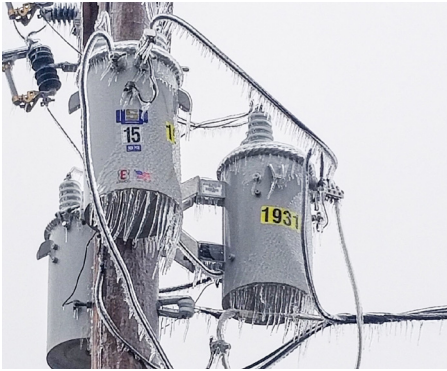


New Year's Day ice storm



The new year brought with it the most significant icing event we have seen in quite a while. Freezing rain and sleet began to settle on lines and trees Friday, bringing approximately 2,000 outages that day, which our crews worked hard to restore. Outages continued into Saturday, and snowfall that evening brought another approximate 2,000 outages on Sunday. Crews continued restoration throughout the weekend before outages began again on Monday as melting ice and snow caused problems. All in all, about 5,000 members were impacted across these four days, those members having an average outage time of 1.5 hours.

We are thankful for our dedicated operations crews and their safety during restoration. Things could have certainly been worse, if not for our vegetation management program. Post storm

data indicates a heavy concentration of outages in areas that have not recently been trimmed. In fact, 62 percent of the outages were caused by tree limbs weighed down by ice and snow into our lines and equipment. The good news is those areas most affected are either being trimmed now or are scheduled soon.

Another 6 percent of outages was due to loss of transmission to our substations and additional causes were due to icing on equipment and lines that were not tree related. Tree trimming of our right-of-way corridors is within our control and this storm magnified for us the importance of our vegetation management program.

Wondering how the melting ice Monday caused outages? Ice and snow on lines and tree limbs weigh hundreds of pounds. It melted off our lines due

to the inherent heat of the conductor before it melted off tree limbs. When this occurs, the heavy sagging lines “snap” back up into sagging limbs. This conductor to tree contact creates outages.

As always, we want to thank all our members for your patience during the storm. Many of you sent messages via phone, email or on Facebook like these below expressing wishes for our crews’ safety and thanks for a job well. We were encouraged by each and every one!

“Thank you to all that braved the elements so we could be safe and warm. God bless you all,” Debbie Dailey. *“I was never worried because Menard Electric has an awesome crew!”* Debra Singer. *“Thank you for restoring our power in great time! We appreciate our linemen and the Menard electric team!”* Teresa Thompson.

New employee

Join us in welcoming Victoria Kennedy as Director of Accounting & Finance. Victoria previously worked at ICG Illinois LLC in Williamsville as Business Manager/Controller. She was with the mine 15 years.

Victoria is a Certified Public Accountant and has earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting and an MBA from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign along with a Master of Accounting from

University of Illinois Springfield.

She says, “I’ve had an opportunity to work with the staff at Menard Electric through my former employment and I have followed the activities of the co-op through articles in this publication. I appreciate the unique structure and not-for-profit objectives of a member-owned cooperative and I look forward to helping Menard Electric meet the needs of its members.”



Words on the Wire

We're Listening...

"Why was my power out in 2020?"



Alisha Anker
General Manager

Determining the cause of an outage can be as simple as looking out a window, sometimes. Other times, clear blue skies leave our members stumped as to why the power would be out and whether they are the only ones impacted. System-

wide, members experienced 28,300 consumer-hours of service interruptions last year. This total is much lower than 2019, down almost 50 percent. The hours equate statistically to 3.2 outage hours per member-consumer during the year – some longer, some shorter, and some having no impact whatsoever.

What caused all those outages? The 2020 data indicates a fairly well-balanced distribution of reasons, which some could say is positive. Positive, in that no one cause is or was detrimental to the system. Let's once again break it down in summary by category.

