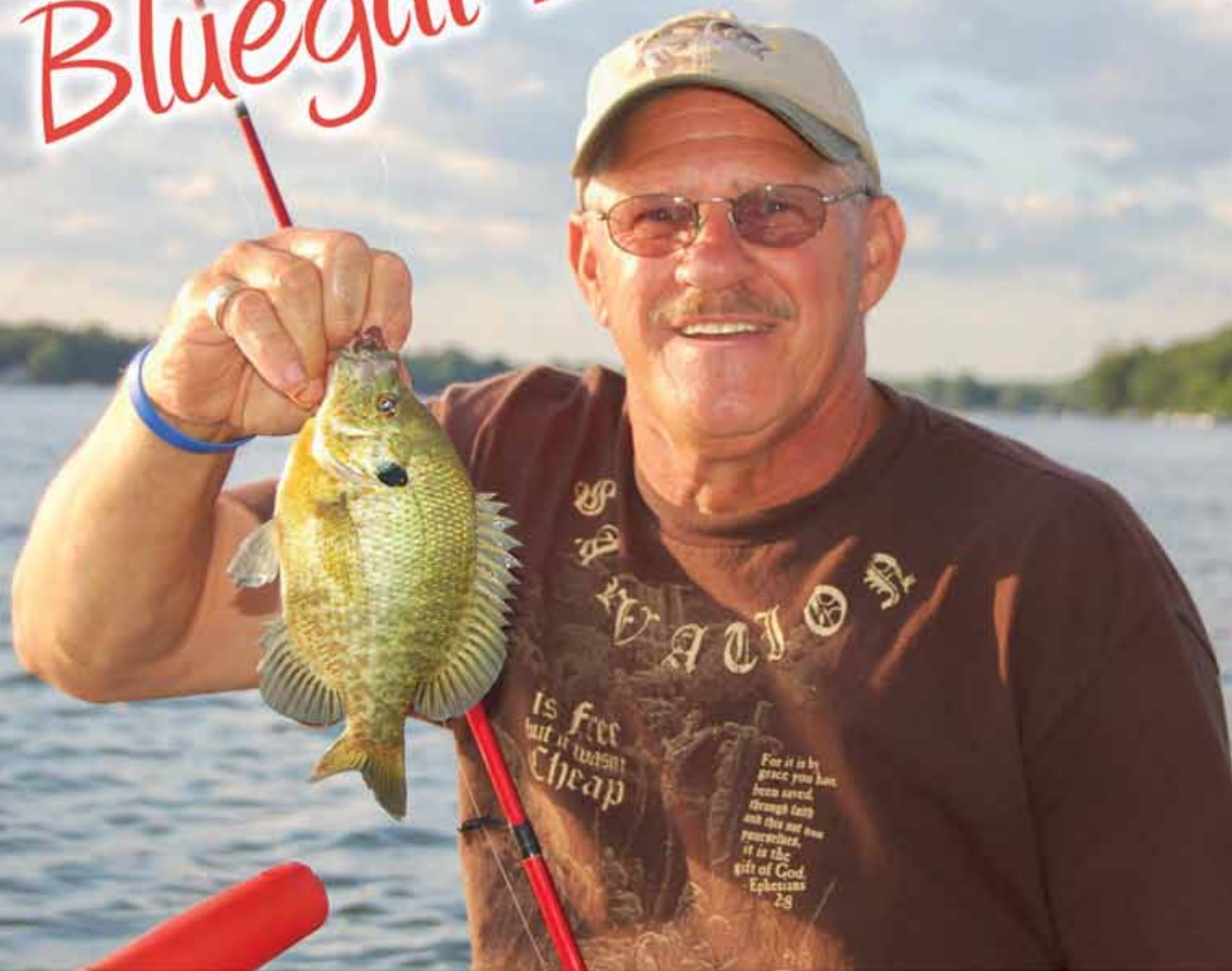


Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

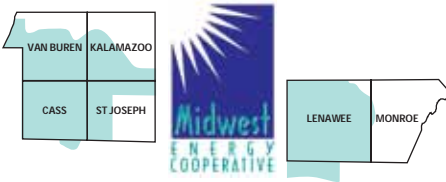
Meet
Bluegill Bob



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23 Be Prepared For Power Outages



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Outage For No Reason?

