

Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

www.menard.com

Safeguard yourself against scams

Over the past year we have seen more and more reports from other utilities of scams targeting their members. Scammers have varied their methods of “attack” but it all boils down to the same thing—they want your personal and/or financial information. Be aware that scammers could contact you by phone, email, or even door-to-door solicitation.

We want to remind all members to be diligent about protecting personal financial information. Never give out social security, credit card, or checking account numbers over the phone if you are unsure who you are speaking with.

We recommend the following additional safeguards:



Make sure you are on our website www.menard.com and click on the link to make secure online payments. Don't use sites you are unfamiliar with. Also, know that we will never send an email requesting personal information or payment details.

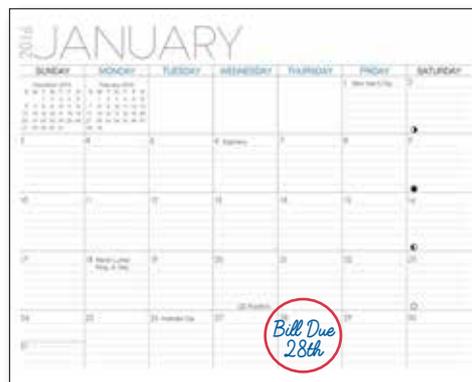


Know our phone number. Call us anytime you are contacted from someone who claims to represent Menard Electric if the information sounds false, you don't recognize the phone number, or you are for any reason unsure. Someone in our office will be happy to verify the information.



Sometimes co-op employees or contract employees may be on your property, whether it be to repair storm damage, perform maintenance, or trim trees. Know that our employees carry ID cards and will be in marked vehicles; contract crews will also have identification. You can always call in to our office to verify a crew. And remember, it is highly unlikely that

one of our employees would ever need to enter your home that was not at your request (such as to install a water heater control device).



Keep track of your payments so you will not be tricked by a scammer who says you haven't paid your bill. Payment is due in our office by 4:30 p.m. on the 28th of each month. Please allow adequate time to mail payments; you may also sign up for automatic payments, pay online at www.menard.com, call the office to pay by credit card, or use our drop off box.

If we haven't received payment by the due date we will send you a past due notice. If you receive a call and you are unsure of your account status, you can see past payments and account balances online through our online bill pay site or call our office during normal business hours.

10 new habits for a new year

New Year's resolutions to save energy and keep you safe

New Year's resolutions are all about habits--either breaking bad ones, like biting your nails, or forming new ones, like exercising daily. Here are some new habits to form that could help you save energy (and money) all year long.

1. Change furnace and air conditioner filters monthly. It's so easy to forget this, consider making it an alert in your phone or calendar.
2. Check your GFCI outlets monthly. Verify they are working correctly to protect from electric shock in bathrooms, kitchens and outdoor outlets.
3. Unplug phone and tablet chargers. Chargers and items with a clock or remote use power even when not in use.
4. Set the washer and dishwasher to use only the options you need and run full loads. While you're making changes try using cold water for clothes and air dry for dishes.
5. Stop using extension cords permanently. Have an extra outlet installed if you need one.
6. Ideally, leave the thermostat at 68 or less in the winter and 78 or more in the summer. Use blankets and fans as needed to stay comfortable.
7. Consider the operation cost with every purchase of a new appliance, electronic, or even light bulb. Consider it as part of the purchase price to help make your decision.
8. Know what to do in case a large storm causes an extended power outage. Make an emergency kit.
9. Plan ahead and call JULIE. It's the law to call 8-1-1 before digging.
10. Stay informed! Read this monthly magazine, visit our website at www.menard.com, and like our Facebook page for energy efficiency and safety information.

