

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



Walking On Webs

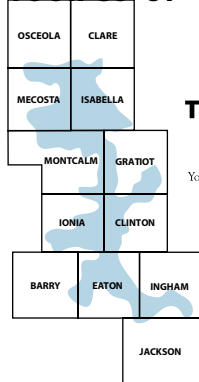
*Iverson's
Snowshoes*

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Thankful

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Wayne Swiler

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Number Changed?

YOUR CO-OP



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue
Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7556 or 1-800-562-8232

Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333
(24 hours for emergency calls)

Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

WildBlue:

1-800-668-8413

www.homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

www.facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1 — Philip Conklin

5130 W. Gresham Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813
517-726-0127
pconklin@homeworks.org

District 2 — Wayne Swiler

Vice-Chairman

11750 Ainsworth Rd., Lake Odessa, MI 48849
616-374-3141
wswiler@homeworks.org

District 3 — Carl Morton

Chairman

11280 Eden Trail, Eagle, MI 48822
517-626-2258
cmorton@homeworks.org

District 4 — Laverne Hansen

Secretary-Treasurer

1190 E. M-46 Hwy., Edmore, MI 48829
989-427-5851
lhansen@homeworks.org

District 5 — Cara Evans

10180 Roosevelt Rd., Bannister, MI 48807
989-862-5590
cevans@homeworks.org

District 6 — Ed Oplinger

10890 W. Weidman Road, Weidman, MI 48893
989-644-3079
eoplinger@homeworks.org

District 7 — Dean Floria

1163 Taft Rd., Remus, MI 49340
989-382-5230
dfloria@homeworks.org

Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC

Take Time To Be Thankful

Before the year rushes to an end and it's time to make resolutions for 2012, let's just stop for a moment. Take a relaxing breath, and think about that planning process.

Here at HomeWorks, we enjoy an attitude of gratitude. A key part of our planning is always to take a look back and realize what we have already accomplished, then take a few moments to be grateful for the many gifts we've been given.

Some people have already put the idea of gratitude into words for us. If one of these sayings helps you remember to count your blessings, share it to help someone else do the same:



"If you want to be successful, it's just this simple.

Know what you are doing.

Love what you are doing.

And believe in what you are doing."

– Will Rogers

**"I learned to appreciate and treasure each day,
because you don't know how many you're going to be given."**

– U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

"When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around."

– Willie Nelson

**"If you haven't all the things you want,
be grateful for the things you don't have that you wouldn't want."**

– Unknown

**"Blessed are those who can give without remembering and
receive without forgetting."**

– Unknown

These last two quotes may be the most useful for any of us:

"Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone."

– G. B. Stern

So take a moment to share your feelings with those close to you, and make sure they know they are appreciated. A few words can make someone's day, and won't cost you anything.

And finally, some words of wisdom from an incredibly successful college basketball coach:

**"Things turn out best for people who make the best of
the way things turn out."**

– John Wooden

From all of us at HomeWorks Tri-County, best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season!

Mark Kappler
General Manager



Join the conversation at
homeworks.org/blog

Meet your cooperative's board of directors

Wayne Swiler Follows Family in Co-op

Wayne Swiler was born in Portland and moved to Lake Odessa with his family when he was in kindergarten.

Later, he graduated from Lakewood Public Schools in 1964, and served in the National Guard from 1965 to 1972, while employed at Oldsmobile.

After dairy farming for several years, he left the business and worked at Herbruck's Poultry Ranch for 20 years before retiring.

Wayne and his wife, Pam, have raised two boys and one girl, and now enjoy three granddaughters. He serves on the board of trustees at his church, and plays an active part with the Ionia County Genealogical Society. He manages to fit in some fishing when not assisting with other community projects.

Following his paternal and maternal grandparents who were some of the very first members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op, Wayne has been a member since 1967.

How did you become involved with the co-op?

One day, while I was helping a neighbor do hay, I was talking about how I wasn't happy with the power outages we'd been experiencing. Clyde Avery just happened to be that neighbor, and he was on the nominating committee for the cooperative. Homer Downing was up for re-election that year.

