

Clay ELECTRIC News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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

From the Manager

March is an exciting month for Clay Electric Co-operative as we continue our commitment to the seventh cooperative principle, Concern for Community. This month, we will be taking a group of area high school juniors to the State Capitol in Springfield for Youth Day. This event gives students a unique opportunity to meet their state representatives and senators, gaining firsthand experience of how our government operates. In addition, they will visit historical sites and connect with peers from across Illinois.

From this group, we will select a few outstanding students to represent our cooperative in Washington, D.C. They will attend the weeklong Youth to Washington Tour in June. This program offers an invaluable experience

where students will visit national landmarks, meet elected officials, and develop leadership skills that will serve them for years to come. We are proud to support the next generation of leaders through these opportunities.

As spring approaches, many members are beginning to plan home improvement projects and other projects that may require new electrical services or upgrades. If you are planning a project that involves electrical work, please reach out to us as early as possible. Some electrical installations and upgrades have lead times, and early planning allows us to ensure that we can meet your needs in a timely manner. **8568-001**

The cooperative is currently running a member satisfaction survey. We encourage our members to go to our



Matt Conklin
CEO

website, www.ceci.coop, and tell us how we are doing. Keeping our members happy and in power is our ultimate goal, and we'd like to hear from you.

Lastly, be sure to keep an eye out for your member number in the center section of this magazine. There are three member numbers hidden within the pages of Clay Electric News. If you spot your number and give us a call, you will win a \$5 discount on your next bill!

Electric cooperatives bring unique value to their communities

Electric cooperatives stand out from other types of businesses because we are built and led by the communities we serve. As independent, not-for-profit electric utilities, we are owned and governed by our local members — not by outside shareholders or investors. That is a powerful differentiator.

Here are a few ways electric co-ops like Clay Electric Co-operative bring unique value to the local communities they serve:

- **We put people before profits.** Co-ops are not-for-profit and provide at-cost electric service. Any excess revenue is returned

to our consumer-members in the form of capital credits, typically as a check in late fall.

- **Community comes first.** We live and work here, too, and we care deeply about our local communities. That's why we engage in development and revitalization projects and sponsor local students for scholarships and youth programs.
- **Affordable, reliable power is our priority.** Clay Electric Co-operative purchases electricity from Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC), our

wholesale energy partner. SIPC is a generation and transmission cooperative formed by a group of electric co-ops in our state. This cooperative business structure allows us to pool local resources and provide electricity at a lower cost than if we purchased it from outside sources.

We're focused on our members' energy needs — not only for today but for the long haul. We're advocating for smarter energy policies that prioritize reliability and affordability for all. We recognize we must be inclusive of all energy sources, which is why we work

Continued on 18B

5 Tips To GO GREEN for St. Patrick's Day



1. Replace your HVAC filter.

These typically need replacing every three months, though factors like pets, climate and system age can affect the timing.

2. Install a smart thermostat.

A smart thermostat offers convenience, savings and efficiency by adjusting the temperature based on your schedule — reducing usage when no one is home.

3. Cut energy use during peak hours.

In spring, peak electricity hours are usually in the evening. Reduce usage by visiting a park, a theater or dining out.

4. Upgrade to energy-efficient appliances.

Look for appliances that are ENERGY STAR-certified, using 10 to 15% less energy and water than standard models, according to Energy.gov.

5. Save energy through rebate programs for solar, battery storage or electric vehicles.

Check with utilities and government programs for rebates and incentives to help make these technologies more accessible.

Learn more at:



"Electric cooperatives" continued from 18A

closely with SIPC to ensure the use of a diverse mix of sources to generate the electricity we provide to our members.

Clay Electric Co-operative is working to power a brighter future through innovation that meets tomorrow's energy needs. Reliable, affordable electricity is more important than ever before, and our focus will continue to be in the best interest of the local communities we serve. To learn more about CECEI, visit www.ceci.coop and let us know how we are doing by filling out our member satisfaction survey.