19% Power supplier (aka transmission)

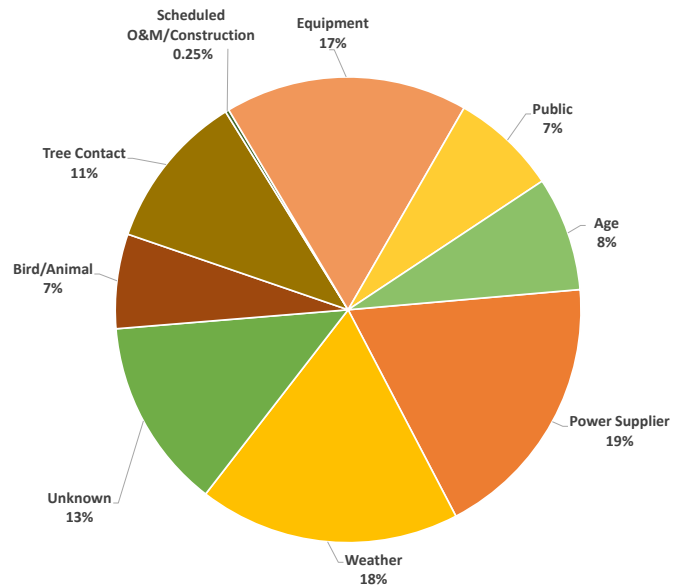
Despite taking first place as the leading percent cause of outage hours during 2020, this category is actually down over 5,000 hours (50 percent) from 2019. Power Supplier outages occur when Prairie Power or Ameren IL lose a transmission line serving one of our substations, or when equipment failure occurs within the substation. Remember, Menard Electric Co-op does not own its substations, we rely on Prairie Power to deliver power to the distribution system where the Co-op takes control to deliver power to and along each circuit. When a substation is outaged, the members served from that sub experience an outage. During some Power Supplier

outages, we are able to backfeed from another substation to restore power to members, however not always, causing this cause to be so frustrating as it's largely out of our control.

18% Weather

Down from last year by one-half, yet still taking second place as the leading cause of outage hours, Weather events caused 91 actual outages. In hard

to almost twice the number of outage consumer-hours in 2020 as compared to 2019 and shows a leading upward indicator. Generally, wear-and-tear of our electrical infrastructure (not related to Weather) can be expected to contribute to outage hours, however this trend is troublesome. The data merits further investigation, so please look forward to a follow-up as we dig deeper to reveal the determinants.



numbers of hours, Weather-related outages accounted for 5,200 consumer-hours of power disruption, which I mention because this compares to 10,840 consumer-hours during 2019. While our poles, wire and electrical facilities were built to withstand the harshness Mother Nature can bring, service disruptions due to lightning, high winds, ice & rain, and other environmental extremes are an unfortunate consequence of the electric industry.

17% Equipment failure

The one cause for concern in 2020 is Equipment Failure – this cause led

13% Unknown

Entering the cause of each outage is required before a Lineman can close an outage ticket, and a fair amount of diligence is taken to report accurately. However, many times the Linemen are simply left questioning the root cause of a power interruption. I call these the Gremlins – tough to describe as they become the buffet from which conspiracy theorists prefer to dine. Believe it or not, these remain a mystery.

11% Tree contact (aka vegetation)

Down overwhelmingly from years past, finally, outage-hours due to Tree

Contacts with our power lines loses its crown as 1st place leader, now a mere glimmer of a cause for 2020 consumer-outage hours. The Co-op prides itself in its diligent right-of-way clearing, spraying and vegetation management program. While not a popular program, the numbers are beginning to finally show value. A bit of a roller coaster, looking back, during 2020 the number of consumer-hours due to Trees was only 3,100, compared to over 15,500 hours in 2019, and going back to 2018 Trees caused 5,900 outage hours. I'll step off the soapbox this year and simply say Thank Goodness and ask that when trimmers are in your neighborhoods, please help us to create an electric system for which the Tree Contact cause continues to decline.

8% Age

Uncoupled from the Equipment causes this year, Age sneaks in as a solo category with 8 percent of the consumer outage hours. The actual number of hours

year over year is very much the same – right around 2,000, yet due to the high concentration of Equipment concerns mentioned above, it's best to distinguish that Age does impact us all, including the electric system and its components.

7% Public & member accidents

In keeping with the reduction trends since last year, down considerably were outages resulting from vehicles, farm machinery, and other equipment making contact with our electric lines. The number of consumer-hours was reduced by 60 percent to be exact, which is good news since these contacts can be not only detrimental to the electric system but also to the equipment and/or its operator. Please be alert when navigating near power lines and always remember to Look Up!

7% Animals

While coming in near last as a leading percent cause of outage hours, sadly the actual numbers of Animals lost to us

due to contact with power equipment increased more than twofold when compared to 2019. We all know critters like to roost, climb, and snoop around our electric poles and transformers. They welcome the warmth of energized equipment, and are naïve to the dangers while foraging for food and safety. We continue to install shields and guards to protect certain devices, but unfortunately too many too soon met their maker.

