



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# Hi-Lites



## Manager's Notes

Luke Johnson  
*General Manager*

Last year, investor-owned utilities were forced to raise their cost of power at a stark rate, resulting in as much as a 40% rate increase for many of their customers. Fortunately, Tri-County Electric Cooperative was not immediately effected by the market price of power due to our ownership in Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC). We are grateful for the hedge of protection that member ownership in the cooperative and in our power supplier provided.

Like many of you, we had hoped that the increases in nearly every industry would subside and return to what they had previously been. As it stands now, Tri-County Electric Cooperative continues to experience external pressures on our wholesale power costs among other economic factors such as supply chain and inflation that are all out of our control. Budgeted amounts for power costs and construction expenses were more than expected.

At a distribution utility level, not only are everyday items we need for new construction and maintenance on short supply but now they are at a significantly higher price. Transformers and

meter bases are necessary to our daily function. Transformers used to take on average 2-4 weeks and are now taking 3-6 months, about 4 times longer. Meter bases for new electric services used to take 1 month to arrive after ordering. Now, meter bases are taking 1 year to arrive, nearly 12 times longer.

We are seeing material pricing increases from 10 to 500%. This is concerning to all utilities as a whole and therefore many are ordering more, putting additional pressures on suppliers. Due to scarcity concerns, increased pricing and longer lead times, we have increased our warehouse material and supply here at TCEC.

SIPC is dealing with similar but different issues. Fuel to fire the generation of electricity in Marion, such as coal, makes up 80% of their over \$100M yearly budget. In 2021 and prior, coal was approximately \$40/ton, where today it is \$200/ton. They are currently able to gradually raise our prices due to power they are able to sell in the market, at an almost all-time high, as well as deferred revenue from previous years. The energy market was in a decade-long stretch of low wholesale power market prices. Since then, energy prices have increased at percentages in the U.S. and around the world that have not been seen since the 1980's.

*Continued Page 2*

### MISSION STATEMENT

To safely provide our member-owners with reliable electric service, superior customer service, and practical energy solutions, all at reasonable prices.

3906 Broadway  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

618-244-5151  
Toll-Free: 800-244-5151  
Fax: 618-244-1496  
Pay by phone:  
855-385-9902

**Mt. Vernon  
Office Hours**  
Monday - Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Salem  
Office Hours**  
Tuesday - Thursday  
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(Closed 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President**  
Donnie Laird - Waltonville

**Vice-President**  
Doug Knolhoff - Hoyleton

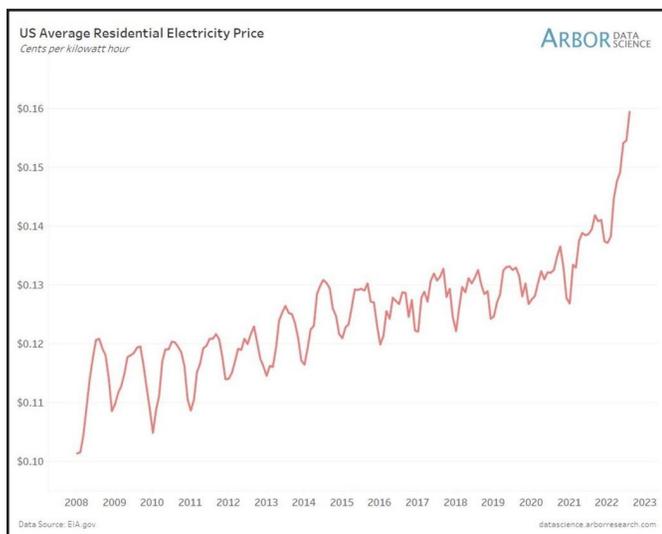
**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Sam Phillips - Salem

Michelle Barbee - Salem  
Tom Beyers - Odin  
Jordan Brink - Richview  
Phil Carson - Oakdale  
Larry Manning - Belle Rive  
Kathy Withers - Mt. Vernon

*Manager's Notes - Continued from Page 1*

These additional costs to us are built into a Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment (WPCA) line on our monthly bill from SIPC each month. Effective for March usage, the PCA on the April bills could be raised to match the additional PCA charges we are projected to receive from SIPC, to keep intact the financial integrity of the cooperative. The WPCA was created to fluctuate to balance these variable costs.

### COST OF COAL



***U.S. residential energy prices soared in 2022 as a result of increased commodity and supply chain costs as well as global geo-political uncertainties. Source: Arbor Data Science and The U.S. Energy Information Administration***

As a cooperative, our mission is to provide safe, affordable, and reliable power to you. Our cooperative and our board of directors are committed to this mission and to those in our communities. We continue to adapt to evolving circumstances and will continue to keep you informed along the way.

## Preparing for Storm Season?

# DON'T FORGET TO READY YOUR CAR

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), every vehicle should have an emergency supply kit onboard. Kits should be checked twice a year and expired items should be replaced regularly. Emergency supply kits should include:

- Snowbrush
  - Shovel
  - Windshield washer fluid
  - Cat litter for traction
- Warm clothing
  - Blankets
  - Drinking water
  - Nonperishable foods
- Properly inflated spare tire
  - Wheel wrench & tripod jack
  - Jumper cables
  - Fire extinguisher
- Reflective triangles
  - Reflective vest
  - Brightly colored cloth (to tie on side mirror)
- First-aid kit
  - Flashlight and batteries
  - Compass
  - Car charger for cell phone

Safe Electricity.org® Source: NSC

American Red Cross  
Blood Drive

Tri-County Electric Cooperative  
3906 W. Broadway St.  
Mt. Vernon, IL

January 20th, 2023  
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

# Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors

One of the most valuable principles of the cooperative business model is democratic control. Boards of cooperatives are democratically elected by the membership to govern and direct the affairs of the cooperative.

