



Clinton County Connection

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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What causes my lights to blink?

You have just come home from work and notice that all of the digital clocks in the house are blinking. There must have been a power outage sometime during the day, right? Possibly, but more than likely it was just a power “blink” and not a permanent outage. A “blink” occurs when the power momentarily goes off for a couple of seconds, and then comes back on.

Overhead and underground electric lines are susceptible to “blinks.” Clinton County Electric Cooperative has a network of over 1,000 miles of line. This network is divided into sections called distribution feeders. The feeders are protected by devices that interrupt the power when a problem, or “fault” occurs on the line. The device will turn the power back on after a short period of time. If the fault is still present, the device will operate again, causing another “blink”. If the fault clears, then the power stays on. If the fault is permanent, then the power goes out and stays out. The “blinks” that you see are operations of the protective devices. Because most faults are temporary in nature, your lights just “blink” and come back on. The protective devices are designed to prevent permanent outages when possible.

What problems occur on the lines that cause blinks?

Faults may be caused by several items:

Lightning

During storm seasons, electric lines are hit by lightning numerous times. Insulators, lightning arrestors, transformers, and other line equipment are exposed to high voltage surges caused by lightning strikes. Lightning puts an enormous amount of stress on this equipment. An example of a problem would be when an insulator gets slightly damaged during a storm. The damage at the time of the strike may be small and the line continues to operate normally. A month or two later, regular operating stress may break down the insulator. The line then starts to “blink” occasionally.

Tree Limbs

Tree limbs contact lines and cause “blinks.” Southern Illinois is abundant with trees. It is difficult to find a Cooperative distribution line that is not in close proximity to trees. The Cooperative utilizes its own crews and hires contractors to maintain the rights-of-way on its 1,000 miles of line. New pruning, spraying, and management methods are being utilized to gain better control of the rights-of-way. Because of the abundance of trees, it takes a while to get through the entire system. The Cooperative appreciates members’ patience when it comes to tree pruning/cutting requests. You can do your

part to help the Cooperative most efficiently improve service reliability:

- Do not plant trees within 30 feet of electric lines. Some tree varieties may require more of a set-back distance. Contact the Cooperative if you have a specific tree you would like to plant and have questions regarding the proximity to electric lines.
- When possible, allow the Cooperative to remove trees rather than just trim them. Trimming is only a temporary measure.
- Please be patient. The Cooperative has a program to maintain the right-of-way on your line.

Animals

Animals can cause problems, too. Squirrels, raccoons, snakes, and birds cause “blinks” on the system. Animals may come into contact with electric

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Bob Kroeger
President/COO

What causes my lights to blink? Continued from 16a ▶

conductors and other equipment at the same time, causing a fault. Livestock that rub against guy wires can also cause problems. The Cooperative uses animal guard products to help prevent animals from causing “blinks.”

Ice and Wind

Electric conductors that have ice on them tend to “gallop” in the wind. Lines may flop together, and cause “blinks.” Fortunately, the Cooperative does not experience this problem very often. Minimal ice build-up and hilly terrain discourage the “galloping” effect.

What if my power continues to blink?

The Cooperative realizes that blinking lights are a nuisance. If you are experiencing an extraordinary number of “blinks,” please write down the dates and times and call us. Let us know if you see any flashes or arcing on the lines. We will do our best to try to find the problem as soon as possible. Because many problems are not obvious, it may take us a while to track down the problem. We do have devices that can be put on the lines to help isolate the problem.

With your patience and cooperation, we will eventually find and correct the problem.

Will power blinks cause damage to appliances and other equipment?

As stated earlier, the operation of a protective device on electric lines causes “blinks.” Some people refer to “blinks” as power “surges”, but, unless lightning is involved, probably no “surge” occurs on the line. When the power goes off and back on during a “blink,” it is often just like turning your appliance or other piece of equipment off and on with its own switch. No damage to your equipment should occur. If lightning is involved, a surge may occur and could cause damage. The Cooperative installs lightning arrestors on its lines to minimize the effects of lightning; yet, lightning can still cause damage.

What can I do in my home to lessen the effects of blinks?

Members can do several things to help prevent annoyances due to power “blinks.”

- Buy digital clocks and VCRs that have a battery backup. The battery will ride through power “blinks,” and

you will not have to reset the time.

- Purchase an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) for your computer. Nothing is more annoying than losing data on a computer because of a power “blink”. A relatively inexpensive UPS will ride through the “blink”, preventing data loss. More sophisticated UPS’s can be bought that keep your computer up and running for several minutes after a permanent power outage, allowing you to save your data.
- Safeguard solid state equipment, computers, and household appliances by installing surge protectors. Nothing is available that will protect your home from a direct lightning strike, but small surges often can be prevented. Whole-house secondary surge protectors that prevent surges from coming into the home can be purchased. Sensitive equipment should also be protected independently.

Cooperative personnel can answer your questions regarding any problems or concerns you may have involving power “blinks.” Please give us a call at 618-526-7282!

**HAPPY
new
YEAR**

**The cooperative office
will be closed on Friday,
December 30 &
Monday, January 2
in observance of
New Year's.**



2017 Clinton County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

**Thursday, March 16, 2016
– Be sure to mark your
calendar!**

*It is never too early to plan
for your upcoming
annual meeting*

Why does my electric bill go up in the winter?

The size of your electric bill is totally dependent on how much electricity you use. The rates do not increase, so if your bill gets larger in the winter, it's because you are using more electricity. Where is it being used, may be the question.

