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Students get to see government in action

Kelly Hamm
Energy Services Manager

Rep. Rich Myers met with 18 students representing McDonough Power Cooperative and McDonough Telephone Cooperative during the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day on Wednesday, April 21, in Springfield. The students had an opportunity to view state government in action on probably one of the busiest days this year at the state capitol. More than 200 interest groups and an estimated 15,000 people came to ask lawmakers to approve a tax hike in order to avoid major budget cuts. The students also heard from State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias during their lunch break.

Pictured in the front row from left are: Alissa Crandall, Cassie Devore, Annie Ryan, Hope Camden, Shazia Siddiqi, Rep. Myers, Laura Deveraux, Katie Bell, Linda King, Erica Ray and Phillip Barnett. In the second row from the left are: Les Fowler, John Johnson, Tucker Hayes, Ben Sprenger, Audra Stephenson, Kaity Vancil, Jake Vancil, Dakota Sopher, Kelly Hamm and Emilie Therrien. **5313B9-956A**

The day was sponsored by the Illinois electric and telephone co-ops and is designed to introduce young rural leaders to state government. There were 246 students representing co-ops from across the state.

Of the 18 students, six represented McDonough Power Cooperative. Two finalists were chosen to represent McDonough Power on a week-long all-expense paid trip to Washington D.C. along with over 1,450 students from across the nation. Laura Deveraux and Shazia Siddiqi of Macomb High School will spend the week of June 11-18, 2010 visiting historically significant national sites, touring some of our most moving memorials, and browsing the campus of our nation's capital. During their time in D.C., they will ride a riverboat down the Potomac, tour the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, and visit the Supreme Court. Kaity Vancil of Bushnell-Prairie City High School and Emilie Therrien of Monmouth-Roseville High School will serve as alternates should one of the finalists decide not to attend.

McDonough Power Cooperative is proud to offer this opportunity to local high school students. We feel like educated citizens are better citizens. And better citizens are better co-op members.

Pictured L to R: Kelly Hamm, McDonough Power Youth Tour Coordinator, Emilie Therrien, Kaity Vancil, Shazia Saddiqi and Laura Deveraux.

McDonough Power Cooperative

1210 West Jackson Street
P.O. Box 352
Macomb, Illinois
61455-0352

309-833-2101

www.mcdonoughpower.com

Office hours:
7 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Weekdays

All Co-op Electric Outages 837-1400

Generator Safety:

Our Lives are on the Line

The safety of you, our members, and our employees is a top priority at McDonough Power Cooperative, especially during dangerous times. When storms hit our area, we rush to your aid as soon as weather conditions allow our line workers to travel and make repairs safely.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines. First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized, and that proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. We place ground chains on the circuit — on both sides of workers — to make sure the line cannot be energized while work's being done.

But even after these measures, our workers' lives remain in your hands.

McDonough Power is proud of our outstanding safety record, but sometimes, no matter how many steps we take to keep everyone safe, the very people we are there to help unknowingly put our lives — and their own — in danger.

Portable generators, widely used when power lines are down, can prove fatal to line workers and your neighbors when used improperly. **4315C5-558B**;

In 2005, a lineman died in Flomaton, Ala., when he contacted a power line that was energized by an improperly installed generator. Forty-one-year-old Ronnie Adams of Winterville, Ga., was working to restore power after Hurricane Dennis. He was married and had two teenage children.

Of course, no one would ever purposely cause the death of a line worker. Nevertheless, a generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them — even if the line seems dead.

And McDonough Power employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

Portable generators can be very helpful to consumers during outages. But we urge you to follow these safety guidelines when using one:

- Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use. This can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including lineworkers making repairs. Have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect emergency generators to your home.
- Always plug appliances directly into generators. Connecting the generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent backfeeding.
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.
- Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Never overload a generator. A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.
- Never fuel a generator while it is operating. Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation. Never cut corners when it comes to safety.

We encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit.

Keeping Power Flowing

Co-op lineworkers maintain an intricate system of power lines around the clock

By Scott Gates

We often take electricity for granted. It makes our homes comfortable day-in and day-out and ready with little more than the flip of a switch.

But what goes on behind the scenes once that switch is thrown is far more complex. The power grid, which can be described as the largest, most complex machine ever built, involves an intricate network of power lines crisscrossing neighborhoods and open country, over mountains and through cities, which has evolved over the last century to supply consumers with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. **8120SL130-832A**

The tricky thing about electricity is that it must be used, or moved to where it can be used, the second it's produced; it generally can't be stored like water or gas. What's more, electricity moves at the speed of light along the path of least resistance. This basic principle calls for a carefully monitored, intricate system to move it 24 hours a day.

Literally millions of miles of power lines span the United States in a complex series of "highways." These lines can be broken into two main categories: **transmission**, the high-voltage "interstates" supported by steel towers and other similar structures that move electricity over vast distances; and **distribution**, the "local roads" that run through small towns and neighborhoods and into homes and businesses. Electric cooperatives own and maintain roughly 65,000 miles, or 6 percent, of the nation's transmission lines and 2.5 million miles, or 42 percent, of its distribution lines, according to the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. This co-op-maintained system could cover the distance to the moon and back five times over.

