

## Planning for the future



**Alisha Anker**  
General Manager

As we begin to wind down our summer and prepare budgets for the New Year, I'd like to share the goals set by your co-op's Board of Directors during a strategic planning session held earlier this spring.

Members of the board, along with management, met for a full day in late March to think strategically about the co-op's future. In large part, the purpose of the session was to attain consensus on focused goals for the co-op to achieve over the next two to three years.

The session was facilitated by representatives from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUCFC), a financial lending and business services organization of which Menard Electric is a member. "Establishing a plan which proactively prepares for multiple scenarios while establishing a sense of direction are key benefits to engaging a Board for strategic planning. The strategic planning team at NRUCFC was proud to help make Menard Electric's session a success," commented Brian Stagen, Regional Vice President.

The strategic goals for focus over these years are designed to be worked on concurrently and are in different stages of development at this time. Here are descriptions in no particular priority order:

- A goal to improve our rate structures to better serve our future needs includes consolidating the large number of rates used in billing our members, while maintaining alignment amongst those in similar

member classes. It will involve the development of new rate structures to accommodate the trend towards beneficial electrification and other dynamic segments in our industry. This goal must incorporate synchronizing our rates with power supplier costs, electricity-use incentives, energy efficiency initiatives, load control programs and the operations of our key accounts.

- Implementing an electric vehicle (EV) program is another goal. This could include developing member education and engagement tools, utilizing in-home EV charging devices, incorporating time-of-use rates and load control measures, and purchasing an EV for the co-op and community. We are hearing from members on this topic and appreciate the patience of those early adopters as EV and plug-in hybrid auto sales continue to increase.
- Another goal crafts a plan focused on using cooperative-owned renewable resources to supplement our power supply purchases. It also includes member education on benefits and drawbacks of renewables, operational impacts of renewable saturation throughout parts of our system, and any financial impacts which may transpire.
- Next, we will evaluate participation in the Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant programs made possible by the USDA. On the surface, this program provides funding in the form of zero-interest loans for certain rural projects and businesses through the co-op's access to these governmental

funds. However, putting the pieces together takes a great deal of due diligence, research and structuring, which begins with educating ourselves and the public prior to assessing community and member interest.

- The development of a Technology Roadmap, inclusive of the many facets in our business which utilize a software package, is another goal. It goes without saying that our personnel are our largest and most valued asset, however the world we live and operate in today necessitates partnering well with technology. We will be thoroughly evaluating our resources to ensure we are extracting the most benefit from our vendor relationships.
- A final item involves continuing our focus to improve (lower) the system line loss factor. This goal was set in our 2018 Strategic Plan while losses were exceeding 10 percent, and at that time included a 10–20 year mitigation horizon. Great strides have been made in the short-term, including a 1.25 percent reduction; however, this burden is in large part a consequence of components utilized to originally build the system we now operate. Continued reduction methods will be incorporated into future work plans and upgrade projects. The average line loss among co-op systems in our area is 6.25 percent.

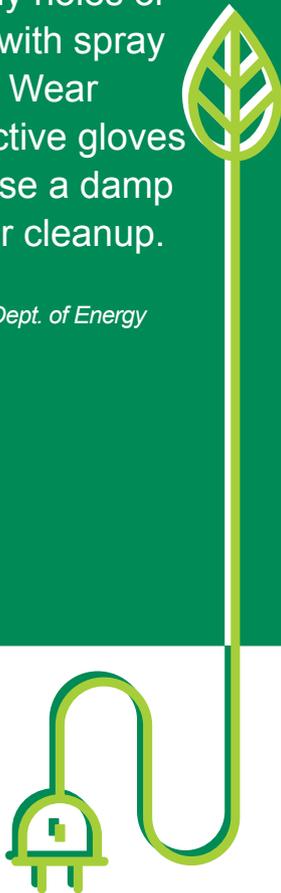
Stay tuned and look for updates on each of these strategic areas of focus as we progress. We welcome your input or any questions you may have. Until next time...

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

An easy way to save energy is to seal air leaks and holes where plumbing pipes run through walls in your home. You can also check wall-mounted cabinets for plumbing holes or air gaps in the back.

