

Friendships Will Carry On Following Retirement

January 1, 2015, will not only be the start of a new year, but also the beginning of a new chapter for Steve Meyer. December 31, 2014, marks Steve's retirement date from Jackson Electric Cooperative after 32 years as the cooperative's member services director.

Steve was first introduced to Jackson Electric Cooperative when then general manager Mike Anderson interviewed Steve for a lineman's position. Following the interview, Mike recognized unique qualities in Steve. At that time, the cooperative did not have a member services department. So, Mike offered Steve a member services position with the challenge to develop programs and services that would benefit members. Of course, Steve accepted. To date, there are programs in place, with modifications made along the way, that were implemented with Steve's guidance.

As anyone would imagine, after 32 years in the same industry, things do change. "The biggest change I see is our attitudes," states Steve. "When I first started at Jackson Electric there was a lot of 'we do it this way because we always have done it this way' type attitudes. Now, I think we are more open to adopting new ideas and new methods of doing everything we do. My leaving, just like those who left before me, helps make way for change and fresh ideas."

When thinking about the past 32 years, many other changes come to Steve's mind. Up until a few years ago, Jackson Electric hired meter readers to read each member's meter. Now, there is an automated meter reading system in place and the meters are read at the office. Some high bill complaints can be resolved by reading the member's meter and analyzing the member's usage from the office rather than a visit to the residence. Regulations in all areas have become more stringent. Communication with members is changing. At one time, the only commu-

Steve is passionate about riding his motorcycle. Throughout his tenure at Jackson Electric, he's met others who share this same passion.



Steve is always willing to help at community events. In this photo, Steve (right) and Dave Graves, from Eau Claire Energy, work a booth at the Renewable Energy Fair in Custard, Wis.

nication available was face-to-face contact and talking on the phone. Those means of communication still exist, but it has evolved to so much more, including social media, e-mails, and phone texts.

Even though change is constantly taking place, it does not play a role in Steve's early retirement. He says, "It's time for me to refocus my efforts on getting more of my own unfinished projects done, and after 32 years at Jackson Electric, step aside and let someone else with a fresh perspective take over where I left off. My hope is that the positive things I put into play will continue on, and new programs and services that I may not have even thought of will be offered to the members."

According to Steve, "As great as I hear retirement is, I'm going to miss the best part of my job, which is the contact I have with people. You couldn't place a value on the friends and acquaintances I've made through the years. I sincerely treasure the opportunity I have had, and never would have had without this job, to meet so many people. Many of the friendships will carry on long after my retirement." ■

Editor's Note: There are not enough positive words to describe Steve's dedication and commitment to the cooperative and its members. We wish him a healthy and enjoyable retirement.

Steve Meyer Retirement Gathering



A retirement gathering will be held for Steve at Sand Creek Brewery, January 9, starting at 3 p.m. with live music starting at 6 p.m. Sand Creek Brewery is located at 320 Pierce Street (old Rock Spring pop factory building) in Black River Falls. You are invited to stop by and wish Steve well in his retirement.

Bundle Up for Winter Weather

Are you ready for winter's cold grasp? Snow and ice are inevitable when dealing with winter storms, but being prepared can make a world of difference. Jackson Electric Cooperative recommends the following tips to help you prepare for wintry blasts.

Winterize Your Home

Winter storms wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for extreme cold and hazardous conditions.

- Maintain and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year to ensure they're working safely and properly.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to make the most of your heating system.
- Freezing temperatures often cause water pipes to burst. Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to avoid frozen pipes.
- Consider installing storm windows for better insulation. You can also cover windows with plastic (from the inside) to keep the heat in.

- Make sure everyone in your family knows where the home's fire extinguisher is located and how to use it properly. House fires occur more frequently during winter months, as people tend to use alternative heating methods that may not be safe.

Prepare a Winter Survival Kit

Severe winter storms often bring heavy accumulation of ice and snow, which can lead to downed power lines and extended outages. Jackson Electric crews work quickly and safely to restore power, but having a winter survival kit on hand is a smart idea.

- Store food that doesn't require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand.
- Refill all prescriptions in the event of a major power outage.
- Keep all forms of identification handy, such as driver's licenses, photo IDs, and Social Security cards. Bank account information and insurance policies are also good to have on hand.
- Have available a first aid kit, blankets, flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.

