

Clay News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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From the Manager

It's a new year with new challenges and new opportunities. Your cooperative is working hard to keep the lights on and keep our members safe. This isn't limited to just hanging high voltage signs and making sure our trucks are visible—it's protecting your data, too.

Cybersecurity is something that wasn't worried about much a decade ago, but it is one of the fastest growing and most serious issues facing the cooperative today. This month will kick off a series of penetration tests of the cooperative's infrastructure to determine where our cybersecurity is strongest and where it needs to be improved.

Many people don't think of themselves as "big enough" to be threatened by cybercriminals, but the days of targeted attacks are over. Most hacking isn't a bad actor directly trying to get access to a specific target. Instead, they throw a large net and take the path of least resistance. A hacker will get a list of frequent passwords and email addresses and run a program to try and get into those email accounts. The ones with weak passwords are the ones that get broken into, and their contacts are then added to a hacker's list. Strong passwords and duo authentication are simple ways to increase the difficulty of compromising your accounts. It's not a matter of

becoming impervious, but to be difficult enough they move on to other targets.

Don't forget to be on the lookout for your member number in the center section of this magazine. There are three member numbers hidden in Clay Electric News. If you find your number and give us a call, you win \$5 off your next bill!



Matt Conklin
CEO



Every month we will have three member numbers hidden throughout Clay Electric News. If you find your member number that corresponds to the one found on the upper right corner of your bill, call our office and identify your number and the page it's on. If correct, you will win a \$5 credit on your next electric bill.

Be proactive in preventing electrical fires

Take steps to help prevent electrical fires by identifying possible issues before they occur.

When assessing your home, the first step is to hire a qualified electrician to check all wiring to ensure it is up to code and that the electrical system can handle the demands of your electronics, appliances, lights and other electrical needs. Beyond that, watch for possible issues as they arise.

Symptoms of issues include flickering lights, discolored outlets and switch plates, damaged cords, frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

Check these electrical items in your home:

1. Electrical outlets:

Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace missing or broken wall plates. If you have young children, install tamper-resistant outlets if your home does not have them. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

2. Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs):

Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the “Test” and “Reset” buttons monthly to ensure that they are working properly.

3. Cords: Check cords to ensure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under rugs, tightly wrapped around an object or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

4. Extension cords: These are not intended to be permanent solutions, so use them temporarily. If you find that you need more electrical outlets, consult your electrician.

5. Light bulbs: Verify that your light bulbs are the intended wattage for the lamp or fixture.

6. Appliances/electronics: If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, it is time to discard it and replace it with a new version. Use surge

and lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.

9. Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs): AFCIs, which monitor the flow of electricity throughout your home, should be properly installed. If an AFCI detects any abnormality, it shuts the system off to



protectors to protect expensive electronics. Make sure your appliances and electronics are placed in dry locations.

7. Circuit breakers/fuses: Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuits they protect. **14561-001**

8. Electrical wiring: If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Also, check for loose wires

prevent a fire. Upon inspection, an electrician can assess whether your home is properly protected.

10. Service capacity: If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. Contact a qualified electrician.

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



Majority of home heating fire deaths involve a space heater or other heating equipment

Heating equipment, such as space heaters, kerosene heaters, fireplaces and wood-burning stoves, is a leading cause of fires in U.S. homes, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The term “homes” includes one- and two-family homes (including manufactured homes), apartments, townhouses and other multi-family dwellings.

During a recent four-year period, local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 48,530 fires involving heating equipment each year. The fires resulted in 500 civilian (non-first-responder) deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage, according to NFPA’s Home Heating Fires report published in 2021.

In addition:

- Heating equipment caused one in seven home fires and 19% of home fire deaths.
- Most home heating fire deaths (81%) included stationary or portable space heaters.
- More than half of the home heating fire deaths were caused by placing heating equipment

too close to things that can burn, such as furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding.

- Nearly half (48%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.
- Failure to clean equipment, such as chimney flues, accounted for a quarter of all heating equipment fires.

Approximately two in five home heating equipment fires involved items that ran on what is considered solid fuel, such as wood-burning or pellet stoves or wood-burning fireplaces. However, electric-powered heating devices were responsible for the largest share of losses, accounting for more than half of the fatalities, three in five injuries and two-fifths of the property damage.

Follow these safety tips to use space heaters safely:

- Read all instructions and use space heaters only as recommended.
- Do not leave space heaters unattended.

