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EnerStar offers support to National Guard Families



Hundreds of people lined the city streets of Paris on December 15, 2003. Citizens both young and old, including EnerStar employees, bid farewell as members of the 1544th Transportation Company, Illinois National Guard, left in convoy for advanced training in Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. The unit is scheduled for overseas deployment in Iraq.

Local families of this guard unit will be getting some extra support from local business, industry and city government. EnerStar Power is proud to be part of the group of community organizations helping those individuals who are serving their country.

During their time of deployment, EnerStar will offer a special "Guard Discount" and reduce electric bills by half for families of National Guard members.

"This discount is an opportunity for those of us who stay behind to offer support for those who serve," stated Tom Hentz, CEO/President of EnerStar. "It's all about those fighting for the red, white and blue, and how we can help them accomplish their mission."

EnerStar is not the only local business offering its support. Mayor Craig Smith announced that the Paris City

Council adopted a new policy that will exempt 1544th families using city utilities from paying their monthly water-sewer bills, until they return home from active duty. Mayor Smith added that he intended to contact local governments in other communities from which 1544th members came and urge them to offer similar support. At press time, no further information was available.

Several military relief funds have been established for those serving on active duty, including one dedicated to those in the 1544th guard unit. If you would like to donate to the relief fund, contact the 1544th office for more information.



For several years, EnerStar Power has served as a storage location for the 1544th guard vehicles



Discover the “Cooperative Difference” at your Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar now for Saturday, March 13, 2004

How is an electric cooperative like EnerStar Power different from other kinds of electric utilities?

The electricity that arrives at your meter is just like the electricity that comes from other utilities. It generally arrives in 120 or 240 voltage, just like the others. It runs the same kind of appliances and lights the same security lights.

While our rates might be slightly higher than other neighboring utilities, we are still cost competitive when you consider the cooperative has many more miles of line strung to far fewer customers per mile than the others.

So, then, what is the “cooperative difference?”

Though we hope the cooperative difference is noticeable year-round in the local and friendly, yet innovative and professional service that EnerStar and its employees provide, and in the special community and economic development projects we participate in — the co-op difference is most evident this time of year. Now is when EnerStar Power employees are preparing for the cooperative’s 65th Annual Meeting of Members to be held on Saturday, March 13, 2004, at Crestwood School in Paris.



**65th Annual
Meeting of Members
on Saturday,
March 13, 2004
Crestwood School
Paris, IL**

Additional information regarding the meeting will be published in next month’s publication and mailed to each cooperative membership.

It is true that investor-owned utilities have annual meetings, but customers are not invited. Their annual meetings are only for stockholders. As a member of our cooperative you’re not only a valued customer, you’re also an owner. You are cordially invited to your annual meeting!

At your co-op’s annual meeting: you get to vote for your representative on the cooperative’s board of directors. A director is a member just like you. He or she is a neighbor who

has a deep commitment to your community and your electric cooperative. You can trust he or she will make decisions that are best for all the members of our not-for-profit company. He or she is your voice on the board.

At your co-op’s annual meeting: you might participate in a free health-screening, win a magnificent door prize or be served a hearty breakfast.

At your co-op’s annual meeting: you will hear during the CEO’s presentation the issues affecting your cooperative. At the end, he will open the floor to questions from the members. That is a luxury that customers of investor-owned utilities simply do not have.

At your co-op’s annual meeting: you will have the opportunity to meet EnerStar’s employees, the local people behind your co-op and become aware of the things they do to make sure the “cooperative difference” is there year-round. If you have a problem with service or have a question about a policy, the annual meeting is a great time to meet our employees and ask your question. Maybe you already know the employees who serve you, so the meeting is a great time to just say hello!

Knowing how to vote

At the Annual Meeting each March, EnerStar members vote for directors to serve as their representatives on EnerStar’s Board. Because there are certain rules regarding voting procedures, it is important to remind members of their voting rights and responsibilities. The following points explain who can and cannot vote at the annual meeting. By knowing these points, you can be assured your vote counts at the meeting.

