

Norris Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



News

82nd Annual Meeting of Members highlights

Members of Norris Electric Cooperative gathered at Newton Community High School for their co-op's 82nd annual meeting of members held Saturday, Feb. 8. During the meeting, consumer-members were provided updates about their cooperative from its leadership.

Board President Gordon McClure welcomed members and brought them up to date regarding the cooperative's 10-year strategic plan to aggressively replace and build new lines, upgrade substations and provide additional space to house line trucks and equipment.

Norris Electric Manager Tamara Phillips introduced Journeyman Lineman Ralph Bowersock, Jr., who represented Norris Electric on an international trip to Guatemala in October. Bowersock was one of 12 volunteer linemen, supported by co-ops from Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin, who traveled to Guatemala on a three-week project to electrify 42 homes, a health post and a school in the remote village of Chixoy.

"Ralph saw the bigger picture and wanted to be a part of it," Phillips said. "I want to thank Ralph and his family for giving of themselves to help make the world a little better for a selected few."

In her remarks, Phillips went on to explain how the cooperative is advancing its strategic plan to retire and replace old poles and lines and conscientiously clearing right-of-ways.

"Last year, more than 55 miles of line were rebuilt, making it one of the most productive years in recent history. Our goal is to continue working at this pace to ensure reliable electricity to our members."

Additionally, the cooperative is adding a substation at Greenbriar in 2020 to help reduce and eliminate extended outages.

In April 2019, Norris Electric joined the national electric industry Commitment to Zero Contacts Program. This initiative helps highlight reasons why safety is the cooperative's first priority. Phillips shared the story of Gerry Kinney, a former lineman from Fairfield, who lost both arms after contacting 7,200 volts of electricity. Kinney spoke to co-op employees about the importance of not becoming complacent in their jobs.

Phillips noted an addition to bills during the past year. "This new line item comes in the form of a Power Cost reduction to



Norris Electric Cooperative's board of directors



During the Norris Electric's annual meeting, it was announced that (l-r) Ron Viehman, Dan Strine and Dean Dietrich were re-elected to new 3-year terms on the co-op's board of directors.



At the end of the meeting, Norris Electric gave away four \$500 scholarships to high school seniors: Josie Grunlob, DavaLynn Tarr, Lexi Marshall and Alexis Bell.

your bill," she explained. "Since our new power contract with Vistra went into effect, we have been able to slightly reduce your power cost, and this should help keep rates affordable for years to come. Norris Electric's rates are the lowest cooperative rate in the state of Illinois."

Addressing the crowd, Board Treasurer Dean Dietrich reported that of the \$40.9 million in revenue collected in 2019, 59 percent went to purchase wholesale power which equates to \$24 million. About 35.5 percent was used for operating expenses, depreciation expenses and taxes. The remaining 5.5 percent, amounting to \$2.3 million, will be allocated back

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#ThankALineworker

Remember to #ThankALineworker on April 13

Lineworkers serve on the frontlines of our nation's energy needs, and on April 13, 2020, Norris Electric, along with other electric cooperatives across the country, will honor the brave men and women who work hard to keep the lights on.

Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing to our local communities. Whether

they're restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers are at the heart of our co-op.

When a storm hits, they set aside their personal priorities because Mother Nature doesn't work around holidays, vacations and birthdays. A service-oriented mentality is one of the many admirable characteristics of an electric lineworker.

Norris Electric is proud to honor the 31 lineworkers that maintain 4,110 miles of power lines in our service territory.

Norris Electric invites all co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for the important work they do. On April 13, you can use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support for the brave men and women who power our lives.

Meet Stephanie Woods

Stephanie Woods has been offered and accepted the accountant position at Norris Electric. Her first day of work was Monday, Jan. 13. Stephanie was previously employed by Kemper's CPA group. She is a graduate of Olney Central College and Eastern Illinois University. Stephanie and her husband, Kevin, live in the Newton area and have two children, Carter and Claire.

Please join us in welcoming Stephanie.



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Meeting highlights

to members as margins and reserves.