Stay Warm and Safe

If an outage occurs, you should plan for an alternate heating source. A fireplace, propane space heater, or wood-burning stove would be sufficient. Fuel and wood-burning heating sources should always be vented, and make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. Always practice extreme caution when using alternate heating sources.

If you use a portable generator during an outage, make sure it is placed outside the home for proper ventilation. Be careful not to overload the generator. Use appropriate extension cords that can handle the electric load.—Source: *NRECA StraightTalk* ■

Know the Terms

Winter weather advisory: The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a winter weather advisory when conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences that may be hazardous.

Winter weather watch: The NWS issues a winter storm watch when severe winter conditions may affect your area, but the location and timing are still uncertain.

Winter weather warning: The NWS issues a winter storm warning when four or more inches of snow or sleet are expected in the next 12 hours, or six or more inches in 24 hours, or quarter-inch or more of ice accumulation is expected.—Source: *www.fema.gov*

Did you know?

Heating your home accounts for up to 48 percent of your utility bill.

A few tips to help you save:

Clean or replace your furnace filter once a month (or as recommended).



Caulk and seal windows to avoid air leaks.



Keep draperies and shades open during the day and closed at night.



America's Electric Cooperatives

Visit www.energy.gov for more ways to save!

Go Green This Year with LED Holiday Lights

Holiday lights bring cheer to your home and neighborhood. Since saving money makes spirits even brighter, try Light Emitting Diode (LED) holiday lights this year. LEDs use up to 90 percent less energy and last seven times longer than conventional holiday lights. It's hard to decide which is the better perk—more green in your pocket or not having to switch out dead bulbs all the time.

LED holiday lights, available in

a variety of colors and shapes, aren't just for the tree. Remember that outdoor "icicle" lights use more energy because they have more bulbs per foot than regular light strands.

Little Twinkling Lights Have a Big Impact

Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier, sees a 5 percent increase in load during the holiday season. Although people tend to stay home and cook more during the



holidays, this energy increase is almost entirely due to holiday lighting.

Safety & the Holiday Season

Take a moment to check your holiday items for safety:

- For your home's exterior, use only lights, cords, animated displays, and decorations rated for outdoor use. Plug cords into outlets equipped with GFCIs.
- Don't overload outlets or extension cords.
- Keep live Christmas trees well-watered. ■

Portable Electric Space Heaters

THE FACTS:

- All electric space heaters produce one unit of heat for every one unit of electricity consumed. They are all 100 percent energy efficient.
- For an approximate operating cost of an electric space heater, use the following formula: $watts/1,000 \times \$0.1130/kWh \times 8 \text{ hours of operation} = \text{cost}$. For example, a 1,500-watt space heater operating eight hours a day for 30 days costs \$40.68 per month to operate.
- Most of us don't plan on turning off the furnace heat in our house, so the space heater is an additional expense.
- If you want to save money heating your home, the dual fuel program is a more economical choice than using a portable space heater.

Contact Jackson Electric Cooperative to learn how you can heat your home with electricity and save money. ■

Power of Value

While the costs of so many things we buy have climbed steadily over the years, electricity is still one of the best values out there. That's comforting to know because electricity is essential to energizing our lives and keeping us connected more than ever before—and that's a powerful thing.

Jackson Electric Cooperative has been committed to making the quality of life of every member better, not more expensive, for decades. We strive to provide reliable electricity to our members at the cost of service. But costs go up; it's just a fact of life.

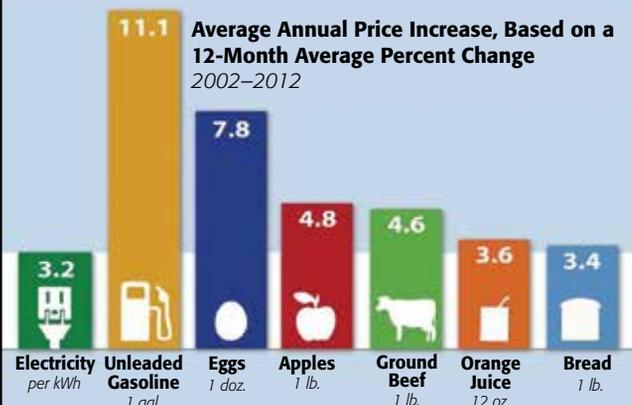
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of a loaf of white bread rose 3.4 percent annually, a dozen eggs jumped to 7.8 percent per year and gasoline has shot up 11.1 percent.