Clyde asked me if I would run against Homer and I agreed, thinking I didn't stand a chance of winning. At the meeting where the election was held, Homer resigned, and I won the election. I have been serving the cooperative for 34 years now.

What does being on the co-op board mean to you?

Serving on the board of directors gives me the opportunity to help the co-op provide its members with reliable, affordable electricity.

What are some highlights you recall?

- The Wolverine cooperatives paying off the debt on the Fermi II nuclear plant;
- Paying nearly \$7 million in capital credits to our members;
- Getting into the satellite business, into propane, and into the WildBlue internet service, and developing the People Fund.



Wayne Swiler shows off the 1938 John Deere B driven by six generations of his family in fields or fair parades.

What do you think of member regulation?

Member regulation allows us the flexibility to adjust our power rates up and down as needed, saving the members by reducing attorney expenses and staff hours required to go through the process with the Public Service Commission. It used to take six months to a year; by the time we got one rate adjustment through, it would be time to do another one. Seemed like we were always playing catch-up.

What challenges do you see ahead?

New power generation will take about 10 years to build and get on-line. We need to get it built soon so we have power when we need it. Most of the power plants here are over 50 years old and need to be rebuilt. We need to keep up with technology, such as solar and wind energy, however the cost is very high. We will have to work hard to develop ways to create green power that is also affordable.

How can members get more involved?

It is easy...with computers, members may now check outages, pay their bills, and check out the latest co-op news. Read your *Country Lines* magazine to keep up on the latest details on what your cooperative is doing. Attend the district meetings—you might even win something!

In closing, I feel the board and management have come a long way in keeping the lights on and having minimal outages, as well as keeping electricity affordable for our members. Years ago, we used to have blinks and outages, and it was considered normal. These days, that is unacceptable, and we can be proud of how far we have come over the years.

Wayne Swiler represents District 2, including Barry and Ionia counties. He was re-elected to the board earlier this year.

Water Heating, Dual Fuel Incentives Change Jan. 1

Times and circumstances change, and our load management program is changing to keep up with the times.

“Our program was created over 20 years ago by our power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative, to lower energy use at peak times when it is most expensive to purchase power,” explains Missy Robson, customer service manager for HomeWorks Tri-County.

“Members received a monthly water heating credit or a discounted heating and cooling rate in exchange for allowing Wolverine to shut off those water heaters or heating and cooling systems at times of peak demand.”

Wolverine’s power contracts have been

restructured so they no longer have an economic need to reduce peak demand. As of July 1, Wolverine has reduced the dual fuel heating and cooling discount, which is now 3 cents per kilowatt-hour. The water heating credits are now \$4.50, regardless of the water

“Our load management program helps us reduce purchased power costs, helping to keep rates stable.”

heater’s size. Any outstanding water heater contracts will be honored until fulfilled.

Fortunately, the automated metering system HomeWorks Tri-County has operated since 2009 works with the devices that were

installed through Wolverine’s program. We are now evaluating whether to start our own load management program for the benefit of our member-owners.

“Having our own program would help us reduce our purchased power costs, helping to

keep rates stable for all members, as well as encouraging energy efficiency and the use of environmentally-friendly geothermal heating and cooling systems,” Robson says.

As of Jan. 1, 2012, our load management rates will change to match Wolverine’s new rates. Members who have been taking advantage of these credits or discounts for years will continue to receive an extra incentive for participating.

Meanwhile, our other member-owners will not be asked to subsidize the difference between the old rate and Wolverine’s new rates, while still benefiting from stable rates.

If you’re not already participating in our load management program, watch *Country Lines* or our website for more details on the new program as it develops in the future.

Energy Optimization Surcharge Changes Jan. 1

| RATE CATEGORY | 2009-11 CHARGE | 2012-15 CHARGE |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Farm & Home (Residential) | \$ 0.00149 /kWh | \$ 0.00204 /kWh |
| General Service | \$ 1.29 /meter | \$ 1.55 /meter |
| Large Power | \$ 30.21 /meter | \$ 47.14 /meter |
| Irrigation | \$ 0.00142 /kWh | \$ 0.00217 /kWh |
| PSDS | \$ 944.53 /meter | \$ 1,186.05 /meter |

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Tariff and Billing Rule Changes Effective Jan. 1, 2012

The HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors adopted the following changes to the cooperative’s tariffs and fees at a special open meeting held Sept. 26, 2011, in accordance with P.A. 167.

