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Rural HIGHLIGHTS

A publication of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative • Auburn, Illinois • www.recc.coop

Snow and ice storm strikes February 1 *Ice causes outages, snow hampers repairs*

The Groundhog Day Storm. It was a two-day headache for RECC and many of our members, but it was very nearly a lot worse.

As rain turned to sleet and ice on Monday evening, January 31, the weather forecast hinged on the front where freezing rain would change to snow. That line pretty much passed through RECC's service area, with small amounts of ice here followed by up to 12 inches of snow. South and east of us, it was mostly ice, with up to two inches of ice accumulation in towns including Mattoon and Newton. The heavy ice there pulled down trees and power lines, causing outages that lasted several days for electric co-ops serving those areas.

The weight of the ice wasn't the issue for us, with about a half-inch thickness built up on our lines Monday night. It was the strong winds that caught the ice-thickened lines, causing them to sway and jump, sometimes in a rhythmic "galloping" motion that puts great stress on the wires and connections.

The first problems that hit were those galloping wires on transmission lines feeding our nine substations. When wires slapped together, they caused blinks or blew fuses along the lines. Ameren, which operates most of the transmission lines in our area, was having trouble keeping



Extra crews from Croft Electrical Contractors helped make repairs after the ice and snow storm, and clear weather on Wednesday made work much easier than in the blowing snow on Tuesday.

their lines operating across central and southeastern Illinois.

Of course, when the transmission line feeding a substation goes out, then hundreds of RECC members are instantly without power. And except for the Glenarm substation, we can only wait for Ameren to restore the affected transmission line. Through Tuesday, Feb. 1,

five of our substations were without power for at least part of the day and evening. Towns like Auburn, Waverly and Loami, also served by Ameren, were out of power for the same reasons.

The actual storm damage to RECC's distribution lines was not that heavy, according to Lou DeLaby, manager of operations and maintenance. "We had

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Dana Smith, *editor*



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Board report

Resume of Minutes Regular Board Meeting January 24, 2011

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co. was held at the cooperative headquarters at 6 p.m. on January 24, with all members present. Also present were President/CEO David Stuva; Manager of Operations and Maintenance Lou DeLaby; Director of Member and Public Relations Dana Smith; Field Engineer and Purchasing Agent Martin Hinton; Executive Assistant Sandy Lex; and Attorney Jerry Tice.

* The minutes of the December 27, 2010 regular Board meeting were approved as presented.

* CEO Stuva introduced co-op member Scott Schmidt, who recently constructed a 10 KW wind turbine and a 2 KW solar system at his residence. Mr. Schmidt gave a short presentation on his investigation of small wind and solar systems and his experiences in installing and operating a renewable energy system.

* CEO Stuva introduced Lou DeLaby, who reported on projects including the relocation of RECC lines along Mansion Road near Chatham where the County Highway Department is widening the road. He said upgrades are also being done along Kennedy Road and BAB Road in Auburn to improve capacity and reliability.

* CEO Stuva presented the IMEA Report.

* The AIEC report was presented by Chairman Ayers.

* The Attorney's report was given by Jerry Tice, who reported on discussion with EWT on the proposed Service & Maintenance Agreement for the GobNob wind turbine.

President/CEO's Report

CEO Stuva reviewed the following reports which had either been mailed or distributed to all directors and attorney: Job Training and Safety, Meters and Outages, Operations and Maintenance, Engineering and Construction, Cash Disbursements Summary, and Check Listing. The Board accepted the reports. The financial and statistical reports for November were reviewed and accepted.

CEO Stuva also

* Reported that the co-op had introduced an automatic telephone notification service, Notify 24, that can call members to provide information about outage problems and, for large outages, give restoration update information.

* Reviewed plans for upcoming meetings.

Board Action

The Board acted on the following:

* Approved the application for, or reinstatement of, membership and electric service for 13 persons.

* Approved a Special Equipment Summary for the purchase of transformers, OCR's, regulators and meters during 2010 in the amount of \$317,768.42, for submittal to RUS for loan funds.

* Appointed CEO Stuva as the voting delegate and Dean Fuchs as alternate delegate to represent RECC at the Cooperative Workers Compensation Group and Rochdale Services Annual Meeting on April 14.

