



along the lines

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2011 M.J.M. Annual Meeting: Progress Continues, Reliability Increases, and New Services are Offered

The M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting was held Saturday, March 19th, at Carlinville High School. Members of the Cooperative received reports from Chairman Robert Lehmann, Secretary William R. Heyen, Treasurer W. Kay Schultz and President/CEO Chris M. Spears. It was reported that the Cooperative had \$19 million in electric sales and positive operating margins of \$508,000 in 2010. Total utility plant increased by \$1.4 million and long term debt declined by \$214,000.

CEO Spears discussed the Cooperative's ongoing efforts to improve service and reliability. Average outage hours per member were at a 10-year low in 2010 and the number of overtime hours logged by employees was also at a 10-year low. Spears attributed these reductions to the Cooperative's tree trimming and right of way clearance program, which was started in 2008, and to ongoing maintenance and system improvements. He told the crowd of approximately 250 that M.J.M. linemen replaced 432 poles and 159 OCR's in 2010 while contractor crews cleared 289 miles of trees and brush. Additionally, in the last year, the Cooperative upgraded



▲ CEO Chris Spears updates MJM members on the progress the cooperative made in 2010.

▼ MJM employees and volunteers register cooperative members before the meeting starts. This year marked the first that electronic registration was used. The electronic registration made the process faster and more efficient.



and replaced substation transformers at the Rinaker and Nutwood substations. He shared with the crowd that it was evident that these efforts, especially the tree trimming, have made a significant difference. When a major winter storm came through the area on January 31st, very little damage occurred in the areas

where tree trimming and right of way clearance had taken place.

M.J.M. Electric Cooperative is now offering on-line bill payment and is accepting credit cards, debit cards, e-checks, and automatic payments. Members were encouraged to visit www.mjmec.coop where they could register

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**The MJM Office in Carlinville will be closing
on Saturdays - Effective April 9, 2011.**

M.J.M Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



264 North East Street
Carlinville, Illinois 62626
Phone: 800-648-4729

Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - Noon
Effective April 9, office will be closed on Saturdays.

Board of Directors

Chairman

Robert Lehmann..... Girard

Vice Chairman

Paul Bartlett.....Brighton

Secretary

William R. Heyen..... Gillespie

Treasurer

W. Kay SchultzGodfrey

Louis E. Johnson.....Shipman

Robert Moore Medora

Gary Morrison.....Fieldon

James R. Niemann.....Litchfield

Dennis Stewart Nokomis

Staff

Chris M. Spears President/CEO

Laura Cutler..... Office Manager

Dale Gansz Director of

Operations

Bronson Borowiak Member

Services Director

Holidays observed

New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, day following Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

How to report an outage

Call 800-648-4729. Do not call the local lineman. Collect calls will be accepted to report outages. When you report an outage, give your name and location number. Before calling, check your fuses or circuit breakers. Check with your neighbors. Call to report hazardous conditions.

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"Happy" summer comfort

I decided to splurge and take my wife to a lodge at one of our great state parks to help bring in 2011. It is difficult for me to stay up much past the late news, but I can do it if I am in good company and if someone will give me a free New Year's hat and silly little horn. There was only one place to eat and it was the nice restaurant at the lodge. By the time you have been there for two full days and eaten six straight meals with the same people, you begin to feel like family. In this case it was super nice.

On New Year's morning, I left our room and went to the room with the BIG FIREPLACE and the BIG VIEW to get some coffee. As I stepped into the hallway a lady housekeeper with a vacuum cleaner looked at me and said, "Hey, I just read your article in the electric cooperative magazine last night." I said, "Then you must know about the little bitty bedroom that I had as a child." And sure enough she did. She told me about her childhood, sisters and brothers, and a house with only a small wood heater for the winter. Then she said, "But we were all happy."

Several others have commented on the article with their stories and all of them have mentioned that they were happy even though their house did not have all the comforts that we have today. At that time I had not yet made a New Year's resolution, but I heard the word happy so many times and I was wishing everyone a Happy New Year, so I made my 2011 resolution. I will be happy regardless of the circumstances.