- Plug them directly into an outlet; most power strips and extension cords are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by space heaters cycling on and off. **10130-001**
- Unplug any other items from the outlet you are using and try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Turn the heaters off before you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Do not use heaters that are in disrepair or have frayed cords or damaged plugs.
- Place them on flat, level surfaces and never on furniture, counters or carpet, which can overheat.
- Unplug and put space heaters away (out of the reach of children) when not in use.

Use space heaters with care. For additional safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org).

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

November 28, 2022

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. (CECI) was held at the Clay Electric Co-operative Headquarters, Flora, Ill., beginning at 5 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 28, 2022.

Trustees present were: Bob Pierson, Neil Gould, Bill Croy, Kevin Logan, Richard Rudolphi, Frank Herman, Frank Czyzewski, Josh Schnepfer and Evan Smith. Also present were: Matt Conklin, CEO and Tyra Cycholl, Attorney for the Board. The meeting was opened by Bob Pierson, who presided and Neil Gould, who acted as secretary thereof.

The invocation was given by Josh Schnepfer and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following proceedings were had [all action being first duly moved and seconded and all action taken being upon the unanimous vote of the Board or without dissenting vote of abstention unless otherwise stated]:

APPROVED, the Suggested Agenda.

APPROVED, the Consent Agenda including the following:

- **APPROVED**, the prior meeting minutes; **12739-004**
- **APPROVED**, (a) to admit to membership those applicants connected for service since the last such review by the board, and (b) cancel those former members shown on the Manager's Report since the last such review by the Board, said members no longer taking service;

REVIEWED, the Consent Agenda including the following:

- **REVIEWED**, the Work Orders;
- **REVIEWED**, the Disbursements;
- **REVIEWED**, the Credit Card Statements;
- **REVIEWED**, the Attorney Retainer;
- **REVIEWED**, the Account Summary Report;
- **REVIEWED**, the Federated Report from the Board;
- **REVIEWED**, NCSC Report from the Board.

APPROVED, Truck 12 replacement with final decision-making power delegated to the purchasing committee.

DISCUSSED, the one-acre plot of land north of Flora. Matt Conklin to negotiate with the farmer for a farming contract.

APPROVED, Supplement No 2 to the Wholesale Power Contract with SIPC.

REVIEWED, CFC commercial paper investment.

REVIEWED, CFC quarterly Loan Payment.

REVIEWED, NRECA midterm election analysis.

HEARD, a report by Frank Herman regarding SIPC Board Meeting.

REVIEWED, RUS Supplemental Contract with SIPC.

HEARD, a report by Kevin Logan regarding AIEC.

WERE UPDATED, on the Board Training and NRECA Annual Meeting.

At 6:02 **APPROVED**, entered into executive session.

At 6:32 **APPROVED**, exiting executive session and returning to the regular meeting.

APPROVED, the CEO Salary as outlined in the resolution.

DISCUSSED, the proposed 2023 budget including:

- SIPC Power Costs;
- Capital Credits;
- Advertising and Donations;
- Capital Items;
- 2023 Budget.

HEARD and APPROVED, a financial report by Matt Conklin as to the following:

- Monthly Reconciliation;
- SIPC Power Delivered in October 2022;
- October 2022 Cash Flow;
- Line Loss;
- October 2022 Form 7;
- October 2022 Balance Sheet;

REVIEWED, the Safety Report for the month of November.

REVIEWED, the Monday morning Safety meeting.

HEARD and APPROVED, the Manager's report by Matt Conklin on the following topics.

- Retirement of Karen Forth;
- Purchase of XFMR Equipment;
- Strategic Planning;
- Rate Comparison Sheet;
- Operations Report;
- Communications Report;
- Upcoming meetings.

WERE INFORMED, of the Retirement of Karen Forth in January of 2024.

WERE INFORMED, of the purchase of XFMR Equipment.

DISCUSSED, strategic planning being held Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2023.

REVIEWED, the Rate Comparison sheet.


REVIEWED, the Operations Report.

REVIEWED, the Communications Report.

WERE REMINDED, of upcoming meetings on Dec. 27, 2022; Jan. 23, 2023; Feb. 27, 2023; and March 27, 2023 at 5 p.m., Christmas party on Dec. 13 at 6 p.m., and strategic planning on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2023.

There being no further business to come before the Board, said meeting was declared adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

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