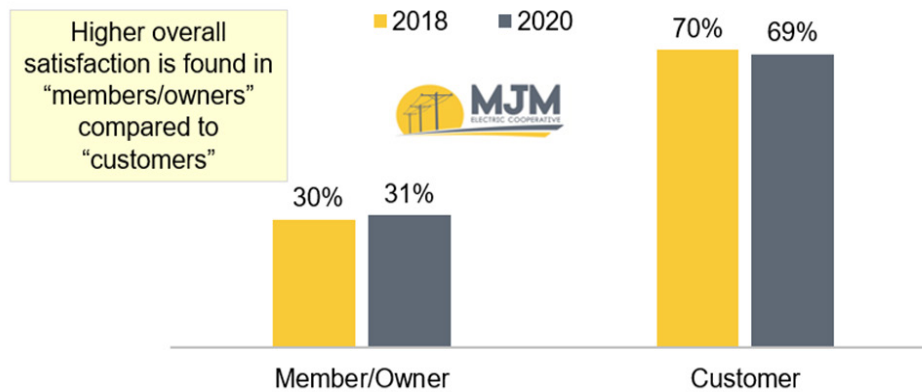
Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

# CUSTOMER OR MEMBER?

Why do cooperatives call their consumers “Members” not customers? The answer is simple! A cooperative is owned *and* controlled by the people who use its services. Guided by the seven cooperative principles, MJM lives its value through a trusted business structure that balances the needs of individuals and the community. These values represent the cooperative difference and how your coop earns the trust of Members every day. Working together, we are part of something special, that’s why membership matters!!

According to the recent Member survey, 69% of respondents still consider themselves to be customers rather than Member/owners. Seeing that we have made very little progress in educating our Members motivates us that much more to reverse this perception. One of the respondents of the survey commented that they did not identify any benefit to being a Member vs. being a customer. The only advantage of value that they saw was to get on the board.


## Trends in Relationship with Co-op



MJM operates on a non-profit, cost-of-service basis, and excels to provide our Members with quality service. Your money pays for what it costs MJM to deliver electricity to you and keep the lines in working order, with a little bit left over going back to you and your communities instead of into the pockets of wealthy investors.

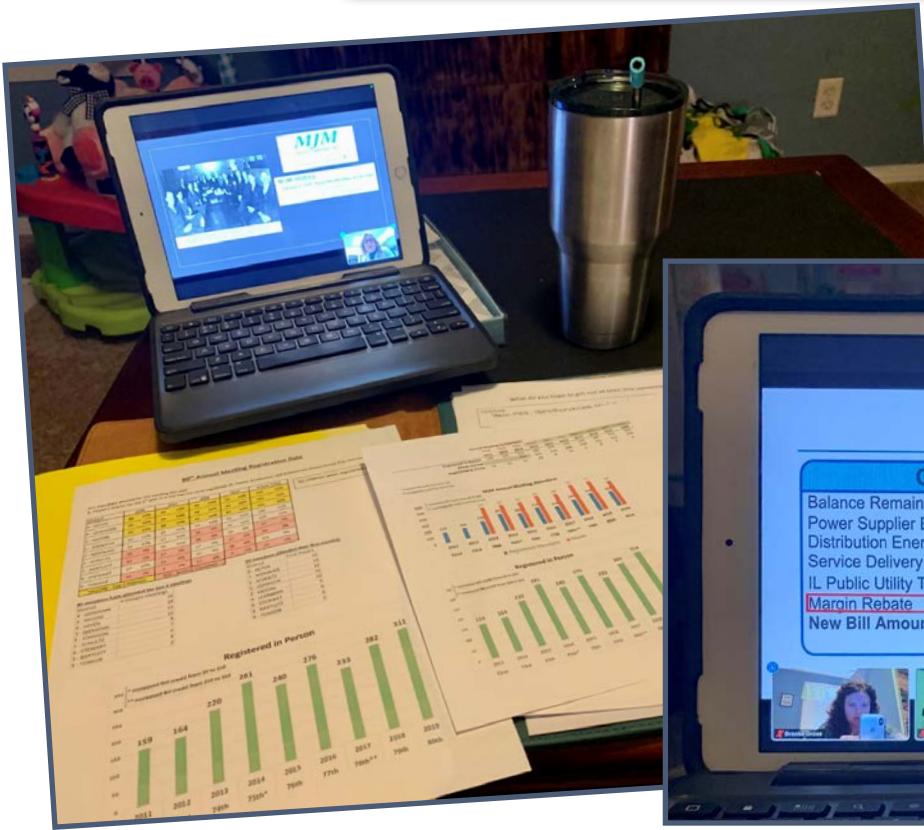
Democratic control *is* one of the main principles of being a cooperative. With Members in charge, you can feel confident that the decisions made are in the best interest of our Members and the communities we serve. All of our Member have a say in how MJM runs its business by participating at our annual meeting and by electing Directors to represent them. (NOTE: This year’s annual meeting that was scheduled for March 13<sup>th</sup> was postponed and has now been scheduled for Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 4:00-7:00 PM. It will be held as a drive-thru meeting at the new Carlinville Headquarters with a to-go meal served and virtual meeting to follow. More details will be forthcoming.)

