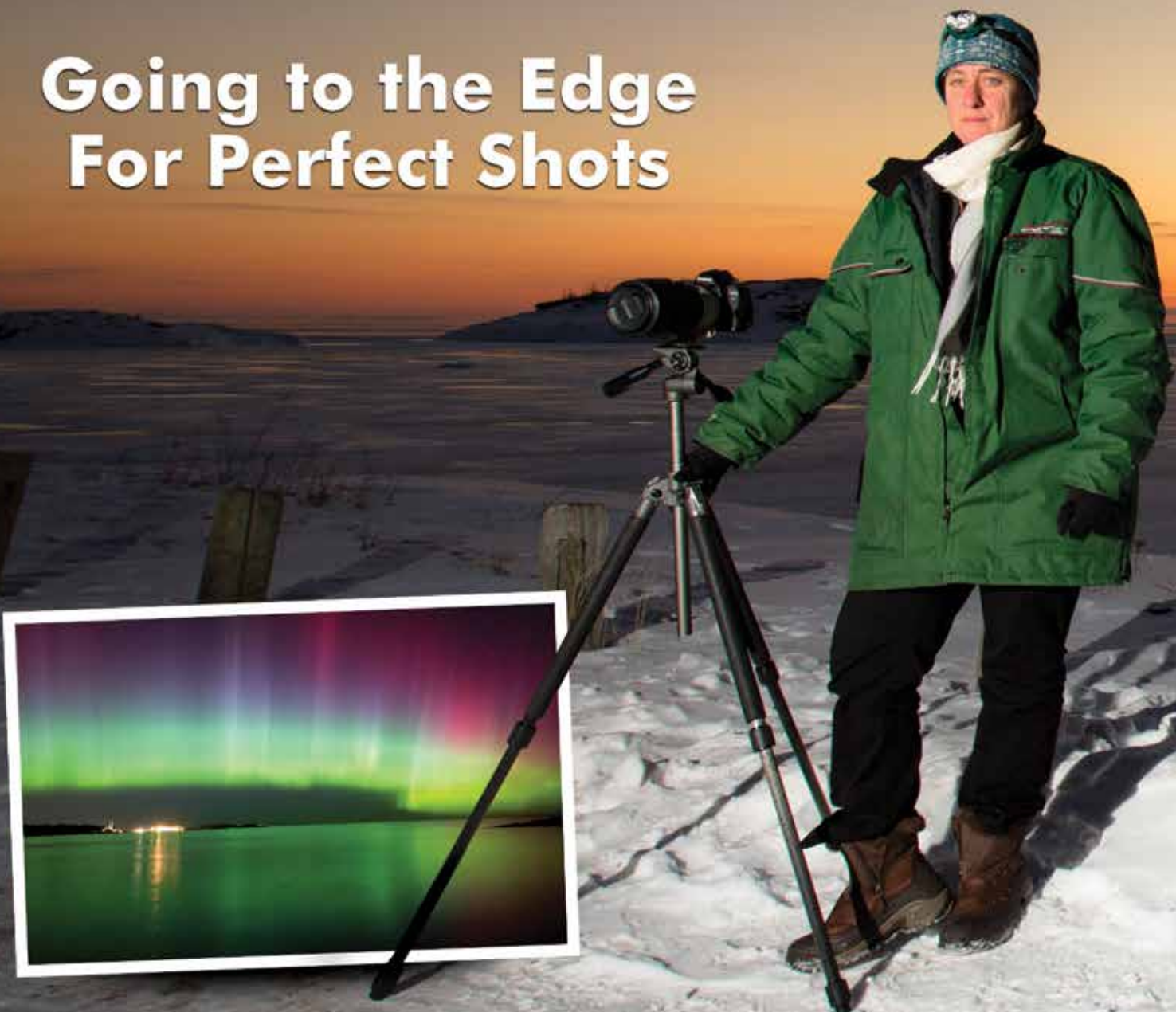


A Service of **Midwest Energy Cooperative**

March 2014

Michigan COUNTRY LINES

**Going to the Edge
For Perfect Shots**



**4 We Need a Common
Sense Solution**

**8 Prepare Now for
Spring Storms**

**9 Power Restoration is Just
a Text Message Away**

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Improvements
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& Clg
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& Htg
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SEVEN
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March 2014
Vol. 34, No. 3

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Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

IN THIS ISSUE

Michigan Country Lines, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Okemos, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Subscriptions are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Cloverland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors. Subscriptions for nonmembers are \$6 per year.

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Letters to the editor should be sent to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Phone 517-913-3531. Email: gknudtson@meca.coop.

