

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



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Deer Blind
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Plus!

- 4 Rate Changes Start In December
- 5 Upgrades To Online Service Coming Nov. 4!
- 12 THAW—Contribute To Heat & Warmth Fund



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(906) 235-5788

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(906) 228-3400

**Sault Ste Marie/
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(906) 632-5543



visit us at waterfurnace.com



**November/December
2014
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Gail Knudtson

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Association officers are **Ken Swope**, Midwest Energy, chairman; **Robert Schallip**, Cloverland, 1st vice chairman; **Jon Zickert**, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and **Tony Anderson**, Cherryland, past chairman. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

Unsolicited letters, photos and manuscripts are welcome. *Country Lines*, however, will not be responsible for their safe keeping or return.

The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

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



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Dallas Braun
General Manager

New Rate Changes Start in December

If you recall, we were hit with a severe ice storm last winter, which negatively impacted our “profit,” which in the cooperative world is called “margin.” As a result, a rate increase of 3.02 percent, totaling just over \$626,000, will start in December.

You might be thinking, “Wait a minute, isn’t our cooperative a nonprofit organization?” It is in that any margin is allocated back to the members. However, bringing electricity to end users is a very capital-intensive business. Every year, Thumb Electric Cooperative (TEC) makes large investments to replace, upgrade and build new infrastructure to ensure a reliable source of power. One source of money for these improvements comes from low-interest loans. We need to show our lenders that we are good to pay back our loans, and thus we are required to make a certain margin every year.

In a good financial year—like we were having before Dec. 22, 2013—7 to 8 cents of every \$1 you pay is given back to you in the form of patronage. Last year, due to the ice storm it was around 2 cents. This is why we need the rate increase, which is the first since November 2010.

This increase will be combined with the annual rate realignment that was approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission last year. If you recall, this was done to ensure that each rate class pays their fair share of the costs. The overall impact on TEC member rates is shown below.

A utility needs a certain cash flow to operate. This is achieved mainly from two sources on the electric bill: the monthly service charge and the energy (kWh) sales. The service charge is supposed to cover the fixed costs of running a business, such as poles, wires, transformers, vehicles, etc. Fixed costs exist regardless of how much electricity each member uses, similar to other utilities such as telephone, internet and cable.

If the monthly service charge is too low, the energy (kWh) charge is too high. So, essentially, members that consume a large amount of energy are paying more than their fair share. Our most recent cost-of-service study, completed by an independent company, showed that our surcharge should be closer to \$40 monthly.

So, are TEC members going to get hit with a \$40 service charge right away? The answer is ‘No’, but as the chart shows, some monthly service charges will increase as we work to spread the fixed costs more fairly among all members. ■

Rate Class	% change	Rate Description	Monthly Charge	Existing Rate	New Rate
A	2.84%	(Farm & Home)	Service Charge Energy Charge/kwh	\$10.00 \$0.120	\$12.00 \$0.121
A-TOD	5.44%	(Farm & Home TOD)	Service Charge On-Peak/kwh Intermediate/kwh Off-Peak/kwh	\$20.50 \$0.104 \$0.074 \$0.050	\$25.00 \$0.108 \$0.077 \$0.053
A-S	8.28%	(Seasonal & Low Usage Farm & Home)	Service Charge Energy Charge/kwh	\$16.50 \$0.115	\$17.50 \$0.126
SGS	5.42%	(Seasonal & Low usage General Service)	Service Charge Energy Charge/kwh	\$18.75 \$0.116	\$20.00 \$0.121
GS	1.01%	(General Service)	Service Charge Energy Charge/kwh	\$12.50 \$0.117	\$13.75 \$0.118
GS-TOD	2.86%	(General Service TOD)	Service Charge On-Peak/kwh Intermediate/kwh Off-Peak/kwh	\$25.00 \$0.104 \$0.074 \$0.050	\$25.00 \$0.108 \$0.077 \$0.053
LGS	-1.25%	(Large General Service)	Demand Charge/KW Energy Charge/kwh	\$10.00 \$0.089	\$10.00 \$0.087
LPDS	-0.42%	(Large Power Distribution Substation)	Demand Charge/KW Energy Charge/kwh	\$10.00 \$0.070	\$10.00 \$0.069
PL-100W	5.36%	(Outdoor Protective Lighting)	Per Light Fixture	\$11.37	\$11.98
PL-250W	5.33%	(Outdoor Protective Lighting)	Per Light Fixture	\$18.95	\$19.96
IHC	3.02%	(Interruptible Heating & Cooling)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.075	\$0.077
DF	8.03%	(Dual Fuel Heating & Cooling)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.064	\$0.069
ES	8.01%	(Energy Storage)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.050	\$0.054

Website, Online Payment Upgrades Offer You More Service

To serve you even better, Thumb Electric Cooperative will launch a refreshed website on Nov. 4, along with an upgrade to our online payment system from E-Bill to SmartHub®.