As a Member of MJM, you are eligible to run for a Board of Director position. To find your district and more, refer to the MJM bylaw booklet available online at [www.mjmec.coop](http://www.mjmec.coop), contact us at 217-707-6156 or email us at [info@mjmec.coop](mailto:info@mjmec.coop). If you are interested in becoming a Board Director this year, and live in District 2, 3, or 8, (please refer to page 8) you must submit a completed petition no later than Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. A petition may be obtained from MJM’s office by request starting on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

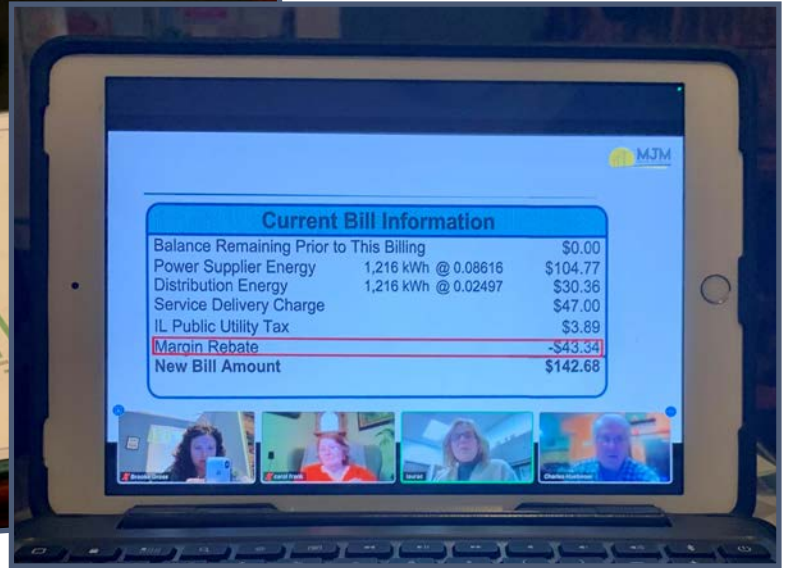
There are other ways for Members to get involved at MJM, too. Members can participate by joining the MAC (Member Advocate Committee) or volunteer as a Trustee for the Operation Round Up Grant Review Committee. 

**Annual Meeting will be held on June 4th at 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. as a drive-thru meeting at the new Carlinville Headquarters.**

# Reunited Once Again!



*Brooke Gross takes a photo of her 'home office' that was temporarily set up in her son's nursery. Meeting locations sure have changed!*



Finally! After a long year of holding off on meetings, MJM's Member Advocate Committee (MAC) got to meet virtually. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Member Advocates throughout the territory tuned in together to listen to a presentation and participate in open discussion.

Communication and Member Service Coordinator Brooke Gross started off the meeting by taking roll call. Those in attendance were prompted to answer the roll call question of 'What do you hope to get out of MAC this upcoming year?' MAC couldn't have given better suggestions on how to shape educating the group and all Members this upcoming year. Some suggested DIY energy efficiency videos, details pertaining to renewables, and MJM's day-to-day operation.

Gross then turned the meeting over to CEO Laura Cutler who gave her presentation over how MJM came to be in 1939, the importance of holding an Annual Meeting, details surrounding this year's Annual Meeting, implementing Operation Round Up, the Margin Rebate Members received in January, and addressing any questions the group may have had. Although it was nice to virtually meet, we are looking forward to meeting in person someday in the future...hopefully!