* Appointed the following members to the 2011 Nominating Committee, to meet March 3 to name candidates for Board elections at the RECC Annual Meeting on June 9:

District #4:

Pauline Miller
33879 Lead Line Rd
Viriden, IL 62690

Helen J. Miller
34373 Lead Line Rd
Viriden, IL 62690

Kelly L. Pitchford
22507 Thomasville Rd
Viriden, IL 62690

District #5:

Fred Reichert
16560 Hunley Rd
Auburn, IL 62615

Galen Bailey
12896 Union School Rd
Auburn, IL 62615

John Megginson
12959 Lead Line Rd
Auburn, IL 62615

District #6:

Brian Abshire
319 E 1400 North Rd
Pawnee, IL 62558

Fred Vangeison
1152 N 700 East Rd
Morrisonville, IL 62546

Steve Elam
1047 N 900 East Rd
Palmer, IL 62556

The meeting adjourned at 10 p.m.



A stretch of line north of the Kincaid Power Plant had 20 broken cross arms, which kept power off for members in the New City area overnight on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

broken cross arms in some areas, and a lot of wires pulled loose from insulators, and reclosers tripped when lines slapped together, but no broken poles,” he said.

The biggest challenge of the repair effort, he said, was working in the blowing snow. Visibility was poor, drifts formed quickly, and some roads were totally blocked. “We told the crews they needed to come in by 9:00 Tuesday night because conditions were getting dangerous, but some worked past that trying to get just a few more lines back on.”

There were some members who remained out of power overnight, mainly near Auburn, New City and an area from Lowder to Loami. When daylight Wednesday morning brought calmer winds, crews were able to resume their efforts in those areas and fix the remaining problems. Even then, some new outages occurred briefly as transmission lines were repaired and lines that had been temporarily back fed were switched over to normal feeds.

Rural Electric was able to get help quickly on Tuesday and

Wednesday, with five crews from Croft Electrical Contractors from Missouri. A three-man construction crew from CWLP in Springfield also came in. The extra crews helped get the repairs done much faster across our service area, DeLaby said.

New communications technologies helped keep members informed on the outage situation, said President/CEO David Stuva. “We were posting updates on the Internet through Twitter, Facebook, and the RECC website,” he said. “With smart phones, wireless Internet and work accounts, many members were able to stay in touch with us and be aware of the problems we were experiencing.” A new outgoing call system also helped get the word out to affected members (see side story).

It may not go down in the record books with the huge ice storm of 1978, but the Groundhog Day Storm will linger in some members’ minds for a long time. Fortunately, no serious injuries or accidents resulted, and by working together, we did get everything restored on Feb. 2, “The Day After.”

Keeping members informed

The Groundhog Day Storm proved a perfect situation to unveil a new communications tool to some of our members. An automated call system, called Notify 24, was set up this winter to allow RECC to call lists of members to update them on outage situations or causes. “Members often ask us, ‘Why was my power out last Tuesday?’ if there was no obvious weather problem,” says David Stuva, President/CEO. “We had just started to use Notify 24 in January to call the members affected after a local outage, for instance to tell them that an insulator broke and their line shorted out,” he says.

During the February snow storm, Notify 24 calls went out to tell members about blinking light problems, and later to let some members know that their lines would not be reconnected on Tuesday night, but that crews would resume their efforts early Wednesday morning.

“We got some good comments from those calls, with members telling us they appreciated the effort to keep them informed and help them make plans for their own well-being,” says Stuva.

The Notify 24 system is one of the reasons that RECC is trying to get updated phone numbers for all our members. Many people rely solely on cell phones today, or may prefer that we call their cell numbers instead of their home phones. This is very helpful to the co-op’s office staff and crews, whether using Notify 24 or trying to contact members directly about problems with their account or service.

Students remember safety tips

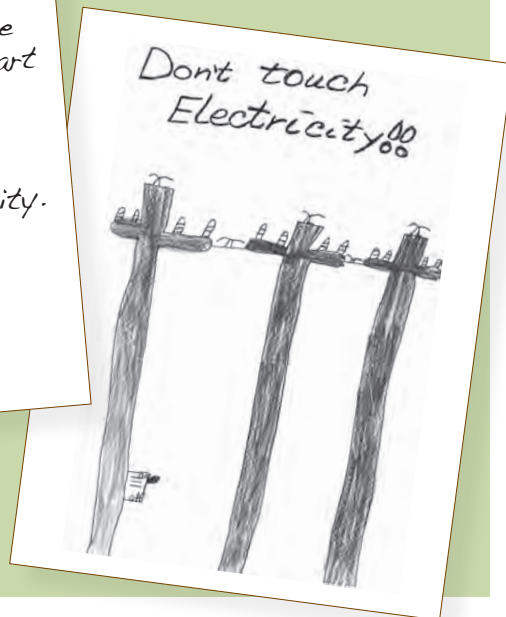
RECC received some great thank-you notes from fourth graders who attended the Live Line Demo programs in Macoupin and Montgomery counties in January. Many quoted tips given by presenter Kyle Finley, about staying inside a car if it hits an electric pole and wires have fallen down, or using ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets near sinks and wet locations. We know there have been accidents where students specifically remembered the Live Line lessons when they were involved in accidents, and probably saved the lives of those involved.