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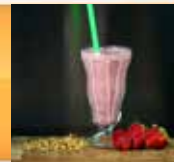
Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.



6

HOME COOKING Shakes & Smoothies

Christin McKamey
& Our Readers



7

OUR ENERGY Maintaining Affordable, Reliable Electricity—You Can Take Action to Help



10

FEATURE Going to the Edge for Perfect Shots

Kath Usitalo



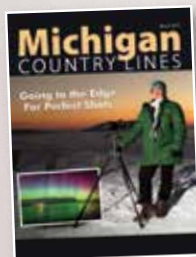
13

SAFETY Stay Clear of Downed Power Lines



14

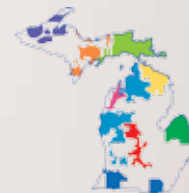
READERS' PAGE Help With Affordable Health Care Law • Mystery Photo • Energy Tip



ON THE COVER

Photographer Shawn Malone, who recently opened a studio and gallery in Marquette, literally goes to the edge of cliffs and makes nighttime forays into the wilderness to capture the glory of the Upper Peninsula's land, water and sky.

Photo Courtesy – Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



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Robert Hance

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We Need A Common Sense Solution

We talk a lot about storms and outages; it's a reality of our business. But the latest storm brewing on the national forecast will result in an entirely different level of devastation unless we do something to change its course.

This storm is fueled by a number of forces, including environmental politics, an insatiable and growing demand for electricity, and aging systems that can't support that demand. Like the "perfect storm" created by weather forces, this could result in widespread and devastating transmission failure and surging electric rates.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

I have been accused of being anti-renewable, anti-environment, and stuck in the old ways of doing business. The reality is I am "pro-member." I fully support exploring and incorporating new technologies that improve and enhance our business. What I don't support is an extreme that speaks to only one issue, effectively ignoring the financial impact to the masses.

The current administration is bowing to the well-funded and very vocal environmental extreme by espousing an "all-but-one" approach to electric generation.

We must have an equally organized voice that promotes a balanced and common sense approach to energy policy to shield consumers from the impact of extreme legislation. This means implementing an energy portfolio that includes coal, along with other generation and technology designed to protect the air we breathe.

You Can Help

We're at a critical crossroads. No matter what we do to protect reliability, costs will increase because new generation must be built. Reliability and environmental concerns must be considered, but affordability must also be part of the solution. I'm challenging you to get involved.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, representing over 900 consumer-owned electric cooperatives, has created an informational website and method of contacting legislators to encourage an "all-of-the-above" approach. To learn more and help send a unified message on behalf of electric ratepayers that affordability must be part of a common sense solution visit Action.coop. Working together as a national membership we have the ability to make our voices heard.

New Generation Needed

While complex in nature, the situation boils down to the need for new electric generation as our current system can no longer reliably handle our collective needs. Weather events late last summer and this winter both exposed the vulnerability of our aging system, demonstrating that our grid is just one major event away from catastrophic failure.

The political tug-of-war is about how to fuel that generation. The environmental extreme—an organized, national voice—wants to eliminate coal. It's great in theory, but impractical and potentially devastating in practice.

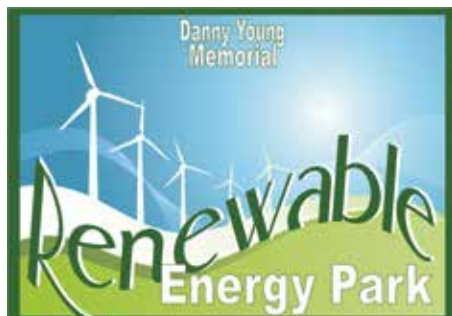
Coal remains the most abundant and affordable fuel available and has effectively powered our nation's generation system for many years. While it's not the cleanest fuel, technology has come a long way in reducing the environmental impact.

A Complicated Debate

This complicated debate comes down to two very critical elements: reliability and affordability.

2013 Year-at-a-Glance

After the fifth full year of operation, the Danny Young Memorial Renewable Energy Park continues to be a valuable resource for individuals considering residential renewable energy applications. Many individuals and groups toured the park to learn more about our efforts and results, or monitored the monthly data collection and economic analysis posted at TeamMidwest.com. Some were simply curious observers or environmentalists, while others were trying to determine whether or not to install similar technology in their own homes.