Multiple providers involved in powering your home.

When large-scale power outages occur as a result of a major storm, consumers get it. We're not necessarily happy about it, but we get it. When they occur for no easy-to-see reason, we tend to be a little less understanding and patient through the process. Sunday, March 3, posed the latter challenge for your electric co-op. We had recovered from one winter storm and were awaiting the next system, but it was a quiet weather evening. Yet at 7 p.m., about 4,800 Midwest members lost power and spent the better part of the next nine hours in cold, dark homes.

We're pretty darned good at dealing with outages on our distribution system. Our customer care team is top-notch with your calls and inquiries. Our lineworkers are patient and skilled in determining outage causes, and effective and efficient in restoration. And, our communications team is timely in providing information and updates through regional media and various online platforms.

But, when you're among the 4,800 people suddenly without power for no apparent reason and no one can offer useful information about why the power is out and when it might come back on, you get frustrated.

I get that. Your co-op family gets frustrated when we can't help impacted members make critical decisions about how to care for their own homes and families. At Sunday night outage was on a transmission line that feeds four of our substations. When the subs went down, we were in immediate contact with the transmission provider, but were completely at their mercy for information. It became abundantly clear through that long night that we have a very different expectation and standard of care for our consumers. The outage was ultimately restored nearly nine hours later, but it was later Monday morning before we knew that equipment failure was the cause.

There are a number of players and

steps involved as electricity travels across the vast infrastructure, from the point of generation to the ultimate point of consumption. Once generated, power is delivered over national and regional transmission systems to our substations. We don't operate these generation facilities or transmission services; we rely on partners for those processes and about 60 percent of your monthly bill is used to pay those partners.

Our distribution system is our piece of the delivery pie. Transmission providers deliver power to our 32 substations, and we deliver from there over our distribution system to your home or business. However, both transmission and distribution systems are comprised of poles, wires and other equipment vulnerable to environmental elements and failure due to age, technical or mechanical issues. When transmission outages occur, Midwest is dependent on that provider for information and restoration. Outages on our own distribution system, on the other hand, are managed by our own local team of employees, and typically allow us to be more immediately responsive to our members. (Please see graphic on page 3.)

Generation, transmission and distribution are very dependent operating systems that co-exist in very independent ways, although that was not always the case. Legislation and regulation, intended to create a more competitive environment, ultimately created a separation that is clearly reflected on today's cumbersome electric bill, and in our ability to respond to member needs.

We take great pride and ownership in our approach to member service and communication, but over this night we simply could not provide what we did not have. A long outage certainly gives members a new appreciation for the value of their electricity, but we're hoping that our everyday standard of reliability and member care are the yardsticks by which you measure the value of your co-op experience.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

Outage Reporting

Midwest offers three easy ways (below) to report a power outage. Please do not use email or social media such as Facebook or Twitter to report our outage, as these platforms are not staffed 24/7.

By Phone: Dial 800-492-5989 and when you hear the greeting, press "1" to access the reporting system and follow the prompts. **NOTE:** If we do not have a current phone number on your account, you will not be able to use this system. Please call 1-800-492-5989 to update account information.

Our incoming lines are more than adequate for regular business, but may become overly taxed during an outage. If you receive a fast busy signal, it means all of our incoming lines are in use. Please hang up and try later, or use a different method of outage reporting.

By Text: Register at TeamMidwest.com (*no time like the present!*) by clicking on the "Outage Texting" rotating ad on the homepage. You will be led through a short set-up and verification process and then be ready to text that next outage! (Once your outage text is received and verified, you will receive an "Outage Reported Successfully" message. A second message will be sent when the outage is restored.) All standard data and text messaging charges apply.