- If only one person signed the membership application, then only that person is allowed to vote. The membership belongs to the person that signed the mem-

bership application.

- If a husband and wife both signed the membership application, then either party may cast one vote for that membership. Sometimes, a membership was taken out before the member was married. In that case, the new spouse may not vote for the membership. A single membership can easily be made joint by simply filling out a form. Call our office for more details.
- If you pay your landlord for the electrical usage at a location and his/her name is on the top line of the bill, you are not able to vote

for that location. The membership belongs to the landlord.

- If a parent or relative dies and you are appointed executor, you cannot vote for that membership. It does not transfer. A membership transfers to the surviving spouse only if it was a joint membership.

If you have any further questions regarding your membership status, please contact the EnerStar Power office at (217) 463-4145 or (800) 635-4145 during normal business hours. We will be more than happy to assist you with any questions you may have regarding your account.

EnerStar Power's operating practices ensure trust

Getting customers to trust a business in today's corporate environment has become a nearly insurmountable objective. Electric cooperatives are the exception. Their unique relationships with their members go beyond the mere flip of a light switch and can be traced back to decades of customer service with an unmatched accountability.

The cooperative business model, by its very nature, incorporates a high level of trust. For-profit companies serve two masters – the shareholder and the customer. In many cases of recent corporate scandal, deceptive financial practices were performed with the intent of hitting fictional earnings targets and creating a high level of comfort for investors. As employees, customers and shareholders suffered, trust in corporate America eroded.

"We know that trust is earned. Day in and day out, the employees at Enerstar work to earn the continued trust of our member-owners." says Hentz. "That's the cooperative difference."

Trust in cooperative America remains strong, however, because the owners and the customers are one and the same. Cooperatives exist solely to serve their member-owners, not to create profits for outside investors. Electric co-op customers elect their boards of directors, who become accountable to the members, at the Annual Meeting of Members each March. Every member has a vote, with a voice in how the cooperative business operates. The co-op business model provides a transparency that fosters trust and offers customers a genuine sense of ownership.

"As a Touchstone Energy cooperative, we're part of a nationwide community of co-ops working together to complement the local connection we have with our members,"

says Tom Hentz, CEO/President of EnerStar. "Two of Touchstone Energy's core values are accountability and integrity. We do business with both, top of mind."

Because cooperatives maintain strong ties to the local economy and the well being of the communities

they serve, they operate under a higher level of accountability.

"We know that trust is earned. Day in and day out, the employees at EnerStar work to earn the continued trust of our member-owners," says Hentz. "That's the cooperative difference."



That's the cooperative difference

Members of your local Touchstone Energy electric cooperative trust their cooperative to provide reliable and affordable electric power. That's because members own the co-op and have a voice in how the business is run.

Plus, electric cooperatives work for members, not for profits — another value of co-op membership.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Winter storms can bring extended power outages

Be prepared for the unexpected

Last year, several storms threatened EnerStar's electrical distribution system, but overall there was not much damage. With each day that passes, it seems we are closer and closer to a major snow or ice storm. There is no doubt that EnerStar's line crews are glued to the television watching the local weather, as we are confident you are too.

Thanks to the hard work of our employees, EnerStar is a well-maintained electrical distribution system. System improvements are made throughout the year so we provide you with the most reliable electricity possible. Yet a few hours during a significant ice storm can knock out years of hard work. We must always be prepared for a worst case scenario.

Throughout the years, our personnel have learned a couple of lessons. One, you can never underestimate the power of Mother Nature. And two, the cooperative must communicate necessary information to our members so they are prepared before an outage occurs and know how to respond during an outage.

With these lessons in mind, here are some suggestions on how you can be better prepared in the event of an extended power outage and how the co-op handles power outages. Remember, planning is the key for both the cooperative and for you.

EnerStar crews will work as quickly as possible to restore power. We will alert local medias regarding our progress. In addition, stay in contact with family and friends for assistance. If you determine you must leave your home, use well-traveled roads.