At the end of 2019, the year term had ended for those who had sat on the original MAC beginning in 2017. Obviously, 2020 has been a wash but 2021 shows a lot of promises as MJM would like to welcome Perry Jackson of Litchfield, Roberta Meyer of Hillsboro, Shelia Beers of Brighton, Heather Loy of Medora, and Patrick Kuykenall of Brighton as the newest Members to MAC. Those returning to the committee are Amy Knodle of Fillmore, Carol Frank of Jerseyville, Charles Huebener of Brighton, David Crone of Jerseyville, Karen Klunk of Jerseyville, Michelle Franklin of Shipman, Scott Peterson of Chesterfield, and Scott Reichmann of Carlinville.

*We are looking forward to working with the Member Advocates in 2021!* 🌈

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# What Does it Mean to be an MJM Board of Director?

Congratulations to W. Kay Schultz and Jim Niemann who recently received their Director Gold Status, which is on top of their Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certifications! These NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) certification programs are specifically designed to help electric cooperative directors, at every stage of their service, understand their roles and responsibilities, stay up to date on the key issues and trends in the industry and prepare them to meet the challenges facing electric cooperatives now and in the future. One of the key strengths of the rural electric program is its commitment to education and professional development.

Because of the important business decisions and oversight responsibilities that directors have, they enjoy both legal and customary power of access to the information and resources necessary to fulfill their responsibilities by being a Member of the NRECA.

Boards are responsible for the following:

- Approval of budgets
- Selection of lenders and approval of loans
- Selection of the bank to hold the co-op funds
- Selection of the independent financial auditor and review the audit
- Approval of capital credit refunds
- Decisions regarding the structure of the annual meeting such as voting procedures, location, etc.
- Approval of policies that address board, employee, and Member functioning
- Approval of what will be communicated to Members regarding their status as Member-owners
- Understanding their legal and fiduciary responsibilities
- Selection of the co-op attorney
- Hiring and delegating authority to the President/CEO
- Speaking with one voice when representing the organization
- Acting as an advocate for the co-op and its Members

An effective co-op board Member maintains loyalty to the organization with a higher loyalty to the Members and understands and is committed to the organization's mission. 🏡



MISSION STATEMENT:

***To be the electric provider of choice, dedicated to providing the services and products our Members want and need.***

# When MJM Calls, Who Will Answer?

Stay in the know by keeping your contact information up to date!

At MJM, we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our Members (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve Member service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows Co-op Members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.


While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected Members through automated phone messages, text messages or email, *if* we have your updated contact information and communication preferences. **You must opt in via our SmartHub app to receive text and email notifications.**

Keeping the Co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered Members of any changes in Co-op event details. Recently, MJM's newsletter has been sent via email to Members who have their emails attached to their account. We have had a lot of positive feedback regarding virtual newsletters. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if MJM has accurate account information.

Many of you have been Members of the Co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many Members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

Sometimes we forget things like paying your bill during a hectic month. Each month, delinquent payment phone calls are made after the 15th to Members with correct contact information on file. This is a courtesy call that informs our Members that the Co-op has not received their payment for the current month.

We want to emphasize that in providing your contact information to the Co-op, we will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by MJM to send important information to you. Please take