January:

Solar output	142
Wind output	161

February:

Solar output	147
Wind output	147

March:

Solar output	358
Wind output	132

April:

Solar output	383
Wind output	172

May:

Solar output	499
Wind output	73

June:

Solar output	533
Wind output	35

July:

Solar output	447
Wind output	30

August:

Solar output	363
Wind output	20

September:

Solar output	344
Wind output	23

October:

Solar output	204
Wind output	40

November:

Solar output	101
Wind output	95

December:

Solar output	64
Wind output	88

Total generation 2013:

Solar	3,585
Wind	1,016

Total generation life-to-date:

Solar (installed Jan. 2008) . . .	24,091
Wind (installed Dec. 2008)	4,650

Cost per kWh generated life-to-date

Solar	\$1.05
Wind	\$3.92

Notice to Members of Midwest Energy Cooperative

Case No. U-15818

2012 Renewable Energy Plan Annual Report Summary

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately 2 percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012 and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, Midwest Energy Cooperative submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2012, Midwest acquired 26,022 renewable energy credits and 531 incentive credits from its wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative, Inc. Wolverine will continue to generate renewable energy and bank unused renewable energy credits for future use and compliance with statutory renewable portfolio standard requirements on behalf of all of its members.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan annual report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the cooperative's website at teammidwest.com or by request at any of the cooperative's offices.

Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Midwest Energy Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/13.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used

Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	54.1%	59.4%
Oil	2.9%	0.6%
Gas	18.1%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	2.7%	0.6%
Nuclear	17.0%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	5.2%	4.2%
Biofuel	0.4%	0.5%
Biomass	0.1%	0.5%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.0%	0.0%
Wind	4.6%	2.7%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas, and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix.

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Avg. Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.1	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,522	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.8	2.0
High-level nuclear waste	0.0056	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/13.

Midwest Energy purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Cooperative, which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Shakes & Smoothies

Shakes and smoothies are a refreshing treat any time of day. With so many different ingredients and combinations, you'll never get bored. They are also unbelievably easy to make. All you need is a blender.

Photography by: 831 Creative

Coconut Granola Berry Smoothie

*1/2 c. granola
6 fresh strawberries
1 T. flax seed oil
3/4 c. unsweetened coconut milk
3 T. vanilla yogurt
7-8 ice cubes*

Blend until smooth and enjoy. Makes 1-2 servings.

Christin McKamey, Royal Oak

Kate's Green Smoothie

*1 c. ice
1 c. apple juice
2 ripe bananas
1 1/2 c. kale
3/4 c. chopped celery*

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. So simple and so good for you. Enjoy! Rinse out your blender and glasses as soon as you can - this mixture sticks to everything.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Peanut Butter Banana Flip Smoothie

*1 c. milk of choice
2 T. natural peanut butter, creamy or chunky
1 t. pure vanilla
1 frozen banana, cut into chunks
6 ice cubes*

Pour milk into blender and add peanut butter, vanilla, banana and ice. Blend on high speed until smooth and serve.

Lorraine Green, South Boardman

Nutty Monkey Shake

*1/4 c. milk
1 banana, cut into chunks
1/4 c. malted milk powder
2 T. creamy peanut butter
2 c. fat-free frozen yogurt*

In a blender, combine milk, banana, malted milk powder and peanut butter. Cover and process for 10-15 seconds or until smooth. Add frozen yogurt, cover and process until blended. 5 servings.

Janice L. Thompson, Martin

Blueberry Cherry Cheesecake Smoothie

*2 c. fresh or frozen blueberries
1/2 c. fresh or frozen cherries
1 1/4 c. milk
1/4 c. (2-oz.) cream cheese
1 to 3 ice cubes*

Combine blueberries, milk, cherries and cream cheese in blender. Process until mixture is smooth. Add 3 ice cubes if using fresh fruit and 1 to 2 cubes if using frozen fruit. Process until smooth and pour into 2 glasses. Makes 2 (12-oz.) servings.

Tina Bates, East Jordan

Adult Peach Smoothie (Fresh Peach Martini)

*2 peaches, peeled, pitted and quartered
4 oz. vodka
1 oz. peach schnapps
1-2 oz. simple syrup
1 1/2 c. ice*

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. Makes 2 drinks.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Coffee Bananas Foster Smoothie

*1 1/2 c. strong coffee, chilled
1/2 t. cinnamon
2 T. brown sugar
2 small ripe bananas
6 oz. vanilla yogurt
1/2 c. fat-free half & half
1 c. ice cubes*

In a blender, combine all ingredients and blend well.

Pat Sullivan, Bozeman

Submit your recipe! Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"All About Snacks"** recipes by **June 10** and **"Best Original Recipes"** by **July 10**.