McDonough Power Cooperative alone has its own sizeable distribution system to maintain: our lineworkers stay busy keeping 1,411 miles of line up and running, 24/7.

When there's a problem somewhere on our system, a power outage typically results. Pinpointing the cause of an outage among those thousands of miles of line may seem like trying to find a needle in a haystack, but McDonough Power line crews try largely to boil it down to a science.

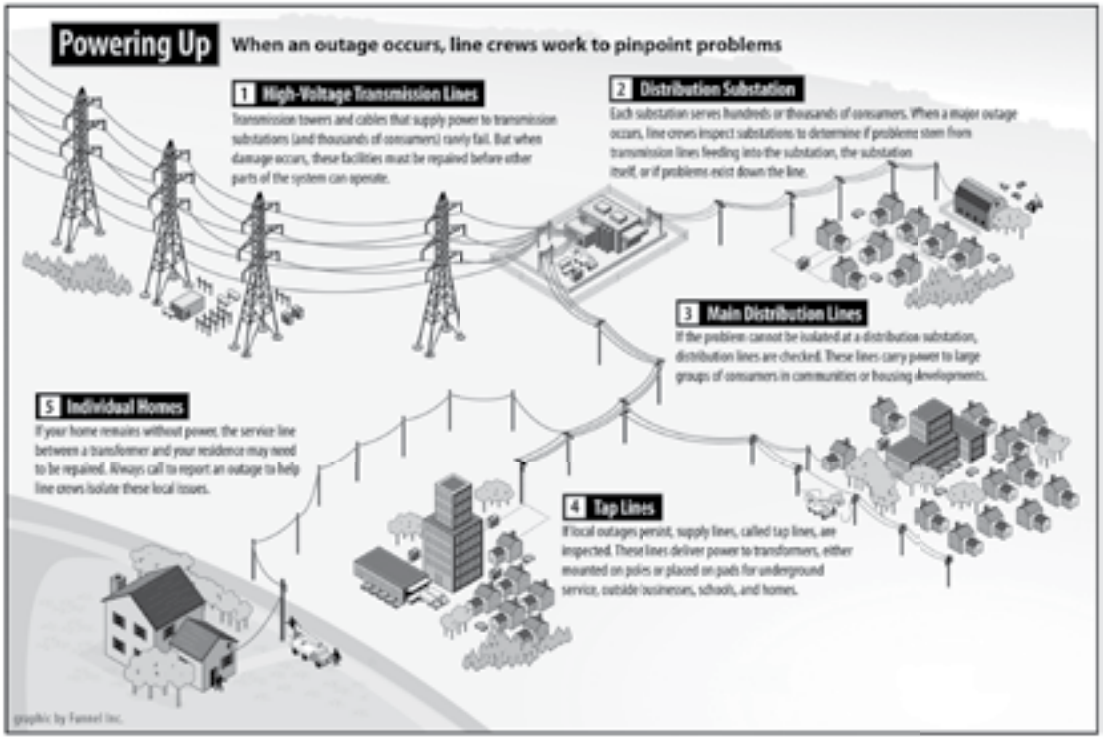
To understand how co-op staff restores power during an outage, think of electricity distribution like a river in reverse. It originates at a single ocean of power — a generation plant — and diverges from there into a series of transmission lines, substations, and smaller feeder lines until it reaches homes and businesses at a trickle of its original strength. So when we start assessing storm damage, we work to fix the biggest problems first (those starting near the "ocean"), prioritizing repairs according to how they can get the most homes back in service the fastest.

It's a big job, but our line crews are up to the challenge. If there is an outage in your area, you can help crews pinpoint damage by calling us at (309) 837-1400. Even if your neighbors have already called, every bit of information we have helps get the river flowing smoothly again.

Chelsey Simpson contributed to this article.

Scott Gates writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Sources: North American Electric Reliability Corporation, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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

Attention members with geothermal systems

McDonough Power has decided to formally make a ruling on whether it is acceptable to have a residential water heater connected to the secondary meter that measures geothermal consumption at a discounted rate. It has been determined that this is an acceptable practice. If your water heater is not linked to the secondary meter please contact a certified electrician to take care of this for you. If you have any questions regarding this please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Social Security Online Services

Do your part for the environment by going online to www.socialsecurity.gov. Whether you want to get an estimate of your future benefits; apply for retirement, disability, or Medicare; report a change of address; or learn more about the program, you can do it online. There's no need to drive to your local Social Security office. Don't wait in traffic when you can go online from your home or office. Save a trip, and the gas that goes with it, by going online to www.socialsecurity.gov. It's the cleanest, greenest way to do business. **525HH103-951B**

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During summer months when air conditioners work hardest, do energy-intensive tasks such as laundry and dish washing during off-peak energy demand hours, usually in the early morning or later evening.

Source: Alliance to Save Energy

MAP LOCATION GAME

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find your map location number, call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a $10 credit on your next electric bill.