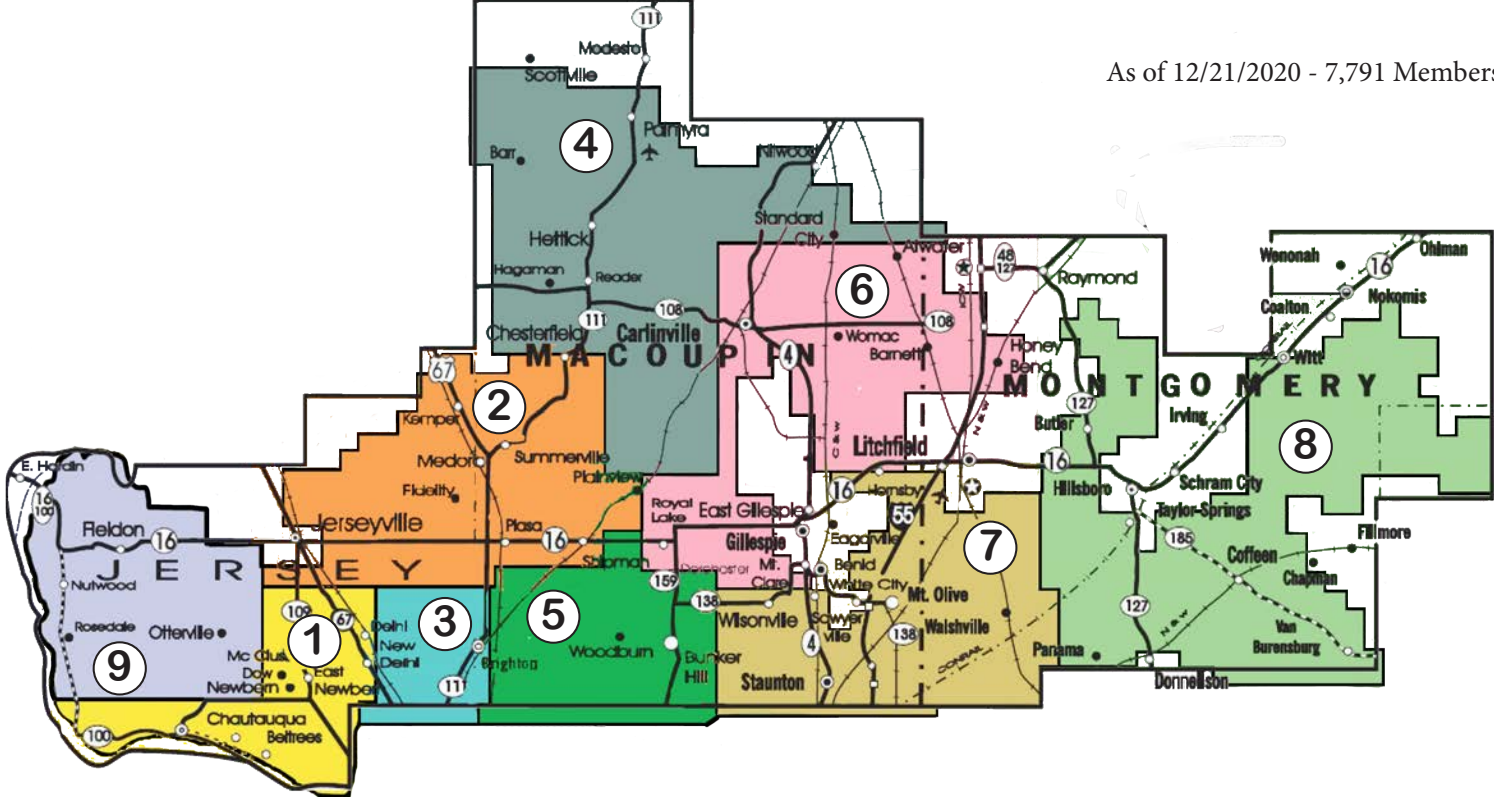
a moment to view your contact information by looking at the bottom of your billing statement on the bill stub (the part that you mail in with your payment) or login to your account(s) online at MJM's website ([www.mjmec.coop](http://www.mjmec.coop)) or via SmartHub on a mobile device. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all Members of the Co-op. 



Call Us

# Board District Re-delineation

As of 12/21/2020 - 7,791 Members



- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> W. Kay Schultz; 793<br/>was 799</p>  | <p><b>4</b> Robert Lehmann; 879<br/>was 889</p>   | <p><b>7</b> James R. Niemann; 923<br/>was 1,014</p> |
| <p><b>2</b> Robert E. Moore; 834<br/>was 835</p> | <p><b>5</b> Louis Johnson; 888<br/>was 994</p>    | <p><b>8</b> Dennis J. Stewart; 912<br/>was 812</p>  |
| <p><b>3</b> Paul Bartlett; 818<br/>was 824</p>   | <p><b>6</b> William R. Heyen; 938<br/>was 913</p> | <p><b>9</b> Marcie Tonsor; 806<br/>was 794</p>      |

On a periodic basis, MJM’s bylaws require that the Board shall review the composition of the several districts. In determining if there needs to be a re-delineation of the districts, the Board shall consider the number of Members in each district, the geographic area covered by each district, and the natural geographic boundaries of the districts. If upon review, the Board, in its discretion, determines that there shall be a re-delineation of the districts, they shall do so by resolution.

The last time re-delineation of the districts occurred, and a resolution was passed, was on October 28, 2011 and became effective April 1, 2012. This was a tedious manual task that was spearheaded by then Staking Engineer Charlie Baker. With investments made by MJM in an electronic mapping system, GIS/ Mapping Coordinator Jeromy Miller was able to get the districts more evenly distributed with much less time and effort and streamlined the process for future re-delineation. A resolution was passed by the board on December 23, 2020 and became effective immediately.



