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Member Services Department employees Kayla Foos (right) and Nikki Hall serve cooperative members with a wide variety of requests.

Member Services

Front-line employees serve membership

When you call the EnerStar cooperative office, the individual who greets you with “Thank you for calling EnerStar, how may I assist you?” is probably an employee of the Member Services Department. These employees work tirelessly to serve the members and never know what challenges they might face on any given day.

“I understood that going beyond the call of duty is not just a sales pitch, but it is truly what sets us apart as a cooperative.”

At first, you may wonder why we do not call it the “customer service” department. The answer is simple – it represents the cooperative difference. As a member-owner of our not-for-profit cooperative, you are more than just a customer when you receive electricity from us. Unlike other companies, you have a say in

how we operate. You have a vote at our annual meeting on proposed bylaw changes and elect the board of directors to represent the membership. These directors are like you; they are also members of the cooperative. They help guide the direction of the cooperative by approving policies, budgets and more. This is what we mean when we say that we represent the cooperative difference.

You may recognize the face or know the voice, but Kayla Foos and Nikki Hall fill an essential role at the cooperative in the Member Services Department.

Continued on page 18C



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

11597 Illinois Highway 1
Paris, IL 61944
800-635-4145
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Petitions available for June 2024 board elections

EnerStar Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting of Members is set for June 1, and cooperative members have the opportunity to run in the upcoming board of directors election. Members who are eligible candidates and can commit the time and energy to the member-owned corporation may want to consider this opportunity.

The role of director is a huge commitment – of time, energy and education – more than most members realize. Thankfully, there are members who are willing to serve in this important capacity. Decisions made can affect the membership into the next generation.

For the 2024 election, EnerStar has three director seats, which are three year terms in Districts A2, B4, and C7.

Members interested in running for the board should contact the cooperative office to verify eligibility and receive a petition packet. The packet includes all the necessary information one would need to learn more about the cooperative and the role of the director.

Board petitions require the signatures of 15 EnerStar members who live in the candidate's Voting District. All members signing petitions must have an original membership card on file and must be currently receiving electricity from the cooperative. Candidates will also need to check with cooperative



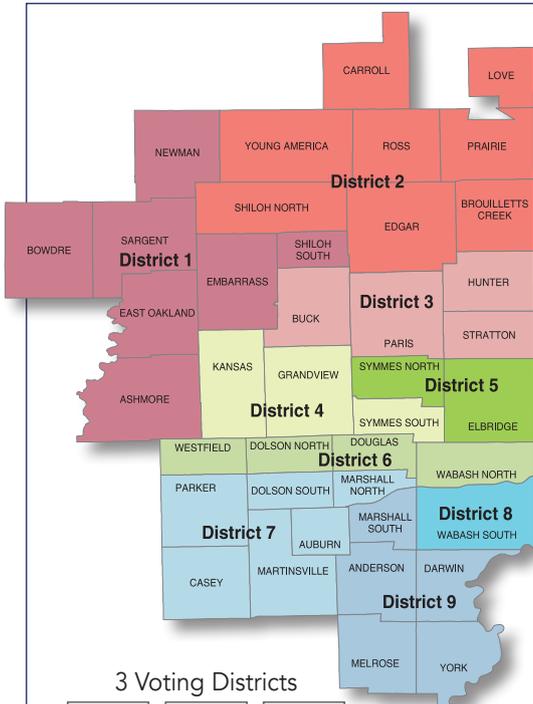
personnel to make certain they reside within the correct Representative District.

Petition packets will be available beginning February 22, 2024.

Completed petitions may be turned in to the cooperative office

from March 18, 2024 to April 2, 2024. Candidates should also provide a short biographical sketch, 250 words or less, and a digital photo to be published with the Annual Meeting Notice. Candidates should also make plans to attend the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members on Saturday, June 1, 2024.

The tentative mailing date of the official notice of the meeting will be late April.



3 Voting Districts		
A	B	C
1	4	7
2	5	8
3	6	9

Voting Districts A, B, and C each contain three Representative Districts in shades of red, green, and blue, respectively.

2024 elections

Representative Board District Descriptions 3 year terms

✓ Voting District A2

District 2 - Currently served by Kevin Julian, Brocton

The Townships of Carroll and Love in Vermilion County, Illinois; the Townships of Young America, Ross, Prairie, Edgar, and Brouilletts Creek in Edgar County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Shiloh lying north of the 1800th Road in Edgar County, Illinois

✓ Voting District B4

District 4 - Currently served by Darin Griffin, Paris

The Townships of Kansas and Grandview in Edgar County, Illinois; all that portion of the Township of Symmes lying south of the 400th Road and west of Illinois Highway 1 in Edgar County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Symmes lying south of the 300th Road and east of Illinois Highway 1 in Edgar County, Illinois

✓ Voting District C7

District 7 - Currently served by Julie Higginbotham

The Townships of Parker, Casey, Auburn, and Martinsville in Clark County, Illinois; all that portion of the Township of Dolson lying south of the 2000th Road in Clark County, Illinois; and all that portion of the Township of Marshall lying north of Interstate Highway 70 in Clark County, Illinois

Clearing the path to reliability

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why EnerStar Electric strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events, with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, most outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. That is why you sometimes see EnerStar crews trimming trees near power lines in the community. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

All U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we can better prepare for severe weather events. Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake

preventative maintenance than to make repairs after the fact.