The new SmartHub system is a powerful account management service tool that offers much more than a quick way to pay your bill—it's a convenient, two-way communication platform that allows you to access your electric service account and track energy use information from either a computer or mobile device.

Here's what you can do with SmartHub:

- Report an outage
- View or pay your bill
- View payment and billing history
- Check your monthly kilowatt usage and view related graphs
- Activate a paperless billing option
- Set markers to track home improvement upgrades and their impact on your electric use
- Record a meter reading

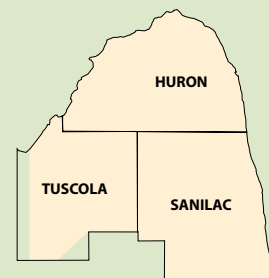
Whether you prefer to pay your bill online or not, you can still register and use SmartHub to check your electric use, report a service related matter, and more! The registration process for new users is simple and fast, but you will want to have your electric bill handy so you can quickly enter



the account number. To get the process started and enroll, visit tecmi.coop and click on the "My Account—Pay Bill/Meter Reading" button on the home page.

The SmartHub app is free to download and install, and is available for both Apple/iOS and Android mobile devices. Search for it in the Apple Store or on Google Play. SmartHub is not case sensitive, but must be entered as one word. If duplicates appear, the correct app is the one provided by our service partner and product developer, the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC). The app is supported using IOS 3.1 and above (iPhone and/or iPad), and the Android 2.1 and above (smartphones or tablets) platforms.

For more details, visit our website at tecmi.coop or call 800-327-0166. ■



Thumb Electric Cooperative

2231 Main Street
 Ubyly, MI 48475-0157
 1-800-327-0166 or
 989-658-8571
 E-mail: tec@tecmi.coop
www.tecmi.coop

PAYMENT STATIONS

Huron County

Bad Axe—Northstar Bank
 Pigeon—Northstar Bank

Tuscola County

Akron—Northstar Bank
 Caro—Northstar Bank
 Mayville—
 Mayville State Bank
 Millington—
 Mayville State Bank

Visit Thumb
 Electric's website:
www.tecmi.coop

*Thumb Electric Cooperative
 is an equal opportunity
 provider and employer.*

Access To Rules & Rates

This notice is published pursuant to the rules established by the Michigan Public Service Commission as set forth in the Consumer Standard and Billing Practices for Electric and Gas Residential Services, R460, 2146 and 2149.

As a member-customer of Thumb Electric Cooperative, the following information is available to you upon request:

1. Complete rate schedules;
2. Clear and concise explanation of all rates that the member may be eligible to receive;
3. Assistance from the cooperative in determining the most appropriate rate for the member when the member is eligible to receive service under more than one rate;
4. Clear, concise explanation of actual energy use for each billing.

**The Cooperative's
 office will be
 closed for the
 following holidays:**

- **Thanksgiving,
 Nov. 27-28**
- **Christmas,
 Dec. 24-25**
- **New Year's,
 Dec. 31-Jan. 1**

*For electrical
 emergencies, please
 call 1-800-327-0166
 or 989-658-8571*



HOLIDAY HAPPINESS

These make-ahead recipes are time-savers, and a perfect compliment to your holiday feast!

Holiday Spinach Dip

1 large round crusty bread, slice off top and hollow
2 pkgs. 10-oz. spinach, defrosted, chopped, squeezed
2 c. sour cream
2 c. Hellman's® mayo
1 c. chopped onion, very fine
2 t. dill weed
2 T. oregano
1 ½ t. Lawry's® seasoning salt

Mix all ingredients. Chill overnight. Serve in bread.
Use scooped out bread and additional small bread slices to dip. Looks pretty surrounded with cherry tomatoes.

