

JO-CARROLL

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  **HI-LINES**



CEO'S REPORT

by Mike Casper

Fiber internet: Working together for the future

The electric cooperative story is about people who banded together to improve their quality of life by bringing electricity to their communities when no one else would.

Jo-Carroll Energy is strongly committed to improving your quality of life. Not only because it is the right thing to do, but because many of us are member-owners of JCE and are involved in, and care about our local communities.

Evolving energy and communications technology are changing, and JCE is stepping up by implementing innovative programs such as our Sand Prairie internet division's Galena fiber pilot project, along with our existing and ever-expanding energy efficiency programs and our commitment to sustainable resources, such as the deployment of renewables.

JCE's team is constantly looking for ways to improve service to our members by developing new products and services. As we previously shared with you, the fiber project not only supports the cooperative's own advanced metering infrastructure to enhance the reliability of our service to you and add cost efficiencies, it also brings a new option for broadband service to you, our member-owners.

The build-out of the Galena pilot fiber project is now complete, and by the end of January brought fiber to approximately 50 member-owners in Galena. We are reaching out to those who currently have access to the service and word of mouth is spreading quickly.

It's good to hear from our members how fiber internet is making their online tasks faster and their lives easier. Our member Ann says: "No more spinning circles waiting for the downloads or opening apps and no more wasted time waiting for my internet to catch up to real time. It is

an amazing difference from the old provider."

Credit for the success of the project goes to our employees who are working hard to bring this service to our members. Paul at EZ Sell USA told us "In all my time working with the internet, I've never had an upgrade that was so seamless, flawless and simple. I was amazed."

It's clear that fiber means faster speeds and better connections. It also means a better quality of life with access to advantages found in more urban areas. Just as our founding members worked together to bring electricity to the rural areas, today we are working to bring our members dependable, quality, local broadband service.

In the co-op's tradition of service and value to our communities, we want to see our fiber project succeed and grow to the homes and businesses throughout the rural communities of our service territory.

You can help. Whether you're in the pilot area or live and work elsewhere in our service territory, let us know that you are interested in Sand Prairie fiber. Simply go to connectsp.com and click on the purple banner, "Want Fiber in Your Neighborhood?" to enter your address. If you're in the pilot area, you'll be able to complete a form to get the process started. If you're outside the pilot, you'll be asked to supply your contact information.

Letting us know you want us to bring fiber to your neighborhood is important! When we plan future projects we'll be looking for clusters, moving forward with new areas based on member interest.

Tell your neighbors; tell your friends. Encourage them to visit connectsp.com to show their interest, too. Let's work together for the future – it's the cooperative way.

Reader prize

Each month we print the name of a Jo-Carroll Energy member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact Jo-Carroll Energy and claim your prize no later than the 10th of the month following publication.

For your information

Your Board of Directors:

David Senn
Chairman
District 7

Russell Holesinger
Vice Chairman
District 8

Marcia Stanger
Secretary
District 3

Martin Werner
Treasurer
District 1

Joseph Mattingley
District 2

Bret Jones
District 4

Patricia Smith
District 5

Thomas Lundy
District 6

Larry Carroll
District 9

Robert Kuhns
District 10

Ronald Hallendorff
District 10

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday

Elizabeth
793 U.S. Route 20 West
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Savanna
103 Chicago Ave.
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Geneseo
1004 S. Chicago St.
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4 p.m.

**Services and
Billing Questions:**

(800) 858-5522
www.jocarroll.com

**For emergencies
and outages call:**
(800) 858-5522

Resume of Minutes

December 20, 2016

The board met on Tuesday, December 20, 2016, at the Jo-Carroll Energy Headquarters. The following is a summary of the meeting activities. The Agenda, as amended, was approved.

Board Issues-

a. November Financials- President and CEO Mike Casper discussed the November Financials, mentioning that due to the warmer weather and late-arriving invoices, revenue was down and costs were up compared to budgeted amounts. Jo-Carroll Energy's equity was at 24.68% before capital credit checks were distributed, and Heidenreich estimated that the cooperative would finish the year with margins of approximately 24%.

b. 2017 Budget- A presentation was given by President and CEO Mike Casper on the 2017 Budget. Discussion was had on rising power costs, especially transmission costs, as well as a review of other estimated cost increases and revenue projections. Casper noted that capital spending is down significantly from 2014. Discussion was also had on maintaining the power cost adjustment (PCA) at zero, subject

to review, in order to help stabilize Member rates. Consensus among the board was for the PCA, along with other rate components, to be reviewed during 2017. The proposed budget was approved.

c. Resolution to Approve \$500,000 in deferred revenue from 2016 and move to 2017- Discussion was had about the effects of deferring revenue from previous years on the cooperative's longer-term financials. After discussion, the general feeling of the board was that deferring some revenue from 2016 into 2017 would help stabilize rates in 2017. The Board approved a resolution to defer \$500,000.00 in 2016 revenue to 2017.