Mail (handwritten or typed on one side, please) to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2014 will be entered in a drawing and Country Lines will pay the winner's January 2015 electric bill (up to \$200)!



Visit recipe editor Christin McKamey's website, **veggiechick.com**, for healthy, vegetarian recipes and info!

Help Your Electric Co-op Keep Rates Affordable

A message for all Michigan electric co-op member-owners. . .
The fight to maintain affordable, reliable electricity continues—and you can help!

Co-op members are needed to step up and let their voices be heard. Electric co-ops across the country are fighting to maintain a balanced energy policy that protects affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible electricity generation.

Co-op members are being asked to join the fight to instill common sense into the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rule-making process by commenting online at Action.coop. It only takes a few minutes to complete.

Proposed regulations threaten to end the use of coal at new power plants. This is a concern because the regulations, along with the ones EPA has in store for existing plants, have the potential to drive up everyone's electric bills.

Nationwide, coal is responsible for about 40 percent of all electricity generated.

"As not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities, electric co-ops rely on a diverse fuel mix to provide affordable, reliable electricity to 42 million Americans," explains Jo Ann Emerson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the trade

association for America's electric co-ops. "We believe strongly in our responsibility both to our environment and to members, who often serve some of the most economically vulner-

thoughts with the EPA. "This is a start, but we can do better, as it's critically important that the voice of co-op members is heard on this issue," says Craig Borr, president/CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association.

Bringing common sense to the rule-making process is also important as the EPA develops rules for existing plants, which are scheduled for release in June.

In just the last decade, power supply co-ops have invested over \$3.4 billion to reduce emissions and boost efficiency. And, *co-ops are only asking that environmental regulation be balanced with realistic costs and benefits.*

By stepping up to comment, you will be asking the EPA to recognize the unique circumstances of your nonprofit, member-owned electric co-op and to work with co-ops to forge a fair solution that allows them to continue providing you with affordable, reliable power.

Electric co-ops serve over 42 million people nationwide. By joining together, co-op members can make a difference in shaping responsible energy policy.

COOPERATIVE ACTION NETWORK

able populations in this country.

"That's why NRECA continues to urge the administration to reconsider this proposal and the potentially damaging effects it could have on communities and the economy," she adds.

Electric rates are something consumer-owned electric co-ops take personally because they know the tough choices many of us face in trying to live on a budget. That's what sets co-ops apart from other utilities and that's why we must stick together.

Thousands have already answered the call and sent comments through Action.coop, but more are needed. About 609 Michigan co-op members have started sharing their



RENEWABLE ENERGY



NUCLEAR POWER



NATURAL GAS



CLEAN COAL

America needs an
ALL OF THE ABOVE STRATEGY
to keep electric bills affordable

**TELL THE EPA TO RECONSIDER
ITS "ALL-BUT-ONE" APPROACH**

ACTION.COOP

BE PREPARED

Before Mother Nature rears her ugly head with spring storms, take time to think through what you need in the event of an extended power outage.

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

- Water – At least one 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.
- Communications - Battery-powered radio and/or television. Midwest Energy works with regional news media to provide regular updates about major power outages.
- Clock – Battery-powered or wind-up clock.
- First-aid kit – and hand sanitizer. Be sure to fill prescriptions and have any needed medical supplies on hand.
- Extra blankets.
- Candles and matches.
- Personal sanitation - Moist wipes, garbage bags and plastic ties.
- Wrench – or pliers to turn off utilities.

Be safe and smart

- Stay away from downed 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. That way you will avoid a

circuit overload when power is restored to 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 power 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 such as a mall or library.
- Do not hesitate to call a doctor if you have any health-related questions or concerns.

Convenient outage reporting

Midwest offers easy and convenient ways to report your power outage. Please do not use email or social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to report your outage as these platforms are not staffed 24/7.

Online and Mobile Power Tools: When you're in the dark and trying to report your power outage, there's nothing more frustrating than a fast busy signal or sitting in a crowded phone queue waiting for the next available customer care representative.

SmartHub offers a set of online and mobile Power Tools, allowing you to report your outage from the comfort and convenience of your computer or mobile device. Log in to your account to report your outage through the online portal at our website, use the free SmartHub app available through your iTunes or Google Play store, or text your outage from your cell phone. A short

registration process is required for new users of these convenient platforms. Learn more by clicking on the Power Tools ad at TeamMidwest.com.

Telephone: The telephone system at your co-op is equipped with an automatic outage reporting system, an easy and efficient way to report your outage. Dial 800-492-5989 and follow the prompts to report your outage. We must have an up-to-date telephone number on your account for you to use this system. Please call our office at 800-492-5989 to update account information.

