The power behind your power

While many of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes, there is a group of professionals that spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst—your cooperative lineworkers.

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must climb 40 or more feet in the air, carrying heavy equipment, to restore power. One of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S., lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high voltage power lines.

In order to bring power to your home, farm, or business, 24/7, Shelby Electric Cooperative lineworkers are responsible for keeping approximately 2,200 miles of line across all or parts of nine counties energized, regardless of weather, time of day, or holidays.

To help keep them safe, lineworkers wear specialized protective clothing at all times when on the job. This includes special flame-resistant clothing to limit potential injuries from burns and sparks, and insulated rubber gloves to protect them from electrical shock. The gear they carry performs a critical function, but it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job complex and cumbersome.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing to the top of a pole to repair a wire. Line crews use their laptops, tablets, and cell phones to map outages, take pictures of the work they have done, and troubleshoot problems.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to their job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any time of the day or night. Crews often work around the clock to restore power.

To show our gratitude for their hard work, April 9, 2018 has been established as Cooperative Lineworker Appreciation Day! So, if you see a lineworker, take a moment to say Thank You to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions. Use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support this April 9, for Cooperative Lineworker Appreciation Day!
Federal income-tax credits for geothermal heat pumps were recently reinstated by the federal government. Residential consumers are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit for installing a geothermal heat pump system in their home through the end of 2019. These credits are retroactive to Jan. 1, 2017. Therefore, anyone who installed a geothermal system in their home in the past 14 months will qualify. Tax credits for geothermal will remain in place after 2019, but will be reduced to 26 percent for 2020, and 22 percent through the end of 2021.

In addition to the residential tax credits, a 10 percent investment tax credit for commercial geothermal systems was also extended.

Legislation was passed two years ago by Congress to extend tax credits for the solar industry. Unfortunately, that legislation failed to include incentives for other renewable energy technologies. Through the Continuing Resolution in early February, tax incentives were extended to renewable energy technologies like geothermal heat pumps, combined heat and power systems, microturbines, small wind systems, fuel cells, etc.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association joined with a coalition of many national and state organizations to support reinstatement of the tax credits during Congress’ Continuing Resolution. Cooperatives are appreciative of the efforts Illinois Representatives John Shimkus, Adam Kinzinger, Rodney Davis, and Darin LaHood put toward sponsoring legislation leading to the tax credit reinstatement.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Make sure your refrigerator door seals are airtight for maximum energy efficiency. Test the seal by closing the door over a piece of paper (so that it’s half in and half out). If you can easily pull the piece of paper out, your seal may need to be replaced or the latch may need to be adjusted.

Source: energy.gov
Getting Real with Marla and Lightning

Spring is here and with it, thunderstorms. Now is the time to take precautions in your home.

Country singer Chad Brock sang, “Thunder’s just a noise, boys, lightnin’ does the work.” The words could have said, “Lightning does the damage.”

Not only is lightning dangerous, it is also costly. According to the Insurance Information Institute, Illinois ranks eighth in homeowner insurance lightning loss claims and fifth in the average cost per claim ($7,424/claim).

Today’s homes often have expensive electronic devices and appliances with digital displays. All electrical components are highly sensitive to power surges from lightning. If not protected, some electronics may be immediately destroyed by surges, while others may be damaged, shortening their life.

One third of all lightning related injuries occur indoors. To help protect yourself, your home’s occupants, and electrical devices, follow these guidelines:

 Unplug electronic equipment before a storm arrives.
 Once a storm arrives, stay away from corded phones, plumbing, and electronics. The use of cordless items, such as cell phones, cordless phones, laptops, and tablets should be fine during a thunderstorm as there are no wires to conduct the electricity.
 Wait 30 minutes after a thunderstorm before plugging back in electronics or going outside. Lightning can strike 10 miles from a thunderstorm.
 Have a qualified electrician install a whole house surge protection device at the circuit breaker panel.
 Purchase and plug electronics into surge protectors.

Tim Hardy, Information Technology Specialist for Shelby Electric Cooperative and PWR-net, advises, “Having a grounded outlet and using an actual surge protector is important. Not every power strip is a surge protector. Look for the words “surge protector” when purchasing one. If it just says power strip, it probably doesn’t provide any protection from an electrical surge.”

Even more than protecting “things,” we want our members to be safe. Lightning kills an average of 51 victims a year. Use the 30/30 rule. When you see lightning, count until you hear thunder. If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within six miles of you and is dangerous. Immediately seek shelter indoors or in a hardtop vehicle and remain until you have not heard thunder for 30 minutes.

~Marla Eversole, Communication Specialist

Sources: ESFI.org, safeelectricity.org

Shelby Electric Cooperative
1-800-677-2612
1-217-774-3986
24-hours-a-day
@YourCoop

Shelby Energy Company
1-217-774-2311
24-hours-a-day
@ShelbyEnergyCo

PWR-net Broadband Internet
1-877-994-2323
7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Please leave a message after hours @PWRnetFast
During the course of Shelby Electric Cooperative’s (SEC) 80-year history, the birth of a brand occurred. Touchstone Energy Cooperatives (TEC) was formally incorporated in October 1999 but came to life on April 4, 1998. It has grown to become a major marketing toolbox for electric cooperatives in 46 states.

For 20 years, TEC has stood as the powerful brand of electric co-ops that exemplify integrity, accountability, innovation, and commitment to community. The brand identity started with a single national ad and now showcases over 50 different programs to assist local cooperatives.

The following is a timeline of just a few of the services Touchstone provides:

1998  TEC’s first TV commercial “Let It Shine” debuted. Now cooperatives have a full library of print, radio, and TV ads available for local and regional use.
1999  The Touchstone Hot Air Balloon Program is born. With its philanthropic component, over $285,000 has been given back to local cooperatives for use in their communities.
2005  The Co-op Connections Card is created. Today there are over 40,000 local and national discounts. Since its inception, over $105 million has been saved on medical prescriptions nationally. Of that, SEC members have saved over $120,000.
2010  Co-op Web Builder is launched as a free web solution for cooperatives to use. Over 600 websites have been developed using Web Builder, including SEC’s site shelbyelectric.coop. This saves the cooperative money on development costs and annual maintenance fees.
2017  The online Home Energy Adventure is unveiled.
2018  The TEC Community Service Project celebrates 10 years of commitment to community.

As we move into the future together, we are committed to serving with a passion for innovation, a commitment to service excellence, and an authentic promise to provide you quality electric service at an affordable price. Shelby Electric Cooperative is proud to be your Touchstone Energy Partner. To learn more about Touchstone Energy, visit touchstoneenergy.com.