Clinton County Connection

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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We are your trusted energy advisor!

LET'S TALK

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in more green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying electric bills more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations, in particular. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

AVOID PHONE SCAMS

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at 800-526-7282. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

AVOID SOLAR SCAMS

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade or extended warranty to their solar array. The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call Clinton County Electric Cooperative (CCEC) or the company that installed the solar array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

USE TRUSTED SOURCES

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

CCEC can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, CCEC has a different "bottom line" that is not directly tied to the sale of a product or service. We take a more holistic, objective view of how to achieve energy and cost savings for our members, and that may or may not include rooftop solar.

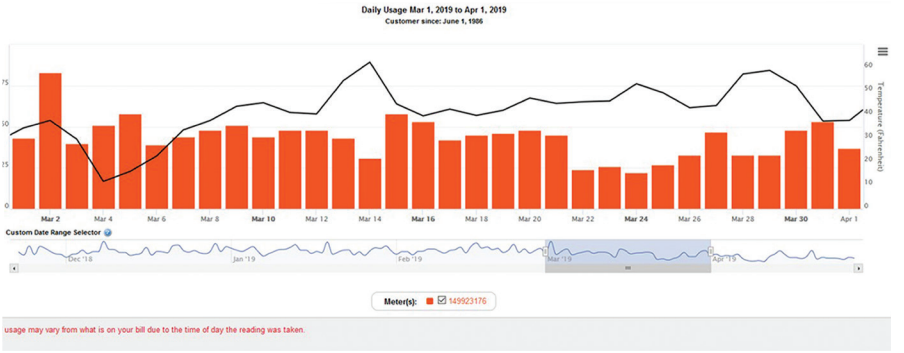
In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor – your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills – we're here to help.

We've improved your usage management tools!

Are you looking to view your usage and weather trends by month or even by day? Go to Clinton County Electric's website, www.cceci.com, log into SmartHub, click start now under the View and Manage My Usage box and select a tool.

The Usage Explorer tool provides a detailed look at your past and present usage all in one place. The Average Usage tool shows your typical or average usage for the selected time period. Finally, the Usage Comparison tool lets you compare two bills of usage history side by side.



Please keep in mind, some of the information can only be viewed from the time the Automated Metering System (AMI) was installed. Clinton County Electric started installing AMI back in August 2018 and finished the project in December 2018.

Do not hesitate to call the office Monday through Friday, between 7 a.m.-4 p.m. at 800-526-7282 with any questions.

Find us on Facebook

Facebook.com/ClintonCountyElectric

I HIT A POWER POLE. NOW WHAT?

We all think it will never happen to us, but it can in an instant.

Drivers veer off the road and run into power poles. Farmers sometimes contact a power line while driving tractors or other machinery. Dump or feed truck drivers raise or lower their bed and snag a power line.

People can become dangerously close or enter electricity's path. Knowing what to do in that situation can save your life. Incidents with power lines or other utility equipment break the electrical current's usual path. This can make the ground, vehicles and other equipment electrified.

If you hit a utility pole, pad-mounted transformer (green box) or other electrical equipment, DO NOT get out of the vehicle. Instead, call 9-1-1 and wait for utility crews to come to de-energize power. Call 9-1-1 in all of these instances:

- Your tractor or car strikes a guy wire (guy wires are the wires staked into the ground that stabilize utility poles). Under normal conditions, the guy wire is neutral, but if the wire is weakened, pulled out of the ground or otherwise damaged, it could become energized.
- You hit a patch of ice and go off the road and hit a utility pole. Or you are in a car accident and one of the vehicles strikes a power pole. Only get out of the car if there is smoke or a fire; otherwise, stay put. If there is a fire, make a clean jump or hop from your car or truck (without touching it), and hop with your feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground at least 30 feet to safety. Think of the downed line sending electrical current across the ground in a ripple-like effect. Each ring of the ripple represents a different voltage. If you step from one ring to another, this is called step potential and it can electrocute you.
- You see an accident that involves a downed power line. DO NOT approach the scene.
- You hit a pad-mounted transformer or other type of electrical box.
- Your vehicle hits a substation.
- You ran off the road, hit a pole and it's dark out, but YOU DON'T KNOW if lines are down.

OTHER SITUATIONS

- You get something stuck in power lines (drone or remote-control device): Do not try to retrieve it.
- You see kids climbing or sitting on pad-mounted transformers: Tell them not to sit or play on it.
- You are carrying a tall ladder or pole: Look up for power line locations and keep at least a 10-foot clearance at all times.
- You see kids climb trees that have power lines above: Warn them not to climb trees near power lines.
- You are using a portable generator: Never plug it into a wall outlet. This can cause backfeeding into the line and kill a lineworker or neighbor.

For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Considering Solar? Call us first!

As interest in "green" energy and ways to save money on utility bills continue to grow, some cooperative members may be considering the installation of a solar array.

Since these types of systems have the capability of returning electricity back to the electric grid, there are some major safety considerations to sort through before a system is installed.

Before deciding to buy a solar array, examine the economics to determine if such a system will lower your monthly electricity costs. If you do decide to install a solar array, contact our office as early as possible in the process.

A CCEC representative will provide information on our interconnection process and policies, as well as answer any questions you may have. That way, you and your installer will have the information needed as you progress with your system.

For more information on CCEC policies and requirements, please contact our office Monday through Friday, between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. at 800-526-7282.

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