

A Service of **Midwest Energy Cooperative**

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Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



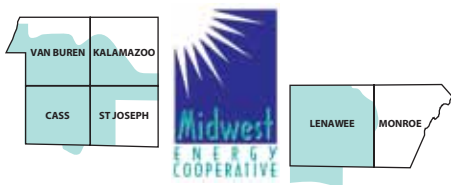
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Customer Service



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Not a One-size-fits-all Business

The electric utility industry is a complex business. As consumers, our primary interest is the availability of power at the flip of a switch. Most don't think much about the behind-the-scenes mechanics, design, infrastructure, processes and people that lead to the ability to light our homes, cook our food, or power our entertainment equipment. We want it when we need it, and are understandably frustrated when it's not there.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

You shouldn't have to think about or understand the complex systems and processes that get electricity from one point to another. That's our job. What is important for you to understand, however, is that your cooperative maintains a distribution system valued at over \$140 million. Because we are a member-owned cooperative, that represents your money at work to make sure that power flows at the flip of a switch.

But the distribution infrastructure (poles, wires and equipment) is just one piece of the complexity of this business model. The kilowatts that travel over that infrastructure are ultimately delivered to a variety of different kinds of members who require them to do very different things. We have various rate classes, each defined by common characteristics related to their use of and need for the kilowatts. Residential members are our largest class in number, representing about 84 percent of our total user base. Some residential members use only 1,500 kilowatt hours (kWh) annually, while others use 1,500 kWh monthly. Regardless of how much they use, they need a certain level of infrastructure in place to make sure power is available when needed.

Commercial and industrial (C&I) members account for only about 14 percent of our total membership base, but contribute 40 percent to our annual sales. C&I rate classes obviously have a very different level of demand for electricity than residential members by the very nature of their use of the commodity. Irrigation

accounts are also noteworthy, as they represent only about 1 percent of the membership base but contribute 2 percent to annual sales.

The point is this: Your co-op's staff has to understand how different classes of members use electricity in order to make sure the appropriate infrastructure is in place to meet their needs. And, each class of member should pay their proportionate share of the cost of that infrastructure. A homeowner does not have the same requirements as the manufacturer who runs motors during weekday shifts. Similarly, the retail shop owner requires a different system and equipment level than the irrigator, who needs significant infrastructure in place to run the high-pressure watering system, only if needed, for a three-month window each summer.

Ours is not a one-size-fits-all business, and the board and leadership have been working in recent months to make sure that your significant plant investment is appropriately distributed across each rate class based on the level of need. We commissioned a cost-of-service study this spring to help with this process. The study took into consideration all relevant billing, accounting and engineering data and directly allocated revenues, expenses, utility plant and other items to rate classes based on proportionate requirements. It was a comprehensive and time-consuming exercise, but ultimately gave us the information needed to develop a rate plan that allocates costs more accurately and appropriately. That plan has since been filed with the Michigan Public Service Commission, with a proposed four-year implementation timeline.

You don't need to understand how a unit of energy travels from the substation to your home, but we do want you to feel a sense of confidence and peace that we understand that—and more—related to delivering, accounting for, and billing your electric service. This is your cooperative, and you deserve to know.

Join Us at the Zoo!

Midwest Energy Cooperative invites our family of members to join us for a day of family fun at one of our annual "Day at the Zoo" customer appreciation events.

Members are invited to join us at either Toledo Zoo on Sunday, Sept. 23, or Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek on Sunday, Sept. 30. Your Team Midwest family will provide zoo admission and a picnic lunch (maximum of six per household), and an afternoon of family fun that won't soon be forgotten. Participating families may buy additional admission tickets at the zoo, and any other costs are your responsibility.

To sign up or get more information, call 1-800-492-5989 or visit TeamMidwest.com. The deadline for reservations is Friday, Aug. 31, and events are held rain or shine. A confirmation letter with further instructions, including parking information and a map, will be sent about two weeks prior to your selected event date.