SmartHub App: Your power outage can also be reported through your online account or our SmartHub mobile app. Simply log-in to your account and report it.

To access this app on your mobile device, click on the SmartHub rotating ad at TeamMidwest.com or search for SmartHub (provided by NISC) through your app store.

Learn About Current Outages

We provide regular updates to local media outlets to keep you informed about outages.

The same updates are posted on the red emergency banner at TeamMidwest.com, and shared on our Facebook and Twitter accounts, which can be accessed by clicking the icons found at the top right side of our homepage.

Our Outage Central map, also available on the homepage and in SmartHub, offers a snapshot of outages by zip code. You cannot reach an individual account on this tool (for your own safety!), but you can see the overall impact of a particular outage.

How to plan ahead for storms and outages – see page 23

Powering Up

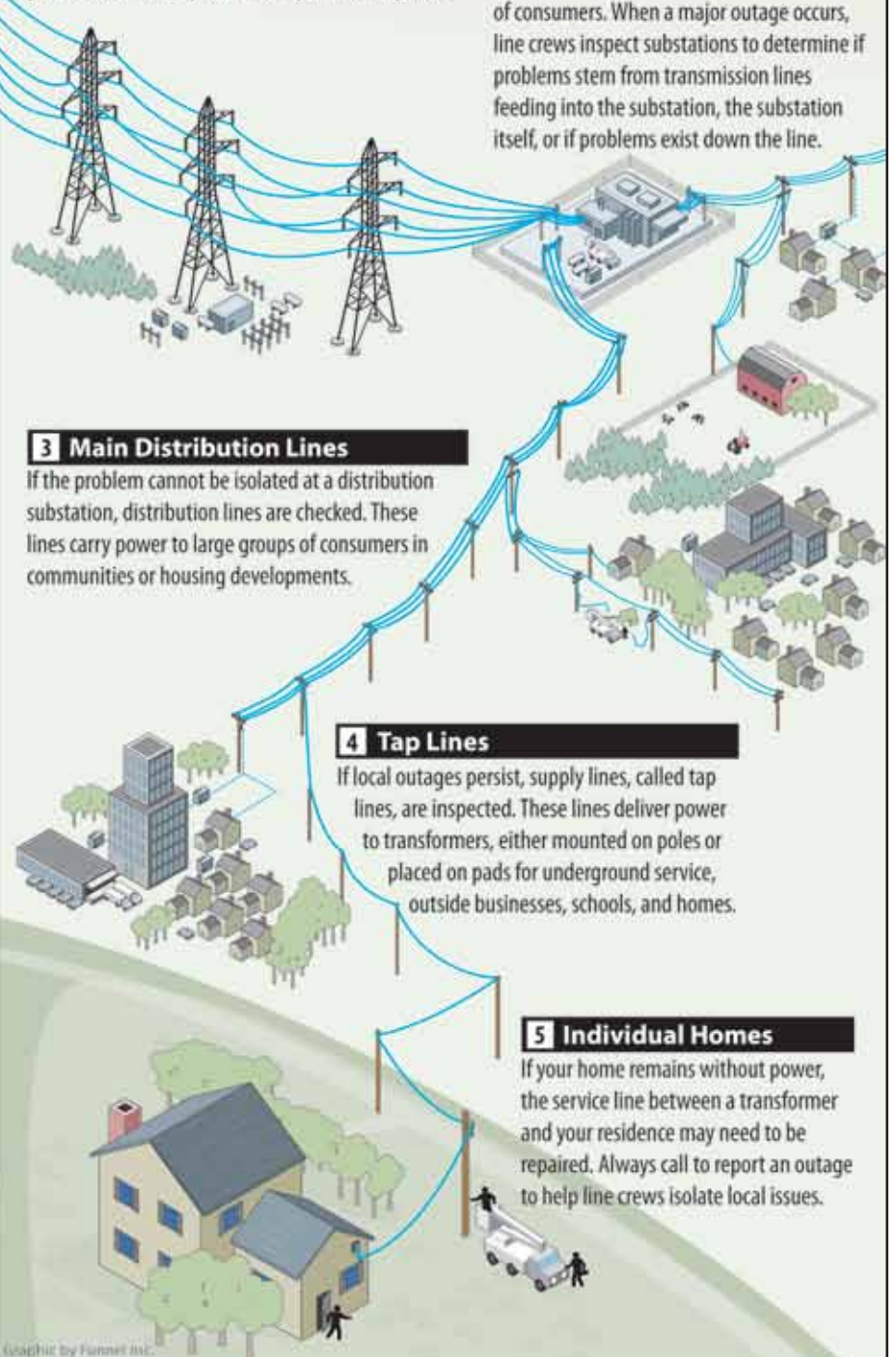
When electricity goes out, most of us expect power will be restored within a few hours. But when a major storm causes widespread damage, longer outages may result. Co-op line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.