We have a limited number of incoming lines that are more than adequate for regular business operations, but may become overly taxed in a major outage situation. If you call and receive a fast busy signal, that means more members are attempting to call than our incoming phone line capacity. In this event, please hang up and try again later, or use an alternative method of outage reporting.

Learning more about current outages

We strive to provide timely and useful information during major outage situations. During any major outage or emergency situation, we provide regular updates to local media outlets to keep you informed about outage numbers and locations. The same update information is posted on the red emergency banner across the top of our homepage at TeamMidwest.com, and shared via our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Get quick access to our social media sites by clicking on the individual icons found at the top right side of our homepage.

Our Outage Central map, also available via our homepage and in the SmartHub app, provides a quick snapshot of outages by zip code.

Out of Power?

Restoration Is Just One Text Message Away!

As your energy partner, Midwest is proud to offer a great set of online and mobile Power Tools to help you manage your account and service experience.

For many years, members have asked for mobile and online methods for outage reporting, and we've filled your toolbox with a variety of options to meet your individual needs and preferences. Texting outages is just one of the exciting new tools offered.

Through the Power Tools page at TeamMidwest.com you can learn more about this easy option, and complete the simple

registration process so that you are ready to go when the next outage hits. If you have not previously provided your cell phone number or it has changed, please contact us at 800-492-5989.

Once registered, texting your outage is as simple as 1-2-3:

1. Open a new text message in your cell phone.

2. Type Outage (without quotes, not case sensitive).

3. Enter the outage number provided during the sign-up process in the "Send To"



field and send.

When your text is received and verified, you will receive an "Outage Reported Successfully" message. A second message will be sent when the outage is restored. Please note that all standard data and text messaging charges apply.

For your information – you can also report your outage online or with your mobile device using SmartHub. Open and explore your toolbox by clicking on the "Power Tools" ad at TeamMidwest.com.

Preferred Contractors Meet Co-op Quality Standards

Choosing qualified and reputable contractors can be difficult. As a service to our members, we have compiled a list of Midwest Energy Cooperative preferred electrical contractors. As part of the qualification process, we researched, interviewed and checked references on a regional pool of contractors, and included on our final list only those that we feel confident will provide the level of service that you have come to know and expect from your co-op.

Please feel free to contact any of these contractors with confidence if you are interested in more information about their services.

Southwest Michigan:

Bender Electric

19636 Allegheny
Cassopolis, MI 49031
269-445-3260
Residential & commercial, repairs, trenching, bucket truck

Byler Electric, Inc.

550 Florence Rd., P.O. Box 86
Constantine, MI 49042
269-435-7156
Industrial, commercial, residential & agricultural; new construction; service upgrades; bucket truck; trenching; Guardian/Generac generator dealer & service

Edison Electric

31158 56th Avenue
Paw Paw, MI 49079
269-657-6955
Industrial, commercial & residential; electrical construction & maintenance

Esper Electric, LTD

7775 North 6th St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-342-6909
Full service electrical contractor for residential, commercial & industrial

Hi-Tech Electric Co.

839 Lenox Avenue
Portage, MI 49024
269-323-1111
Industrial, commercial & residential; data & communications systems; access controls; service & lighting upgrades; generator sales & service

Jones & Son Electrical Contractors, Inc.

23482 CR 4, Elkhart, IN 46514
574-206-9465
Residential & commercial services

Kerwin Electric, Inc.

7930 S. 8th St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

269-375-6543

Residential, commercial, industrial & agricultural; generators; crane service; solar & wind power

Ketelhut Electric

7445 Territorial
Watervliet, MI 49098
269-468-5341
Commercial & residential, all electrical & cabling needs

Kusmack Electric, Inc.

39560 72nd Ave.
Decatur, MI 49045
269-720-3821
Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling & service upgrades, troubleshooting, generator installations

Midway Electric Inc.

51433 63rd Ave.
Lawrence, MI 49064
269-674-3213
Residential, commercial, & industrial; data & communications systems wiring

Peterson's Electric, Inc.

2010 West W Ave.
Schoolcraft, MI 49087
269-679-4797
Commercial & residential service & repair

Wolverine Electrical Contracting, Inc.

2700 Old US-31 North
Niles, MI 49120
269-683-4850
Commercial, industrial & residential; bucket truck; trenching; data & communication systems wiring; Generac generators sales & service; electric thermal storage heating sales & service

Southeast Michigan:

Creighton Electric L.L.C.