Executive Session- Entered Executive Session at 10:32 A.M.

Out of Executive Session- Out of Executive Session at 10:47 a.m.

Consideration of Matters discussed in Executive Session - None

Other Business - None

Adjournment

Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.



Director nomination petition deadline approaching

Nomination petitions for the 2017 Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors are now available, with three director posts up for election in 2017.

Districts with elections include: District 3, now represented by Marcia Stanger of Apple River; District 6, now represented by Tom Lundy of Savanna; and District 9, now represented by Larry Carroll of Thomson. Petitions must be filed at Jo-Carroll Energy's headquarters no later than March 24, 2017.

Any Jo-Carroll Energy member residing in the district of a director whose term is expiring, including the incumbent director may petition for nomination. Members interested in seeking election to the board may pick up a nomination petition at one of Jo-Carroll Energy's offices or

download a petition from the cooperative's website at www.jocarroll.com.

Petitions must be signed by at least 25 Jo-Carroll Energy members residing in the district for which the director is to be elected.

In order to qualify to have their names placed on the ballot, all nominees must participate in an orientation process provided by the attorney for the cooperative, assuring that all nominees fully understand the expectations and responsibilities of directors. These include, but are not limited to: time demands, educational expectations and fiduciary duties.

Complete details on director qualifications and the nomination procedure can be found in Jo-Carroll Energy's bylaws. The bylaws are

posted on the cooperative's website at www.jocarroll.com.

Elections

Members who live in districts where a director is up for election AND there is more than one candidate will receive a special mailing in April. The mailing contains a ballot for the board election, candidate profiles and return envelope.

Profiles of candidates also will be included in the May Hi-Lines.

Remember, you will only receive a ballot if you live in one of the three districts with elections this year (Districts 3, 6 and 9) and if there is more than one candidate.

If there is only one candidate in a district, election is by a vote of acclamation at the annual meeting.



ANNUAL MEETING

Save the date of Tuesday, May 23 for the Jo-Carroll Energy Annual Meeting of Members!

The meeting will be held at West Carroll High School in Savanna.

Registration at 5 p.m.; Meeting at 6 p.m.;
Dinner at 7 p.m.



Safety tips for home buyers

From choosing a realtor and touring homes, to applying for a loan and signing many documents, buying a home can be a nerve-racking experience. The Safe Electricity program wants to help make the process a little less stressful and shares tips for home buyers to help them take note of the safety of a home.

Many homes sold every year have already been lived in and have the natural wear and tear of age and use. In 2015 alone, the National Association of Realtors says approximately 5,250,000 existing homes were sold, while the U.S. Census Bureau says 510,000 newly constructed homes were sold.

Safe Electricity provides the following checklist to help you evaluate potential hazards:

- **Outlets** – Note the location and the number of outlets in each room. If the outlets only have two prongs and are missing the third hole for the grounding pin, the home is not grounded. You will want to consider having the electrical system updated.
- **Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)** – GFCIs provide protection against shock from an electrified appliance in contact with water. It is important that GFCI outlets are installed in areas where water and electricity may meet. This would include bathrooms, kitchens, garages, basements, outdoors, etc. If GFCIs are not in the home, you will want to plan on having them installed for your safety.
- **Lighting** – Flip on lights, and listen for any popping or sizzling sounds. If there are, there may be an electrical issue.
- **Appliances** – Check the age and status of appliances that will come with the house. This could include: furnace, HVAC, water heater, refrigerator, oven, etc. Will these appliances need to be replaced in the near future? Are they working properly?
- **Faucets** – Turn on faucets to make sure they are running and draining properly, and that there are no leaks.
- **Sump pump/drainage** – If the home has a basement, check for a sump pump or proper drainage. A basement susceptible to flooding can be dangerous and costly.
- **Insulation** – Check to see if the home is properly insulated. Insulated areas should include attics, ducts, crawlspace walls, and floors or walls that are adjacent to unheated spaces.
- **Roof** – Note the condition and the age of the roof, and the material it is made of. An old roof may leak and cause damage to the structure of the home.
- **Detectors** – Check if smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in the home.