We hope you will plan to join us for a fun-filled day at the zoo!



Above: Binder Park Zoo's giraffe exhibit is always a crowd favorite.



Left: Elephants come in all shapes, sizes and colors at the Toledo Zoo.

2012 Customer Usage Survey

The more we know about the ways our members use electricity, the better we are able to provide innovations and solutions. That's why we're asking you to take a few minutes later this summer to provide us some information that will help us better serve you.

A survey will be included in your August bill (and available online if you prefer an electronic version). It is intended to provide us with your latest contact information, and give us detailed information about your home and energy use. Relevant information will be added into your account to equip us to more effectively answer your questions and help you understand and manage your energy use.

Please take a few minutes to complete and return (or submit) the survey. The information will be used only by Midwest and not made available to any outside entities. To encourage you, we are offering \$100 energy credits by random drawing to 10 members who complete and return the survey.

Please watch your August bill for your survey, or visit TeamMidwest.com beginning Aug. 1 to complete it online. Thanks for helping us better serve you!

Scholarship Winners Announced



Abby Jo Carpenter



Joshua Clark



Lindsey Mroczek



Kendall Weber

Midwest Energy Cooperative recently awarded \$500 college scholarships to four 2012 high school graduates. Applications were judged based on academic achievements, school and community activities, honors and awards, and an essay.

Any high school senior whose parents or guardians receive service from Midwest Energy Cooperative and whose primary residence is in Midwest's service territory were eligible to apply.

"All of our award winners have demonstrated an excellent balance of academics and other involvement during their high school careers," said Bob Hance, Midwest Energy Cooperative president/CEO. "We're proud to use this scholarship program to help support today's student leaders on the path to becoming tomorrow's business and community leaders."

The scholarship winners are:

Abby Jo Carpenter, daughter of Matthew and Kelly Carpenter of Adrian. Abby graduated from Madison High School and will begin studies this fall at Michigan State University. This award was funded by Midwest and presented through the Lenawee County Education Foundation.

Joshua Clark, son of Timothy and Lynelle Clark of Niles. Joshua graduated from Edwardsburg High School and will begin studies this fall at Washington University in St. Louis.

Lindsey Mroczek, daughter of Ken and Deb Mroczek of Mattawan. Lindsey graduated from Mattawan High School and will begin studies this fall at Western Michigan University.

Kendall Weber, daughter of Chris and Cindy Weber of Wauseon. Kendall graduated from Wauseon High School and will begin studies this fall at Bluffton University, in Bluffton, OH.



White Pigeon Substation REBUILT

June weather provided a great backdrop for crews to put finishing touches on Midwest Energy Cooperative's new White Pigeon Substation. On Aug. 8, 2011, the substation was destroyed by a late afternoon fire. With rapid response from local fire departments and quick backfeeding work by Midwest crews, the fire was contained and members were only without service for about four hours.

Rebuilding work on the substation, which serves about 1,200 members in White Pigeon and Constantine, began this spring and was finished in late June. Our power supply partner, Cadillac-based Wolverine Power Cooperative, provided a mobile substation, allowing for a live cutover to the new sub and a seamless transition for our members.

The total project cost was about \$2 million, most of which was covered by insurance as a result of the fire.



 **Your Perspective**
PHOTO CONTEST

May Winner!

The votes are in and Brienne Poorman, a member from Cassopolis, is the May winner of our 2012 Your Perspective Photo Contest. Brienne's entry, "This is what summers are made of ..." secured the most votes by May 31 and won her a \$20 bill credit. There's still plenty of time to submit your entry. Visit us at [Facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest) for details and official rules.



Staying Safe Takes Practice

As Midwest Energy Cooperative works to provide safe and reliable electric service to our members, keeping employees safe is also a top concern. Our crews in the field work around dangerous elements, and occasionally under less than ideal circumstances. They need to know how to keep themselves, and their co-workers, safe at all times.

