

*Words on the Wire*  
*And the feedback says....*



**Alisha Anker**  
General Manager

At the onset of the season, I summarized the overall results of Menard Electric's member satisfaction survey conducted about a year ago. A renewed *thanks* to the more than 550 randomly-selected members who graciously scored the cooperative

on a wide range of factors.

Over 25 percent of those surveyed took the time to provide written comments, which is quite impressive. As a person who receives a litany of requests for survey input, I must admit it's a rare instance that I offer more than the obligatory "Rank this 1 to 10" response. However, I've found when I do expand on a greatly negative or positive experience, the company notices. Let me state with certainty, your Co-op noticed. So, best I can here in short, let's talk feedback comments.

In keeping with the safe way to jump a car battery, let's connect the positive cable first. Nearly half of the comments made provided positive feedback. To those who called out employees by name as exceptional, their egos salute you. To the member whose security light was fixed the next day, you're welcome and please continue loving those recipes. To the member on oxygen...Yes, we are going above and beyond during an outage to see your power is restored. To all

the longevity members who commented on the great strides made over the past 15-plus years to 40-plus years, we will keep up the good work. To those using our online bill pay site, glad you found the convenience you were looking for, we continue to improve its features. To those who've had payment arrangements work for them successfully, you are very welcome; we understand the need to be flexible during trying times. Finally, to the member who "does not want Ameren," we appreciate the vote of confidence. A long, long time ago men around a map table drew lines that dictate to this day which electricity provider is responsible for distributing power to your homes, farms and businesses. We here at Menard Electric are doing all we can to live up to that responsibility and your expectations.

Some comments were neither positive nor negative, so I'll offer in response... Menard Electric *does* have a leveled

payment offering, two actually, please see Be BudgetWise on page 20d or call the office to learn more. The online bill payment portal *will* retain your payment card info for future use; I use this feature each month myself. See instructions on page 20C. Windmills in the area are *not* being sited by the co-op, rather independent developers are responsible for their locations and interconnections. These turbines, by the way, do not directly impact your electricity rates. For those members interested in installing solar at the service location, please, please contact myself or an engineer at the office to discuss. We'd be more than happy to explain your options, run a preliminary analysis of your bill with solar or meet to review our policies on operating generation in parallel with the co-op system.

Finally, as Mom always said, not all that glitters is gold. The negative comments were mostly related to high rate

Continued on page 20B ►

**Going the Extra Mile**

Electric cooperatives maintain more miles of power lines per consumer than other types of electric utilities. Even though they serve fewer consumers and acquire less revenue, electric co-ops always go the extra mile to power the communities they serve.



**Menard Electric Co-op**



Consumers served per mile: **4.4**  
Revenue: **\$11,500**

**Other Electric Utilities**



Consumers served per mile: **32**  
Revenue: **\$79,000**

Sources: EIA, 2017 data. Includes revenue and consumer averages per mile of line.

**“Feedback” continued from page 20A**

concerns, with a sampling of poor outage and tree-trimming experiences. To the latter, we do apologize. These two aspects of our business are uniquely intertwined. For each of the tree and woody vegetation contacts with our lines, service interruptions and blinks are more likely to occur. Yet, trimming trees and properly maintaining the right-of-way for co-op facilities is not popular. We have taken strides to increase the oversight of the contractor crews that mechanically clear and, as a follow-up, apply herbicides. They are firmly aware of our mission to work cooperatively with our members who are impacted by right-of-way clearing.

To the comments on rates and the monthly facility charge, please know that balancing the impact of fixed expenses to a revenue recovery based largely on a variable component is a common struggle for electric utilities, especially not-for-profit cooperatives. Each co-op is unique, each utility is unique, and as such developing a rate design that reflects the goals and objectives set by the board is important.

During Strategic Planning last year, the board remained consistent to its obligation to ensure the Co-op retains a strong financial position. A detailed rate study is now underway to ensure our rate structure aligns with the co-op’s future goals and objectives. Comparing us to Ameren is largely unfair due to the very nature of our consumer density. As you can see in the image on the previous page, at just 4.4 members per mile of line, and much less revenue per consumer, we are already at a disadvantage when compared to utilities like Ameren. We do our best to efficiently manage our resources, cut costs where possible and do more with less to provide you with safe, efficient, reliable service.

Again, *thanks* to all who participated and provided feedback. We find these comments especially helpful in our efforts to apply needed improvements and meet member expectations. We will continue to work hard and serve you better. Till next time...

## Can I pay my bill online?

Yes, it’s easy. Just visit our website [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) and click Pay Online or access through our MyMEC App.

### How do I register?

Click on the Register link. A screen will pop up asking for your account number, email address and last four of your social security number. Hit submit and an email will be sent. Once you receive the email, click on the link to finish setting up your password and security question. You can now log in to view account details and pay online. You will also receive an email each month notifying you when your bill is ready to view.



#### Registration FAQ:

##### What if I did not get an email?

If you did not receive the registration email with link to establish your password, please check your spam/junk folder. If you still do not find the email, please call the office and we will resend it.