Fill any holes or gaps with spray foam. Wear protective gloves and use a damp rag for cleanup.

Source: Dept. of Energy



## Join Us

### Annual Meeting is Thursday, August 4, 2022 at PORTA High School

#### 4:30-6:30 Registration

Receive an attendance gift and be entered to win bill credits.

#### 4:30-6:45 Grilled Pork Chop Dinner

by Mason County Pork Producers

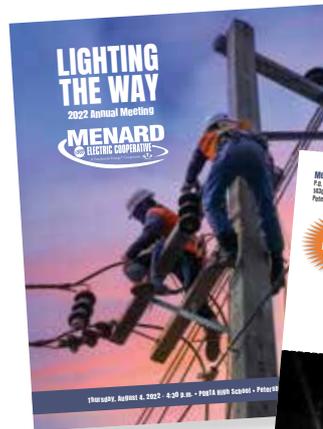
#### 7:00 Business Meeting

Hear from co-op leaders and conduct business of the co-op.

#### 7:45 Drawing for Bill Credits

From names of members registered at the meeting; do not need to be present to win

*Bring the Registration Card from your Official Notice for quick and easy registration!*



## 8/11 is National Safe Digging Day



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

**Call 8-1-1** If any landscaping projects will involve digging remember to always call JULIE at 811 or visit [illinois1call.com](http://illinois1call.com) two to three days in advance so that all underground utility lines can be marked.

## “How may we help you?”

### Some information regarding our round-the-clock phone member services

#### Around the Clock Service

When you make a call to us at 217-632-7746 or 800-872-1203 during our regular hours of 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri our office employees will answer the call. If calls are too numerous for our phone lines to handle or a call is made after hours, Cooperative Response Center (CRC) personnel will answer. CRC is a nationwide 24/7 contact center for electric co-op utilities that allows you to call in outages and payments anytime; you can also report other issues at your convenience for CRC to relay to our staff to handle the next morning.

#### Identification for Account Access

The fastest and easiest way to gain access to account balance information is to provide the account number, found on the top right corner of your bill. Without the account number you will be asked to provide other identifying information. This is part of our Member Identity Protection Policy to keep your account information secure. Please note that for your protection CRC is restricted from accessing all your member information.

This policy has frustrated callers who sought an account balance over the phone but could not provide proper

identification. We understand this can be aggravating to callers who have only the best of intentions, such as paying a bill for a family member or friend. As much as we would like to assist, we must follow policy to protect our membership.

Members may call us during regular office hours to give permission for a specific individual to have access to an account, or to provide power of attorney information. However, this type of exception information is available only to employees during normal office hours.

#### Service Reconnections

Members who have been disconnected due to non-pay may call in anytime to make the required payment to be reconnected. Please note that per policy our linemen are not dispatched after 9 p.m. to reconnect services that were disconnected due to non-payment.

#### Abusive Language

Unfortunately, it is required that we implement a protocol for our office employees and CRC personnel to disconnect from abusive calls. Our employees and CRC personnel want



to help. They are not required to listen to threatening, foul or abusive language. Personnel are aware that emotions can run high and will give any caller three warnings to stop speaking in the abusive manner before the call is disconnected.

#### A note about outage calls

Our dedicated linemen are on-call 24/7 to handle emergencies and restore power outages caused by storms and other issues. Providing your account number is the easiest way for personnel to locate your service; you can also provide a service location and member name. If you have additional information regarding the outage, such as hearing a loud noise or seeing damage, provide that information also. You may also report outages through our MyMEC app or at [menard.com/outage-center](http://menard.com/outage-center).

## Keep Our Poles Clear

Utility poles are not bulletin boards or support for satellite dishes and bird houses. These obstacles create a dangerous environment for line workers. Linemen climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night, in the worst of conditions. Anything attached to utility poles can create serious hazards for our line personnel.

Do not attach items to utility poles. Also, please do not plant bushes or flowers, or place objects around, the base of poles.