Arlene Russel, Harbor Springs

Bailey's Milk Chocolate Truffles

¾ c. heavy cream
3 T. butter
1 ½ lb. milk chocolate chopped in pieces (not chocolate bits)
¾ c. Bailey's® Irish cream
½ c. confectioners' sugar
¼ c. cocoa powder
⅛ t. cinnamon

Combine cream and butter in saucepan and bring to a light boil; remove from heat. Add chocolate pieces, stir to melt. Stir in Bailey's®. Pour into bowl and refrigerate at least 6 hours. Spoon out walnut size pieces of the mixture onto cookie sheet and refrigerate until firm. Before serving, sift together confectioners' sugar, cocoa and cinnamon or you can do them all separately, for a different variety of colors. Roll each truffle into a ball and roll in cocoa/sugar mixture. Makes 40 or more. Refrigerate in airtight container. Use candy papers to keep them from sticking together when serving at room temperature. These do have alcohol in them, so serve just at an adult party.

Kami Maurer House, Sebewaing

Low Effort Eggnog



4 egg yolks
⅓ c. sugar, plus 1 T.
1 pint whole milk
1 c. heavy cream
3 oz. rum or bourbon (or extract)
1 t. freshly grated nutmeg
4 egg whites

In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat the egg yolks until they lighten in color. Gradually add the ⅓ c. sugar and continue to beat until it is completely dissolved. Add the milk, cream, bourbon and nutmeg, and stir to combine. Place egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat to soft peaks. With the mixer still running, gradually add the 1 tablespoon of sugar and beat until stiff peaks form. Whisk the egg whites into the mixture. Chill and serve.

Laura Kurella, Sturgis

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"Sandwiches"** recipes by **Nov. 10** and your favorite **"Soups"** recipes by **Dec. 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 countrylines.com for more reader recipes!

Photos—831 Creative

Don't Get Lost in the Shuffle



Craig Borr, CEO,
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

Six hundred pages, plus another 1,000 of supporting documents—that's the length of the latest proposal from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It would amend the Clean Air Act (only 465 pages) to limit carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the power plants on which Michigan relies today.

Besides the actual rule, a lot has been written about its legality, feasibility and complexity. In fact, Michigan Rep. John Dingell, the longest-serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives, emphatically stated several years ago that the EPA's regulation of carbon dioxide would result in a "glorious mess". His position, and I agree, is that Congress should determine far-reaching energy policy—not a federal agency loaded with lifetime bureaucrats.

But lost in the shuffle of these thousands of pages is *the impact on people*. How much will electric bills increase? Will manufacturers relocate? How many jobs will be lost? Which power plants will be forced to shut down? In Michigan, one-third of Michigan's coal fleet will close as a result of EPA regulations. Arguably, some of those facilities need to close, as they are old and dirty.

Energy policy questions are often difficult, but they are important questions. Michigan's electric cooperatives work hard to keep your electricity affordable and reliable. That's why we're asking the EPA for answers to these and many other questions.

We don't want you to get lost in the shuffle. We put you—our members—first. We advocate for you. Our member-cooperatives see you every month paying your bill at the office. We work with you. We know when times are tough. We often live next door.

After all, you govern us. Our board members and community leaders are one and the same. We're as local as any organization, and we like it that way.