0.25% Scheduled construction & maintenance

Finally, during a very small number of hours last year (~70), members were without power for the sake of scheduled construction and maintenance. We do our best to alert members ahead of time of these events so that the impact to your daily lives is not further disrupted. This cause does come with our sincere apologies and we do appreciate your patience while our crews work safely to make needed repairs.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is conducting a member segmentation survey early February. You may be contacted, and we would appreciate your participation. The results will give us information to help us develop programs that will be best benefit our members and help us plan future communication efforts.

Apply Now! College Scholarships

Scholarships

- One \$1,000 scholarship to a 4-year college or university
- One \$500 scholarship to a 2-year community college
- One \$500 scholarship to an accredited technical school

Who Can Apply:

Applicants must be a high school senior or equivalent, graduating during 2021.

Applicant's parent/legal guardian must be a Menard Electric Cooperative member with their primary residence or business served by the cooperative.

Additional details are provided with the application form.

Please note: In previous years one winner was also given a trip on the Youth to Washington Tour to Washington, D.C. That trip has been canceled for 2021.

**Apply at menard.com/scholarships
Deadline for applications is March 1, 2021**

Board highlights

For full minutes visit menard.com or contact the office.

November 24, 2020

- All Directors present in person or remotely; also Manager Anker, Attorney Smith & Manager of Accounting & Information Services Chris Hinton.
- Approved 2021 Budget as presented.
- Approve 2020 & 2021 Prairie Power Revenue Deferral Plans to include: re-deferral for 2020 of all deferred revenue from prior years utilized this year, to pay 2.5 mills/kwh instead of 5.0 mills/kwh for 2020 power purchases; full waiver of deferral plan for 2021 to pay 0.0 mills/kwh for all 2021 power purchases.
- Anker reviewed monthly & YTD financial operating report, balance sheet & financial trends. Operating margins YTD as of 10/31 were \$3,352,042 compared to \$2,995,610 last year; equity at 42.78%; 12-mo TIER 3.08 & DSC 1.87.
- Reviewed Member Svs report w/694 past due notices sent, generating 223 cut off tickets & \$3,695.61 in write-offs. Operations report w/70 incidents affecting 484 members total & included three incidents of farm equipment contact. Safety report no illness or injuries. Reviewed 2020 energy efficiency & irrigation rebates issued.
- Approved new program that would enable electric service held by residential tenants to revert to landlord (owners) membership upon disconnection of service due to relocation.
- Approved resolution to increase 2020 capital credit allocation by \$10,000 to cover remaining 2020 estates.
- Dennis Ryan appointed delegate & Anker alternate delegate to RSI/ICWCG Annual Meeting.
- Next Board Mtg 12/22/20.



Ross Cloninger,
Forester/Field Technician

Strawberry Valentine Chex Mix

- 6 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 12-oz. white chocolate chips
- 1/2 teaspoon shortening, optional
- 2 drops red food coloring
- 1 box Strawberry Creme Jell-O Instant Pudding (not gelatin)
- Valentine M&M's and/or sprinkles, optional

Pour chocolate into a small glass dish. Add shortening to help coat the cereal easier. Microwave 1 minute 20 seconds. Let sit in microwave 3 minutes. Remove and gently stir. If chocolate loses its shape and looks smooth, it's done. If not, microwave in 15 second increments, letting sit 2-3 minutes each time, until smooth. Add 4 tablespoons of pudding and stir gently until smooth. Add food coloring if desired. Pour chocolate over cereal and stir gently to coat. Transfer to wax paper. Sprinkle with M&M's and sprinkles, if desired. Let cool to set. Break into pieces and store in airtight container.

Ross says, "My mom would make this and always hide it when I came over because she knew I would end up eating all of it." Find original recipe with tips at <https://butterwithasideofbread.com/strawberry-valentine-chex-mix>

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source:
www.energy.gov



Access Your Menard Electric Cooperative Account **ONLINE**



View your bill

Receive an email when a bill is ready to view, typically by the 7th of each month.

Pay by credit/debit card or an e-check

Make or schedule payments and receive payment confirmations.

Choose paperless billing

Reduce clutter if you do not require a paper bill.

See billing and usage history

This is a great help if you need the information for taxes.

Register your account today through our MyMEC App or at menard.com

You may already have our MyMEC App on your phone for outage reporting. Simply choose Payments at the bottom of the screen to visit the payment portal. Need to download the app? Visit your Google Play or iOS store and search for MyMEC or Menard Outage.