Although I am not convinced that it is necessary to have total temperature comfort for one to be happy, I am convinced that everyone would like to have comfort. I am going to teach you

everything I know about temperature comfort in your house.

The first thing to know is that not everyone has the same comfort temperature. Some like it hotter and some like it colder. Based on the calls I get at the office I could say that a husband and wife rarely agree on which temperature is best. One lady told me, in a kidding tone, that her husband was more worried about his cattle being comfortable than her. Comfort is usually related to

both the air temperature and the relative humidity. Generally speaking, folks are most comfortable if the temperature is about 74 degrees with a relative humidity of about 50 percent. Remember that relative humidity is the percentage of moisture in the air compared to the most moisture that the air could hold at certain temperatures. Let's start with some summer comfort tips.

I have never had a person tell me that their house was too dry in the summer. Let's take a day in Arkansas when the temperature is 90 degrees. If the relative humidity is 70 percent, you will feel sticky hot because the moisture on the skin cannot evaporate and cool the body. So you turn on your AC unit. An AC unit cools by removing heat and humidity. As the humidity is lowered, the skin moisture evaporates and you feel cooler. That same 90-degree day in Arizona with 50 percent relative humidity would be like going to heaven because the skin moisture evaporates easily. So that 90-degree air at 50 percent is much dryer than the 90-degree air at 70 percent. If it were raining on a 90-degree day, the relative humidity would be right at 100 percent in either state. How can we relate this to your house for better comfort? Well, if it is a



Doug Rye

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The modulating transformer unit (MTU) pictured above was installed at the Womac substation east of Carlinville as part of the Cooperative's move to an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system. This piece of equipment will allow information to be gathered from meters served by the substation and relay that information to the office in Carlinville. Each of MJM's substations will eventually be outfitted with this equipment. The AMR system will improve operating and billing efficiencies and allow for closer oversight of the distribution system. Among other benefits, the AMR system will allow automated meter readings, so members will no longer have to read their own meters. The system is planned to be completely installed early in 2012. While installing the new equipment, line foreman Johnny Schmid (in bucket) and lineman Jason Bouillon performed some maintenance work in the substation.

"Summer comfort" continued from page 2

hot 90-degree/70 percent humidity day and your house has lots of air infiltration, leakage in the return air system, unvented bath areas, or anything making moisture, the air conditioning unit will have to work harder and longer to keep you in the comfort range.

If your air conditioning unit is oversized, it will not run long enough to remove the humidity, so you will probably lower the thermostat setting to make the unit run longer. All of this means higher

utility bills. The solution is to caulk, repair ductwork, vent bathrooms, etc., and then purchase a properly sized air conditioning unit when needed. This really isn't complicated if you take it one step at a time. So I suggest that you let this much absorb and not evaporate and next time we will discuss winter comfort tips.

Column reprinted with permission of the Association of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives. Doug Rye is a licensed architect

living in Saline County and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show. He works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To ask energy efficiency-related questions, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug's columns, can also be found at www.ecark.org.

Preparation helps MJM weather winter storm

MJM Electric Cooperative experienced a significant number of outages at the start of February due to a severe winter storm that moved through the area. Although some members were without power for nearly 24 hours, the damage could have been far worse. Thankfully for MJM, the most severe weather occurred east of the Cooperative's territory.

On Sunday, January 30, the National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning for Monday-Wednesday. The staff of MJM began bracing for the storm on Sunday. Additional poles were put on standby in case strong winds came through. Calls were made to find additional linemen crews in case the outages were too much for MJM line-

men to handle alone. Facilities were secured for additional crews and an airplane was reserved if a quick assessment of the system was necessary in the event of widespread damage. CEO Chris Spears, Director of Operations Dale Gansz and line foremen Pete Evans, John Halder, Johnny Schmid, and Mike Hart went over procedures for restoration efforts as well as supervision procedures in case outside help needed to be called in.