Our operations department has a regular monthly safety program to make sure we provide comprehensive training to protect our crews and members. Among the annual programs is the Pole-Top Bucket Truck Rescue training, held earlier this summer. This program gives our crews the tools and information needed to help and protect one another in the event someone is injured while working on the pole. Above, Kirk Sander, an apprentice in our Adrian office, reaches for a tool he needs to help his "co-worker" mannequin during this exercise.



Midwest Energy offices will be closed for Labor Day on Monday, Sept. 3. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.

Have a happy and safe Labor Day weekend!



Find us on Facebook.

[facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest)



Expanding Excellence

“Our members are more effectively served today because our team is better able to deliver meaningful, one-call solutions through ongoing training.”

Your cooperative was recently honored by utility industry leaders as the recipient of the Expanding Excellence Award for Innovation in Customer Service, presented at the annual CS Week Conference in Dallas. The award recognized Midwest Energy’s efforts to better serve its members through the customer care department.

In 2010, the customer care leadership team began working with InterWeave Corporation, a Tampa-based consulting firm dedicated to performance development as a means of improving member interactions. Together they pursued an approach that evaluated people and procedures within the department to better align with the company’s values of innovation, integrity, community and passion. They encouraged more self-awareness as to how individual behaviors can both positively and negatively influence member interactions.

During the training process, customer care team members mastered ways to engage

members by being assertive, positive and confident while working in partnership to resolve the issue behind the call. “The majority of our calls as an electric utility are related to billing or service issues. Callers can naturally be frustrated and our reps could easily become worn-down and defensive,” explains Meghan Tarver, customer care supervisor. “This process has helped us identify ways to better and more appropriately acknowledge the needs of our callers and provide a consistent, respectful, solution-based experience with every call.”

The learning process is ongoing as team members participate in regular evaluation and coaching based on actual call interactions, and the results are noticeable. “Our members are more effectively served today because our team is better able to deliver meaningful, one-call solutions through ongoing training,” Tarver said. She is also seeing a marked improvement in job satisfaction as the group works to better serve its members. The team is comprised of 16 employees including call center, front counter, collection and dispatch roles. On a typical day, the group handles more than 500 calls.

“I have seen and experienced the change in our call center as a result of this process. And more importantly, our members have experienced it,” adds Bob Hance, president/CEO. “Every interaction, whether it’s on the phone, in the office or in the field, is a chance to make a positive difference at that moment for that member, and we take those opportunities very seriously. I’m proud of the work we’ve accomplished and the service we are providing to our members.”

Photo – Kimberly Mitchell (center), president of InterWeave, celebrates with Midwest Energy Cooperative employees Candy Riem (left), marketing and member services manager, and Meghan Tarver (right), customer care supervisor, after the cooperative was recognized with the Expanding Excellence Award for Innovation in Customer Service during the 2012 CS Week Conference in Dallas.

Midwest in the Community

Giving back to our communities is one of the core values of Midwest Energy. 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 we impacted our communities over the last couple of months.

Gold Hammer

Every year, students in the residential construction program at the Lenawee Intermediate School District work on a community-based renovation project in conjunction with the local Habitat for Humanity Program.

This year's project, started last September, was an old, vacant farmhouse in extremely poor condition. In nine months, working just three hours a day, the students turned the dilapidated structure into a beautiful and modern farmhouse that will be occupied by



a man and his three children.

The students' hard work was celebrated at the school year's end with the Annual Gold Hammer Awards Banquet, where Midwest had the honor of recognizing the four top students.

This year we also introduced the Midwest Values Award to recognize a key volunteer or business who went above and beyond to assist the students during their renovation project. The inaugural winner was Rick Coon from Adrian Mechanical.



Above: This young man finds it a little intimidating to "measure up" against one of the life-sized prehistoric life exhibits at Ann Arbor's Museum of Natural History.

Right: Experimenting with magnetic fields proves to be very engaging for a young guest at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum.