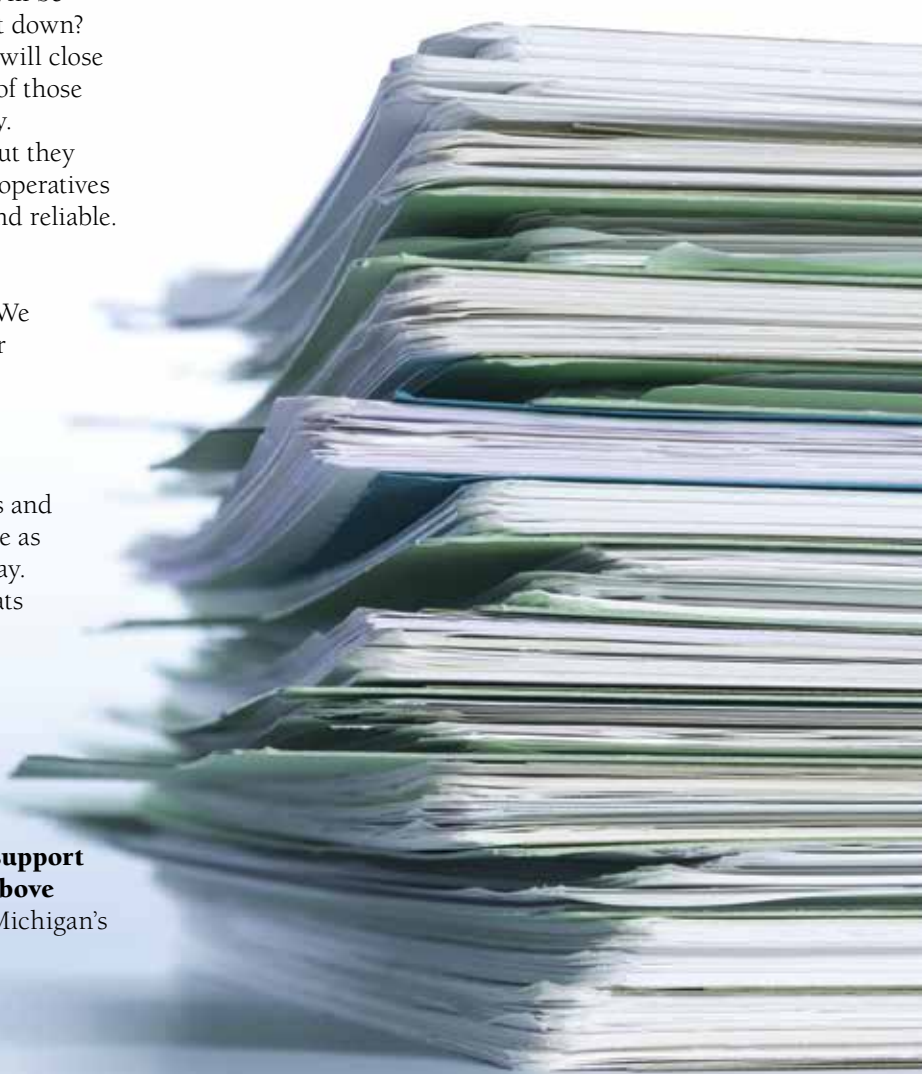
That's why we keep reminding the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., that the rules they write have an impact on the real world—where we live. That's why we're encouraging everyone to take 30 seconds to sign up at Action.coop and tell the EPA we cannot afford these regulations.

Please raise your voice. Don't get lost in the shuffle. **Together, we can tell the EPA that support for the environment and a true all-of-the-above energy policy are not mutually exclusive.** Michigan's

electric cooperatives lead by example. Our members are proud to be leaders in both energy efficiency and renewable energy. We have been leaders in both of these important areas long before they were required by the Michigan Legislature. Like many of our member-consumers that make their living in the agriculture industry, electric co-ops have always been good stewards of the environment because it is the right thing to do.

Together we need to remind regulators and lawmakers that the impact the EPA's proposed new rules could have on rural Michigan people, and others throughout our country, should be their *first* thought, not their *last*.

With over 900 electric cooperatives in the country backing us up, our voice can be heard. We have a great and positive story to tell. We can tell the story together. And it won't even take 1,600 pages. The EPA's public comment period is extended to Dec. 1—please take a moment to visit Action.coop today and let your voice be heard. ■



**STATE OF MICHIGAN
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF
THUMB ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
CASE NO. U-17677**

- Thumb Electric Cooperative requests Michigan Public Service Commission approval to implement a power supply cost recovery (PSCR) plan and a PSCR factor of up to a negative \$0.01105 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to compute member-customers' bills for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2015.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may contact Thumb Electric Cooperative, 2231 Main Street, Ubyl, Michigan 48475-0157, (800) 327-0166 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Thumb Electric Cooperative.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: December 2, 2014, 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 Suzanne D. Sonneborn

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 Thumb Electric Cooperative's (Thumb) September 29, 2014 application to implement a power supply cost recovery (PSCR) plan and PSCR factor of up to a negative \$0.01105 per kWh with a \$0.06725 per kWh allowance for cost of power supply included in base rates to compute its member-customers' bills for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2015.

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 November 25, 2014. (Petitions to intervene may also be filed using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Thumb's attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, 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.

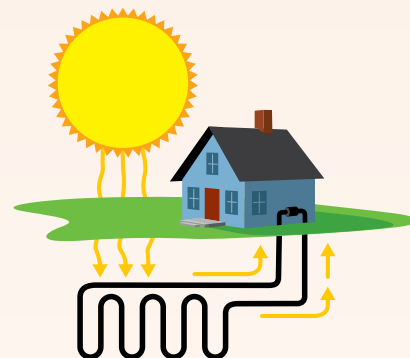
Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure R 460.17315 and R 460.17335. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 241-6060.