If your power is out, EnerStar will be doing everything in our ability to get it back on as quickly as possible. We will put more people



on the phones and more crews in the field. Realize that your outage may be a result of a mishap miles away. Just because you do not see EnerStar line crews at your residence, does not mean they are not hard on the job.

Restoring the power is EnerStar's priority. But are you prepared for an emergency? Especially one which could last several hours, maybe even days?

When the inevitable winter snows and ice storms arrive, will you know what to do if you have a power failure? Do you have a survival kit in your vehicle in case you are stranded in bad weather? Here are some suggestions to make sure that you and your family are prepared for whatever emergency may arise.

A survival kit for your home or vehicle should include six basics: water, food, first aid kit, clothing, tools or emergency supplies and special items. Store a three-day supply of water in plastic containers. Allow one gallon of water per day per person: two quarts for drinking and two quarts for food preparation/sanitation. Store a three-day supply of non-perishable food for each person. Select items that are compact light weight and require little or no cooking such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, juice and high-energy foods such as unsalted nuts, dried fruits or hard candy.

Include these basics in your first aid kit: sterile adhesive bandages, safety pins, soap, latex gloves, sunscreen,

scissors, tweezers, a needle, antiseptic, a thermometer and petroleum jelly. Also be sure to include non-prescription drugs such as aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid and syrup of Ipecac (especially for young children when advised by poison control). Prescription medications should

be kept current and available.

Tools or emergency supplies should include working flashlights and extra batteries, paper or plastic cups, plates and utensils, a battery operated radio, a non-electric can opener, matches in a waterproof container and tools to turn off household gas and water if needed. In addition, include necessary toiletries such as toilet paper, soap, feminine supplies, personal hygiene items, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach for sanitizing.

Store at least one complete change of clothing, including footwear, for each person. Rain gear, blankets, sleeping bags, hats, gloves, thermal underwear and sunglasses should be included both at home and in the vehicle emergency kit.

Include some games and books to help pass the time, especially if you have children with you that may become bored easily. If you have infants, always make sure you have extra formula, bottles and diapers at home and in your vehicle.

Store your emergency survival kit in a backpack, duffel bag or even in a covered plastic container. Water and food should be replaced every six months. Replace the batteries in your emergency kits at least once a year.

For more information on emergency survival kits and winter preparedness, visit the National Safety Council Web site at www.nsc.org and the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org.

Warm up to winter driving

It is a funny thing, winter driving. At the beginning of the season, there are definitely two different types of people on the road. First is the overcautious type that drives too slowly. On the other hand is the overconfident type that drives much too fast. Neither is ideal, because both can result in fender benders or more serious conditions. Most drivers could probably use some friendly reminders to ease the tension of winter driving.

By following a few simple steps, driving can be fun and hazard free despite those adverse weather conditions.

Pre-trip planning

To minimize the chances of weather-related delay, plan ahead with safety in mind. Always be sure to check the forecast. If a winter storm is predicted for the area in which you will be driving, think twice; ask yourself if the trip is absolutely necessary.

Make sure that the roads are clear by checking updated road condition reports. Finally, winterize your car and make sure you have an emergency car kit.

Starting the car

The owner's manual is the best source for information on how to start your vehicle in cold weather. Be sure to turn off all accessories (radio, heaters, lights, etc.) before starting your car. This will maximize your battery's starting power. If your car has a fuel injection system, do not touch the ac-

celerator pedal. For carbureted cars, depress the accelerator once before attempting to start the vehicle.

Then, simply turn the key and hold it for a few seconds. Continuing to grind the starter can damage the mechanism and can cause too much fuel to enter the engine, which will cause it to flood.

Handling roadside emergencies

If your car does not make it to your destination, use the following tips to stay safe until help arrives.

- Pull off the road as far as possible
- Indicate trouble by opening the hood and turning on the vehicle's emergency flashers. Place a "Call Police" sign in the rear window.
- Stay in the car. Avoid the temptations of accepting a ride with a stranger. Instead, if someone offers to help, and if you do not own a cell phone, ask him or her to notify the police. Leave only with a marked police car or a state or city emergency vehicle.
- Do not walk or hitchhike a ride.