1 High-Voltage Transmission Lines

Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members) rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

2 Distribution Substation

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.



3 Main Distribution Lines

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

4 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

5 Individual Homes

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues.

Graphic by Farnet Inc.

Directors Re-elected

Districts 1, 2 and 5 are up for election in 2014.

Ben Russell, district 6; Colyne Sorsby, district 7; and Harry Gentz, district 9, were re-elected to new three-year terms on the Midwest Energy Board of Directors after running unopposed in the 2013 election.

Midwest Energy is governed by a nine-member board, and each director is elected to serve a three-year term. Directors are elected by and represent members living in his or her district, and must reside in the district they represent. These are important roles as your directors make critical decisions on behalf of you and the other members-owners of this cooperative.

Three seats on the board of directors will be up for election next year.

Members interested in serving on the board should contact the co-op at 800-492-5989 for information. Official election information will be included in the November/December issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

In 2014, Districts 1, 2 and 5 will be up for election.

District 1 is currently represented by Jerry Campbell of Decatur and includes Hamilton, Decatur, Porter, Volina, Marcellus and



Ben Russell
District 6



Colyne Sorsby
District 7



Harry Gentz
District 9

Penn townships.

Jim Dickerson of Bloomingdale is the current director in District 2, which includes Silver Creek, Pipestone, Bainbridge, Keeler, Coloma, Watervliet, Hartford, Lawrence, Paw Paw, Waverly, Arlington, Bangor, Covert and Bloomingdale townships.

The current District 5 director is John Green of Dowagiac. District 5 includes Milton, Howard, Pokagon, LaGrange and Wayne townships.

Prepaid Metering: Pay-As-You-Go Power

Food. Gasoline. Even cell phone minutes. We pay for those and a score of other goods and services before we actually use them. Now, pay-as-you-go electric service, also called prepaid metering, is growing in popularity among members of your electric co-op—Midwest Energy—and some other electric co-ops.

Prepaid metering programs vary by provider, but all begin with consumers paying for their kilowatt hours before using them. The Midwest Energy Cooperative system monitors consumption and notifies the user by phone and

email when the account has three days of payments remaining, based on historical use. Participating members can also request notification based on a selected account balance. When the balance is low, there are multiple ways to add funds: in person at one of our district service centers, online at TeamMidwest.com, or over the phone. Service is remotely disconnected if the account balance is depleted and reconnected when a payment is received.

Prepaying can offer a good solution for members who move around a lot, own rental

properties, are in college or the military, or are facing financial difficulties. For starters, it eliminates the need for deposits, late fees, and disconnect and reconnect fees.

Prepaying can also help consumers plan more accurate monthly budgets and make smaller, incremental payments. For example, if you only have \$10 to put gas in your car, you pay \$10. The same goes for prepaid electricity.

“Members are empowered to manage electric use in a way that best suits their individual situation,” explains Candy Riem, Midwest’s vice president of marketing and member services. “Even better, when they use less energy it lowers demand on our entire system, which saves everyone money in the long run.”

