Clinton County Connection

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Published by Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. • cceci@cceci.com • www.cceci.com

Safety at Clinton County Electric Cooperative:

Ensuring protection for workers and communities

The electric distribution industry plays a vital role in delivering power to homes, businesses and industries in our community. However, working with electricity is inherently dangerous, and safety is the paramount concern for both lineworkers and the communities they serve. In this article, we explore the key safety protocols, challenges and strategies for ensuring safety at Clinton County Electric Cooperative (CCEC).

Let's begin by examining the risks associated with electric distribution. Electric distribution refers to the process of delivering electrical power from substations to residences and businesses. Lineworkers encounter a variety of potential hazards, including:

- **Electrical shocks and burns:** Contact with live wires or electrical components can cause severe injuries or fatalities.
- **Arc flashes:** Sudden releases of electrical energy can cause dangerous explosions, fires and severe burns.
- **Falls:** Working at heights while installing or maintaining equipment, such as power poles and transformers, poses fall risks.
- **Mechanical hazards:** Equipment like digger derricks, bucket trucks and power tools can cause accidents if not properly maintained or used.
- **Environmental factors:** Working in extreme weather conditions like high winds, thunderstorms or icy conditions can increase the risk of accidents.

Given the risks associated with electricity distribution, strict safety standards and protocols are critical to minimize accidents. Lineworkers are required to wear specialized PPE, such as:

- **Rubber gloves and sleeves** to prevent electric shocks.
- **Arc-rated clothing** that resists burns from arc flashes.
- **Hard hats and safety glasses** to protect against head injuries and flying debris.
- **High-visibility clothing** for visibility during night work or in low-light conditions.

Lineworkers must also be familiar with the Lockout/Tagout safety procedure. It is used to ensure that electrical systems are properly shut off and cannot be inadvertently reenergized during maintenance or repair. Workers use padlocks and tags to prevent accidental activation of equipment.

Regular training is essential for lineworkers. This includes both classroom education and on-the-job training in areas such as:

- **Electrical safety awareness:** Recognizing hazards like exposed wires or faulty equipment.
- **Rescue procedures:** How to respond quickly in case of electrical accidents, including performing CPR or using an AED.
- **Climbing and rigging techniques:** Ensuring workers can safely navigate heights and handle tools and equipment.

Training for the public and first responders is also essential. CCEC has developed a "Live Line" demonstration that helps aid the lineworkers when training the public. The demo helps educate children on how an electric distribution system works and how to handle themselves around electrical equipment and emergencies. It also is used to educate first responders on the risk and proper procedure in the event of an emergency involving our electrical system.

Regular inspections of equipment and infrastructure (such as power lines, transformers and substations) are crucial for identifying potential hazards before they cause an accident. Preventative maintenance helps keep equipment in optimal working condition.

In case of an emergency, quick action can save lives. CCEC has implemented

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Minutes from CCEC's 85th Annual Meeting of Members

The 85th Annual Meeting of Members of the Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the Central Community High School, 7740 Old U.S. Highway 50, Breese, Ill., on Thursday, Aug. 15, 2024.

The meeting was called to order by Tim Hanke, chairman of the Clinton County Electric Cooperative (CCEC) board, at 7:30 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Wiegmann acted as secretary and kept the minutes thereof.

Chairman Hanke reported there was a quorum present.

Robert's Rules of Order governed the meeting.

The invocation was given by President/COO Bob Kroeger.

All present were then asked to stand for the national anthem.

Chairman Hanke then recognized the CCEC Board of Trustees, Advisory Board, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative (AIEC) employees and veterans, along with special guest Southern Illinois Power Cooperative President/CEO Paul Furtak.

Secretary/Treasurer Wiegmann read the official notice of the meeting and informed the members that proof of mailing of the meeting notices and number of members is evidenced by the receipt of mailing from the U.S. Postal Service.

Upon motion by Ron Becker, seconded and a vote taken thereon, the minutes from the 2023 Annual Meeting were approved.

Elections and Credentials Committee Member Vernon Mohesky then conducted the 2024 election. Three trustees were up for reelection, including Rob Gerstenecker, John Becker and Kevin Wiegmann. All candidates ran unopposed and upon motion by Wayland Middendorf, seconded and a vote taken thereon, all three candidates were reelected by acclamation to a 3-year term set to expire in 2027.