A copy of Thumb's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets, and at the office of Thumb Electric Cooperative. 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 460.6j 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.

Renewable Geothermal Heat

Geothermal is a simple technology that uses the earth's renewable energy to provide high-efficiency heating and cooling. In winter, the system draws heat from the ground and transfers it to your home. In summer, it extracts heat from your home and transfers it to the ground. **Contact the energy experts at Thumb Electric Cooperative at 800-327-0166** for honest answers on your energy choices, or call any of the trained and certified installers listed here.



All-Temperature Geothermal Systems

1103 E. Caro Rd., Caro, MI 48723
989-673-5557

Ameriheat, Justin Faber

2891 E. Forester Rd., Deckerville, MI 48427
810-376-4534

B & D Heating, Cooling & Plumbing

1148 North Van Dyke, Bad Axe, MI 48413
800-515-1117

Burkhard Plumbing & Heating

638 E. Huron Ave., Bad Axe, MI 48413
989-269-7532

Certified Temperature Innovations

3107 Custer Rd., Carsonville, MI 48419
810-300-7748

ES Sheetmetal, Gene Root

9450 Belsay, Millington, MI 48746
989-871-2067

Geo Renew Systems, Inc.

3045 Grange Hall Rd., #7, Holly, MI 48442
248-531-0325

Geomasters, Inc., Plumbing & Heating

57 Ward St., Crosswell, MI 48422
810-679-2251

Geothermal Systems of Lapeer, LLC

6689 Orchard Lk. Rd. #188
West Bloomfield, MI 48322
810-240-2116

Holland Heating and Cooling

9160 Lapeer Rd., Davison, MI 48423
810-653-4328

Ingell Refrigeration

1115 4th St., Port Huron, MI 48060
810-982-4226

J & B Plumbing & Heating

7641 Pigeon Rd., Pigeon, MI 48755
989-453-3931

Jack McCain Plumbing & Heating

9651 Weale Rd., Bay Port, MI 48720
989-453-2277

Kowaleski Heating & Cooling, LLC

3977 Ruppel Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468
989-428-3371

Kulek Heating & Air Conditioning

14421 Jeddo Rd., Yale, MI 48097
810-387-4452

Kundinger & Kroll

31 E. Main St., Sebawaing, MI 48759
989-883-2770

Lakeshore Improvements

Plumbing & Heating

7825 Big Gulley Rd., Palms, MI 48465
989-864-3833

Michigan Energy Services

8445 Main St., Whitmore Lake, MI 48189
888-339-7700

NRG Control

3690 Washburn Rd., Vassar, MI 48768
989-670-2543

Newton-Johnson Plumbing & Heating

114 Enterprise Dr., Vassar, MI 48768
989-823-2341

Orton Refrigeration

31 W. Sanilac Rd., Sandusky, MI 48471
810-648-2252

Preferred Heating

7736 Arendt, Melvin, MI 48454
810-378-5454

Priority Service by Porter & Heckman

3056 Davison Rd., Lapeer, MI 48446
810-644-8576

Shetler Plumbing & Heating

7184 Nitz St., Pigeon, MI 48755
800-547-3651

Superior, Inc.

3442 Cemetery Rd., Cass City, MI 48726
989-872-3305

Thumb Cooling & Heating

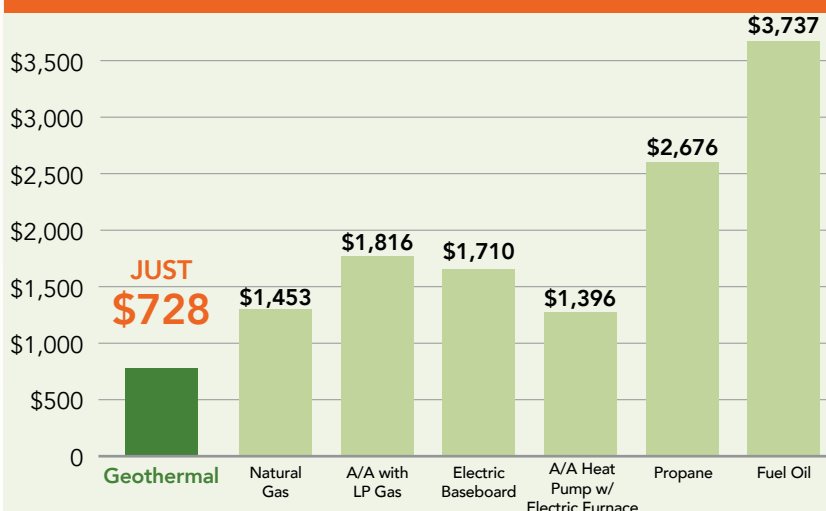
5599 Pochert Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468
989-428-4948