260 Westfield Dr.
Archbold, OH 43502
419-445-2223
Commercial, industrial & residential; full service electrical contractor; high voltage work; excavation work; Generac sales & installation

Ford Electric L.L.C.

8442 Brooks Hwy., Onsted, MI 49265
517-467-4133
Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling, repairs, troubleshooting, generator systems

MTC Electric

P.O. Box 39, Tecumseh, MI 49286
517-260-1664
Residential, commercial & small industrial; troubleshooting

Neil's Electric, Inc.

2366 Carleton Rd.
Adrian, MI 49221
517-265-4459
Residential & commercial electrical installation and service

Sexton Electric

6035 U.S. Hwy. 223
Addison, MI 49220
517-252-5187
Residential & light commercial electrical

Snyr Electric

8380 Round Lake Hwy.
Manitou Beach, MI 49253
517-270-7777
Residential, commercial & industrial; underground wire locator; trenching; aerial bucket truck; generator installation & repair

GOING TO THE EDGE



She's dangled over an icy wall and rappelled its glassy facade, come dangerously close to the edge of several cliffs, and inched along narrow paths in the pitch-black night of the Upper Peninsula's wilderness to capture stunning images. Photographer Shawn Malone actually studied music in college, but a decade or so after leaving the Chicago skyline behind, she's developed a worldwide following for her impressions of the natural wonders surrounding her adopted hometown of Marquette.

"I was doing a lot of auditions in major cities and grew weary of all the concrete, traffic, and smog. I realized I couldn't possibly be happy in that environment," Malone says of her past life. So, she and husband Brian took a jaunt to the U.P.

and, she recalls, "We fell in love with the area after seeing Lake Superior for the first time in Grand Marais, and were struck by the quality of the water. I always remember that. We just moved up here, with no jobs, for the quality of life."

Looking to earn a living, Malone picked up a camera and began seasonally capturing the woods, waterfalls, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Lake Superior, and the Mackinac Bridge and lighthouses.

With Brian, also a photographer, she then traveled and sold their work on the art fair circuit for many years, including the Ann Arbor show. Burned out by the traveling grind, however, the couple missed the land they loved. "I moved to the U.P. to be in the U.P.," she says. "The next step was to figure out how to stay in the U.P."

One year ago, they cut all but a few art fairs from their schedule and opened Lake Superior Photo, a gallery and studio in Marquette, where they exhibit and sell prints of all sizes.

Besides landscapes, Malone has pointed her lens to the night sky and captured spectacular Northern Lights images, which have catapulted her into the national and international limelight—especially with the release of her time-lapse video, "North Country Dreamland." She edited 10,000 still images taken throughout 2012 into the 7-minute program, which was the "People's Choice" winner in a 2013 Smithsonian online competition (see lakesuperiorphoto.com).

"The Northern Lights have really caught on with the media," Malone says of her extensive portfolio of sky shots. She believes it's because most people will never see the lights in person. While it's possible to catch the colorful, dancing flares most of the year, conditions must be just right. Even in the best viewing spots, including the U.P., there's no guarantee that clouds won't obscure them. "You might go years without seeing a strong display," she says, citing the spans between activity she witnessed in 2004, 2011, and those in her second video, "Radiance" (Oct. 2013). "Those kinds of displays you remember the rest of your life."

Monitoring space weather websites helps her decide whether to venture out and attempt a photo shoot, but she adds, "A lot has yet to be learned on how the aurora works, but you have a good opportunity to see it with a strong solar flare off the sun that is Earthward-directed." Once she sees some activity, her experience helps to



Lake Superior sea caves—This is one of the photographer's favorites because of the arch portals' composition and reflection in the foreground. The sun only sets through the left portal a few days in the year.

FOR PERFECT SHOTS



▲ **Northern Lights, Crisp Point Lighthouse**—One of Malone's most difficult shots, this 10-frame panoramic shows a 180-degree view, and received an Epson International Panorama Competition Silver Award. Lake Superior had to be flat-calm for the composite to mesh, and aurora borealis made an appearance!

▼ **Mackinac Moonrise**—This shot only happens once a year due to where the moon rises, and the weather.



▲ **Milky Way Road**—A unique shot of the Milky Way on a moonless night, creatively lit by the car's headlights.

Photos by Shawn Malone

judge how much time to invest and whether it will pay off.

Patience and luck are given credit for some of her success, too, especially as she ventures into the wilds where there are no danger warning signs. Recalling a trip to Isle Royale after shooting the Northern Lights at Tobin Harbor, she headed back to her lean-to. "I had a two-mile hike at two in the morning along basically a deer path...a cobblestone, trippy kind of thing." It was so dark that she couldn't see what was around her, but could hear moose sparring nearby. "That sound puts the fear of God in you because you could just feel the power of the animals," she says, shuddering while remembering that

too-close call.

