

From the Manager

Summer gives way to fall this month. I'm proud of the work our crews have put in over this year's storm season. Needed upgrades across our system have proven their value through several damaging storms this year. No amount of work will ever give us perfect reliability, but we've seen the efforts of our construction team and contractors over the last couple years cut down on outage times. Increasing the size of conductor on our three-phase backbone over the last couple years allowed us to feed members from other substations when transmission outages took out multiple subs. Being able to reroute our system to put our members back in power while the transmission grid is still being repaired is satisfying. Knowing our members have power is what lets us sleep well at night.

This month should see our area farmers starting to get into their fields again. As the harvest season begins, we encourage all our members to:

- 1. Slow down and stay alert.** As farmers work diligently to bring in their harvest, tractors and other large equipment might be sharing the road with you. Slow down and stay alert, giving them the space they need to operate safely.
- 2. Stay patient.** Harvest season can bring slower-moving vehicles onto the road. Remember, everyone is trying to get where they need to go. Show patience and understanding to ensure a safer journey for all. **7481-001**
- 3. Pass with caution.** If you encounter slower vehicles, pass with caution. Make sure you have a clear line of sight and plenty of room to overtake safely. Always use your turn signals and follow traffic rules.
- 4. Watch for farm entrances.** Be extra vigilant around farm entrances and driveways. Farm vehicles may unexpectedly enter or exit the road. Stay attentive and be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary.
- 5. Be mindful of dusk and dawn.** Dusk and dawn can be particularly challenging times for visibility. With the sun low on the horizon, visibility might be reduced. Make sure your headlights are on and keep a safe distance from other vehicles.
- 6. Use seatbelts.** No matter the season, wearing your seatbelt is crucial. Seatbelts save lives. Make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled up before hitting the road.
- 7. Stay cautious in poor weather.** Fall weather can be unpredictable. Rain, fog and frost can make roads slippery and reduce visibility. Slow down, increase your following distance and use your vehicle's lights appropriately.
- 8. Avoid distractions.** Keep your attention focused on the road. Avoid distractions like texting, eating or adjusting the radio. Your full attention is essential for your safety and the safety of others.

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



What to consider before saying yes to home solar

Energy use generated by residential solar panel systems grew by 34% from 2.9 gigawatts (GW) in 2020 to 3.9 GW in 2021, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). (In case you are wondering, there are one billion watts in one GW. Also, 3.125 million photovoltaic [solar] panels are equivalent to one GW of power, according to the EIA.)

U.S. homeowners surveyed by the Pew Research Center in January 2022 demonstrated a strong interest in installing residential solar panels for their homes, with 8% stating they had already done so and 39% stating they had given it serious thought. Anyone seriously considering a residential solar panel system should do their homework first, as it is a big investment.

Benefits of home solar

According to energy.gov, the potential benefits of having a residential solar panel system include:

- Cost savings on energy bills
- Increased home value
- Reduction of carbon dioxide, water consumption, greenhouse gases and other pollutants

The benefits of solar can vary drastically based on:

- Electricity consumption
- Solar energy system type and size
- Whether a system is purchased or leased
- Direct hours of daily sunlight
- Size and angle of the roof
- Local electricity rates

Drawbacks of solar

The major drawback of home solar panel systems is the upfront cost. According to the National Renewable



Energy Laboratory (NREL), the average cost of installing a residential rooftop solar array is \$19,000. Additionally, every time your roof needs to be replaced, the solar array must be removed, reinstalled and often repaired, adding to the costs of both your solar panel system and roofing projects. **12687-001**

However, since the lifetime of a solar panel array and a roof are both roughly 25-30 years, energy.gov recommends that individuals consider replacing their roofs at the same time that they install the solar panel array to avoid staggered reinstallation and repair costs. For example, the NREL estimates that when installing a roof

and a solar array together, it costs approximately \$25,000 as opposed to \$30,000 when installed separately (the price varies depending on the size of the home and other factors).