That's a great feeling to take away from these programs, only surpassed by the fun in reading their notes, such as this letter from Colten Perkins at Carlinville Elementary School.

Dear Rural Electric:

Thank you for supporting the Live Line program. My favorite part is when the squirrel blew fire out of his mouth. I learned how not to touch electricity.

Your friend,
Colten Perkins



More copper wire thefts

Copper thieves have pulled ground wires off of more RECC poles this winter, costing the co-op and our members thousands of dollars to replace the missing sections of wire. Our crews have found wire missing on poles north of the Glenarm substation and north of the Lowder substation, as well as in the Girard and Virden areas.

Some of the same areas near Lowder were hit by thieves last year in March and November, with ground wires cut at the bottom of each pole and as high up as the thieves could reach.

“RECC is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of these criminals,” says President/CEO David Stuva.

Not surprisingly, the thefts occur on poles located away from homes or major intersections. But the areas are still open and visible, Stuva says. He is encouraging members and rural residents to report any suspicious activity or anyone trying to sell large amounts of copper wire pieces.

Stuva adds that RECC's own crews or contractors would always be driving marked vehicles, so

they can be identified easily. They also would seldom be working on a line at night, unless responding to an outage problem, he points out.

“We need the help of our members, being vigilant and watching out for the good of the neighborhood. After all, the cost of repairing and replacing these wires is being paid by every member-consumer.”



Copper ground wires are installed on electric poles to provide safety protection and proper operation of protection equipment.

Changing our look

RECC office entry getting an update

She was 55 years old, and looking a little weary for her age.

“She” is the office for RECC, on Highway 104 just east of Auburn. And after all those years, she’s getting a little face-lift.

When Rural Electric moved its offices from Divernon to Auburn in 1955, a state-of-the-art brick building held the offices, truck warehouse, board room and appliance showroom for the growing cooperative. While it’s had several additions and changing use of the spaces over the years, the front entry looked pretty much the same until a few months ago.

What started inside with some office re-arrangements and new paint schemes spilled out the front door, which also moved to a different corner of the lobby. The large plate-glass windows are gone, and new “eyebrow” awnings help shade the windows across the front and west sides of the building.

The lobby will be barely recognizable to those who haven’t visited recently, with the front counter replaced by a service window (but no isolating, bullet-proof glass!), and double doors separating the adjacent meeting room.

Inside work is nearly done, with a little floor leveling needed before new locking-panel tiles cover the classic linoleum tiles. The outside work was halted by cold January weather, but a new stucco-type finish will be applied to the central focal point when warmer temperatures return. The co-op name will be proudly announced there in large acrylic letters.

An open house is planned for later this year, to celebrate the new look as we enter our 75th year of doing business. In the meantime, of course, members are welcome to stop in any time to talk about their electrical needs, or just say hello!



A stucco-like finish will be applied to the center section of the new façade when warmer temperatures return.



Custodian Stefan Sporer, one of the co-op employees who has done the painting and finish work inside, replaces a switch near the new service window in the front lobby.

News & Notes

SpeedNet Internet expanding service

SpeedNet is now offering free installs for wireless Internet service in Central Illinois. As a member of RECC you will also get your first month of service for just \$1.00. Over the past year SpeedNet has added capacity on its network and added over 30 towers to its system. A new site is under construction now in Waggoner. With plans starting at \$19.95 per month, SpeedNet has a plan for everyone. To take advantage of the special pricing and free installation, call the RECC office at (800) 245-7322.

Some efficiency tax credits remain

The federal energy efficiency tax credits that were in effect the past two years aren't gone after all ... they just shrunk for 2011. While home improvements like high-efficiency furnaces, air conditioners, heat pumps, windows and insulation used to earn a 30 percent tax credit, now the credit is ten percent. The maximum total credit that can be claimed for 2006 through 2011 is also lower, at \$500. The maximum credit for different upgrades varies, so check out the details at the Energy Star website (www.energystar.gov/taxcredits).