Image courtesy of Butler Rural Electric Cooperative

# Board highlights

May 24, 2022

- All Directors present; also General Manager Alisha Anker & Operations Manager Dalton Whitley.
- Whitley reviewed bids for mechanic's building; board approved purchase agreement w/FBI Buildings.
- Entered into executive session; reconvened; approved all actions taken.
- Approved revisions to Net Metering Policy & Interconnection of and Service to Qualifying Facilities Under PURPA Policy. Revisions were supported by amended provisions in PPI policies.
- Resolution adopted to participate in U.S. Bank One Card credit purchase program through membership w/ NRUCFC to diversify credit risk for employee purchases.
- Anker reviewed monthly & YTD financial

For full minutes visit [menard.com](http://menard.com) or contact the office.

- operating report, balance sheet & financial trends. Operating margins YTD as of 4/30 were \$1,087,241 compared to \$552,851 last year; equity at 45.12%; 12-mo TIER 3.83 & DSC 2.07. Advised RUS loan advance requested of \$3.4 million for work plan projects completed Aug 2021-Mar 2022.
- Anker reviewed operations report w/72 incidents; longest duration outage 486 min affecting 1 member due to bad transformer; largest # affected by single outage 208 due to bad insulator on Bishop 100 circuit.
- Advised monthly safety mtg consisted of job-site crew visits.
- Reported on new irrigation systems construction & 2 load control events.
- Next mtg 6/28/22.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

*We can provide you with helpful information regarding your electric usage and our policies before you meet with a solar installer.*

Contact us at [info@menard.com](mailto:info@menard.com) or 800-872-1203 and visit [menard.com/distributedgeneration](http://menard.com/distributedgeneration).

## KiloWatt Korner



The age-old adage “It’s not the heat, it’s the humidity” is proving accurate this summer season. With record high “feels like” temps being regularly reported, we took this month to meter a few portable dehumidifiers we use in our garage and living spaces to improve comfort.

The first unit we tested is a SoleusAir 3-speed model which removes up to 70 pints (8.75 gals) of moisture from the air per day. We set the fan speed on Medium for the test month, manually emptied the bucket (onto plants, bushes & trees) and programmed the unit to achieve 60 percent relative humidity in the attached garage. Power usage from the device ranged from a high of 580 watts/hr to as little as 2 watts/hr. The high end reflects the energy consumed while the unit drew in moist air and refrigerated (condensed) it into the dispelled water. Once the desired humidistat level was achieved, the unit’s LED display and programming mode drew minimal energy. For the entire month, this model consumed

a total of 105,120 watt-hours costing us approximately \$13.

Meanwhile, in the laundry room within the living space we tested a portable 2-speed Pelonis PAD20C1 dehumidifier which removes 22 pints of moisture per day. To this unit, we connected an optional hose dispensing into the washing machine wastewater drain for continuous operation to obtain a desired 55 percent relative humidity level. This unit averaged 150-160 watts/hr in normal mode, increasing by only 5-10 watts/hr when in “turbo” mode. By comparison, we like this unit much better due to its increased efficiency and quieter operation. This unit is EnergyStar rated with an integrated energy factor (IEF) of 1.7L/kWh, meaning for every 3.6 pints of moisture removed (converting from liters), 1.0 kilowatt-hr of energy is used. Across the month, this model consumed just 49,300 watt-hours, costing us \$6.10 for the benefit of improved comfort and more-productive air-conditioning.

**Korner Recommendation:** Consider adding a dehumidifier to beat the sultry days of summer this year!



# ~~Back to School~~

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Take one thing off your plate when you sign up to pay your bill automatically.

## YOU CHOOSE

a Preferred Payment Method: Credit Card, Debit Card, Bank Account.

## YOU CHOOSE

a Monthly Payment Date: 10th, 17th, 24th

Visit [menard.com/ways-to-pay](http://menard.com/ways-to-pay) to download the form.

## NO MORE PAPER!

Back to School also means more papers to review, sign, return and file.

Don't require a paper bill from us?

Choose Paperless Billing and view your bill online.

Sign up through our online bill payment site at [menard.com](http://menard.com).