And: 837 South State, Caro, MI 48723
989-672-4948



Annual Operating Costs

For an Average 1,800 Sq. Ft. Home
(45,000 BTU heating load, 20,000 BTU cooling load)



Factors Used: Electric Baseboard, Air-Source Heat Pump and Geothermal—based on TEC's 6.863¢/kWh dual-fuel rate. LP gas—based on \$2/gal. and 90% efficient furnace. Fuel Oil—based on \$3.50/gal. and 80% efficient furnace. Natural Gas—based on \$1.08/therm., 90% efficient furnace including \$9/mo. service charge. (Electric baseboard costs do not include air conditioning.)



Meet Our Deer Blind Contest Winners!

From hideouts that resemble a cozy cottage (complete with area rug) to basic shelters, we received more than 60 entries in our *Country Lines* tricked-out deer blind contest. Who knew there were so many cool deer blind styles? Thanks to all who participated—it was difficult to choose! Our winners are featured here, but visit countrylines.com to tour the tricked-out blinds of other electric co-op members who entered.

"Most Tricked-Out"

Congratulations to **Ward Forquer**, a HomeWorks Tri-County member, for having the most tricked-out blind. Affectionately known as "Fort Miller Lite," it's a two-story 10 by 14-foot insulated structure with a carpeted observation room, solar panel, propane heat and lights, 13-inch flat screen color TV, bunk beds, and customized Miller Lite memorabilia. Located in Isabella County, it can host up to 12 people.



Photos—David Trumpie Photography

"Most Interestingly-Engineered"

Kudos to **Ronald Camp** for building the most interestingly-engineered blind. Working in underground excavation for 30 years, Ron envisioned a 36-foot underground storage tank for his shelter. The HomeWorks Tri-County member set the tank upright, above ground, and added a cupola at the top that swivels 360 degrees. Getting to the top means climbing a 28-rung ladder, but he is installing a 12-volt elevator.



"Best Story Behind the Blind"

Dean Ronk made his deerblind after finding that nearly every garage sale had a fake Christmas tree—usually with a bent, broken base or missing branches. The Midwest Energy co-op member decided to bend the wire tree branches around a circle of hog fencing, with heavy plastic as a roof. His idea has gained popularity, and he says, "it makes hunting affordable, and a 'green' way to hunt by recycling old trees." Now he makes them for friends, and people are giving him their old trees. ■



Photo Courtesy - Dean Ronk

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2014–2015 Season

Program: Winter Protection Plan
Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2014–2015	
# in Household	150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income
1	\$17,505
2	23,595
3	29,685
4	35,775
5	41,865
6	47,955
7	54,045
8	60,090

Add \$6,090 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants in the plan must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

Program: Home Heating Credit
Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
1	\$12,842	4	26,243
2	17,329	5	30,728
3	21,786	6	35,186

Add \$4,457 for each exemption over 6.

Program: Earned Income Credit
Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept., Internal Revenue Service irs.gov/EITC
 Michigan Dept. of Treasury
michigan.gov/treasury

The **Winter Protection Plan** protects eligible senior and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–March 31). You may enroll between Nov. 1 and March 31. If you are an eligible low-income customer, your utility service will remain on from Nov. 1 through March 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, **and**
- make equal monthly payments between the date you apply and the start of the next heating season of any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (March 31), from April 1 through Oct. 31, you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill. **Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months.** You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- are age 65 or older,
- receive Department of Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- receive Food Assistance,
- receive Medicaid, or
- household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart at left.