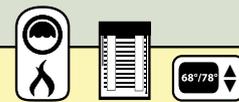


Source: Whirlpool Corporation



Invest in Efficiency

The benefits of some home efficiency investments aren't seen as quickly as others. Here's how a few upgrades compare over time:



Set Water Heater to 120°

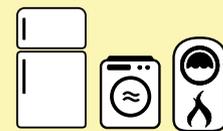
No Cost; Save \$73/yr

Open Window Blinds in Winter; Close in Summer

No Cost; Save \$35/yr

Adjust Thermostat 1° Down in Winter, 1° Up in Summer

No Cost; Save \$82/yr



ENERGY STAR Clothes Washer

Costs \$194 extra; Save \$140/yr

ENERGY STAR Refrigerator

Costs \$97 extra; Save \$100/yr

Wrap Hot Water Tank

Costs \$85; Save \$23/yr

Upgrade to ENERGY STAR Heat Pump (From 10 to 15 SEER)

Costs \$5,700; Save \$408/yr

Instant Benefit

1-5 Year Payback

Long Term Investment

Find more ways to save at **TogetherWeSave.com**.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy Home Energy Saver, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. Based on national average savings; actual savings will vary by climate.

Safety tips for new electronics

Did Santa bring you that big-ticket electronic item you wished for? Many homes add televisions, computers or gaming consoles this time of year. Installing and operating these items safely protects not only the expensive equipment, but also the entire home.

Safety Tips:

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Send in warranty and product registration forms in order to be notified about product recalls. Recall information is also available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov.
 - Never install an exterior television or radio antenna close enough to contact power lines if it falls.
 - Arrange furniture so outlets are available for equipment without the use of extension cords.
 - Do not place power cords in high traffic areas or under carpets, rugs or furniture, and never nail or staple them to the wall or baseboard.
 - Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit into a two-prong outlet.
 - All appliances and cords should be kept in good condition.
- Examine them regularly for damage, and repair or dispose of damaged items.
 - Keep cords out of reach of children and pets.
 - Make sure entertainment centers and computer workstations have enough space around them for ventilation of electronic equipment.
 - Keep liquids, including drinks, away from electrical devices. Spills can result in dangerous shocks or fires.
 - Unplug equipment when not in use to save energy and reduce the risks for shocks or fires. Power strips or surge protectors make a good central turnoff point.
 - Always unplug electrical items by grasping the plug firmly rather than pulling on the cord.
 - If you receive any kind of shock from a large appliance or any other electrical device, stop using it until an electrician has checked it.
 - If an appliance smokes or sparks, or if you feel a tingle or light shock when it's on, stop using it. Discard and replace it or have it repaired by an authorized service provider.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Surge protectors

Although surge protectors and power strips both allow you to plug several devices in one location, they are not interchangeable. A true surge protector includes internal components that divert or suppress the extra current from surges, protecting your valuable electronics from electrical spikes, while a power strip simply provides more outlets for a circuit. Surge protectors are best paired with televisions, computers, stereos, and other electronics that have delicate circuitry.



Energy savings

Sometimes the factory settings on new electronics aren't the most energy efficient. Screen resolutions/brightness, standby modes, and other settings can often be changed to more energy-efficient options without decreasing your enjoyment. And it's a change that will save you every day over the life of the item.

Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at www.menard.com or contact our office.

Present were Manager Eric Hobbie, Attorney Charles K. Smith and Directors Jay Frye, Jerry Brooks, Warren Goetsch, Gary Martin, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney, Jodine Tate, and Steve Worner.

Staff members made budget presentations.

Hobbie presented the Manager's Report. He reviewed the Balance Sheet, Budget, Outage Summary and Safety Report. He reported on work done by the crews for the month.

He discussed the status of State of Illinois delinquent accounts and what actions other co-ops were taking.

Hobbie presented the financial report for the month of September. Year to date margins were \$1,912,791 compared to \$1,589,431 a year earlier. Equity as of the end of September was 38.09% and the number of member accounts served was 10,827 compared to 10,766 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at the end of September was \$43,824,322 compared to \$42,877,901

last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Hobbie presented a Technology/Cyber Security Update.

Goetsch reported on AIEC Activities and the Engineering and IT Conference.

Martin and Hobbie reported on Prairie Power, Inc. and the Technology Committee.

Hobbie presented the capital credit estates report.



**Our office will be closed
Friday, January 1 for
New Year's Day.**

Tip of the Month

Fireplaces

Remember to keep the damper closed on your fireplace when it's not in use. When a fire is roaring, much of the warm air will go up the chimney, creating a draft that pulls heat from other rooms. Take note of where your thermostat is located to be sure you aren't adding to your heating system's load.