"This margin was primarily used for last year's construction projects," explained Dietrich. "Your electric plant value increased by \$7.3 million this year totaling \$89.7 million, meaning the value of your cooperative went up almost 9 percent. We are in sound financial condition."

During the meeting, it was announced that Dan Strine of Wabash County, Ron Viehman of Lawrence County and Dean Dietrich of Richland County were re-elected to new three-year terms on the board of directors.

At the end of the meeting, Norris Electric gave away many prizes including four \$500 scholarships to graduating high school seniors: Josie Grunloh, daughter of John and Janet Grunloh; DavaLynn Tarr, daughter of Matt and Amy Tarr; Lexi Marshall, daughter of Chad and Jennifer Marshall; and Alexis Bell, daughter of Troy and Angela Probst.



Respect the orange signs: Move over and slow down in work zones

Many, there aren't enough hours in the day. Because of that, many people use drive time to be productive. They might call their boss, text their best friend or apply mascara.

Multitasking can be an effective use of time, but not while driving.

In 2017, 799 people died in work zone accidents, according to the U.S. DOT's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Although this reflects incidents that took place in road construction zones, know that accidents, injuries and deaths can happen in any roadside work zone, including utility work zones.

That is why we ask you to help keep our crews safe by slowing down and following any other instructions — including moving

over to give them space — anytime you see orange warning signs and cones that lead up to a work zone.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or not moving over can also put an elevated line-worker in danger by causing the bucket he or she is in to move or sway.

Lineworkers already have enough to contend with by working high up on power lines while out in the elements. Their profession consistently places on the Bureau of Labor Statistics most dangerous jobs. Do your part; please don't add noncompliant drivers to the mix.

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

2017 statistics released by the U.S. DOT's FHWA:

203
fatal crashes
where speeding
was a factor

222
fatal work zone
crashes involving
large trucks or
buses

132
worker fatalities in
road construction
sites

Make the most of your landscaping

The month of April features Arbor Day, Earth Day and Safe Digging Month. It is recognized as a month to plant trees and start landscaping projects, or if the weather is uncooperative, at least plan for all those projects.

Done correctly, the right landscaping can help beautify and add value to your property while also helping to reduce energy bills. Consult a local tree nursery, arborist, or U of I Extension office expert for assistance to find the right trees for your space. Here are some tips on how to make the most of your plans.

Safe digging

Whether building a deck, planting a tree or creating a new garden bed, always call JULIE before doing any digging. It's not just a safety suggestion, it's the law. Call 8-1-1 or visit illinois1call.com to submit a request or get more information about the underground utilities that will be marked. Be sure to call by Wednesday afternoon if you are planning a weekend project.

Safe placement

Keep areas around meters and transformers free of vegetation that can limit access. Keep trees away from underground utilities – roots can grow into and interfere with pipes, cables and wires. Keep trees from overhead lines – see the graphic below for suggestions on how far to stay from lines.

Tree branches that come into contact with lines cause blinks and power outages and we have a tree trimming plan in place to reduce service interruptions. Avoiding the area near lines means we won't need to trim your trees. See our website for more information on our trimming program.

Plant for efficiency

The U.S. Dept. of Energy says that planting the right type of tree in the right place can block winter winds and summer sun, saving you up to 25 percent of heating and cooling costs.

They suggest planting deciduous trees with high leaves and branches on the south side of your home and those with low branches on the west side; these

locations will prevent the hot summer sun from heating up your home. They also note that shading an outdoor air conditioner unit can improve its efficiency as well.

Planting evergreens and shrubs close together on the north/northwest side of the home can provide a block to those cold winter winds. But don't plant any too close on the south side or they'll block the winter sun from warming your home.

Special note for farmers

Safe Electricity recommends maintaining a 10-foot minimum distance between any equipment and electric lines – that's above, below and to the sides of lines. Field cultivators, sprayer booms and even antennas can be higher than 10 feet. Inspect entrances to fields to ensure there is adequate clearance for equipment; and always use a spotter who can verify from a different vantage point.

Visit SafeElectricity.org for more safe planting tips.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start.



illinois1call.com

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project.