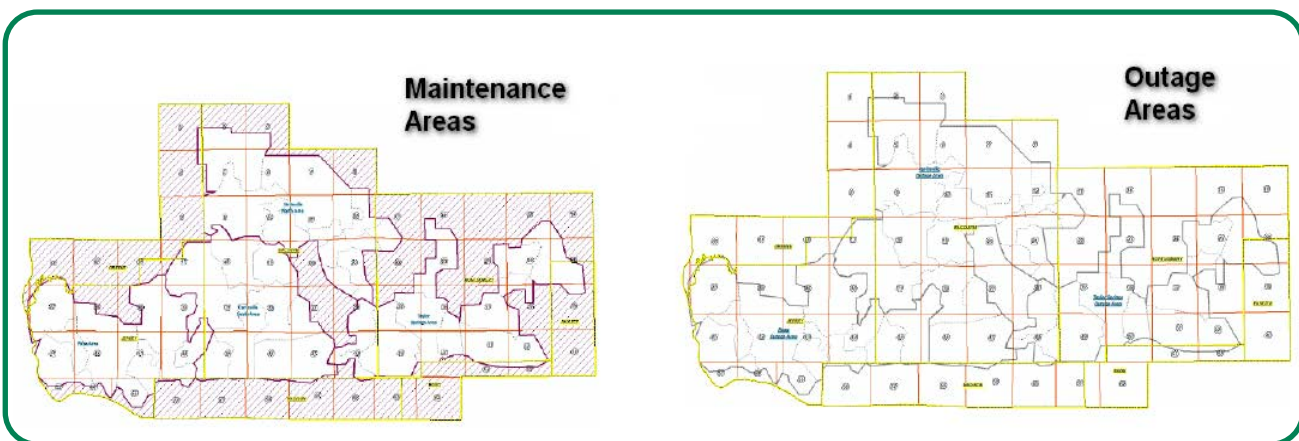
# Benefits of the GIS (Electronic Mapping) System

by Jeromy Miller, GSI/Mapping Technician

Over the years, MJM has seen growth at different rates geographically across our system. Historically, the Board Districts were set based on township numbers. MJM serves power to 68 townships and these entire townships were divided up amongst the Board Members to represent our Membership. Over time and as we see more growth in certain areas, we have had to try to balance that out as best as possible. Doing so was a time-consuming process and each account that was changed had to be done manually, one-by-one, and in our billing system. Over the past several years, I have tried to use our GIS (electronic mapping) system, to automate processes in an effort to save time and reduce potential human error.

I found a way for our GIS (mapping) system to feed the data over to our CIS (billing) system. I first took the shapefiles (polygons) around all of our townships and copied that database and made a new one for Board Districts. I was able to set up a process with help from our software vendor, NISC, to enable the Board District of a service to be determined by which polygon it fell in geographically. Our nightly process then pushes that data over to our CIS system. This allows us to make mass edits in seconds, rather the former time-consuming manner by which we changed them manually in each account affected. I then was able to run a script and do an export of data to see how many Members each Board Member was representing. At that point, I was able to play with the polygons to get the board representation more balanced. Once we arrived on a representation that we felt was fair and appropriate, we were able to process those changes with a mass update of our CIS data. Moving forward, we can now, in a matter of minutes, rebalance our Board districts when necessary.

This obviously put the wheels in motion to take things another step forward and enhance other parts of our system. In the past, we dispatched crews after hours based on the townships as well. I did a similar process by taking the polygons of our substations and feeders, cloned a copy of them, and built a new database for our service/outage areas. This allows us to have a service within those boundaries, to autofill the outage, service areas, and push that data over to our CIS (billing) and OMS (outage) systems. This was done for a few reasons. First, to balance the different regions out based on the manpower we have at the headquarters and outposts. Secondly, to improve safety for our crews, as prior, a feeder may cross into several townships and crews from different facilities could get dispatched onto the same outage after hours. Now when a Member calls in an outage after hours, the dispatching firm, CRC, can see the correct outage area to dispatch from, dispatch crews much faster, and provide more safety for our crews. The lineman no longer have to double check that another crew may already be out on the same sub or feeder outage in a different township.



