



POWERLINES

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF WHITEWATER VALLEY REMC






www.vremc.com



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Electric Co-ops Tackle a Challenging Legislative Session



MARY JO THOMAS,
CEO

This year's legislative session was marked by many challenges – and many successes.

It was unlike any other as the House of Representatives held session in the

Government Center, not the Statehouse. Legislators and lobbyists weren't able to walk the Statehouse hallways together, and simple, important conversations were more difficult to arrange.

Despite these challenges, Indiana's electric cooperatives had several gains.

BROADBAND Four bills were passed this session encouraging broadband projects and developments. Additionally, \$250 million was incorporated in the budget for the broadband projects. We are looking forward to the potential

funding opportunities for Indiana's electric cooperatives' and other broadband companies deployment efforts as we seek to increase service to rural Hoosiers across the state. As you may remember, WWVREMC completed a feasibility study on bringing broadband to our members in 2019. The study found that it is not financially feasible for us to take on a broadband project ourselves. But we continue to monitor the developments and possible opportunities to work with a partner to better the communities we serve with high-speed broadband service.

BATTERY STORAGE SALES TAX

EXEMPTION Cooperatives are always searching for the best ways to serve their members and keep energy safe, reliable and affordable. Battery storage is a cutting-edge technology that several cooperatives are exploring to save their members money and encourage economic development. The tax bill included language that exempts utility-scale battery storage systems from sales tax, thus

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August Due Dates

The due dates for payment of electric bills are **August 19 and 26.**

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saving cooperatives who engage in these projects millions of dollars.

POLE ATTACHMENTS One piece of legislation that could have had a much more detrimental impact on Indiana electric cooperatives and their members had to do with pole attachments. But the electric cooperatives were able to negotiate a more favorable outcome.

At the start of the legislative session, cable providers filed bills that would have mandated electric cooperatives charge them the FCC rate when they attached cable to the co-ops' poles. This would have put electric cooperatives like yours under FCC jurisdiction and lowered the for-profit cable providers' financial responsibility. However, we were able to successfully negotiate a more favorable solution: removal of the FCC language and an increase in the attachers' responsibility (from an FCC rate of 7.41% to 12.5%). Language was also added that existing contracts would be grandfathered keeping attachments under contract at the current contract rates and sets a fine for unauthorized attachments.

How does this affect WWVREMC? The cooperative has over 8,200 pole attachments on our system from various companies. So, you can do the math and see how being a part of these negotiations mean for-profit vendors pay their fair-share when attaching their equipment to cooperative-owned and maintained poles.

The legislative session concluded with a "final dead bills day" April 22. The legislature recessed rather than adjourned so lawmakers can call themselves back into session later in 2021 to redistrict.

I have been invited to continue to serve on the 21st Century Task Force. The group will begin meeting again to study the issues stated in EA 1220 and report back to the General Assembly no later than November 2, 2022.

If you are interested in these topics and want to stay current on all the issues impacting electric cooperatives, register to be a grassroots advocate at <https://action.indianaec.org/register-to-be-an-advocate/>.

UNDERSTANDING POWER SURGES AND BLINKS



Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts--this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers.

WWVREMC encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events. In fact, when it comes to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme. In 2019 alone, squirrels were responsible for more than 1,200 outages nationwide.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, WWVREMC crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage. And you can help too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling 800-776-0493.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When shopping for new light bulbs, know the difference between lumens and watts. Lumens measure the amount of light produced by the bulb. Watts measure energy consumption.

Energy-saving LEDs come in a variety of colors and brightness levels and last 15-25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

Source: energy.gov



Go Paperless. Get a \$5 Bill Credit!

You may have heard about the proposed postage increases going into effect this year. To help offset this additional expense of mailing bills to our members, we are running a paperless billing promotion for a limited time.

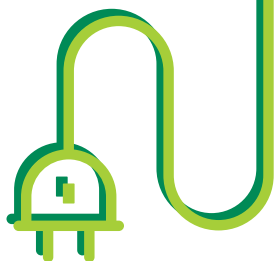
Every dollar the cooperative saves in postage and printing expenses helps to reduce power bills. Going paperless is great for the environment and members benefit in other ways too.

- A monthly email notification will be sent via email.
- See the identical bill statement online as you would receive at home.
- Receive your statement in real-time without any delays.
- You will be able to access your SmartHub website or mobile app 24/7.

- Reduces your paper clutter at home and no more misplaced bills.
- Pay your bill online using your checking account or credit card. You will receive an email confirmation of your payments made online or through our mobile app.
- Your Powerlines newsletter will be emailed to you so you won't miss out on important co-op news.

Sign up before October 2 to receive your power bill by email and receive a one-time \$5 bill credit.

Reduce the number of paper bills being sent to your home by enrolling in our paperless billing notifications. It's free and simple! The hidden account number is 857305.





Each month we hide an account number in the Powerlines. Did you find it?

NO JULY WINNER

Keep reading your Powerlines each month because the next hidden account number could be yours!

Payment Options

US Mail

Whitewater Valley REMC, P.O. Box 3199, Martinsville, IN 46151-3168

SmartHub

Log-on at www.vremc.com.

Pay-by-Phone

Call 844-827-4759. Set up your PIN. Follow prompts.

Liberty Office

In person or in the drop box.

Automatic Withdrawal

Simply request a form and submit it to our office.

FCN or Franklin County National Bank

In person or in the drop box. (Bring payment stub.)

VanillaDirect

Visit vanilladirect.com for payment locations and details.



For more information about payment options, please call us:

765-458-5171 or 1-800-529-5557

Helpful Information

Liberty Office Hours

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

CLOSED SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

To Report an Outage or Emergency

Call 1-800-776-0493, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Login to your SmartHub account or sign up for outage texting at www.vremc.com.

Be ready to provide the following information:

- The name and account number under which your electric service is listed.
- Map location number.
- Your phone number - needed to call back or confirm power restoration.
- The type of problem you are experiencing - flickering lights, complete power outage, etc.

LIFE LESSONS



Educate children on bus safety

SCHOOL DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN. Do you and your child know the electrical safety risks lurking between your house and their school?

Keep these safety tips in mind.

Warn your child not to play near or around power lines while waiting for the bus.

Warn your child to stay away from pad-mount transformers (the big, usually green boxes) or other electrical equipment in your neighborhood. 7,200 volts of electricity are usually coursing through them.



Bill Credit Winners

Our monthly drawing for five \$20 bill credits from all voting members of the 2021 annual meeting continues. Here are the winners.

AUGUST

Edward Davis, Centerville

Carol Glass, Richmond

Robert Gilbert, Centerville

Robert House, Richmond

Julia Thomas, Farmland

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