- 1) Establish the 2012 Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor at \$.00813, based on annual cost forecasts from Wolverine Power Cooperative.
- 2) Establish Energy Optimization rates for the 2012-2015 EO program years, based on 2 percent of electric revenues as designated by Michigan Public Act 295.
- 3) Revise the cooperative’s “Requirements for Pole Attachments” tariff sheet from \$6.50 per attachment point per year to \$9.
- 4) Revise the monthly credits given to members who participate in the cooperative’s load control heating (dual fuel) and water heating programs, aligning the cooperative’s retail credits with the wholesale credits assigned by Wolverine Power Cooperative.

For specific details on any HomeWorks tariffs or fees, please call us at 1-800-562-8232 or visit our website at homeworks.org.



The perfect gift

- Available in any amount
- Your gift can be applied directly to an electric or propane account
- Call 800-562-8232 or stop by either of our offices to start gifting!

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Blanchard Sept. 26, your board of directors:

Held a special open member meeting with time for open comment.

- Established the 2012 Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor at \$.00813, based on annual cost forecasts from Wolverine Power Cooperative.

- Established Energy Optimization rates for the 2012-2015 EO program years, based on 2 percent of electric revenues as designated by Michigan Public Act 295.

- Revised the cooperative's "Requirements for Pole Attachments" tariff sheet from \$6.50 per attachment point per year to \$9.

- Revised the monthly credits given to members who participate in the cooperative's load control heating (dual fuel) and water heating programs, aligning the cooperative's retail credits with the wholesale credits assigned by Wolverine Power Cooperative

During the regular monthly meeting, your board of directors:

- Learned about the various planning tools used to develop the Construction Work Plan, as a first step in reviewing the new four-year Work Plan and the cooperative's system

maintenance plan at future board meetings.

- Reviewed key ratio trend analysis statistics with comparisons to other cooperatives in the state, cooperatives of similar size, and all U.S. electric cooperatives.

- Went over preliminary information on a cost-of-service study performed by one of the cooperative's lenders.

- Congratulated directors Wayne Swiler and Cara Evans for earning the board leadership certification through NRECA's continuing education program.

- Recognized employees Jayne Graham and Matt Miller for 25 years of service to the cooperative.

- Read and approved "Board Policy 102 – Functions of the Board of Directors" and heard reports required by "Board Policy 211 – Whistleblower Policy" and "Board Policy 316 – Identity Theft."

- Reviewed August 2011 preliminary financial statements, and learned there were 135 new members for the month.

- Acknowledged the August/September safety report, with one employee accident, two public accidents, and four safety training sessions held.



HomeWorks Tri-County members have used Co-op Connections Card pharmacy benefits 3,445 times, saving \$85,569.97

If your local business can offer HomeWorks members a Co-op Connections® discount on your products or services, call Jayne Graham at 517-647-1252, or email jayne@homeworks.org.

Check Out What's New Online michigan-energy.org

Updated Website!

- New Look
- New Features
- Improved Navigation

Simplified Online Audit

- The Energy Optimization Program is pleased to offer Energy Depot®, a set of online tools that will allow you to complete your home energy audit in a quicker, easier format. Energy Depot is a one-stop-shop for energy efficiency education and information.

Join Us on Facebook!

- Like our page to get the latest news, updates, events and promotions.

www.facebook.com/EnergyOptimization

Must be cooperative member to be eligible for these programs. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.

Online Ordering

- Reduce phantom electricity use by ordering an energy efficient Smart Power Strip online.