Driving tips

Approach winter driving with the right frame of mind – always drive at a speed that matches the prevailing visibility, traffic and road conditions. Listed below are other important suggestions to keep in mind.

- Always wear your seat belt. (It is the law in most states.)
- Remove ice and snow from windows, license plates and lights.

Also be sure to clear snow from the vehicle's hood, roof and trunk.

- Watch for slick spots under bridges and overpasses.
- Be careful when you cross intersections; they can become especially slippery.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent the vehicle's fuel line from freezing.
- Avoid spinning your tires if you are stuck in snow. Gently rock your car back and forth by applying gentle pressure to the accelerator and the brake until you become free.

Winterize your car

Winter can put a vehicle to the test, so it is a good idea to give that car or truck a good check-up if you have not done so this winter. Some things to check:

Fluid - Check the oil, antifreeze and windshield washer fluid. Remember that oil and antifreeze need to be changed periodically.

Electrical System - Check the battery, and test all exterior lights, heater and defroster.

Tires - Check for proper inflation and adequate tread. In some snow areas, you may want to add heavy-duty snow tires, or carry snow chains in the trunk.

Snow-Clearing Gear - Check the wiper blades and replace if they are worn. Keep an ice scraper and snow brush in the car, and extra washer fluid. You may want to store a small shovel in the trunk, and some sand or cat litter for traction. And keep a chemical lock deicer both in the car and somewhere outside the vehicle.

Emergency stuff - Motorists sometimes get stuck in the snow. Keep a warm blanket or two in the trunk, spare hat and gloves, flashlight, and perhaps some non-perishable food just in case.



**Check area road conditions
before you venture out on your journey:**

Illinois http://www.dot.state.il.us/operations/mo_state.html

Indiana <http://www.in.gov/isp/roadinfo/weather.html>

Members may take advantage of “trade-a-tree”

The same trees that beautify your landscape and provide shade for your home can also be responsible for problems with electrical service. Trees growing too close to electric lines are the primary cause of momentary short circuits and flickering lights. In the case of a storm, snow or ice, the limbs on those trees are likely to knock power lines out completely and create a threat to your safety.

To protect your family, property and power service, EnerStar offers free right-of-way tree trimming and clean up as part of a comprehensive community plan. EnerStar has taken an aggressive approach to tree trimming in an effort to reduce power interruptions.

Trees planted under power lines should be removed for the safety of everyone. Therefore, EnerStar has developed the trade-a-tree program.

But sometimes, high maintenance trees create a situation that calls for more intense measures. Trees planted under power lines should be removed for the safety of everyone. Therefore, EnerStar has developed the trade-a-tree program. The new program, as its name suggests, allows EnerStar to remove trees that grow directly beneath high voltage power lines. For each tree removed, EnerStar will provide an ornamental tree that has limited growth. The replacement trees will be scheduled for spring pick-up. Members should plant the trees in an area away from the power lines to avoid a repeat situation later.

Should a tree need removed in a member's yard, EnerStar personnel



will attempt to notify the member by telephone or a personal visit. The trade-a-tree program only affects trees that are located in landscaped or mowed yards directly under or within close proximity to high voltage power lines. Trees located close to service drops and other low voltage secondary lines are not part of the trade-a-tree program.

Though some members may be inconvenienced by the temporary loss of a yard tree, we are hopeful the long-term advantages of lower operating costs and a safe, more reliable service will convince members to participate in the trade-a-tree program. For more information regarding the program, contact Mike Clark at (217) 466-7616 or Greg Hollingsworth at (217) 466-7619.

Get Charged!

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives partner with Discovery Channel School

This school year, EnerStar Power is taking advantage of a Touchstone Energy school program that is electrifying kids across the country. Through partnerships between Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and Discovery Channel School, EnerStar has embarked on a campaign to ensure that middle school students in our communities receive a quality education on electricity—its beginnings to its importance in today's world. The program allows EnerStar to embrace our commitment to the community in a new and powerful way.