As technology increases, we strive to harness it as a vessel by which to improve service to our Members. This is done at every level of the Co-op from the office to the lines and the men working on them. We continue to find ways to automate processes, share data, and utilize our resources to better serve our Members. MJM has made great strides over the past several years, and we will continue to pursue and progress in the years to come.✈️

**MJM'S 82ND ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS**

# **DRIVE THRU**

**MEETING DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS**

This year's MJM Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting of Members will be held as a non-traditional, drive thru meeting.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2021**

**4:00-7:00 P.M.**

**CARLINVILLE HEADQUARTERS**

Each Member who votes will receive a \$15 bill credit, attendance gift and the chance to win a grand prize!

**FOR DETAILS, CALL 217-707-6156**

**MEMBERS MUST BE PRESENT IN VEHICLE TO VOTE!**

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## Three Electrifying Kitchen Appliances to Save Time and Energy

Whether your oven and stove top are powered by gas or electricity, it's no secret that they consume more energy than smaller counter top appliances, like slow cookers and toaster ovens. In addition to efficiency, smaller kitchen appliances can provide faster cooking times and less hassle with cleanup.

If you're looking for convenient cooking methods with the added bonus of energy efficiency, here are three electrifying appliances for your kitchen:



Air fryers are becoming increasingly popular, and consumers have a lot of good things to say about these handy little appliances. Air fryers use convection to circulate hot air and cook the food—this means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. Air fryers are fairly small, so they won't take up much of your counter space, and with everything cooked in the fryer, cleanup will be a breeze. Air fryers are available in a variety of sizes, and prices range from \$40 to \$200+.



Electric griddles have certainly been around for a while, and they offer several benefits for any home chef (beyond bacon and eggs!). Griddles are convenient because you can cook everything at once—like a “one-pan” meal, and the possibilities are endless. From fajitas to sandwiches to French toast, griddles can help satisfy any taste buds. They consume small amounts of energy and provide quick cooking times, so your energy bill will thank you. Prices and sizes for griddles vary, but you can typically find one for about \$30 at your local retail stores.



Pizza brings people together, so why not consider a pizza maker for your kitchen? These compact, counter top machines are an inexpensive alternative to a costly brick oven, and they use less energy than your traditional oven. Choose your own fresh ingredients to whip up a faster, healthier pizza at home. Plus, most pizza makers are multifunctional and can be used to cook flatbreads, frittatas, quesadillas and more. You can purchase a pizza maker for about \$30 to \$150+ online or at your local retailer.

These are just a few electrifying appliance options for your kitchen. Remember, when you're cooking a smaller meal, counter top appliances can save time and energy. 🌈



Air fryers circulate hot air (convection) to cook the food. This means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. *Photo Credit: Hamilton Beach*

Electric griddles consume small amounts of energy and provide quick cooking times, so your energy bill will thank you. *Photo Credit: Hamilton Beach*



Pizza makers are compact and inexpensive, and they use less energy than your traditional oven. *Photo Credit: Hamilton Beach*

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## Member Trading Post

**FOR SALE:** 2 Twin Bed Headboards. \$100 for both. Maple in color. 217-408-6479

**FOR SALE:** Car, boat, or camper inside storage available. 618-334-4298.

**FOR SALE:** Hay wagon JD running gear, all metal. Very good condition. Two new charcoal/gas combo grills. Beautiful Chaise lounge is a soft gold (tan) color that includes 3 pillows. The length is approx. 5' long, 32" wide, and the height of the seat is 20". Skidsteer loader bucket - \$750 (Litchfield). Eduard 4-Light Vanity Light (New in box) Quantity - 2 Retail for \$308 each- Selling for \$150 each. Details as follows: Overall 8.5" H x 33" W x 6.75" D, Overall

Weight 8.8 lb., Dry, Damp or Wet Location Listed, Shade Included, Shade Color is Crystal clear, Shade Material Glass, Finish Polished nickel. Currently has four 120 Volts lights. Call Jim at (618) 420-4744

**FOR SALE:** ATN Thor-HD Thermal Imaging Rifle Scope. Call for more information and details at 618-535-5828.

**FOR SALE:** 1998 full size GMC van with hydraulic lift and wheelchair tie down. V8 engine, plenty of power. Comes with a good engine, transmission and tires. 89K miles. Clean title. Asking \$5,000 O.B.O. Please call 618-372-7217.

 **Happy**  
**St. Patrick's Day!**

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.