Keep in mind, you likely won't be able to check every detail of the home yourself. A home inspector will examine all parts of the home, and will provide you with a full report. Anything that is wrong with the house, you can choose to negotiate with the seller to fix the issues, fix the problems yourself after purchase, or back out of the deal.





TOAST
your bread...

NOT YOUR HOME.

Did you know that a damaged appliance could destroy your home?

Help protect your home from electrical fires:

- **Keep appliances in good working order.**
- **Do not use appliances with cords that are frayed, cracked, or damaged.**
- **Do not use electronics that are damaged or have been wet.**
- **Do not use extension cords permanently.**
- **Do not plug too many appliances into one outlet.**
- **Register new appliances so you will be notified of a recall, and periodically check Recalls.gov.**

Do your best to prevent fires, but always be prepared. Have a smoke alarm with working batteries and a fire extinguisher rated for electrical fires.

For more information on electrical safety, visit: SafeElectricity.org

Easy steps to greater efficiency

By Anne Prince

Do you want to save money and electricity but have limited time, money and patience? According to the Department of Energy, a “typical American family” spends nearly \$2,000 per year on their home energy bills. Much of that money, however, is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances or inefficient heating and cooling systems.

Luckily, there are several relatively easy ways to save energy without a substantial commitment of time and money. These efforts will help you save whether you own or rent an older or newly constructed home. And, you won’t have to hire a specialist or call in a favor from someone who is handy with tools to help you.

Where to start

According to Money Magazine,

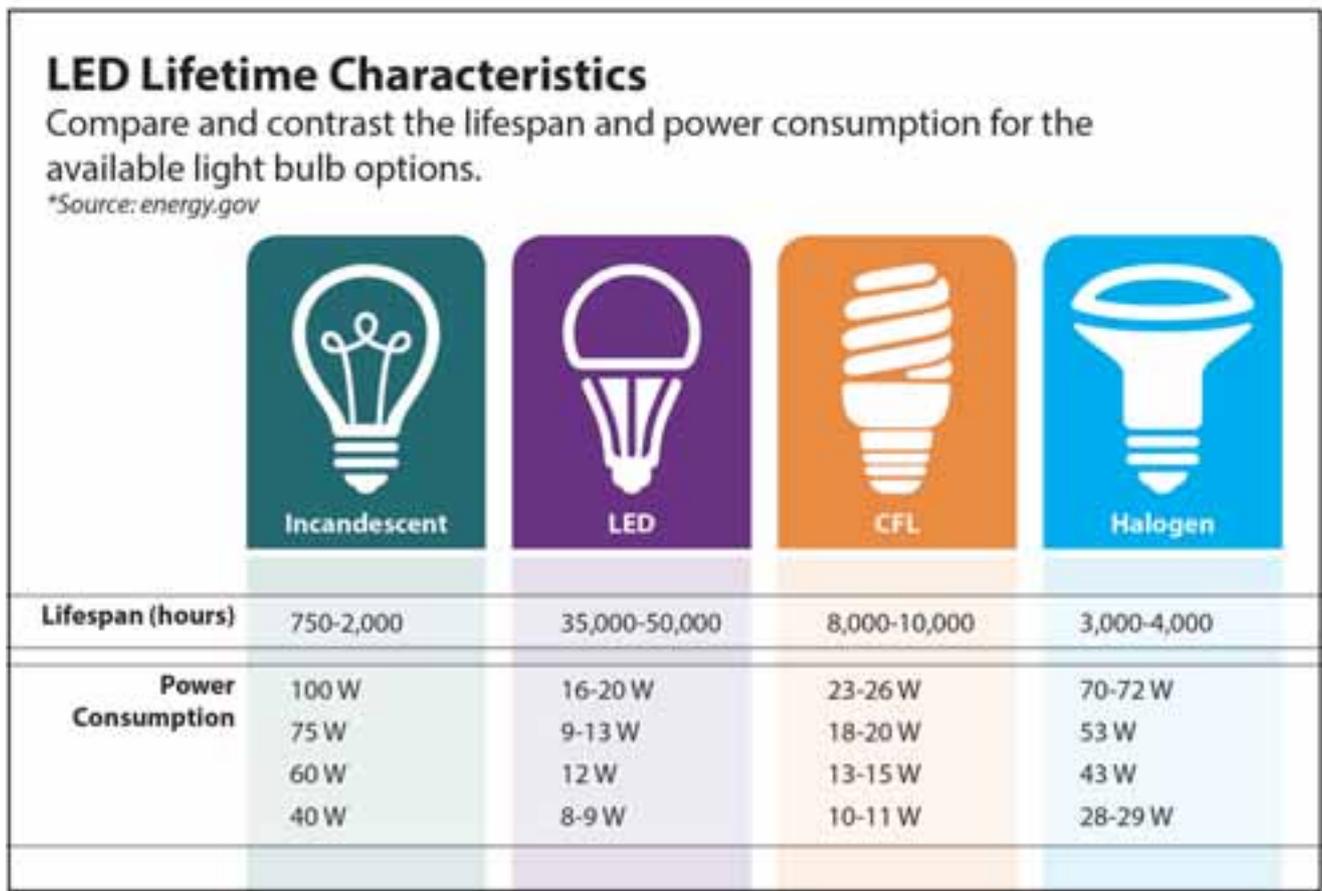
“improving the envelope” of your home is a good place to start. Sunlight, seasonal temperature changes and wind vibrations can loosen up even a tight home, increasing air leakage. Doors and windows may not close tightly, and duct work can spring leaks, wasting cooled and heated air. By placing weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors, you can keep cool air inside during warm months and prevent chilly air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and creates greater efficiency. Apply weather stripping around overlooked spaces like your attic hatch or pull-down stairs.

Replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in home efficiency and is one of

the fastest ways to cut your energy bill. Known for their longevity and efficiency, LED bulbs have an estimated operational life span of typically 10,000 to 20,000 hours compared to 1,000 hours of a typical incandescent. According to the Dept. of Energy, by replacing your home’s five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with models that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating, you can save \$75 each year.

Wrapping up savings

Installing a blanket around your water heater could reduce standby heat losses by 25 to 45 percent and save you about 7 to 16 percent in water heating costs, according to the Dept. of Energy. For a small investment of about \$30, you can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets and install them



Change air filters for energy efficiency



in about one hour. On a safety note, the Dept. of Energy recommends that you not set the thermostat above 130 degrees Fahrenheit on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket; the higher temperature setting could cause the wiring to overheat.

Given that a large portion of your monthly energy bill goes toward heating and cooling your home, it makes sense to ensure your home's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is performing at an optimal level. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter extends the life of your HVAC system and saves you money.

Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Otherwise, dust and dirt trapped in a system's air filter leads to several problems, including: reduced air flow in the home and up to 15 percent higher operating costs; lowered system efficiency; and costly duct cleaning or replacement. Many HVAC professionals recommend cleaning the system filters monthly. A simple task like

changing the filters on your HVAC system makes your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Take control of your energy savings

Take a look at your programmable thermostat. When was the last time you checked to make sure it was programmed for the current season and family schedule? This is one of the best

energy-saving tools at your fingertips. It enables you to fine tune the temperature during particular hours of the day. Many models allow you to differentiate between weekday and weekend schedules, and internet-connected thermostats can learn your schedule and make adjustments automatically. Most models come with an override option so you can make manual adjustments without losing overall programming. You can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines.

Remember, there are easy steps you can take now to improve the energy efficiency of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, contact Jo-Carroll Energy at (800) 858-5522.

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Warmer weather is on the way! Use energy efficient window treatments or coverings, like blinds, shades and films, to reduce heat gain in your home. These devices not only improve the look of your home but also reduce energy costs.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Linemen complete apprentice training



Three Jo-Carroll Energy lineworkers recently graduated from their apprenticeship training. Keith Hayes, Jacob Weede and Jacob Salzman have completed the requirements to graduate from the Electric Line Worker Apprenticeship training program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. The apprenticeship

program includes a combination classroom instruction and on-the-job training.

Salzman and Weede both joined the cooperative in September of 2013, while Hayes was hired in July of 2015.



See your photos in print

The 2017 Photo Contest is now open. Jo-Carroll Energy is accepting entries for the 2017 contest; winners will be featured in the 2018 Jo-Carroll Energy Calendar.

We are looking for images that represent life

in our service territory – whether they are action shots or scenic landscapes. All photos must be the original work of the entrant and be taken within the Jo-Carroll Energy service territory.

Entry deadline is June 30, 2017.