Prepaid metering also helps streamline co-op operations. Employees previously tasked with disconnecting and reconnecting a home’s electric service can be assigned elsewhere, as those procedures become automated. If folks are disconnected for non-payment, the remote setup lets hookups occur in a matter of minutes when payment is finally made.

—Magen Howard

For more information or to sign up for the program, please contact Midwest Energy’s Customer Care Department at 800-492-5989.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Midwest Energy Cooperative is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission to or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization’s programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization’s nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Robert L. Hance, president & CEO. Any individual or specific class of individuals who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Midwest in the Community

Giving back to our communities is one of the core values of your co-op.

We believe in doing what we can, individually and as a family of employees, to strengthen and support the communities in which we live, work and serve. Following are some of the ways Midwest Energy employees impacted our communities over the last few months.

Blood Drive

In February, Midwest Energy hosted a blood drive through Michigan Blood for employees in the Cassopolis office. A total of 22 pints was donated with 33 registered employees, including (1) Nicky Adam, mapping technician.

Michigan Blood is an independent, non-profit blood bank that provides blood for 38 hospitals across Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

The organization, founded in 1955, collects over 115,000 blood donations each year at nine permanent donation sites and over 3,700 mobile blood drives statewide.

Walk for Warmth

On a cold Saturday morning in late February, several hundred walkers representing 26 teams took to the Adrian streets for the inaugural Lenawee County Walk for Warmth. Midwest Energy Cooperative and Touchstone Energy®, in partnership with a host of local service providers organized through the regional Community Action Agency (CAA), sponsored the event raising more than \$16,000 for the CAA's unrestricted utility assistance program.

Midwest provided all participants with a commemorative Walk for Warmth fleece scarf, (2) modeled by team members Patty Clark (left), community development specialist, and Pam Myers, technical billing support specialist.



Your Survey Participation Counts!

Midwest Energy Cooperative is committed to providing members with reliable electricity and high levels of customer care and service. Your thoughts and opinions about the cooperative help us to better serve you.

In April and May, we will work with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Market Research Services to complete a member satisfaction survey. Members will be selected randomly for participation and surveys will be admin-

istered by phone and email. All information collected is confidential and will not be shared with any outside entities. If you are contacted, we greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time to share your opinions about your cooperative experience.

We strive to provide all members with safe, reliable electricity and a superior customer service experience. By participating in the survey, you will help us make decisions that benefit you, your family and your neighbors.



Scan this with your QR reader to visit our online photo album and see more photos from these and other "Midwest in the Community" events.

And On This Farm Were Some Rebates...

Michigan's farmers know how much energy goes into the daily operations of running their agribusiness. The state is aware too, as the industrial sector (including all agribusiness) accounts for 25 percent of Michigan's total energy consumption.

The Farm Services Program, available through Midwest Energy's Energy Optimization (EO) Program, rewards farmers for installing energy-efficient equipment and measures to help reduce energy use.

Read on to find out how you can manage your annual operating costs and cash-in on energy-efficiency rebates.

"As Michigan works to save energy, a great deal of focus is on our local farms," says Art Ayer, energy efficiency programs director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. "Energy Optimization offers solutions that help our farming members better manage energy consumption, thereby making their businesses more productive."

Prescriptive Rebates

Dozens of EO rebates are available for purchasing and installing energy-efficient farm

equipment. Rebates offset the cost differences between standard equipment and energy-efficient models—putting your choices on an equal playing field and keeping things

lighting systems, dairy parlor and milk harvesting/cooling equipment, indoor radiant heat, thermal blankets for greenhouses, crop irrigation horsepower reduction, and installation of variable frequency drives for irrigation pump motors.

Popular Farm Services Rebates

- Lightbulbs or fixture replacements \$1–\$100/item
- Circulation or exhaust fans \$2/blade-inch
- Low-energy livestock waterer \$50
- Milk house electric water heater \$250/unit
- Dairy refrigeration system tune-up Up to \$150

affordable. When weighing replacements or upgrades, consider the long-term investment return that comes with energy-efficient models. While standard equipment just uses energy, energy-efficient options are "givers"—putting money back in your pocket and saving energy year after year.