The renewable energy credits for geothermal, solar and wind systems remain the same at 30 percent, through 2016. RECC's rebates for heat pumps and geothermal systems also are ongoing! And finally, there is still a potential for more funding through the Home rebate program, for qualifying geo, heat pump, furnace and air conditioner systems as well as insulation projects. Contact RECC if you are contemplating an upgrade project in those areas.

Self-Serve 24, any time!

If you haven't tried RECC's Self-Serve 24 phone line, check it out! You can check your account balance or make a payment, from anywhere, any time. During a larger

outage, you can also let us know your power is out, or even hear the latest repair updates. Just call Self-Serve 24 at 438-3575, with your electric account number.

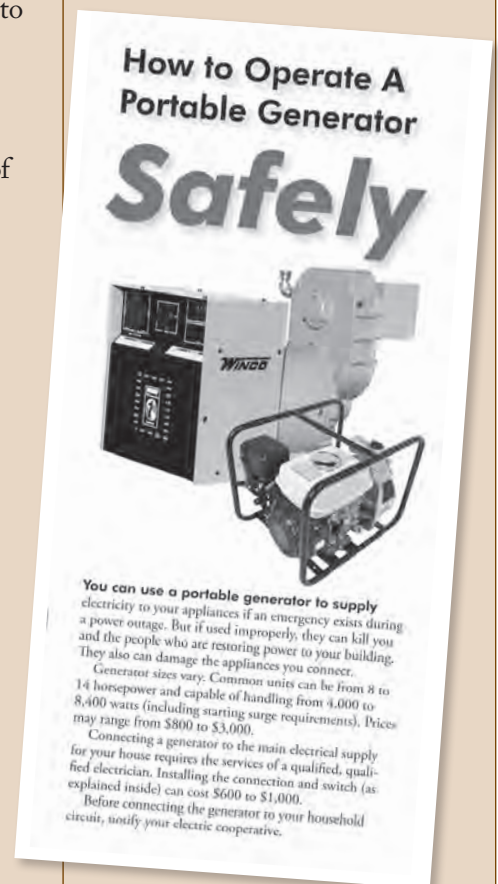
Thinking about a generator?

With the recent storm and resulting outages, you may be thinking about investing in a standby generator. They can provide electricity for your whole house, or to operate a few lights and maybe the television or a small appliance or two. Just having a light for reading, a television to watch, or a small amount of warm food or drink can certainly reduce the increasing demand to move into a motel room.

Before buying a generator, identifying your needs should be the top priority. You can do that by calculating the number of watts needed. Add up the wattage required to power the items you want to be able to run. You will have to have a generator with more output than your total because of the initial surge of motors when they start up. Remember that small portable generators can't power your furnace and air handling system plus your refrigerator, freezer, washer and dryer, along with a well pump. The generator may not have a steady output of electricity and heavy duty motors that power refrigeration equipment and furnace blowers can be damaged with the surging of a generator.

For help in planning your generator needs, the Illinois

Electric Cooperatives have developed a brochure on small generator safety. You can call our office for a free copy, or read it online at our website, www.recc.coop. Remember the most important safety tip of all: make sure a switch disconnects your home from the electric grid while your generator is in use!



MEMBER RESPONSE PAGE

Please send me information on services from RECC:

<input type="checkbox"/> Peak Switch	<input type="checkbox"/> New Home Energy Guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Marathon Lifetime-Warranty Water Heaters
<input type="checkbox"/> Dual Meter Heating Rate	<input type="checkbox"/> Surge Suppressor Lease	<input type="checkbox"/> Long Distance Saving Rates
<input type="checkbox"/> Security Light Rental	<input type="checkbox"/> Co-op Power Plus™ Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> AT&T Wireless Cellular Phone Savings
<input type="checkbox"/> Convectair Heaters	<input type="checkbox"/> DTN Wireless Internet	

Electric heating equipment rebates

An electric heat rebate form must be completed. Minimum system sizes apply.

- Geothermal System – \$250/home
- Air Source Heat Pumps – \$250/home (with electric back-up)
- Air Source Heat Pumps – \$100/home (with gas back-up)

Electric equipment rebate request

Please include a copy of your sales receipt for your new electric equipment, purchased and installed within the past 12 months.