Kaitlyn Dimas shows her winning design that was printed on shirts and distributed to members of her 4th grade class at Woodside Elementary School in Hartford.



Safety Month

In April, Midwest provided our hotline safety demonstration program to nearly 600 4th grade students as part of our 2012 Safety Month Contest. Students from Britton, Clinton and Deerfield schools in southeast Michigan and Watervliet, Hartford and Paw Paw schools in southwest Michigan were presented with the interactive safety demonstration, then provided with supplies to draw a poster to show what they learned.

Each participating classroom selected one poster to represent their class, and one winning design was selected from each participating school and printed on Safety Month t-shirts that were given to the students on a Midwest-sponsored field trip. Students from the southwest Michigan classrooms visited the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and students from southeast Michigan visited the Museum of Natural History in Ann Arbor.

Building, Planting or Playing? Stay Clear of Power Lines

Electric utility workers see some new homes and other structures built in odd places—a home with the roof less than 8 feet from an existing power line and a swimming pool or barn right underneath a line, for example.

“When you think about a builder hauling in materials and working in those areas, and then folks using the pool or getting too close to the roof, it’s pretty scary,” says Joe McElroy, safety director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association.

So, whether you’re a contractor or a do-it-yourselfer, use extra caution while working near overhead lines (never get closer than 10 feet), and consider their location in your planning. Also, McElroy encourages you to call Midwest Energy (800-492-5989) to let them know when you’re planning to work within 10 feet of power lines.

“Electricity flows through metal, wood, water and many other conducting materials, including human beings—all in an effort to reach the ground,” McElroy adds. “Small

birds can sit on power lines unhurt because they don’t create a path to the ground, but you and your ladder do.”

Further, a power line doesn’t have to be touched to be dangerous. Unless you are qualified to work around power lines, you should stay at least 10 feet away, or more.

Since overhead lines are not insulated, touching a line or an object in contact with it can result in serious injury, or even death. Stay away, and contact your electric co-op.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration advises that the best protection is lots of space. Don’t operate equipment around overhead lines unless you are authorized and trained to do so. Other safety tips include:

- ▶ Use a nonconductive fiberglass ladder.
- ▶ If objects (scaffolds, cranes) must be moved near the lines, appoint a worker whose only job is to observe the clearance between the lines and the object and warn others if that distance is not maintained.

A power line doesn't have to be touched to be dangerous.



▶ Never touch *any* downed power line, and never assume fallen lines are dead.

If you are in a vehicle that contacts with a power line, don’t leave the vehicle. As long as you stay inside and avoid touching outside metal, you should avoid an electrical hazard. If you need to exit to summon help or because of fire, jump out without touching any wires or the exterior, keep your feet together, and hop to safety.



Photo - iStockphoto.com

LEAVE THE POLE ALONE



What do yard sale signs, basketball hoops, satellite dishes and birdhouses have in common? They’re often found illegally attached to utility poles. But this isn’t just a crime of inconvenience. Safety issues caused by unapproved pole attachments put the lives of lineworkers and the public in peril.

Your local electric co-op line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night, in the worst conditions, so anything attached to them can create serious hazards. Sharp objects like nails, bolts, tacks, staples or barbed wire can also puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making lineworkers vulnerable to electrocution.

Co-op lineworkers have even reported poles used as support legs for deer stands, lights and carports. Any person placing items on poles also comes dangerously close to energized power lines with thousands of volts of energy pulsing overhead.

Unauthorized pole attachments also violate the National Electrical Safety Code. Utilities strictly follow this code, so please help keep lineworkers—and members of your community and family—safe. Don’t attach any of these dangerous items to utility poles.

Fixtures not belonging to the co-op or another utility will be removed by line personnel, and the co-op is not responsible for any losses if an item is damaged or destroyed during removal.