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the Winter Protection Plan are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut off between Nov. 1 and March 31. However, seniors are encouraged to pay whatever they can during the winter so they will not have large, unmanageable bills when the protection ends.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the **2014** tax year if you meet the income guidelines listed at left, or you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs. Additional exemptions are available for seniors, disabled claimants, or claimants with 5% or more of their income from unemployment compensation.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. **Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided, or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (517-636-4486, or michigan.gov/treasury).** The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **before Sept. 30, 2015.**

The **Earned Income Credit (EIC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EIC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EIC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year **2014** equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. Visit the website or see the **2014** MI tax booklet for details.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program

Contact: Local Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS)
michigan.gov/mdhs

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): mibenefitsaccess.org You do not have to be a DHS client to apply for help with a past due bill, shut-off notice or the need for deliverable fuel through the SER. This program, available Nov. 1–May 31, provides most of its utility assistance during this crisis season. However, limited assistance is available outside the crisis season. If you receive a DHS cash grant, you may vendor part of it towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 855-275-6424.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization

Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (200% of poverty guidelines shown above) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation. Contact your local Community Action Agency for details. Visit mcaaa.org to find one in your area.

Program: United Way

Contact: Call 2-1-1 or UWmich.org/2-1-1

2-1-1 is a free phone service operating 24 hours daily to provide information about help that may be available in a particular area with utilities and other needs. Learn more at UWmich.org/2-1-1.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection

Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for details.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty

Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You must still pay, but contact your utility company and they will help you set up a payment plan.

Program: Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program

Contact:

The Trust Fund provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families facing a financial emergency or hardship including the need for energy assistance.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund at (517) 284-5299 or <http://Michigan.gov/dmva>

Program: MI Energy Assistance Program

Contact: Utility or 2-1-1 in late November

Agency assistance through MEAP, which includes funds from the Low Income Energy Assistance Fund (LIEAF), became available in early October. Visit Michigan.gov/mpsc for details about organizations that have received MEAP grants. Shut-off protection is provided Nov. 1–April 15 for all residential customers (regardless of income) of any Michigan electric that has chosen not to collect 97 cents monthly from its customers for the LIEAF fund.

Contribute to THAW

(The Heat And Warmth Fund)

Keep this child—and thousands of others like him—warm this winter.



Neighbors helping neighbors in need.

- A family had funeral expenses that caused them to fall behind in their utility bill payments. THAW helped to keep the heat and electricity on during this difficult time.
- A senior citizen with an annual income of \$7,000 has to pay a large, unexpected medical bill and falls behind on utility payments.
- A 42-year-old husband with two children is laid-off. He can't find another job, his unemployment runs out...and the utility bills don't get paid.

Also visit
thawfund.org
for more
information.

These are just some of the people helped by The Heat And Warmth Fund (THAW).

THAW is a nonprofit organization that provides last-resort energy assistance to low-income families in Thumb Electric Cooperative's service area. THAW has helped more than 75,000 Michigan senior citizens and families (more than one-half with children) keep their heat and electricity on during the winter months.

Please make a donation to THAW. Your tax-deductible contribution will help someone in your community keep their heat and electricity on this winter.

Please complete and mail the clip-out form below, along with your donation to: **Department 77650, THAW Fund, P.O. Box 77000, Detroit, MI 48277-0650**. Or, make a contribution using VISA or MasterCard, by calling **800-866-THAW** (or 8429). Your gift is tax-deductible.

Yes!

I want to help someone in my community keep their heat and electricity on this winter. Enclosed is my check or money order payable to THAW. I understand my gift is tax deductible.

☐ \$10

☐ \$25

☐ \$50

☐ Other \$ _____

MAIL TO:
Dept. 77650
THAW Fund
P.O. Box 77000
Detroit, MI
48277-0650

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

To make a contribution using VISA or MasterCard, call 1-800-866-THAW (or 8429) or visit thawfund.org.

Use Your Space Heater Safely

Many people use space heaters for winter warmth, but they can be dangerous if used improperly.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that 25,000 home fires every year are associated with space heaters, and cause over 300 deaths. An additional 6,000 people annually go to the hospital for related burns.

These fires are caused by contact with or nearness to the heating elements, flammable fuels used in the heaters, defective wiring, and carbon monoxide poisoning caused by improper venting or incomplete fuel combustion.

Here are tips for using a space heater safely:

- Keep it at least 3 feet from flammables, such as curtains, clothing, furniture or bedspreads.
- Select a model with an automatic shut-off, in case it tips.
- Buy one that is certified by an independent testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Buy the right size to handle the area to be heated.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep kids and pets at a safe distance.
- Never leave it unattended, or sleep with it on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near it.
- Do not use in a bathroom—a high-moisture area can cause damage.
- Keep it away from water to prevent electrocution.