Involve your utility early on

If you are considering a solar system, let your utility know, since most residential systems are tied to the power grid. The utility will be able to provide information about connection requirements and fees, reliable contractors, relevant policies, accurate rates and other resources. For example, Clay Electric Cooperative does not have any application or grid access fees, but some other utilities



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.

might. CECI is also a Net Billing rate structure that differs from the Net Metering rate structures of an investor owned electric utility. These distinctions need to be modeled in your solar quote to adequately show a realistic financial outlook.

Are there tax breaks/incentives?

There is a federal tax break available to those who qualify. The federal residential solar energy credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of income tax otherwise owed. For example, claiming a \$1,000 federal tax credit reduces federal income taxes by \$1,000.

The residential tax credit can be claimed on federal income taxes for a percentage of the cost of a home solar panel system paid for by the taxpayer (e.g., a 30% tax credit). The best way to find incentives is to visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency website at www.DSIREUSA.org.


Additionally, Illinois has its own solar incentive programs. When looking for solar installers, finding the right one to leverage all available incentives together for the best savings is imperative.

Homework assignment

In addition to contacting your utility, do the following:






- Review energy bills for the past 12 to 24 months to calculate the average monthly kilowatt usage.
- Assess the age, size and condition of your roof, as well as available ground space. This will help determine the best location for solar panel arrays.
- Hire qualified installers who are trained and certified to install solar. **14964-001**
- Get several quotes from multiple installers and ensure that all costs are factored into the quotes, including equipment, permitting, installation and inspection fees.

Going solar is a great way to harness energy from the sun; however, assess where it would be located, the size of the array required and the costs versus savings before considering having a home solar array installed.



Got Electric Fencing?

INSPECT IT REGULARLY

- **1. Make sure that fencing is visible.**
Use electric fence tape, warning signs or other methods.
- **Inspect electrical fencing regularly.**
Ensure everything is tight, secure and free from frays. **2.**
- **3. Make sure your electrical fence is tight and well-supported.**
A lack of support can cause it to sag.
- **Cap posts, especially metal T-posts.**
This prevents an animal (or human) from being impaled. **4.**
- **5. Check for a loose or sagging fence.**
Not only can animals escape, but wires can fall out of insulators.

Learn more about electrical safety at: **Safe Electricity.org**

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month


Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a tune-up for your heating system? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment.

Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

Source:
Dept. of Energy



Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

7784 Old Hwy. 50,
P.O. Box 517,
Flora, Illinois 62839
618-662-2171
800-582-9012

Office hours:
7:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.
www.ceci.coop
facebook.com/ceci.coop



Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

July 24, 2023

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 7 p.m. on Monday, July 24, 2023.

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

The invocation was given by Frank Czyzewski 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;
- **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 CFC Report from the Board.

APPROVED, Deceased estates as presented:

REVIEWED the CFC Line of Credit Interest.

REVIEWED CRC news brief.

HEARD, a report by Bob Pierson regarding SIPC Board Meeting.

DISCUSSED, upcoming AIEC Annual Meeting and Board Training and Region 5 meeting.

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

- Monthly Reconciliation;
- SIPC Power Delivered in June 2023;
- June 2023 Cash Flow;
- Line Loss;
- June 2023 Form 7;
- June 2023 Balance Sheet;

HEARD, the Manager's Report on Safety.

REVIEWED, the Safety Report for the month of July.

REVIEWED, the Monday morning Safety meeting.

HEARD, the Manager's Report on Cybersecurity.

HEARD and **APPROVED**, the Manager's Report by Matt Conklin on the following topics:

- Managers Meeting Update;
- Operations Report;
- Communications Report;
- Upcoming meetings.

WERE UPDATED, on recent Managers Meeting at AIEC headquarters

REVIEWED, the Operations Report.

- Approved using remaining loan funds for contractors to perform T&E work.

REVIEWED, the Communications Report.

WERE REMINDED, of upcoming meetings on Aug. 28, 2023, Sept. 25, 2023, Oct. 23, 2023, at 7 p.m. and Nov. 27, 2023, at 5 p.m. and the Annual Meeting on Aug. 24, 2023.

There being no further business to come before the Board, said meeting was declared adjourned at 8:25 p.m.