<input type="checkbox"/> Clothes Dryer, Electric Replacement – \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Heater, Standard Warranty – \$200 (less than 10-yr warranty)
<input type="checkbox"/> Clothes Dryer, New Home or Gas Conversion – \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Heater, Life-long Warranty – \$250 (10-yr or longer warranty)
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Range, Electric Replacement – \$25	
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Range, New Home or Gas Conversion – \$25	
	This water heater is for: <input type="checkbox"/> New Home <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Conversion <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Replacement

Member Name _____ Account No. _____

Mailing Address _____

Town _____ Phone _____

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

P.O. Box 19, Auburn IL 62615

Telephone: (800) 245-7322 (RECC) or (217) 438-6197 • www.recc.coop

Normal office hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

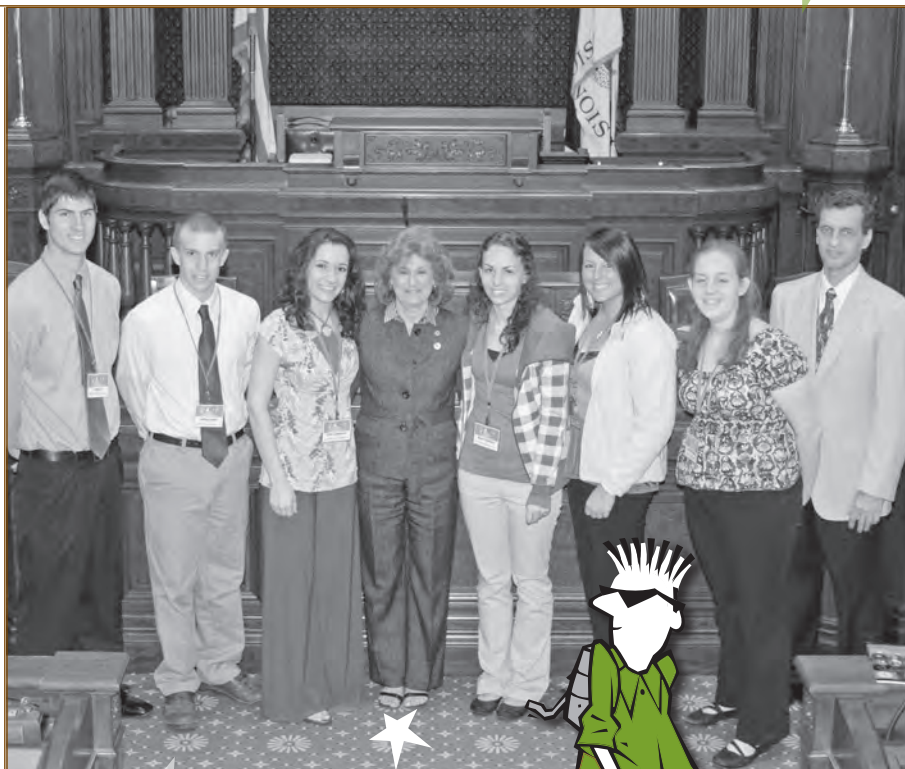
Rural Electric Youth Day deadline is March 18

Time is running out to apply for Rural Electric Youth Day and the Youth to Washington contest!

Up to 10 students will be sponsored by RECC at the Illinois Youth Day program on Wednesday, April 6, touring the Capitol and other historic sites, and meeting with their state legislators. Two of those students will be selected to attend the Youth To Washington trip, June 10-17, with about 1,000 young people from around the country. RECC sponsors these trips to encourage students to learn more about our government's operation and about electric cooperatives.

Any junior attending a high school in RECC's service area is eligible for these expense-paid programs. Application request forms have been sent to our local schools, or students can contact our office. We will mail a full application kit and background information directly to the student. The application form includes a summary of the student's school and civic activities and accomplishments, and a brief essay question pertaining to the rural electric program.

Applications must be returned to RECC by March 18, and the ten students selected for the Illinois Youth Day program will be notified by March 23 so that they can arrange their school schedules around the trip. Transportation will be provided from Auburn to Springfield and back.



★ Youth Day

After the day's activities in Springfield, the students will have individual interviews to select two winners for the trip to Washington, D.C. They will be judged on their application information, personal poise and confidence, and demonstrated understanding of the rural electric program. The two winners will travel by bus from Springfield to Washington

this summer, in one of the best-recognized youth programs in the nation's capital.

Students from any of our local high schools are encouraged to apply. They can call our office at (800) 245-7322 to ask for an application packet, or e-mail a request to recc@recc.coop. What a great way to have fun, meet new friends and maybe even learn a little history!