Teach Kids Safety, Too

Kids often don’t understand the outdoor dangers of electricity, but making them aware of overhead lines and these rules can help:

▲ *Never play or climb trees near power lines.*

▲ *Never climb a utility pole or tower.*

▲ *Never fly kites or model planes near trees and overhead lines.* If a toy gets stuck in a tree near the lines, don’t climb to get it. Call your local electric co-op or utility for help.

▲ *Don’t play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment* (usually green boxes).

▲ *Never go into an electric substation*—not even to rescue a pet or retrieve a toy. Substations contain deadly, high-voltage equipment. Call your electric co-op or area utility instead.

▲ *Use caution before plugging in a radio or electrical gadgets outdoors.* Keep all electrical appliances at least 10 feet away from hot tubs, pools, ponds, puddles and wet surfaces.



Energy Star® Products Can Bring Out the Best in Your Home

Remember your grandparents' kitchen and living room? Now picture your current home. What differences come to mind? Lime green and turquoise appliances have given way to black, white and stainless steel. Console TVs have become flat screens. And, energy use is more important than ever since more appliances and electronic devices are part of today's homes.

Energy efficient merchandise offers convenience and helps you manage your energy use. Energy Star® products provide the same features that you're already used to, but can use up to 75 percent less energy than standard models.

What is Energy Star?

Energy Star began 20 years ago as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This voluntary labeling program promotes energy efficient products. Computers and monitors were the first products to earn the Energy Star label.

Today, there are 60 Energy Star product categories—from lightbulbs to refrigerators—

and over 300 million qualified products are sold each year. In addition, 2,200 private employers manufacture these products, providing jobs and helping customers save energy.

To use the Energy Star label, a product must:

- Contribute significant energy savings.
- Deliver features and performance that customers demand.

- Back up energy savings claims with testing.

In short, Energy Star is a trusted brand for quality products that use less energy. Energy efficiency products are among the few products on the market that pay you back over time.

Rebates

While Energy Star-qualified products often cost more than standard versions, the initial investment is almost always recouped by the long-term savings that result. Rebates can also help offset the up-front cost. Midwest Energy Cooperative offers cash-back rebates on qualifying

efficiency products, including Energy Star. Learn more at michigan-energy.org.

Shop On

If a lightbulb burns out or your fridge is on the fritz, give Energy Star a chance. For more ways to save energy, check out Midwest Energy Cooperative's other Energy Optimization programs.

Online: michigan-energy.org

Call: 877-296-4319

Sample Energy Efficiency Products	Rebate
CFLs, LEDs, LED Holiday Lights	In-store discount
CFL or LED Light Fixtures	\$15-20
Smart Power Strip	\$20
Room Air Conditioner	\$20
Dehumidifier	\$20
Refrigerator	\$20
Clothes Dryer	\$25
Dishwasher	\$20
Clothes Washer	\$50
Low Flow Aerator Kits	\$10

ENERGY STAR® appliances: Feel-good purchases
 Dishwasher on the fritz? Need a new refrigerator? Dryer not working? Take advantage of \$10-\$50 Energy Optimization rebates on qualifying energy efficient appliances. View incentives online.

shop SMART

ENERGY TIP: Use up to 75% less energy with ENERGY STAR products.

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.



Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

TeamMidwest.com

a day at the ZOO

Midwest Energy invites you to join us for a day of family memories at the Annual Member Appreciation Day at the Zoo.

Sunday, Sept. 23 *or* Sunday, Sept. 30
Toledo Zoo *or* Binder Park Zoo

Midwest will provide zoo admission, a picnic lunch and an afternoon of family fun that won't soon be forgotten. *Some restrictions apply; see details below.*

Choose your date and reserve your tickets online at TeamMidwest.com or by phone at 800-492-5989. Events are held rain or shine. A confirmation letter with details will be sent two weeks prior to the event. Reservation deadline is Aug. 31.

Admission and lunch limited to one venue and a maximum of six guests per household. Additional tickets may be purchased at the zoo and other costs are your responsibility.