The first outages were reported Monday evening at around 6 p.m. At 10 p.m. there were around 100 members without power. The storm continued to dump ice and snow, in addition to winds that were predicted to gust at nearly 40 miles per hours. Outages

continued to be reported on Tuesday. The highest number of outages at any one time was around 800 with the most persistent problems around the Bunker Hill area.

MJM's system had 1/2 inch of ice accumulation and some wind. Most of the outages were related to trees but others were caused by the ice and wind. Lines sagged and began to gallop. Very few outages took place where tree trimming and right of way clearance work had been completed.

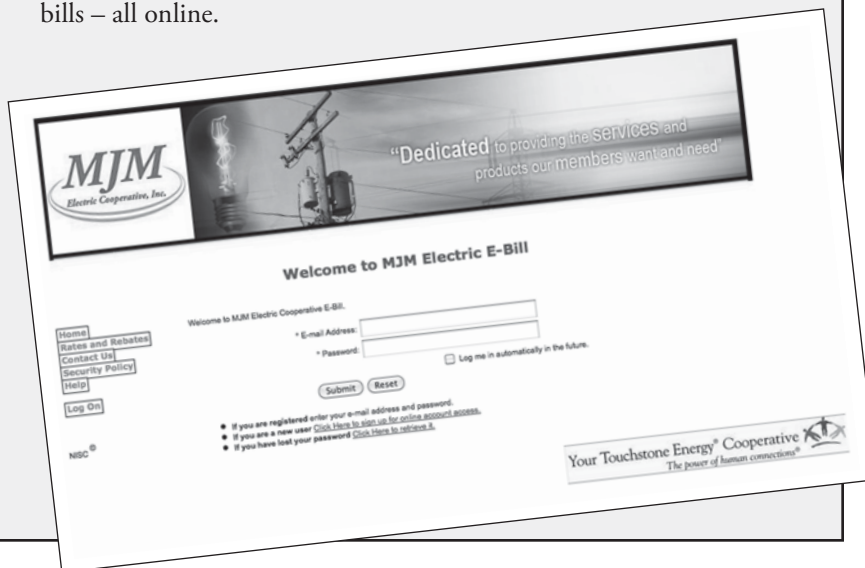
Power was fully restored on Wednesday evening.

The staff of MJM thanks its members for their patience and assistance during the storm.

Online billing now available

MJM Electric Cooperative members can now pay and view their bills online by logging onto MJM's website – www.mjmec.coop – and clicking on Ebill.

Once you've created an account, you will have the option to view your current bill, view your usage history, enter meter readings, and pay bills – all online.



Office to close on Saturdays

April 2 will be the last Saturday that MJM's office will be open. The office will be closed on Saturday, April 9, and all Saturdays thereafter.

A survey of MJM members showed that the vast majority of members do not visit or call the office on Saturdays. In addition, there is a less pressing need to have the office open on Saturdays now that the Cooperative offers on-line services.

Members can still call the office after hours at 1-800-648-4729 and receive assistance from the after hours contact center. You can also pay bills, submit meter readings, and view usage history online by signing up for an Ebill account. You can do this by visiting www.mjmec.coop and clicking on Ebill.

Copper theft not worth the ultimate price

By Molly Hall, Director of Safe Electricity

Copper theft has reached an epidemic level that is not only affecting the United States, but is international and creating immense global havoc. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the theft of copper costs the national economy around \$1 billion per year. The increase in copper theft has disrupted the flow of electricity, created electrical hazards, slowed down construction projects and knocked out irrigation networks across the United States.

Additionally, when thieves cut locks or chain link fencing surrounding an electric substation they leave a highly dangerous area exposed for inquisitive children and animals. Stealing material from an electric substation or utility pole can cause not only serious injuries and death, but extensive outages, fires and explosions — consequences that impact innocent people. The minimum damage that can occur is an outage, which may affect thousands of individuals. The ultimate cost of copper theft can be someone's life.

In October, Ameren employees sent to repair an outage found the cause — a dead man, who was attempting to steal copper wire. He had cut into an energized wire. His two accomplices fled the scene.