ENERGY OPTIMIZATION
michigan-energy.org
877.296.4319

3474 Alaiedon Parkway, Suite 600
Okemos, MI 48864



Learn about our programs at michigan-energy.org • Questions? 877.296.4319

Take Steps Now to Enjoy Comfort Safely

Winter's coming and that means my to-do list at home includes making sure our furnace is working properly. A service call from a heating and cooling specialist will give me the peace of mind of knowing it is clean, vented properly, and operating safely and efficiently.

I'll also make sure the smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors have fresh batteries, and that they're working like they're supposed to.

These things are important to me because it's not just my safety I'm concerned about. I want my wife and three kids to have a comfortable winter without any fears of carbon monoxide, and these are easy steps I can take to assure that will happen.

Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer. It's a poison gas, colorless and odorless, with the same density as air. It enters the body only through the respiratory system, and combines with the blood to exclude oxygen. It can't be seen or smelled, and mixes freely with the surrounding air.

Early signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include dizziness, flu-like symptoms, and/or



CO monitors come in different styles for different uses, from your home to an RV.

a frontal headache.

These symptoms, even if they seem like another illness, should not be ignored. Depending on its concentration in the air, carbon monoxide works fast. At 3,200 parts per million (ppm), you'll notice dizziness or a headache within five or 10 minutes. Even at a slightly lower level, such as 2,000 ppm, you can suffer death or irreversible damage in just one hour.

Carbon monoxide, excessive water vapor, carbon soot, and aldehydes are products of incomplete combustion. You might notice a dampness in the air, more soot than usual, or the sour smell of the combustion fumes—that would be the aldehydes.

Make sure your furnace is working properly. Proper venting gives you further assurance in case the furnace stops operating correctly in the future. You should also check your vent openings. Make sure they're not blocked by stored items, and they're free of debris such as birds' nests.

Your family is important to me. If you ever have a concern about carbon monoxide, or suspect a gas leak, don't hesitate to call us. Our service is available 24 hours for your protection and convenience.

By the way, we send out safety information like this a couple times a year to all of our HomeWorks Tri-County Propane customers through our *Pipeline* newsletter. If you did not receive *Pipeline* in the past few weeks, call us at 877-574-2740 and we'll make sure you get one.

Randy Halstead is the propane manager at HomeWorks Tri-County Propane, a subsidiary of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative



Has Your Phone Number Changed?

When you sign up for electric service with Tri-County Electric Cooperative, we record your phone number. But these days, many members have gotten rid of their land lines to use a cell phone, or gave us a cell phone number that is no longer in service.

So, we're asking you to make sure we have your current phone number on file.

"We need to have an accurate record of the number you are most likely to call

from if an outage occurs," explains system engineer Chris Jensen. "This is recorded as your primary number, and our outage management system can recognize your account quickly if you use that number to report the outage."

If you have a secondary phone number, we can record that, too, Jensen says. We would use that number if we need to contact you for some reason but can't reach you at the primary number.

Here are a few reasons we might need to call you:

- To confirm your power has been restored. Our automated metering (AMI) system works most of the time, but will not work in some areas, or if its communications links are down.

- To notify you of a planned outage.

- To clarify locations of reported trouble, such as wires down, and

to warn you to stay away.

- To inform you to call an electrician, if repairs are needed before we can re-connect your service.

- To assist you in checking for a tripped breaker or other trouble when AMI indicates full power is reaching your meter.

- To let you know if for some reason we are unable to restore an outage for a period of time, so that you can make other arrangements.

While our service representatives will be checking phone numbers every time they talk to a member, there are several ways you can confirm or update your primary or secondary phone numbers with HomeWorks:

- Email tricoenergy@homeworks.org.
- Write a note on your payment stub.
- Call 800-562-8232 or, after hours, leave a message.
- Leave a note through our eBill system's self-service option.
- Stop by one of our offices and tell us.



Changing your phone can mean changing your phone number, too.

LEDs, CFLs Are Best Home Lighting Choices

We've all heard the rumors about incandescent lightbulbs not being produced after 2014, which poses the question: What should we use instead?

Everyone by now is aware of compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) and their potential 75 percent savings, but there is always a concern about their mercury content.