Hanke returned to the microphone to give the chairman's report. He started his speech by discussing the co-op's focus on the principle of Education, Training and Information. To embody that principle, CCEC performs live line demonstrations, training at the Kaskaskia College Education Center, and promotes employee and board attendance at different classes and meetings. All information and knowledge the board gains from these other entities is brought back to the boardroom and discussed at the following board meeting. He then said, "For the past 20 years, the per diem or reimbursement for trustees attending monthly meetings and/or classes has been $200 per meeting/class. At the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees on July 29, 2024, the board approved increasing the per diem to $300 effective in January 2025."

Hanke then touched on Concern for Community, mentioning the $69,500 in scholarships that has been awarded to high school seniors and students at K.C. over the last 10 years, as well as the $39,000 in teacher grants awarded to area teachers over the past 10 years.

The chairman's report came to a close with Hanke talking about two big outages that occurred in 2024. The first was the storm over the Memorial Day weekend that left over 3,500 people without power. The second occurred when a transformer blew up in the Boulder substation leaving 300 members without power.

Kevin Wiegmann gave the treasurer's report, stating that the co-op is once again financially sound. He also showed data on revenues, expenses, margins, assets and the effect inflation has on these numbers.

Next, CCEC President/COO Bob Kroeger gave the president's report. He discussed the importance of safety and was proud to report no lost-time accidents have been reported since 2009. He then moved his focus to the reliability of the grid. President Kroeger said, "The latest long-term reliability assessment published by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation determined the region in the middle part of the country is at high risk of energy shortfall under normal conditions." He then went on to explain substantial growth in demand, a changing resource mix, transmission and lack of coordination between the electric industry, regulators and policymakers are all reasons contributing to the possible energy shortfall. He then talked about SIPC and the future of rates, stating, "Looking ahead, the new wholesale rate has paved the way for the SIPC staff to begin working on development and implementation of demand response options. Demand response programs are designed to provide an incentive to encourage members to reduce energy usage or provide SIPC the ability to control member load to reduce demand during peak periods. It's exciting that we're getting closer to being able to offer programs to the membership that put some ability to control energy costs in your hands."

He closed out his portion of the evening by touching on improvements to CCEC's distribution system, as well as the 2024 electric rates and the effect inflation has had on those rates. He then mentioned Democratic Member Control, which gives cooperative members the responsibility to elect a board of trustees to represent them and act on their behalf, and Autonomy and Independence, which recognizes that every cooperative is different, controlled by the members and operated in the best interest of the membership.

Upon motion by Vernon Mohesky, seconded and a vote taken thereon, all reports given by the officers and the president were approved.

The final portion of the meeting was dedicated to recognizing employees and trustees for their years of service: Ahren Lanhauser (20 years), Ralph Kuhl (25 years) and new employees Sam Kuhl and Braden Trame. Chairman Hanke and Trustee Kevin Kampwerth both received awards for 25 years of service.

There being no further business to come before the 85th Annual Meeting of Members of the Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc., upon motion by Myron Johnson, seconded and a vote taken thereon, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Hanke at 8:18 p.m.

After adjournment, four cash prizes were awarded. The winners were Charles and Christine Bauer, $100; James Kalmer, $50; Irishtown Township, $50; and Terrence Tebbe, $50.

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Kevin Wiegmann, Secretary/Treasurer

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Rob Gerstenecker, Chairman

"Safety" continued from 18A

emergency response strategies that include:

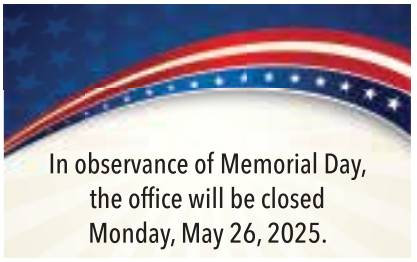
- **Clear communication:** Maintaining contact with lineworkers and emergency teams to assess the situation and coordinate the response.
- **First-aid training:** Ensuring that all employees are trained to respond effectively to electrical injuries as well as general first aid.
- **Disaster response plans:** Preparing line personnel for extreme weather events or natural disasters that could disrupt power distribution.