Through this community outreach program - called Get Charged! Electricity and You – EnerStar is providing area schools with a comprehensive kit of educational materials focusing on electric-



Kelly McCrocklin, EnerStar employee, presents Danette Young, 5th Grade teacher at Crestwood School, with the school's Discovery Channel School Kit. The kit is full of the necessary items to teach today's kids all about how electricity is made and delivered.

ity, a component of the National Academy of Science's National Science Education Standards (NSES).

Each Get Charged! Kit contains the following education materials: posters, two videos, interactive CD-

ROM featuring electricity, teacher lesson plans, student activity books and teacher resource guide. Kits were distributed to area schools in December as an early Christmas present.

"This program is a win-win program for cooperatives like EnerStar and the schools in our communities. It underscores Touchstone Energy's core value of "commitment to the community" by helping schools with a fun and interesting, yet educational, program for the kids," says Angela Griffin, EnerStar's Manager of Marketing and Cooperative Communications.

"Assisting our schools is very important to us and we are very pleased to offer this program."

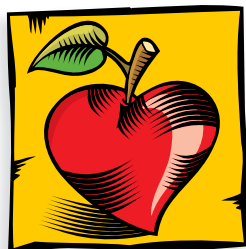
For more information about the program, contact Griffin at (217) 466-7603.

The gift that lasts:

Give your valentine a healthier heart

Instead of wrapping up a box of chocolates for your Valentine this year, surprise the one you love with a far more enduring gift, a healthier heart.

February is National Heart Month, after all. And healthy hearts begin with the food we eat. Healthy food begins with cooking. This year, consider giving a kitchen appliance that helps your honey cook without so much fat and calories. Microwaves, bread



makers, special indoor grills and rice steamers, for instance, make quick work of a low-fat dinner.

Nutritionists claim the microwave is one of the best appliances for preparing heart-healthy, low-fat meals. Microwaves can steam vegetables or cook meat and potatoes without added oils.

Likewise, convection ovens allow fat to drip from baked, boiled or roasted meat, making for a lower-fat

meal. And smokeless electric indoor barbecues are great for grilling a low-fat wintertime meal.

Cooks who use crock-pots and slow roasters need to add little or no extra fat to their recipes.

And for snacks, food dehydrators turn fruits and vegetables into tasty, reduced-fat treats. Bread makers allow the cook to control the amount of sugar, fat and salt added to breads, pastries and other baked goods.

So cheers to a healthier heart starting this February!



11597 IL Hwy 1 • Paris, Illinois 61944 (217) 463-4145 • Office hours: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F



Add a little light to your night

There's no place like home...and at nightfall, you'll have peace of mind with a security light from your electric cooperative.

Nothing foils a would-be burglar or trespasser like the brilliant beams of an electric cooperative security light. Today's security lights are brighter and more efficient than ever. And since the security light turns itself on at dusk and off at dawn, it's there when you need it, automatically. A security light is an affordable way to provide safety and protection for everyone's family and possessions. Call EnerStar today for all the details.



Do you have story ideas?

With EnerStar's new and improved center section magazine, we are looking for new ways to promote EnerStar and the territory we serve. We are especially looking for member activities or hobbies, community issues and local history. We will continue to inform our members about cooperative happenings and safety issues. What stories would you like to see included in this magazine? Maybe you or someone you know has an unusual hobby or unique story. If you have an idea of an appropriate story, call Angela Griffin at (217) 466-7603 and tell her about it. You can also e-mail her at agriffin@enerstar.com. Thanks!

We're Here for You!



Electric cooperatives were created to serve rural residents when no one else would. And we will continue to provide you with electricity and other services that improve your quality of life. When you look around and see things changing, remember one thing that will never change is the quality of service you receive from your electric cooperative. EnerStar Power...we're here for you!



Mission statement

EnerStar exists to serve the changing needs of its members by improving their quality of life, by serving their energy needs and actively supporting community development.