Custom Rebates

If you want energy solutions tailored to your farming operation or wish to move forward with renewable energy, the EO Custom Program may be for you. Rebates are based on annual per-kilowatt-hour (kWh) estimates. Custom projects may include advanced

FREE Engine Block Heater Timer (\$35 value)

Even though the weather is warming, engine block heater timers are still available. Instead of needlessly warming vehicle engines all night long, these

devices prevent energy waste by turning the motors on two to four hours before you need them. Visit michigan-energy.org/heatertimer or call 877-296-4319 to request your free timer while supplies last.

Energy Optimization—Something for Everyone

Midwest Energy knows that farmers are too busy to research the latest energy-saving equipment or ideas, so we've done it for you.

The EO program puts you in touch with quality products and big energy savings. Visit michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for more information.



Upgrade your bulbs and SAVE BIG!

Think beyond incandescents. For every light in your home—floodlights, chandeliers, sconces, 3-ways, globes, dimmables—there's an energy-saving CFL or LED. Receive instant in-store savings on CFL and LED bulbs at participating retailers.

Visit michigan-energy.org/RetailersSearch to locate the participating retailer nearest you.

ENERGY TIP: ENERGY STAR® bulbs use 75% less energy than incandescents and last 6 times longer.



ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319

Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-17199

- Midwest Energy Cooperative requests Michigan Public Service Commission approval for non-base rate revisions to its construction/line extension policies, special charges tariff, interest on deposit provisions, and implementation of an Industrial Service Rate, Schedule (IND).
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031, (800) 492-5989 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Midwest Energy Cooperative.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: April 23, 2013, at 9:00 a.m. This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Thomas E. Maier

LOCATION: Constitution Hall, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider Midwest Energy Cooperative's (Midwest) January 17, 2013 application for non-base rate revisions to its (i) construction/line extension policies, (ii) special charges tariff, (iii) interest on deposit provisions, and (iv) implementation of an IND.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscdockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscdockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by April 16, 2013. (Petitions to intervene may also be filed using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Midwest's attorney, Albert Ernst, Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

Any person wishing to appear at the hearing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of his or her wish to make a statement of position. All information submitted to the Commission in this matter becomes public information: available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure. Please do not include information you wish to remain private.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure R 460.17315 and R 460.17335. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 241-6060.

A copy of Midwest's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets, and at the office of Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, Cassopolis, MI. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

March 26, 2013



Look Up, Stay Alert During Outdoor Work, Play

As the weather turns to warm, adults and kids alike will head outside to perform winter clean-up and play. Before they do, remind them to look up, down and around, and be alert for power lines and other electrical hazards—it's the best way to stay safe from electrical shock, and even death.

"Here at Midwest Energy Cooperative, using proper procedures and safety measures is a matter of life and death," explains Mike Roush, operations vice president. "We take safety seriously at home, too. Accidents happen, but if we educate ourselves and our children, we can keep them to a minimum." See a few safety tips below...

For Kids . . .

Never fly a kite on a rainy day or anywhere but an open space. A high point in the sky makes a kite a grounding point for lightning, and kites could easily become tangled in power lines.

- Don't climb trees that are near power lines and poles—both evergreens and leafy trees can disguise danger.
- Never climb a power pole.

- Stay far away from power lines lying on the ground. You can't tell just by looking if electricity is still flowing through them. If there's water nearby, don't go in it. Water is the best conductor of electricity.

- Obey signs that say "danger" and "keep out" around large electrical equipment, like substations. These signs aren't warnings; they're commands to keep you safe.



For Adults . . .

Power lines tend to become part of the landscape, so before climbing a ladder to trim branches or access your roof, look around to make sure you are not in close proximity to electric lines.

- Remember that power lines and other utilities run underground, too. Call 811 to have utility lines marked before you start digging.

- Starting that winter cleanup yard work? Sweep dried leaves and debris from outdoor receptacles.