Safety at Clinton County Electric Cooperative is not just about following regulations. It's about creating a culture of safety. Leaders within organizations must foster an environment where safety is the top priority. That starts by encouraging open communication. Workers should feel comfortable reporting hazards or unsafe conditions without fear of punishment. Employees must also recognize safe practices. Rewarding those employees who consistently follow safety protocols reinforces a culture of safety. Finally, there must be continuous improvement. Companies must regularly evaluate and update safety programs to stay ahead of emerging risks and technologies.

Despite the significant safety measures in place, challenges remain in the electric distribution industry. Many power lines and equipment are outdated, leading to increased risks of malfunctions and accidents, which is why CCEC is continuously working to upgrade the oldest and most outdated infrastructure. CCEC also has to prepare for workforce shortages. As experienced workers retire, there is a need to ensure that new employees receive proper training and support to uphold safety standards. Climate change also must be taken into account. Increasingly severe weather events, such as storms, tornadoes and ice storms, pose new safety challenges for your cooperative.

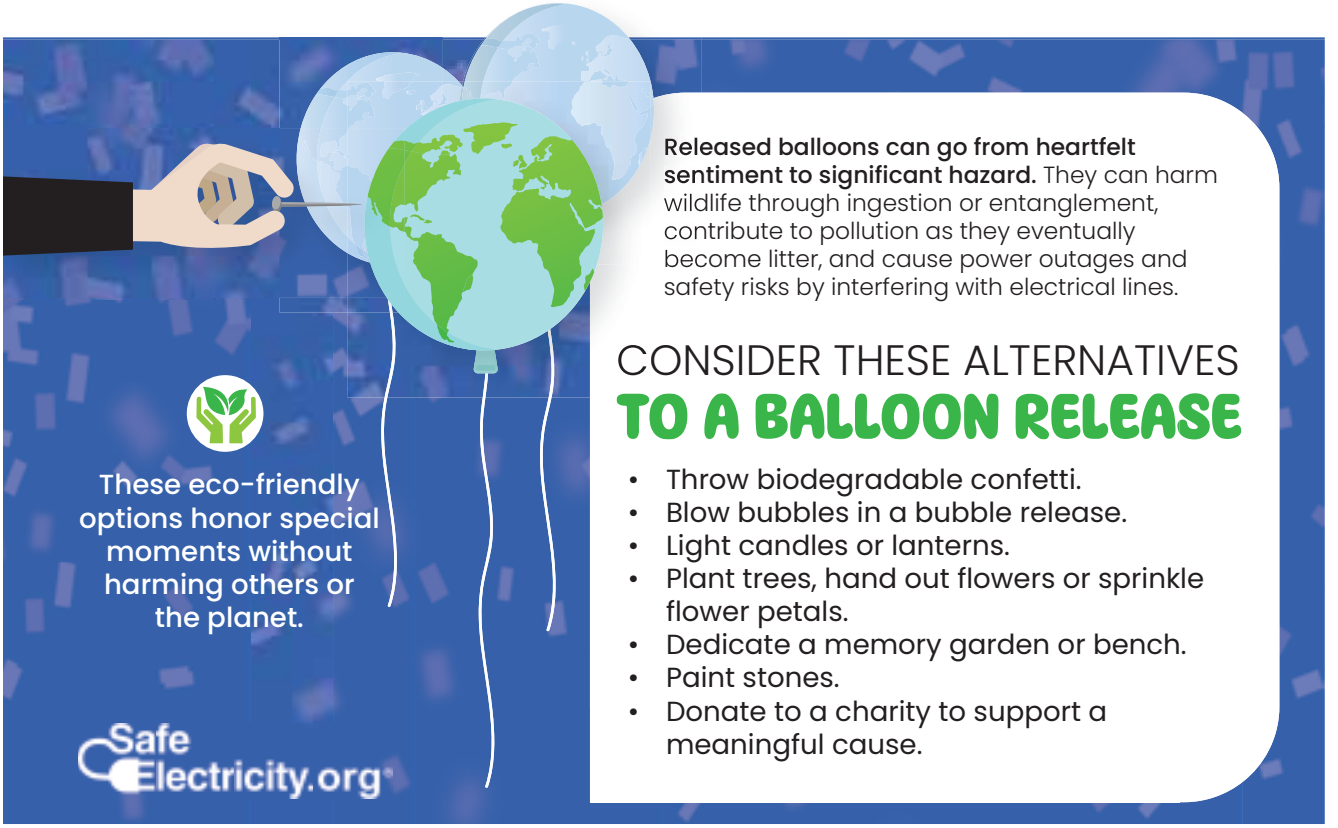
Looking to the future, advancements in automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning could further reduce the risks to workers and improve the efficiency and reliability of the electrical grid.