In August a 23-year-old man broke into a North Carolina electric co-op's substation to steal copper wire. He was perched atop a high-voltage regulator when he apparently cut a wire. The jolt of electricity knocked him 10 feet away from the regulator and he was dead at the scene.

The members of Oklahoma Electric Cooperative are facing an estimated \$1 million repair bill because copper thieves wrecked a substation for just \$100 worth of copper. The damage caused an outage and destroyed regulators and a large transformer valued at

\$600,000. Given the fire and destruction, co-op officials are amazed they didn't find a burned body in the substation, too.

People must be aware of this kind of theft and that tampering with electric power facilities can result in extremely dangerous situations. Always alert your utility provider when you see or suspect suspicious activity.

Safe Electricity offers these tips to help safeguard against electrical dangers and prevent copper theft:

- Never enter or touch equipment inside a substation; stay away from power lines and anything touching a power line.
- If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc., contact your electric utility immediately.
- If you see anyone around electric substations or electric facilities other than utility personnel or contractors, call the police.
- Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.
- Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location and never leave them out while away.
- If you work in construction, do not leave any wires unattended or leave loose wire at the job site, especially overnight. Consider hiring a night security guard.



- Help spread the word about the deadly consequences that can result from trying to steal copper.

Copper theft is not harmless. Dealing with any metal and electricity is a dangerous combination, especially when it is done without permission or training. Copper theft places the thief and others in danger.

People who think stealing electric wire is a quick way to earn some easy money should think again. The value of metal is not worth losing a life.

For more information, visit: www.SafeElectricity.org.



MJM Electric Cooperative directors elected to three-year terms at the annual meeting were, from left, James Niemann of Litchfield (District 7), Robert Lehmann of Girard (District 4), and Louis Johnson of Shipman (District 5). Nine directors serve on MJM's Board, serving staggered three-year terms.

for Ebill. Members can view their current bill, payment history, billing history, make payments or submit meter readings on the Ebill site. While these services were only recently made available, many have already taken advantage of them. Because on-line services are now available, it is difficult to justify the expense associated with keeping the office open on Saturday since very few members call or visit the office on Saturday. Members can also obtain assistance from the Cooperative Response Center (CRC), an after hours contact center utilized by the Cooperative.

Spears reported that the Cooperative is moving forward with plans to install an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system. He explained that the AMR system will allow the Cooperative the ability to have much closer oversight of the distribution system, improve operating and billing efficiencies and will have a payback of 8 years or less. Spears reviewed a number of benefits including meter reading, improved outage detection and restoration efforts as well as improved billing accuracy. He addressed some of the negative and costly attributes associated with a self read system. Additionally, he said that the AMR system will make it possible for members to take advantage of forthcoming energy management/demand response

programs and "time of use" rates, which can help members control costs.

Spears discussed plans to make the billing period more current. For example, the bills due in March were for January usage under the existing self read system. The AMR system would make it possible for the Cooperative to bill for February usage in March. However, this will create a "catch up" month

whereby an additional month of usage will need to be paid at some point in time. Spears stated that the Cooperative did not want to create a hardship on its members and consequently had decided to allow its members 15 months to pay for the extra month. Therefore, members will end up paying for about 2 extra days per month during the 15 month period. He said that substation equipment for the AMR system is being installed by M.J.M. linemen at this time and that H.D. Supply will start changing out meters in May. It will take approximately one year to complete the entire installation.

Members were told that M.J.M. had a Cost of Service Study conducted in 2010, which found that current charges are not sufficient to satisfy the requirements of its lender. The study also found that the monthly Facility Charge, which is currently \$20.50, should be \$34.50. CEO Spears explained that the Facility Charge covers the cost of the poles, lines, transformers, etc. necessary to make the electric service available when a member decides to use it. Initially the Cooperative was going to increase the Facility Charge by \$6.50 per month. The Cooperative had also planned to apply all of the revenue from the "catch up" month on the AMR system. Nonetheless, it has since decided to use some of the money

from the "catch up" month to offset the need for a higher increase to the Facility Charge. This action will allow the Cooperative to limit the Facility Charge increase to \$2.00, which will take effect in May. Chairman Lehmann stated, "we are member focused and accountable to those we serve. Costs are rising for all of us, but when it comes to your electric bill, the rates are set to simply cover the cost of doing business, not to generate profits for distant shareholders."