- If they're not already, consider upgrading your outdoor receptacles—or any outlets that could come in contact with water—to ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). GFCIs immediately interrupt power

- flow when a plugged-in device comes in contact with water. Regardless, keep your outlets and cords dry and covered outside.

- Use only weather-resistant, heavy-duty extension cords marked for outdoor use.

- Don't leave outdoor power tools unattended for curious children or animals to find.



For more safety tips and information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Sources: Electrical Safety Foundation International, Safe Electricity



Before Mother Nature rears her ugly head with spring storms, here's some helpful information you may need in the event of an extended power outage.

Following are items Midwest Energy suggests to keep on hand and easily accessible in the event of a power outage. Everyone should also consider the unique needs of their own family in order to create an emergency kit that provides for individual circumstances.

- **Water** – At least 1 gallon per person, per day for drinking and sanitation. If you have pets, have extra available.
- **Food** – At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food, focusing on items that can be eaten without being cooked. Don't forget a hand-operated can opener.
- **Flashlights** – and fresh batteries.
- **Telephone** – Make sure it's corded. Cordless phones will not work when your power is out.
- **Radio** – Battery-powered, and/or a TV. Midwest Energy works with regional news

media to provide regular updates about major power outages.

- **Clock** – Battery-powered or wind-up.
- **First-aid kit** – and hand sanitizer. Be sure to fill prescriptions and have any needed medical supplies on hand.
- **Extra blankets.**
- **Candles and matches.**
- **Moist wipes** – Plus garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- **Wrench** – or pliers to turn off utilities.

all appliances at once. Leave on one lamp to know when power has been restored.

- **Never leave burning candles unattended.** Candles should only be used as temporary sources of light.
- **Keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed.** Food will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours in a fully loaded freezer if you keep the door closed. A half-full freezer will generally keep food frozen for 24 hours. If it looks like the outage will be prolonged, prepare a cooler with ice for freezer items.
- **If it's hot outside, close drapes and blinds** on the sunny side of your house, drink plenty of fluids, take your pets to a cool basement location and go to an air-conditioned community facility.
- **Do not hesitate to contact a physician** if you have any health-related questions or concerns.

Be Safe and Smart

- **Stay away from downed power lines,** and warn others to do the same. Report downed power lines to the electric company.
- **Turn off all appliances,** including your furnace, air conditioner, water heater and water pump. In that way you will avoid a circuit overload when power is restored to



For more information, contact Midwest Energy at 1-800-492-5989, or visit generlink.com. Installation is free for co-op members.

Safe, Quick, Affordable Generator

Many people have gone to the trouble and expense of buying a generator, only to have it sit idle because it's difficult to use and/or expensive to hard-wire.

Global Power Products, Inc., a Georgia company that works with many electric cooperatives around the country, offers a product that provides a quick, affordable, safe and easy answer. The GenerLink™ system is a meter collar device that eliminates extension cords, transfer switches and extensive wiring, and enables homeowners to plug their generator directly into their meter base. During an outage, the homeowner simply plugs the generator into this device to restore power to their home. When the outage has been restored, the electricity coming from the generator will automatically be cut off. Plus, there's no risk of dangerous backfeed onto the power lines!

GenerLink is designed and rated to connect directly to a standard household electric service of 200 amps or less. Global Power Products has a list of generators that are compatible with this product.

For more information about this product, please contact Midwest Energy Cooperative at 1-800-492-5989, or visit generlink.com. To place an order, please call Global Power Products directly at 1-800-886-3837. Let them know you are a Midwest Energy member when you call, as we have arranged a discounted price. The unit will be shipped to our office and we will send a serviceman to your home for free installation.



Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



TeamMidwest.com



LOCAL HEROES

**We are a part of your community:
family members, friends, neighbors.**

**We serve at the soup kitchen, read to kids in
school, maintain and clean local shelters
and coach the youth soccer league.**

We are Midwest Energy Cooperative.

**Here for you...
during and after the storm.**



Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 