##### I’m trying to login and it says the user name or password are incorrect.

Be sure you have completed your registration by accessing the email that was sent to you and clicking the link to set up a password. Also, doublecheck you are typing in your user name and password correctly.

##### It says my account number/social security number digits are not valid.

The social security number must match the member’s number we have on file. Call us to ensure we have the correct number.

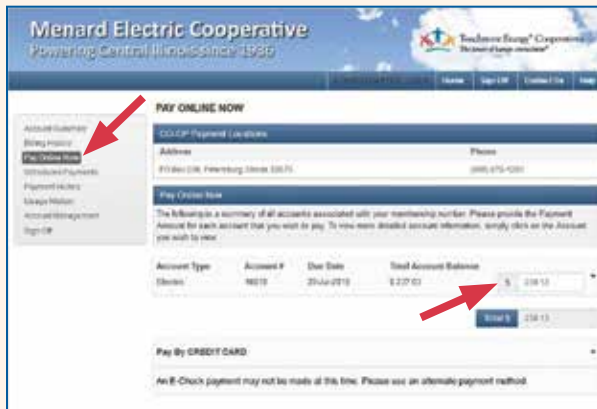
##### I’ve clicked “forgot your password” but don’t get a response.

Check your spam/junk folder for an email to reset your password. Call our office and we can send you a reset email.

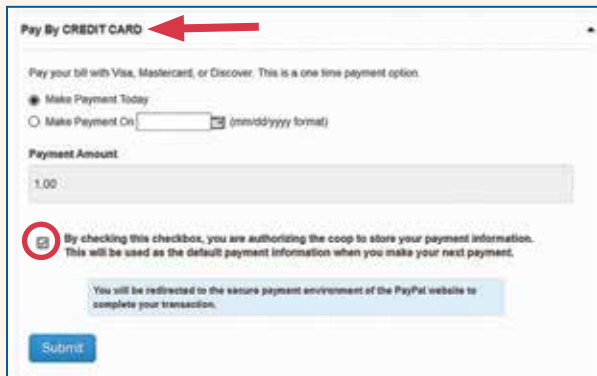


## How do I pay online?

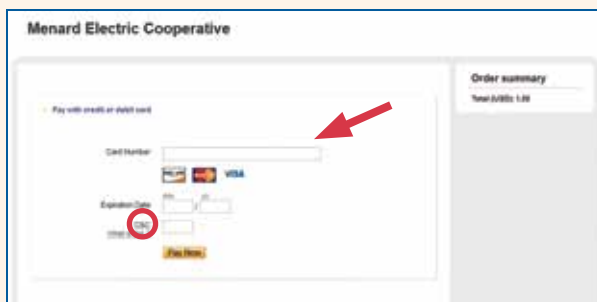
Once logged in to your account, click on Pay Online Now, and enter the amount you are going to pay.



Click on Pay by CREDIT CARD. Check the box if you wish to save your card information.



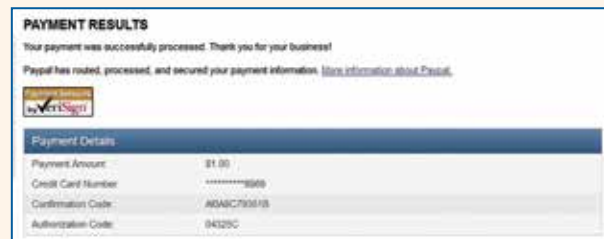
Fill in your credit/debit card information. Please note that CSC is the CVV number located near the signature line on the back of your card.



If you checked the box to save your payment information, paying next time is even easier.



Once you've processed your payment, you'll see an authorization. If the payment does not go through you will see a Payment Declined screen.



### Online Payment FAQ:

#### How do I pay multiple accounts?

A drop-down menu exists on the home screen to choose the account you want to view. All accounts will appear on the Pay Online Now screen. You can pay accounts separately or as one transaction.

#### Do I have to pay the exact balance due?

No. You can enter the amount you want to pay in the amount field for each account.

#### Can I schedule a recurring payment?

No. At this time, you can schedule a payment before the due date later in the month, but you must log on each month to schedule or make a payment.

#### What else can I do online?

Through the Online Pay portal, you can also view your billing and payment history, electric usage history and manage your online account (update email address and password).