Presentations were also made by N. Duane Noland, President/ CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, and by Sabrina Kapp, Manager of Communications for Wabash Valley Power Association. After all of the reports were made, Director's Robert Lehmann, District 4, Louis Johnson, District 5 and James R. Niemann, District 7, were each re-elected to a 3 year term.

Southern Gospel Entertainment was provided by Mark and Pam Fisher, followed by a drawing for prizes. A number of prizes were made available, including a grand prize of a \$150 electric bill credit won by Donald Breitwiser of Bunker Hill. Each member in attendance received a \$5 bill credit, lunch and an energy saving CFL bulb.

M.J.M. Electric Cooperative is a member owned and controlled, not for profit, at cost electric provider. It is a member of Touchstone Energy® — an alliance of more than 703 local, consumer-owned electric utilities around the country. M.J.M. Electric is committed to providing superior service based on four core principles: integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community. The Cooperative serves more than 9,200 accounts over 1,700 miles of line in Macoupin, Jersey, Montgomery, Bond, Fayette, Greene and Madison counties. For more information visit www.mjmec.coop.

Member Trading Post

For Sale: New Holland 45 horsepower diesel front end loader, used, approximately 100 hours - \$19,500. Over 600 board feet of rough cut cherry, different sizes - \$950. Heavy duty auger, 12", runs off PTO - \$300. Call 217-899-2903 or 217-414-9901.

For Sale: 2002 Dodge Dakota, quad cab, excellent shape. Call 618-635-2675.

For Sale: 8' bed for 1998 full size Chevy truck; with liner/tailgate; no lights - \$850. Great condition. Litchfield. Call 217-313-1079.

For Sale: Heminray green/clear insulators. approx. 40 - \$4 each; all \$150. Call 217-324-3869.

Wanted: good used semi-box trailer (for storage) open outdoors preferred. Reasonable. Call 217-324-3869.

Wanted: 15 square feet of 8 inch vinyl siding. Call 618-376-3143.

For Sale: Antique cherry thee-quarter bed with matching dresser with marble top. Twelve seven-piece place settings and serving pieces, Gorham stainless.

100-year-old child's white China tea set. 75-year-old high chair with white enamel tray. Call 618-372-3603.

Wanted: Gazebo, non-wood. Call 618-753-3311.

For Sale: John Deere riding mower with 12 horsepower Kohler motor and 42" deck. Call 217-532-3444.

For Sale: Great billboard/sign location available between Hillsboro-Litchfield, Route 16. Call 217-324-3869.

For Sale: homemade heavy duty steel welded car ramps - \$95. Call 217-324-3869.

For Sale: Willett Buffet cabinet-Wildwood cherry; dining table-solid Elswick cherry, six cane chairs - \$1,650. For details contact mgowner79@yahoo.com or 217-710-5614.

For Sale: 1930's era four poster bedroom set, dresser/mirror, chest of drawers. Walnut. Very nice. Excellent condition - \$2,495. For details contact mgowner79@yahoo.com or call 217-710-5614.

For Sale: 2008 Jayco Eagle 32 ft. Travel Trailer, electric awning and power jack, 2 large slideouts, king bed, walk-in shower, excellent condition, lots of storage/cabinets, kept under roof storage, original price \$40,000 - asking \$23,500. Call 618-372-4547.