- Check the cord for fraying and cracks, and do not use an extension cord to run it.
- Be sure the plug fits snugly in the outlet. (The cord and plug may feel warm when operating, but it shouldn't feel hot. If it does, unplug it and have a repair person check for problems.)
- Do not try to repair a broken heater yourself—go to a qualified appliance service center.

Visit <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSC/PUB/PUBS/463.html> for more safety tips on space heaters that use wood or kerosene. ■



Metered Propane Service Rules

Providing prompt deliveries and great service is a priority for Thumb Energy Services Corporation (TEsC). To help us provide great service, members using our metered propane plan are required to provide accurate monthly meter readings, with payment, by the due date each month.

If a member fails to provide regular and accurate monthly meter readings, TEsC may, at its sole discretion, convert the member's payment option from the metered program to the *will call* program.

Please contact TEsC if you intend to be on vacation or away from home for an extended period of time, so we can properly service your account.

Winter Tree Trimming Schedule

Tree trimming will take place in the following areas by Kappen Tree Service and Proline Clearance.

Tuscola County

Dayton Township:

Lobdell, Hunt and Byington Road areas, plus Lakeview Drive, Woodland Trail, Harmon Street, Cat Lake Hills Road, and Cat Lake Road north of Blackmore Road.

Watertown Township:

All single phase lines

Sanilac County

Continues in Lexington and Lower Sanilac



Alpine Power Plant
Northeast view from M-32 Hwy

Wolverine Co-op Plans New Natural Gas Power Plant

A new, natural gas-fueled electric generating plant is being planned by Wolverine Power Cooperative, of Cadillac. Called the Alpine Power Plant, its location will be in Elmira Township, Otsego County, west of Gaylord. Wolverine, a not-for-profit electric cooperative, provides wholesale electric power to six electric cooperatives throughout Michigan.

“Wolverine is excited about moving forward with a new natural gas peaking plant,” said project spokesman, Ken Bradstreet. “Our Alpine Power Plant will provide a nice balance to Wolverine’s existing power supply portfolio, while at the same time increasing electrical reliability in northern Michigan and complementing the ever-increasing amount of renewable energy in Michigan.”

Wolverine intends to present its development plans to both the Elmira Township and Otsego County planning commissions within the next month. Wolverine will also apply for an air quality permit with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

After a nearly two-year evaluation, Wolverine chose the Elmira Township site and entered into property options for nearly 170 acres of land. The location was

chosen, in part, due to the convergence of existing interstate natural gas pipelines and high-voltage electric transmission lines on the property.

Wolverine expects the project investment associated with the Alpine Power Plant to exceed \$100 million and provide significant tax revenues to several local units of government. “The Alpine Power Plant will provide a major boost to the local economy,” Bradstreet explains.

Through sound financial management, Wolverine is able to build this project with existing funds. Based on preliminary cost estimates, it is anticipated there will be no rate impact on the electric co-ops that purchase power from Wolverine. Visit alpinecleanenergy.com for further details on the proposed plant.

Wolverine supplies wholesale power to Cherryland Electric Cooperative (Grawn); Great Lakes Energy (Boyer City); HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative (Portland); Midwest Energy Cooperative (Cassopolis); Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op (Onaway); Spartan Renewable Energy, Inc. (Cadillac), and Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative (Cadillac). ■



«« Do You Know Where This Is?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Dec. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric co-op.

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com or send by mail to: *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include the name on your account, 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 January 2015 issue.

The September contest winner is Phyllis Burge, of Manistique, a Cloverland Electric Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as the



East Channel Lighthouse on Grand Island in the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore area.

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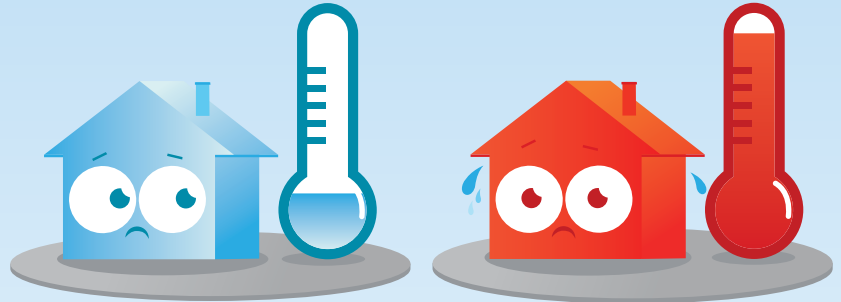
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