"Getting the shot" also involves experimenting with manual settings and using a tripod to keep the camera steady for long exposures, Malone tells shutterbugs in her teaching workshops.

Her imagery also appears in magazines, websites and books, and she freelances as a managing photographer at *Upper Peninsula Second Wave*, an online magazine. Her artwork is also viewable and for purchase at <http://www.lakesuperiorphoto.com>, and this year she'll ponder a book project.

Meanwhile, her camera will be kept ever-ready to record impressions of the land, water and sky she loves.



Photographer Shawn Malone says the difficulty of a shot is related to logistics and understanding what happens at certain times with light and subject matter. Follow her on Facebook at [fb.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto](https://www.facebook.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto)

Get a Handle on Hidden Electric Costs

It's expected that your gas bill will spike in winter due to constant furnace use. But did you know that running the furnace can also cause your electric usage to increase?

While high electric use is often associated with operating an air conditioner, a forced-air furnace also uses its fair share of electricity. A furnace typically has two motors: The combustion blower motor, which draws air into the combustion chamber and pushes combustion and exhaust air through the ignition chamber; and the blower motor, or air handler, which blows heated air through your home. The blower motor uses about 80 percent of the total electricity consumed by the furnace, costing you anywhere between \$33 and \$65 monthly.

Switch to an ECM Furnace

If your furnace is over 10 years old, a staged

furnace outfitted with an electronically commutated motor (ECM) will help you save energy and money. A staged furnace adjusts the amount of fuel burned (from high to low) in every cycle, and some furnaces modulate their output based on the amount of heat needed. An ECM, also called a "variable speed motor," adjusts its speed as necessary, instead of running at one speed. This type of blower motor conserves energy, ensuring optimal airflow and using less electricity.

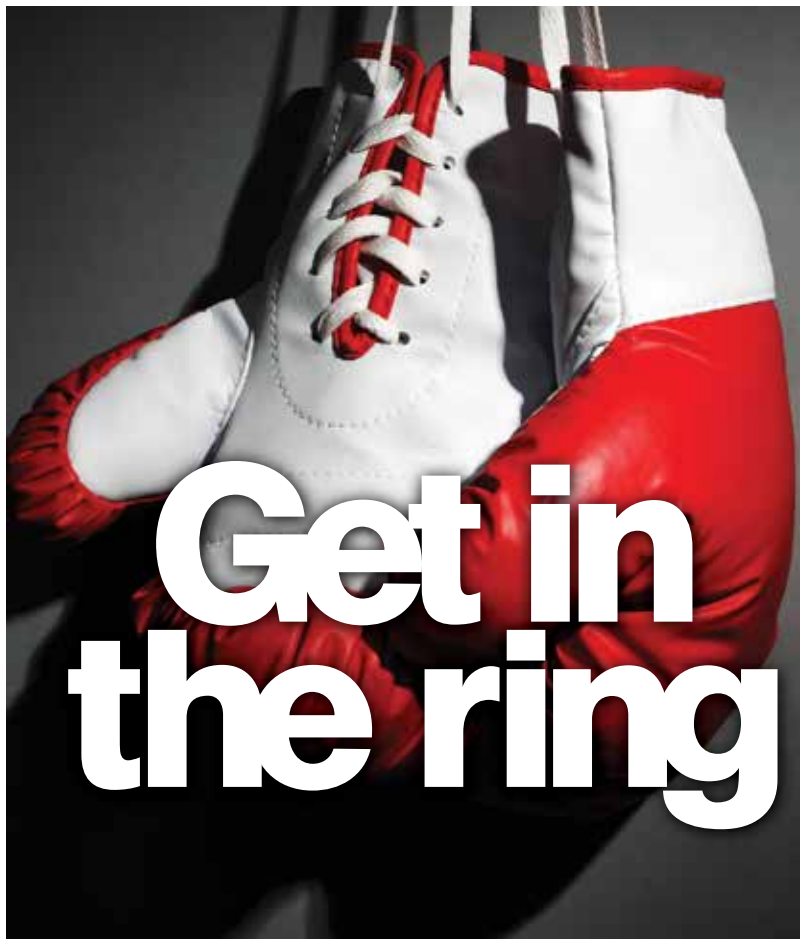
Great Rebates

An ECM furnace can also save you around \$80 per year, costing \$11 to \$32 less per month than running a standard blower motor. You can save even more in gas costs

if the new furnace is a higher-efficiency model. Midwest Energy Cooperative will help you with the up-front costs of installing an ECM furnace through a \$150 Energy Optimization rebate. Visit michigan-energy.org for details.