While the price

of everything continues to go up dramatically on everyday items, the cost of electricity is still a great value. Clearly, our appetite for electricity continues to increase and shows no sign of slowing down. The next time you flip a switch, use your toaster, or run your washing machine, remember the value electricity holds.—Source: *Touchstone Energy*, www.togetherwewave.com ■

Electricity Remains a Good Value

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than expenses like gas and groceries. Compare the average price increase of these expenses each year over the span of a decade, and the value of electricity shines.

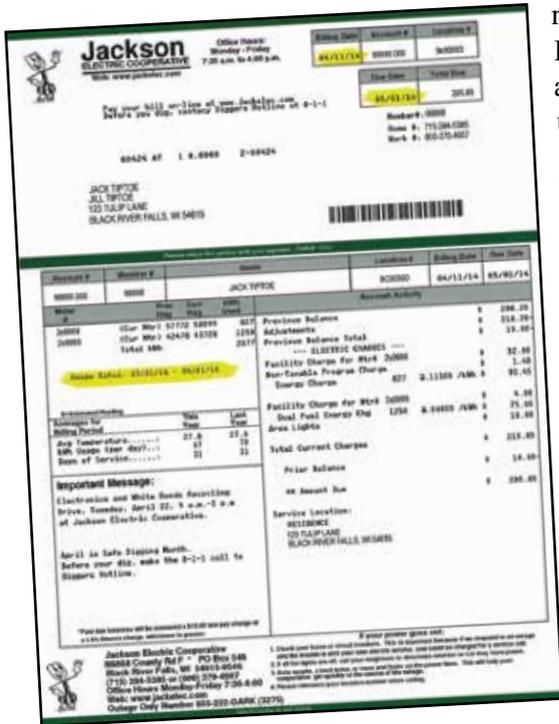


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index 12-month percent change averaged from 2002 through 2012

You Commented. We're Responding.

Member Comment: "There are so many dates listed on my electric bill. What do they all mean?"

Our Response: There are three separate dates listed on your regular green-striped monthly electric bill. They are billing date, due date, and usage dates. On the electric bill located below, highlighted are the three dates.



ing, and due dates on the electric bill. Let's first look at the usage dates. On this particular bill, the kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage is calculated for the entire month of March. The kWh is how much electricity you used at your residence for that particular month. For this account, with two meters at this residence, the total kWh usage is 2,077.

Billing Date: This is the date billing information is updated and bills sent in the mail. According to the sample bill, the billing date is April 11.

Due Date: This is the date your electric bill payment is due. According to the sample bill, the due date is May 1 for March's kWh usage. You used two months of electricity before your payment is due. Why is that?

There's a lot that goes on behind the scene, so to speak, before you receive your bill. We allow time for payments to be processed after the first of the month, and meter reads to be recorded before we mail the bills. Once we have the billing records updated, we coordinate the billing with Dairyland Power.

Dairyland receives the billing file from our office and they print, sort, and mail the bills to our members.

When you receive your bill and the total amount due seems higher than normal, check your kWh usage on your statement and think back to what may have altered the usage in your household. You may remember adding a dehumidifier to a room, family members may have visited for a weekend or a holiday, or you may have done improvements to your home that required more electricity, such as the use of power tools, lighting, etc. Remember, every time you flip on a light switch, you're using and paying for the electricity.

You will also see on your bill where you can update your phone numbers and e-mail addresses. This information is very important to the cooperative so that we can contact you with any imperative cooperative information related to your account.

If you have any questions about your bill, please contact our office. ■

This is a great question, because every month we get several phone calls where members share some type of confusion between the usage, bill-

Jackson Electric Cooperative's office will be closed December 24 and 25 and January 1.

If you experience an outage during this time, call 855.222.DARK (3275).

Payments can be made online at www.jackelec.com or dropped in the secured drop box located in Jackson Electric's building parking lot.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Don't Forget the Rebates!

Jackson Electric Cooperative offers rebates and incentives on qualified Energy Star appliances, lighting, heat pumps, and energy efficient home improvements. Go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office for more information.

Deadline for rebate submission is December 31, 2014.

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