



# Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

## Prepaid Electric Service option now available! An energy solution for today's consumer

RECC's new Prepaid Electric Service allows you to pay for energy when you choose, the same way you buy groceries and gasoline. The easy pay-as-you-go plan will give you greater control over your budget because you can decide how much to pay and when to pay it.

### Prepaid Electric Service offers many benefits:

#### Say goodbye to large deposits

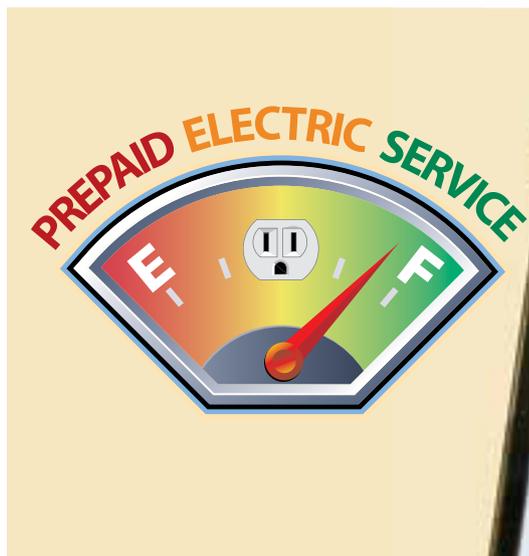
A \$50 deposit and \$25 toward your first energy use is all that's needed to start on Prepaid Electric Service. (You'll still have your \$5 co-op membership fee as well.) If you have a larger deposit with the co-op, you can apply part of it to your energy bill!

#### No more monthly bill

Instead of one large bill at the end of the month, you can make smaller payments when your prepaid account runs low! And there are no late fees that increase your costs.

#### Buy electricity when convenient

You can customize a payment schedule that works for you. Make a payment anytime online or by phone, or through our office during business hours. You can buy an electricity supply for a month or more, or enough for a few days at a time.



*With RECC's SmartHub portal, members can see their prepaid balance on a Prepaid Electric Service account, along with their average daily cost and much more. SmartHub is useful with any account, and can be viewed on a computer or mobile device.*

#### Monitor and control your energy use

Since you can see your prepaid balance change each day, you'll be more aware if your electric use increases. You can also see how changes in your habits can affect your energy cost!

#### Receive low-balance notifications

We'll let you know if your prepaid balance is getting low, usually when you have about five days left of typical electric use. You can choose

e-mail or text messages, or phone calls to alert you of a low balance.

Prepaid Electric Service is a different way to pay and manage your electric costs. If you want more information about this new billing option, give us a call at (217) 438-6197. We can review your account history and current balance, and explain the transition to the prepaid plan.

Many co-op members around the country are now enjoying the benefits of Prepaid Electric Service. Call us to see if it's a good fit for you!

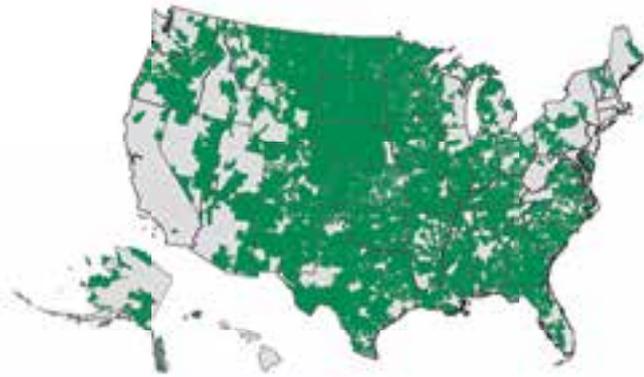
## Another service upgrade at Otter Lake Campgrounds

RECC crews completed installation in February of a new 800-amp service entrance for a portion of the North Campgrounds owned by the Otter Lake Water Commission. The project is part of the commission's upgrade of its two campgrounds along the shores of Otter Lake, increasing the electric service capacity and installing heavier underground wiring to camp sites to accommodate air conditioners and other amenities used by the campers. The Southeast Campgrounds had a similar upgrade in 2013, also with a new 800-amp service from the co-op.



*Journeyman Lineman Craig Costello is pictured installing the meter and main disconnect box at the campgrounds.*

**42 million Americans**  
IN **47 STATES** DEPEND ON  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES  
FOR **RELIABLE** POWER.  
WE'VE INVESTED  
**\$93 billion**  
IN SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS  
OVER THE LAST DECADE.



**AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES**  
#WeKeepTheLightsOn



Co-ops have built great expertise in maintaining and repairing infrastructure in the areas they serve. As locally owned and operated not-for-profit utilities, cooperatives emphasize system upgrades and maintenance.