Tri-County Electric Cooperative has a 9-member board with three directors from each district. The territory of the cooperative has three districts, each of which contains one of the primary counties (Jefferson, Marion, and Washington) of the Cooperative. The membership elects one director for each district at the annual meeting each year, and the directors serve three-year rotating terms. This year's annual meeting will be held on July 8, 2023.

Board candidates can be nominated by petition signed by at least 25 members, and signatures may come from the entire Cooperative membership. A joint membership constitutes of only one member - meaning if both the member and the joint member sign the petition, it counts as one signature.

Petitions can be picked up as early as February 8, 2023, and filed in person along with an affidavit stating that the person filing the petition meets the qualifications to become or remain a board member. Petitions must be filed in person at our Mt. Vernon office no later than close of business on Monday, April 10, 2023.

Petitions may be picked up in person, sent to a member by e-mail, or mailed to a member, but must be filed in person. If you would like to receive an official petition along with the affidavit, please contact Lynn Hutchison, Director of Member Services, at 618-244-5151 or by e-mail at [lhutchison@tricountycoop.com](mailto:lhutchison@tricountycoop.com).

The Credentials and Elections (C&E) Committee (formerly known as the Nominating Committee) will meet to review the qualifications of

petitioning nominees and supervise nominations of board members.

If there are no nominations by petition for the district in which a director is to be elected, it is the duty of the C&E Committee to select a nominee(s) for that district. The C&E Committee is scheduled to meet on Monday, April 17, 2023, and the members of the committee are: Tonya Lowery, Amy Telford, Ralph Hilmes, Keith Doehring, Cindy Leeck, and Jill Harre.

If you would like to review the qualifications to become or remain a board member, or the section regarding nominations, the bylaws of the Cooperative can be found on our website, or you can contact us at 618-244-5151, and we will mail a copy to you.



**NEW YEARS**  
**SAFETY RESOLUTIONS**

Consider these safety-themed resolutions this year. They will help keep you and others safe!

1. Do not drive distracted, especially near or in work zones.
2. Do not place a cell phone on bedding or under a pillow.
3. If you see a downed power line, stay away and call 9-1-1.
4. If you are in a car accident involving a downed line, do not get out.
5. Do not take on electrical work if you are not qualified.
6. Never use a portable generator indoors, in a garage or in an enclosed area.
7. Test GFCI outlets monthly to ensure they are working.
8. Ensure your home's electrical system is up to code.
9. Look up and look out for overhead power lines when working outside.
10. Call 8-1-1 prior to your next digging project.

Safe Electricity.org®



**Touchstone Energy**<sup>®</sup>

## Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grant Winners

*Winners of Touchstone Energy Empowerment Grants for schools in Tri-County Electric Cooperative's service area have been announced. The grants fund innovative, unfunded projects or materials in area schools. Congratulations to all grant winners!*

Lynette Baity  
*ROE #13 Alternative Learning Academy*

Kelsie Boldt  
*Dr. Nick Osborne Primary Center*

Brandon Bullard  
*Jefferson County CEO Program*

Ranzie Callahan  
*Bethel Grade School*

Crystal Drenner  
*Irvington Grade School*

Megan Hargett  
*Farrington Grade School*

Linda Klingenberg  
*Nashville District 49*

Kellie Woodrome  
*Field Grade School*

## Shepherd's Pie Soup

### Ingredients:

- 4 large russet potatoes, equal to 2 lbs.
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 1 lb. ground beef, 85% lean
- 1 large yellow onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tablespoons salted butter, separated
- 1/4 cup flour
- 4 cups Chicken Broth
- 2 cups half and half
- 3/4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1/2 tsp. mustard powder
- 1/4 tsp. ground sage
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 1/2 cups mixed frozen vegetables
- salt/pepper to taste

### Instructions:

1. Cook and crumble the ground beef over medium-high heat until cooked through. Drain grease. Remove the ground beef from the pot and set aside.
2. While the meat cooks, peel the potatoes and cut them into thirds. Add to stock pot and cover the potatoes with 1 in. of water. Add the salt and boil gently for 10-15 minutes or until very fork tender. Drain, then gently mash with 1 Tablespoon of butter and sour cream. Set aside.
3. Melt 2 Tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, cook for 1 more minute.
4. Whisk in flour, use a silicone spatula to stir the flour as it cooks for 1 full minute.
5. Add the chicken broth, stirring continuously. Loosen any beef remnants from the bottom of pot.
6. Add the Worcestershire sauce, Italian seasoning, mustard powder, and sage. Slowly add the half and half. Bring to a boil, then reduce to simmer.
7. Stir in the potatoes until well combined into broth. If possible, use an immersion blender to blend until creamy. Add ground beef and frozen vegetables. Cook for 5 minutes until cooked through.
8. Remove from heat and serve with shredded cheese.