Light emitting diode (LED) bulbs are supposed to be the latest and greatest, with no mercury content, delivering at least the same energy savings as a CFL. Also known as solid state lighting, LEDs have been on the market for a few years now. As with the CFL, there have been some bumps along the way. The main issue has been finding a way to manage the LED temperature. If the bulb gets too hot, it will fail. After some testing and making adjustments, the LED is slowly gaining ground on the CFL as a home lighting choice.

Companies now think they have the problem solved, and offer a number of bulbs that will screw into existing lamps for a seamless transition. However, there's another problem with the new LED technology: the price tag. LEDs in the popular shapes and lighting equivalents that people want to use in their homes can cost upwards of \$50 per bulb!

Some experts predict prices will come down in the next two to five years, but they also say that even with the high price tag,

the efficiency, longevity and reliability make the LED a promising light source even at the higher price.

CFLs have been around for awhile now. When first introduced, they had serious drawbacks, such as taking forever to warm up and



All of these lightbulbs—CFLs, LEDs, and energy-saving incandescents—meet the new energy standards that take effect from 2012–2014.

give off full light, and the bulb's longevity.

Over the past few years, great strides have been made in improving both issues. Marketers now offer instant-on bulbs that take minimal to no warm up time, and manufacturers have changed the magnetic ballasts to electronic to improve performance.

The CFL still has a minimal amount of mercury in each bulb, but let's put into perspective how much mercury is actually there. A CFL bulb contains about 5 milligrams of mercury. How much is 5 milligrams? It's about enough mercury to cover the period at the end of this sentence.

Other common items that contain mercury are watch batteries (25 milligrams); a manual thermostat contains 3,000 milligrams.

When you consider the mercury content

of a CFL, remember that burning fossil fuels is the main source of mercury in our environment. A power plant will produce 10 milligrams of mercury to light an incandescent bulb, but only produces 2.4 milligrams to power a CFL for the same amount of time. So, using CFLs actually reduces the amount of mercury in the air.

Overall, any comparison of LED vs. CFL bulbs pretty much boils down to the price of each. Both bulbs are dimmable, save energy, and have made great strides in becoming more reliable and living up to the hype.

With people becoming more concerned about the environment, LED bulbs should be the wave of the future as their prices come down.

For now, it's very hard to compete with the return on investment from a \$2 CFL bulb, compared with up to \$50 for an LED. Both bulbs are a very good option to reduce costs in your home. Just remember to do your homework and make sure to get a quality product.

*Nick Rusnell is
HomeWorks Tri-County
Electric Cooperative's
energy advisor*



HomeWorks Tri-County offices will be closed:

Thursday, Nov. 24 – Thanksgiving

Friday, Dec. 23 – Christmas

Monday, Dec. 26 – Christmas

Monday, Jan. 2 – New Year's

Please call 800-562-8232 for emergency electric service, or 877-574-2740 for propane

We wish you a safe and happy holiday season!





Tri-County Electric Cooperative

homeworks.org

Do you know the **9 Crucial Questions** you need to ask your **propane** company?

If you're a typical homeowner shopping for a propane supplier, you'll probably call three to five propane companies and make a decision based on what sounds like the lowest price.

Unfortunately, price-per-gallon can be a deceiving number. Many propane companies will attract new customers with a low advertised price-per-gallon, then surprise the customer with additional fees and hidden charges.

By asking your propane supplier the **9 crucial questions** found in our **FREE report**, you'll discover how much you *really* pay for service, and how to choose a company that will give you the **best value**. Our FREE report includes:

- The 9 crucial questions you need to ask when shopping for a propane company.
- A worksheet for easy side-by-side comparison of each propane company you call.

This report is a free service of HomeWorks Tri-County Propane. And we're so confident that we can provide you with the best value propane service, that **we'll even give you contact information for 12 of our competitors** so you can call and compare for yourself.

Get a copy of the **FREE REPORT** by visiting homeworks.org/9questions or calling 1-877-574-2740.



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FREE REPORT by visiting
homeworks.org/9questions
or calling 1-877-574-2740



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1-877-574-2740
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