Safety at CCEC is critical, not only for the protection of lineworkers but also for the communities that count on a reliable power supply. By adhering to strict safety protocols, investing in training and technology, and fostering a culture of safety, the coop can continue to provide essential services while minimizing the risks to human life and infrastructure.



In observance of Memorial Day, the office will be closed Monday, May 26, 2025.

Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. will host the 2025 Annual Meeting of the membership on Thursday, Aug. 21, 2025. The nomination procedure for those interested in running for a spot on the board is published on page 18D.



Bylaws specify nomination procedure

Section 4.06. Nominations. It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to appoint, more than ninety (90) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which Board trustees are to be elected, a committee on election and credentials consisting of not less than five (5) nor more than nine (9) members with at least one (1) member from each district from which a trustee is to be elected. No employee, trustee, Officer, known candidate, or close relative (as hereinafter defined) of any of the above may serve on such committee. The purpose of the committee is to review the qualifications of petitioning nominees and to conduct the election of trustees. To be nominated by petition, a candidate for trustee must file a petition for nomination signed by at least twenty-five (25) members, but not more than fifty (50) members. Signatures may come from the entire Cooperative membership. A joint membership constitutes only one member. Nominations by petition must be picked up and filed not more than ninety (90) days or less than forty-five (45) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which trustees are to be elected. The Election and Credentials Committee, or subcommittee of same must meet to determine if the candidates meet the qualifications for trustee. Upon establishment of the fact that a nominee for trustee lacks eligibility under these Bylaws, it shall be the duty of the Election and Credentials Committee to disqualify such nominee. If there are no nominations by Petition for trustee in any district in which a trustee is to be elected, it is the duty of the Board of trustees to appoint a member to serve in that position. At least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting of members, the Election and Credentials Committee shall certify a list of nominees for trustee to the secretary. The secretary shall then post at the principal office of the Cooperative, at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting of members, a list of the nominations for trustee to be elected, listing separately the nominee(s) for each trustee district. The secretary shall also be responsible for mailing, with the Notice of Meeting or separately, but at least five (5) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Board members to be elected and the names and addresses of the nominees. No nominations may be made from the floor. Nominees' names from the same district may be rotated on the ballot so that each nominee's name is on the ballot in the same position as equal number of times as possible. Notwithstanding anything in this section contained, failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any election of trustee. The Election and Credentials Committee shall elect its own chairman and secretary at its initial meeting. It shall be the responsibility of the committee to establish or approve the manner of conducting any ballot or other voting, to pass upon all questions that may arise with respect to registration of members in person, to count all ballots or other votes cast in any election or in any other manner, to rule upon the effect of any ballots or other votes irregularly or indecisively marked or cast, to rule upon all questions that may arise relating to member voting in the election of trustees and to pass upon any protest filed with respect to election or to conduct affecting the result of the election. In exercising the responsibility, the committee shall have available to it the advice of counsel provided by the Cooperative. In the event a protest or objection is filed concerning any election, such protest or objection must be filed not more than three (3) business days following the adjournment of the meeting in which the voting is conducted. The committee shall thereupon be reconvened, upon notice from its chairman, not less than seven (7) days after such protest or objection is filed. The committee shall hear such evidence as is presented by the protestor(s) or objector(s), who may be heard in person, by counsel, or both, and any opposing evidence; and the committee, by a vote of a majority of those present and voting, shall, within a reasonable time but not later than thirty (30) days after such hearing, render its decision, the result of which may be to affirm the election, to change the outcome thereof, or to set aside. The committee's decision (as reflected by a majority of those actually present and voting) on all matters covered by this Section shall be final. The committee may not affirmatively act on any matter unless a majority of the committee is present.

For a list of Election and Credentials Committee members, date of meeting, a petition or any other information concerning the nominations procedure, please contact: Bob Kroeger, President, Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc., 475 N. Main Street, Breese, IL 62230, (618) 526-7282.