First, we need to know that the colder it is outside, the more energy it takes to keep our homes warm. When it's 70 degrees out, your heating system doesn't have to work to keep it 70 degrees indoors. But when it drops to 10 degrees out, it has to work very hard to keep it 70 degrees indoors.

Take a look around your home to see what uses electricity to keep your home warm. If you have electric heat, whether baseboard heaters, electric furnace or a heat pump, you pretty much know where it's getting used. If you have a gas furnace though, you might not think your electric use would increase. Remember though, the more your furnace runs, the more the blower runs, and it's run by electricity. If you have an electronic filter, it too will be running more.

Even though you use gas, you may have some portable electric heaters you use to keep certain rooms warm, or use by your favorite TV. Electric blankets will also increase electric use. You may also have some electric heat tapes on water lines to keep them from freezing.

Here are some tips to help reduce your electric use.

Heat Pumps

Heat pumps are very efficient heating systems. Yet if the heat pump malfunctions, they become electric furnaces and can lead to high electric use, so verify the outdoor unit is operating on a weekly basis. Keep filters clean and make sure the coils on the



unit outside are clean too. Do not turn the thermostat up and down on a heat pump, this will cause the auxiliary heat strips to provide more of the heat than they need to. If you wish it to be cooler at night or other periods, use a programmable thermostat designed for heat pumps. They can raise the temperature back up without causing the auxiliary heat strips to come on.

Showers

Make sure showers are no longer than they need to be. It's easy to stand under a warm shower to wake up in the morning, but that causes your water heater to operate more than needed. Pay attention to children's showers and time them if necessary. Make sure you have low-flow shower-heads in place.

Laundry

With newer laundry detergents, washing machines and fabrics, hot or even warm water is not

necessary to get clothing clean. Use cold water washing for all but the dirtiest clothing. Don't over load the machine, but do use full loads.

Dish Washing

Wash only full loads of dishes and then use the water heat option on the cycle with no drying. This allows you to set your water heater to 120 degrees (more than adequate for household and laundry use) yet have water that gets your dishes clean. With the warmer water in the machine, you won't need to use the dry cycle, especially if you'll crack the door when the cycle is done.

While these tips will help reduce energy use, making sure your home is properly insulated and air-sealed will provide the most energy savings. In addition to saving money and energy, a properly insulated and sealed home will also be more comfortable and healthy.

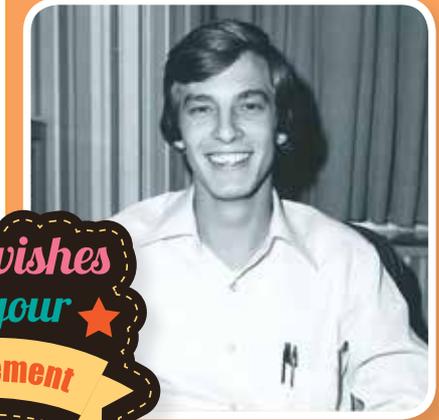
We'll miss you Harry

On October 15, 1975, Clinton County Electric Cooperative hired a guy fresh out of college as the Member Service Power Use Advisor. That guy was Harry Buller and during his tenure at CCECI he worked his way up to Manager of Operations. Through the years, Harry managed to build dynamic relationships with not only CCECI members, but also his co-workers. Harry was able to connect with many members who came into the office, as well as those he met in the field. Being stationed in the office, and working primarily with the linemen, Harry was also able to form strong bonds with both the outside and inside employees of CCECI.

On January 6, 2017, the cooperative will be losing a patriarch, as Harry is retiring. He will take with

him an abundance of knowledge and experience obtained over the past 41 years. Though he has done his best to share his wisdom with those of us left behind, we will never be able to replace the "special little something" Harry has brought to work with him every day for the past 41 years.

Harry did say he will be around every now and then to relive "the good ole days," but outside of that "he'll take retirement one day at a time." We, along with the membership, will miss your friendly, approachable personality, as well as seeing your contagious smile every day. Good Luck in retirement, Harry, from all of your family and friends at Clinton County Electric Cooperative.



Applications are being accepted for 2017 Youth Day and Youth Tour

Clinton County Electric Cooperative will again sponsor up to 12 area sophomores or juniors to attend Youth Day in Springfield to be held on April 5, 2017, sponsored by the cooperative and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Two students will be selected to go to Washington D.C. from June 9-16, 2017 for an all-expense paid tour.

Who may enter?

Youth Day in Springfield and Youth Tour to Washington D.C. are open to high school sophomores and juniors that are children of Clinton County Electric Cooperative members. (Children of Clinton County Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees or employees may attend at their own expense.)

Youth to Springfield

Up to 12 students will participate with more than 125 other youths from other Illinois electric cooperatives in Illinois Rural Electric Youth Day in Springfield set for April 5, 2017. The day's activities in Springfield will include touring the State Capitol complex, visiting with legislators and a luncheon. Transportation to Youth Day in Springfield will be provided by the Cooperative.

Washington tour

Of the 12 students attending Youth Day in Springfield, two will have the opportunity to participate in the Washington D.C. Youth Tour. The two local winners will join about 70 other Illinois students

who are winners of similar contests sponsored by other Illinois electric cooperatives. They will travel on air-conditioned buses, leaving on June 9 and returning June 16. While in Washington D.C., they will visit such attractions as the White House, U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian Institution, Arlington National Cemetery, Lincoln Monument and many other national monuments and places of interest.

Applications are available at www.cceci.com/youthprograms. Completed applications need to be returned to the cooperative office no later than February 24, 2017. Feel free to contact Carrie Trame at Trame@cceci.com with any additional questions.