Save Even More

Looking for more ways to save? The ENERGY STAR® rule of thumb for achieving optimal savings is to set your thermostat back by at least 8 degrees for 8 hours, twice a day. Also, set the fan switch to "auto" instead of "on." The "auto" setting operates the blower motor only when the thermostat turns on the furnace, instead of running the motor constantly.

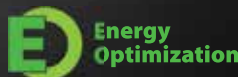


Knock out energy waste

Tired of high energy bills? Fight your frustrations and keep more money in your pocket with the help of your electric co-op's Energy Optimization program. Whether you choose to replace an energy-guzzling furnace or install a high-efficiency CFL or LED bulb, rebates are available to help you complete just about any energy-saving project at home.

ENERGY TIP: Save up to 40 percent in furnace electricity costs by changing the filter regularly.

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.



FOLLOW THESE SAFETY TIPS FROM YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP:

- ▼ **Assume all power lines are energized and dangerous.** Even downed lines that seem “dead” can be re-energized at any time during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators. Lines do not have to be sparking to be live!
- ▼ **Any utility wire, including sagging or downed telephone or cable lines could be in contact with an energized power line, making them very dangerous, too.**
- ▼ **Never touch a downed line – or a person or object that is touching it!** A downed line can cause things around it to become energized, traveling through the ground to chain link fences or other objects.
- ▼ **If someone is injured from electrical contact, do not try to assist. You could be injured or killed, too. Call 911.**
- ▼ **If lines fall on your vehicle, do not drive away or get out.** Stay inside until utility workers say it’s okay. Warn others to stay away. If you must leave the vehicle—only in the case of fire—jump free without touching the ground and auto at the same time, keeping both feet together, and hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out, and walking or running allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. Your body then becomes the electricity’s path, and electrocution results.
- ▼ **Never drive over a downed line,** it could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.
- ▼ **Call 911 immediately to report a downed power line.** Then call your electric co-op or the local utility.

Visit **SafeElectricity.org** for other electrical safety tips.

MSU Extension Offers Help for Understanding Affordable Care Act



Michigan State University Extension wants to help individuals, families and businesses make the right health insurance decision.

Extension has a team of educators that can help residents understand the new rules and requirements, navigate the federal Health Insurance Marketplace, and make a decision that fits both health needs and financial realities.

"People need to be extremely careful when signing up for insurance," explains Brenda Long, who spearheads MSU Extension's education efforts. "This is one of the most important decisions a person can make, and they will be dealing with concepts they are often unfamiliar with."

"We hope to give people the knowledge they need so they can meet with a local certified application counselor, or go to the federal health care site and make the appropriate decisions for themselves and their families."

Part of the service offered is a series of free, weekly, unbiased educational webinars and a new website that explains changes in the insurance landscape. A list of the webinars, as well as details about the Affordable Care Act, Health Insurance Marketplace, and how both affect Michiganders can be found at Extension's Affordable Care Act Roadmap (aca.msue.msu.edu).

Organizations that provide health or

community assistance, or employers looking to provide education for their employees can also contact MSU Extension directly at healthinsurance@anr.msu.edu and request information about setting up an in-person training session.

"We aren't trying to push consumers to select any one specific plan," Long adds. "We hope to teach people skills they can use so they can decide on the plan that best fits the needs for themselves, their families or their employees."

The online educational webinars for individuals are held every Monday from 9-11 a.m., 3-5 p.m., and 6-8 p.m.; and for farmers and small-business owners every Monday from Noon-2 p.m.



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **April 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric cooperative. **We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone!** Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com; enter your guess at countrylines.com; or send by mail to *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the May 2014 issue.

The January contest winners are Gary and Elaine Pohl of Westphalia, who are members of both Home Works Tri-County Electric Cooperative and Cloverland Electric Cooperative. The Pohls correctly identified the photo as a mural at the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum near the riverwalk in downtown Lansing.



Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*

Programmable thermostats can save up to \$160 a year in energy costs. Match thermostat settings to your schedule: cold when you're away and warm when you're at home. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day (lower at night when you're snug in bed). By turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for at least eight hours, you can shave 5 to 15 percent from your heating costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com,
U.S. Department of Energy

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[YouTube.com/AmericanMetalRoofs](https://www.youtube.com/AmericanMetalRoofs)


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*Frank Farmer, President,
American Metal Roofs*

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