For Sale: Assorted tack. Heated water bucket (paid \$32, asking \$20), saddle pad (paid \$35, asking \$25), bridle (paid \$32, asking \$20), purple saddle cover (paid \$8, asking \$6), black saddle bag (paid \$12, asking \$5), neoprene girth (paid \$18, asking \$10), rainmaker hoof conditioner (paid \$22, asking \$10), lunge line (paid \$8, asking \$5), curry comb (paid \$5, asking \$2.50), brush (paid \$6.50, asking \$3), extra bit (paid \$12, asking \$6). Almost all of this tack has never been used or only used once or twice. Sell each piece or make offer for all. Call 217-827-7690 or 618-836-7117 before 1:30 p.m.

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Existing homes eligible for up to \$1,500 through Home program

MJM members living in an existing home are eligible for up to \$1,500 towards energy efficiency improvements through the federally-funded Home program.

Members must first have an energy assessment conducted at the home. There is a cost of \$25 for this service.

Doing so makes the member eligible for incentives of \$1,500 towards geothermal systems, \$1,000 towards air source heat pumps, and \$350 towards central air conditioners or gas furnaces. The equipment must meet certain efficiency standards. Members can only obtain one heating or cooling equipment incentive, but are also eligible for



an incentive of 30 percent of the cost of an insulation project, up to \$500, and \$250 towards a heat pump water heater.

Funding for the program is limited,

and the program ends once funding is exhausted. Call the cooperative office at 217-854-3137 for more information.

Member Trading Post continued

For Sale: Kimbell Moonglow organ. 10 yrs old. Mint condition. Short in the speakers (fixed easily). Cost \$900, asking \$150. Call 217-827-7690 or 618-836-7117 before 1:30 p.m.

For Sale: White Otterbox Defender. Fits iPhone 3 or 3G. Never been used. Paid \$48, asking \$20. Call 217-827-7690 or 618-836-7117 before 1:30 p.m.

For Sale: 2002 Chevy Suburban. All leather, all power. 6.0 litre, 2 wd w/towing package. White w/biege interior. Must see! Call 618-836-7412 or 618-292-3035.

For Sale: 125 Yamaha 125 Enduro (no title) - \$500 or best offer. Call 618-836-7412 or 618-292-3035.

For Sale: Small square bales of grass hay - \$3. Call 618-836-7333.

Wanted to Buy: 3 pt field sprayer, 50-75 gal tank, 20-25 ft boom, cat I. Call 217-473-1824.

For Sale: 1989 Chrysler Fifth Avenue, 4-door, automatic, A/C, leather, 96,000 plus. Call 217-710-4966.

For Sale: Race car bed, twin, red - \$100. Call 217-851-1581.

February Outage Summary

2/4 – 10:49 a.m.

North Palmyra, tree on line, off 1 hour.

2/5 – 1:28 p.m.

Witt, line burned down, off 3 hours.

2/6 – 12:27 a.m.

Tree limb on line, off 2 hours.

2/6 – 11:33 a.m.

Staunton, tree on line, off 2 hours.

2/7 – 10:21 a.m.

South Litchfield, Hillsboro, Grisham, member dropped tree on line, off 2 hours.

2/9 – 7:58 a.m.

Shipman, vehicle hit pole, off 1 hour.

2/15 – 11:19 a.m.

North Palmyra, Scottville, South Palmyra, Barr, OCR opened, off 1 hour.

2/16 – 8:53 a.m.

Grisham, tree on line, off 1 hour.

2/17 – 9:57 a.m.

North Hurricane, tree on line, off 1 hour.

2/19 – 9:10 a.m.

North Palmyra, Scottville, Barr, two phases made contact, off 3 hours.

2/20 – 4:51 p.m.

Otter Creek, OCR opened, off 2 hours.

2/21 – 6:21 a.m.

Carlville, tree limb on line, off 1 hour.

2/25 – 1:38 a.m.

Mississippi, frayed strand in phase, off 5 hours.

2/27 – 8:43 p.m.

Hillyard, OCR opened, off 2 hours.

2/28 – 12:14 a.m.

Hillsboro, Grisham, line burned down due to lighting, off 2 hours.

2/28 – 12:34 a.m.

South Fillmore, OCR opened, off 3 hours.