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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Unleashing the Power of OUR Community!
Clay Electric Cooperative's Community Spotlight is featured in each issue of Illinois Country Living Magazine and on our Facebook page each Thursday.
If you have a community event you would like to see spotlighted, send your submissions to us by email at Admin@ceci.coop or by mail to Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc.—Community Spotlight, PO Box 517, Flora, IL 62839

STAY IN THE KNOW



Stay connected by keeping your contact information up to date. Current contact information benefits you in multiple ways.

- ✓ Faster outage reporting and response
- ✓ Timely alerts about planned outages and other important updates
- ✓ Smoother customer service interactions
- ✓ Improved access to member benefits and programs

Ensure your phone number, email address and mailing address are up to date so you can enjoy the benefits of staying connected.



Utility scams in this age of AI: How to spot and avoid fraud

Someone calls claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Real utility companies don't do this, but scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you. Scammers are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult for consumers to detect. Learn how to protect yourself.

Beware of these common scam tactics

- **Disconnection threats:** Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment.
- **Caller ID spoofing:** Fraudsters use software to make their calls appear legitimate.
- **Overpayment claims:** They may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
- **Smishing:** Scammers send fake text messages that seem to come from your utility company.
- **Phishing attempts:** Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links.

If you have any doubt about the status of your electric service, call your utility company using the customer service phone number on their website.

Watch for the following red flags

- High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action
- Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift cards, reloadable cards or cryptocurrency)
- Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses

AI use enhances utility scams

By leveraging AI-powered techniques, utility scammers can create sophisticated and convincing frauds that are hard for consumers to recognize and avoid.

- AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of company colors and logos.
- Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.
- AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear

when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.

- Scammers use AI to launch large-scale utility scam campaigns quickly and efficiently.

According to Kathy Stokes, AARP Director of Fraud Prevention Programs, "the ability of AI to improve and scale scam tactics is the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution for fraud criminals."

Protect yourself

- Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
- Verify any communication by calling your utility company directly using the number on your bill.
- Never share personal information. Legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone. **8793-006**
- If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification.

If you suspect a scam, report it to your utility company and the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud).

Remember, legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt, let your utility company know so they can take proactive measures to both protect you and others from becoming victims.



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.

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Jan. 27, 2025

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 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025.

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

The invocation was given by Richard Rudolph 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**, Resolution for Compensation;
- **APPROVED**, Per Diem/Mileage for 2025;
- **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. **6779-002**

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.

APPROVED, the retirement of capital credits for members requesting retirement.

APPROVED, revisions to Policy 900-1 as presented.

APPROVED, closing the line of Credit Debt for 2024 into a 30-year loan.

HEARD, an NRECA update regarding Mattheson Energy Update and Trump Energy Executive Orders.

HEARD, a report by Bob Pierson regarding SIPC as well as notice of the SIPC Annual Meeting Delegates.

HEARD, a report by Kevin Logan regarding the AIEC board meeting.

DISCUSSED, upcoming Board Training and the NRECA Annual Meeting.

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

- Monthly Reconciliation;
- SIPC Power Delivered in December 2024;
- December 2024 Cash Flow;
- Line Loss;
- December 2024 Form 7;
- December 2024 Balance Sheet.

HEARD, the Manager's Report on Safety.

REVIEWED, Monday Morning Safety meeting held Jan. 27, 2025.

REVIEWED, the Cybersecurity Report.

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

- Adam McKnight Continuing Education;

- Chicken Farm Update and System upgrade map;
- Operations Report;
- Communications Report;
- Upcoming meetings.

REVIEWED and **APPROVED**, the continuing education classes taken by Adam McKnight.

HEARD, an update on the Chicken Farm and System upgrades.

REVIEWED, the Operations Report.


REVIEWED, the Communications Report.

WERE REMINDED, of upcoming meetings on Feb. 25, 2025, and March 24, 2025, at 3:30 p.m. and April 28, 2025 at either 3:30 or 7 p.m. and May 27, 2025 at 7 p.m. (moved to Tuesday due to the holiday).

REVIEWED, a thank-you card from a foster child for Christmas presents.

There being no further business to come before the Board, said meeting was declared adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

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