For two decades, co-ops have been national leaders in deploying Smart Grid technologies, including advanced meter technologies. Smart technologies allow remote monitoring and faster, more accurate pinpointing of issues in

real time, expediting outage restoration efforts. The combination of expertise, technology, and local focus allows America's Electric Cooperatives to keep the lights on.

## RECC receives Certificate of Safety Achievement

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative received the Certificate of Safety Achievement at the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) Roundtable, held in Bloomington on Feb. 11. RESAP is a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and strives to promote the highest standards of safety among electric cooperatives. The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) works with Illinois electric cooperative members in their dedication to employee and public safety. Twenty-four Illinois cooperatives currently participate in RESAP.

The program is based on two fundamental guiding principles. The first principle is a commitment to safety at all levels of the cooperative. Leaders accept responsibility for a culture that drives safety performance. The second is that leaders and employees take ownership of the systems and processes that create a safe working environment.



*Shown (L-R) are: Duane Noland, AIEC President/CEO; Lou DeLaby, RECC Manager of Operations and Maintenance; and Steve Davis, AIEC Manager of Regulatory Compliance. DeLaby said that Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative has been part of the RESAP safety accreditation program since 1993.*

## Safety video contest open to high school students

High school students who have been looking for a creative video project, now have a challenge placed before them by the Energy Education Council (EEC) and Illinois Broadcasters Association (IBA). They have launched new video contests this year to help raise awareness about outdoor electrical safety in Illinois. One of these contests is specifically for Illinois high school students. The contest provides prize money for the winning students and their schools, and it is being funded by Illinois electric utilities.

The "Safe Electricity High School Challenge" allows students to create a short video – from 6 seconds to 60 seconds, with the option of submitting a broadcast-length 30 or 60-second video.

The contest judging criteria include creativity, message effectiveness, accuracy of safety information provided, production quality and adherence to rules. It is paramount that all electrical safety recommendations and guidelines be followed during the development of video entries.

Up to five winning high school entries will be named. The creators of each winning video will share a cash prize of \$500, and the sponsoring high school will receive \$500.

Winning videos may appear online on program and utility websites, as part of EEC's educational efforts to increase awareness on important outdoor electrical safety issues.

Students or teams of students must have a faculty sponsor and pre-register



on the IBA website in advance of the video submission deadline. The pre-registration deadline for high school entries is May 15, 2015. Complete details for the contest can be found at [www.illba.org](http://www.illba.org).



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## Implementing quality surge protection

By Tom Tate

There is little, if anything, you can buy today that does not have some electronic component. Even clothing as wearable electronics are starting to take hold. So, it's time to take a look at making sure your electronics last as long as possible by protecting your products from electrical surges.

A surge is an unexpected increase in voltage that causes damage to electrical equipment. A surge is usually created by lightning and can damage unprotected computers and sometimes even protected computers.

Surges can enter a home through any number of avenues. The most obvious is through the power lines. Less obvious is through the telephone lines, cable/satellite connections, water lines and any other metallic system that connects to your home. So, to protect against surges, you need to take a three-pronged approach.

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Perhaps the most important thing to do is to be sure all the grounds in your home are good and that they are bonded together. Over the years, grounds can deteriorate, new services can be added with inadequate ground-

ing and so forth. A faulty ground will allow surges into the home rather than bleeding them off into the earth. Get a qualified electrician to test and correct your grounding system.

Next, protect your electrical service entrance with a surge device. The easiest to install are those mounted behind the meter. They can also be mounted at the main electric panel. When a voltage surge travels down the electric lines, these devices will act to "clamp" the surge and reduce its power.

The third prong is to protect expensive devices at their point of use. Computers and entertainment equipment are prime examples. Remember that surges can enter the home via paths other than the power lines. Computers and entertainment equipment are frequently connected to cable and phone lines. Those devices need to have protection at the point of use that covers all possible avenues. These are generally in the form of a power strip that most of us are familiar with. Use a quality product from a manufacturer such as Monster, Belkin, Tripp Lite, or APC, to name a few. .

*Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*

### RECC offers surge protection plan \$4.95 lease offers whole-house protection

Protect your equipment now with RECC's easy lease program! We will install and maintain a whole-house surge protection device for \$4.95 a month. We also offer a selection of plug-in protectors for your home, from single-plug cubes for your garage door opener to satellite system strips with electrical,

phone and cable connections. One standard six-plug strip is included in your lease program, with others available for purchase.

Call our office at (217) 438-6197 for more details or to schedule an installation. Or e-mail us at recc@recc.coop.