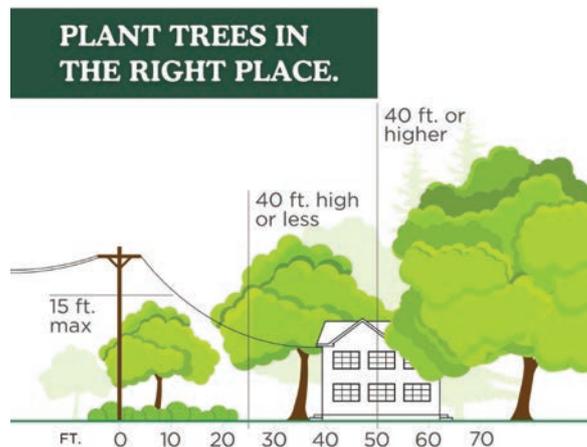
Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. Electricity can arc or jump from a power line to a nearby conductor, such as a tree. Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and hazardous for lineworkers to restore power.

Affordability

As a co-op, EnerStar always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone. When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help, too. When planting new trees, ensure they're planted safely from overhead power lines.

Medium-height trees (40 feet or smaller) should be planted at least 25 feet from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 feet) should be planted at least 50 feet from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers.



Plant shrubs at least 10 feet from the transformer door and 4 feet from the sides. If your property has underground lines, contact 811 before you begin any project requiring digging. Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch dangerously close to overhead lines, please get in touch with us at 1-800-635-4145.

We have deep roots in our community and love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program ensures service reliability.

Member Services *Continued from page 18A*

Kayla joined EnerStar in 2017 with a solid background in customer service. She oversees billing functions, payments and capital credits as the department supervisor. Kayla must stay updated with the numerous software applications utilized by the cooperative for billing functions and member messaging. Kayla says the cooperative prioritizes the membership's interests in every decision. She also added that members who face difficulty

paying their electric bill should contact the cooperative as soon as possible. "We are here to assist the members," Kayla stated. "Early communication helps us do that."

Nikki Hall is a recent addition to the Member Services Department. She joined the cooperative last year, and her primary responsibilities include answering phone calls and assisting members at the office. When asked about what she finds unique about working for

a nonprofit cooperative, Nikki said, "From the very beginning, I understood that going beyond the call of duty is not just a sales pitch, but it is truly what sets us apart as a cooperative."

The next time you contact the co-op or visit the office, remember that the Member Services Department is available to assist you, the membership. They play a crucial role in our cooperative, and we are fortunate to have such dedicated employees.

Reliability: NERC issues concerning report

Electricity is an essential part of our daily routine. At EnerStar, we recognize its significance and our responsibility to distribute it to our members reliably. As a local cooperative, we are dedicated to ensuring transparency and educating our members, which is one of our seven cooperative principles. With that mindset, electric grid reliability is one focal discussion point at annual meetings and in our magazine.

In the news: rolling blackouts

There has recently been increased national news coverage about rolling blackouts in the United States. This concern is mainly due to the aging power grid's inability to keep up with the increasing demand for electricity and extreme weather conditions. The early closure of baseload coal plants as part of the transition towards cleaner energy sources has also contributed to the problem. However, before we continue discussing this issue in more detail, it's important to provide some background information.

What is a rolling blackout?

Rolling blackouts are temporary power outages used by power grid operators to balance the power supply in a region. They prevent overloading and more widespread outages. Unlike regular outages, they are shorter in duration and "roll" from location to location. Predicting blackouts is complex, and there may be little warning when they happen.

Balancing the grid and where EnerStar fits into this equation

EnerStar collaborates closely with our generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, Wabash Valley Power, in resource and infrastructure planning. This collaboration ensures you have power

when you flip on a switch. However, it is important to note that the electric grid is much larger than just EnerStar. The grid is widely considered one of the world's most complex machines. This complexity arises because Americans consume varying amounts of electricity throughout the day, resulting in a constantly fluctuating supply and demand for electricity.

EnerStar is linked to a section of the grid managed by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). MISO is one of the seven Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs) in the United States. It is responsible for overseeing the electric grid in 15 midwestern states, which includes most of Illinois.

Wabash has sufficient generation capacity to meet the peak demands in our service area. However, the MISO region (and others) is at a higher risk of shortages in the future due to the decrease in available resources. Situations such as these can put the entire grid in jeopardy. In the worst-case scenario, MISO may have to order temporary, controlled outages to prevent widespread outages. These brief outages are known as rolling outages.

Recent reports alarming on the grid's future

EnerStar is a National Rural Electric Cooperative member, a trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives. NRECA represents 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape through this association. NRECA has summed up best what is happening,

NRECA's CEO, Jim Matheson, recently expressed concern about the current state of the nation's energy future in response to the National Electric Reliability Council's (NERC) latest assessment of the electric grid's stability. According to Matheson, the electricity demand is rising while the supply of always-available baseload generation is declining. He pointed out that nine states experienced

rolling blackouts last December due to the shortage in electricity supply. Matheson added that proposals such as the EPA's power plant rule to close additional baseload will only add to the problem. He believes that without a significant shift in state and federal energy policy, we will face this reality for years. Our area, which MISO serves, is considered a "high-risk" area.

"Key measures of future electricity demand and energy needs are rising faster than at any time in recent years, adding to future resource adequacy concerns at a time of unprecedented transformation in the industry," added Matheson. "It warns that an increasingly large portion of North America is at risk in the future." In 2028, NERC anticipates a capacity shortfall, especially for winter electricity generation and fuel risks.

What can we do about it

EnerStar and Wabash, along with the NRECA, will diligently continue to pursue reliable and affordable power sources and work with our legislators to enact "sensible" rules for our power sources. We're watching out for you. If you want to dive deeper into the NERC report, visit www.enerstar.com. We will post the link on our website along with this article.