# Board highlights

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

June 25, 2019

- Present were Directors D. Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Gary Holloway, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick & Steven Wornier; Manager Alisha Anker & Attorney Charles Smith. Directors Gary Martin, Jodine Tate & Dennis Ryan absent.
- Frye: Discussed proposed meeting dates for July 2019-June 2020. Dates, as amended, approved.
- Frye: Reviewed Committee appointments; approved.
- Anker: Discussed proposed area service agreement approved by Village of Riverton. Board approved agreement; authorized Anker to execute joint petition for hearing with Illinois Commerce Commission.
- Anker: Reviewed operating statement, balance sheet, budget, long term debt maturity dates/rates; ICG Illinois LLC amended payment process; rebate summary; members services report & past due notices, cut-off tickets & write-offs; operations & reliability report.
- Anker: Reviewed annual meeting; over 800 meals served, 405 registered members, 102 proxies approved, 128 votes for Freda Habermehl & 163 votes for Gary Holloway.
- Board tabled decision on CoBank Sharing Success Program recipients.
- Board approved Anker as delegate and Brady Smith as alternate to UUS Annual Meeting.
- Board approved donation of \$250 to Cooperative Finance Corporation Integrity Fund to support electric co-op service territory challenges.
- Anker: Gave May financial report. Year to date margins \$1,371,571 compared to \$1,399,688 last year. End of May equity 40.49%. Served 10,932 accounts. Net utility plant \$49,753,616 compared to \$48,437,749 last year. Co-op meets requirements of RUS, FFB, NRUCFC & CoBank.
- Anker & Frye: Gave Safety Report.
- Goetsch: Discussed AIEC activities.
- Anker: Reported on Prairie Power, Inc.
- Board entered into Executive Session; reconvened.
- Next month's meeting 7/23/19.

## Be BudgetWise

We now offer two ways you can even-out the fluctuations in your monthly utility bills.



### Budget Billing:

This is our traditional budget program. You pay the same amount every month. The amount due is fixed at the average of your most recent 12 monthly billable amounts as of the month you sign up. Regardless, in June you will settle up with a credit if you used less than the estimated amount of electricity, or a balance due if you used more. We will periodically evaluate the account and may apply a one-time adjustment to keep you from having an excessive settlement amount.

### Average Billing:

This is a new program. Your bill will reflect the average of your most recent 12 monthly billable amounts, rounded to the nearest \$5 increment. The amount due may fluctuate month-to-month based on your 12-month rolling average use of electricity. You won't face a settlement month each year, the 12-months just continues forward.

If either option interests you, email us at [info@menard.com](mailto:info@menard.com) with your account number and the BudgetWise option you are interested in, or call Pam at our office at 800-872-1203.

## Ways to pay your bill

### Automatic Payment

We'll deduct the total from your savings or checking account automatically on the 10th, 17th or 24th of each month. (You now have three dates to choose from.) See the back of your payment stub or our website for the form to fill out.



### MyMEC App

Download the MyMEC App by searching for Menard Outage in the Google Play or iOS App store. See the new payments feature to log in to our secure payment portal.

### Website

Visit [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) to link to our secure online bill payment portal and pay with your credit or debit card.

### Phone

Call us at 800-872-1203 Mon-Fri 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. to pay with a credit or debit card.

### Drop Off

Stop in, or use our drop box anytime, at our office at 14300 IL St Hwy 97, Petersburg.

### Mail In

Allow adequate time for delivery to PO Box 200, Petersburg, IL 62675.





## Don't wait. Be prepared before the storm.

Imagine a major storm hits - many power lines are down, and your electricity may be out for several days. You are low on everything—food, pet supplies, toilet paper, batteries, diapers and your medication.

Imagine how you would feel in this situation. Planning ahead ensures you have the tools and resources to effectively weather a storm. The Department of Homeland Security offers more resources to help you prepare at [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan).

### Preparedness actions and items

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food (canned goods/energy bars/peanut butter/instant coffee/water) and other essentials (diapers/toiletries).
- Confirm you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies (soap/hand sanitizer).
- Ensure your First Aid kit is stocked and your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside emergency items (flashlights/batteries/manual can opener/battery-powered radio/TV).
- Organize supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location.

### With advance warning

- Take extra steps to safeguard your home (shutter windows/securely close exterior doors).

- Fully charge cell phones, laptops and devices.
- Be sure generators are rated to handle the amount of power you will need; review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely. See Backup Generator Application below.

### During a storm

- If power is out, turn off appliances/TVs/computers/other sensitive electronics to help avert damage from a power surge and help prevent overloading circuits during restoration. (Leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.)
- If utilizing a small generator, consider using LED holiday lights or solar lights to illuminate living areas.
- During thunderstorms, the American Red Cross recommends avoiding electrical equipment and land-based telephones.
- Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radios for emergency updates. Install our MyMEC App to your mobile device to stay abreast of restoration efforts and other important co-op news. To download it search for Menard Outage in the Google Play or iOS App Store; you'll need to input your account number (found on your bill) or meter number (located under the digital digits and above the barcode) to link your location.

- During and after the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs – including on your property.

### Backup Generator Application

Some of our members have backup generators to utilize during extended power outages. It is critical that any backup generation connected to your electric system includes a manual or automatic transfer switch. Without the switch, the backup generation could feed back onto our lines, putting our linemen and others at risk of electrocution.

We need to know if you use a generator that connects to your home's electrical system. You or your installing contractor must submit the online Backup Generator Application at [www.menard.com/generators](http://www.menard.com/generators). If you do not have internet access, call the office to request a paper copy.

