

Clay ELECTRIC News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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From the Manager

As February brings the heart of winter to southern Illinois, it's a time when we all appreciate the warmth of home and the reliability of the power that keeps it that way. With Valentine's Day upcoming, it's also a reminder of the strong connections we share with family, friends and our cooperative community. At Clay Electric, our commitment to you is unwavering. **18001-680**

We're grateful for the trust you've placed in us as we continue building infrastructure improvements. Our ongoing work to enhance system reliability is paying off, with fewer and shorter outages even as we navigate the challenges of winter weather. Forecasts suggest we could see colder snaps and potential snow in February, so preparing now ensures you're ready for whatever comes.

Here are some timely tips to help you stay safe, warm and efficient:

- **Thermostat settings:** Keep it at 68°F when home and lower it when away or asleep. Programmable or smart thermostats make this easy and can save on your bill.
- **Circulate warm air:** Run ceiling fans clockwise on low to push warm air down from the ceiling.
- **Seal drafts:** Check windows, doors and outlets for leaks — weatherstripping and caulk are inexpensive fixes that prevent heat loss.
- **Safe use of space heaters:** These can be helpful but are energy-intensive (often 1,500 watts — equivalent to running multiple appliances). Keep them on flat



surfaces at least three feet from anything flammable, and never leave them unattended or running while sleeping.

- **Generator safety:** If using a portable generator during outages, operate it outdoors only, away from windows and doors, to avoid carbon monoxide dangers. Never connect it directly to your home's wiring without a proper transfer switch.
- **Outage preparedness:** Stock flashlights, batteries, bottled water and nonperishable food. If you depend on electric medical equipment, keep backup power charged and let us know about your needs — we prioritize those accounts during restorations.

Our dedicated linemen and staff stand ready 24/7, braving the cold to keep the lights on. While we work hard to minimize interruptions, winter storms can happen, and your patience and understanding mean the world to us.

Speaking of our dedicated staff, our forestry crew will be working on the Iola substation's south feeder. They'll be clearing rights-of-way of dangerous trees to improve reliability. We expect them to be working generally in the area south of Iola, north of Hickory Hill Lane, east of Farina and west of U.S. Route 45. Their work area will be highlighted on the map included in this section.

Don't forget to search for your member number in the center section of this magazine. Three lucky numbers are hidden each month in Clay Electric News — if yours is there and you call us, you'll earn a \$5 credit on your next bill!



Matt Conklin
CEO

The power surge

Factors driving the rising demand for electricity

Across the U.S., the demand for power is climbing at one of the fastest rates in decades. As the economy becomes more reliant on electricity and data centers continue to sprout up in many parts of the country, electric cooperatives are preparing to meet the challenges that skyrocketing demand brings.

The North American Reliability Corporation — the watchdog for the U.S. electric grid — recently released the 2025-2026 winter reliability assessment, which echoed other recent reports, including longer-term outlooks that expect sufficient energy resources during normal conditions but potential supply shortfalls and outages under more intense weather conditions.

Extreme weather coupled with additional factors that are driving increased demand creates challenges for electric utilities, including cooperatives, in their mission to provide reliable power around the clock.

Several key factors are driving increased demand — including economic growth, expanded manufacturing, data center development and increased electrification in transportation. Together, these trends are reshaping how much electricity we consume and how quickly utilities like Clay Electric Cooperative must adapt to meet future needs.

One of the biggest drivers of rising demand is increased electrification. More homes and businesses are transitioning to electricity for home heating, water heating and transportation. EVs are becoming more common on the road, and many states are offering incentives to help consumers make the switch. Additionally, electric heat pumps are replacing traditional furnaces in many homes due to their efficiency. These transitions mean more energy use and pressure placed on our electric grid.



Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough electricity to power 3,600 homes for one year) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

- 1 Increased Electrification:** Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
- 2 Data Centers:** Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
- 3 Economic Growth:** Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
- 4 Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring:** New, expanding and “onshored/reshored” manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

Data centers are another major contributor to rising demand. As AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing technologies grow, the need for data processing and storage has skyrocketed. Data centers require huge amounts of power to operate servers and cooling systems 24/7. Tech companies are building new facilities nationwide — many of which are in electric cooperative-served areas — and these regions are experiencing multi-year surges in electricity demand as a result.

Economic and manufacturing growth are also contributing to higher electricity use. As businesses expand and new industries take root, especially in rural and suburban areas, the demand for reliable, high-capacity power is increasing. The resurgence of domestic manufacturing has led to major facility construction. These facilities often require substantial energy loads, and many operate continuously to keep production lines running. This growth brings jobs and investment, but it also puts new pressures on the electric grid.

Population growth and housing development are also contributing to

rising demand in many regions, and everyday life is becoming more energy dependent, too. Smart appliances, connected devices, home offices and entertainment systems are adding to overall consumption, even as efficiency improves. **14728-001**

While increased demand presents new challenges for electric utilities, it also has the potential to create significant opportunities for co-ops and the communities they serve, such as job growth, steady revenue and improved infrastructure. Electric co-ops are responding by planning carefully for the future — investing in grid modernization and offering programs and services to help co-op members conserve energy.

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of today’s economy, and its role will only grow stronger. As electrification accelerates, long-term planning becomes more important than ever.

Clay Electric Co-operative is ready to meet rising demand in our local communities. Through innovation, investment and collaboration, we are preparing for a more reliable and resilient energy future.

The parts of a POWER POLE

Ever wonder what's on a power pole and how it delivers electricity to your home? Learning about each part can help you and your family stay informed — and safe.

Here are some common parts found on power poles. Equipment can vary depending on location and service needs.

Insulators keep energized wires from touching the pole or other wires, preventing dangerous contact.

Primary wires are the main series of wires that carry high-voltage electricity (often 7,200 volts) from substations through the distribution system — about 60 times higher than household voltage.

Lightning surge protectors shield equipment from lightning or sudden voltage spikes.

Neutral conductor wires provide a return path for electricity to the substation and are grounded to balance the system.

Secondary wires deliver lower-voltage electricity directly to homes and businesses.

Transformers — the round, metal tank-like devices — reduce high-voltage electricity from primary wires to a safer level for homes and businesses. Many include a lightning arrester for protection.

Ground wires run the entire length of the pole and safely channel electricity and lightning into the earth.

Guy wires anchor poles to the ground for stability. Stay clear of them when walking, playing, mowing or driving nearby.

Communication lines — for phone, cable or internet — are usually the lowest wires on the pole.



Safety Tip: Never attach signs or posters to utility poles — it creates serious hazards for lineworkers.

 Safe
Electricity.org®

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Dec. 17, 2025

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. (CECI) was held at the Clay Electric Co-operative Headquarters, Flora, Ill., beginning at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 17, 2025. Trustees present were Bob Pierson, Neil Gould, Bill Croy, Kevin Logan, Frank Herman, Frank Czyzewski, Richard Rudolphi, Evan Smith and Josh Schnepfer. Also present were Matt Conklin, CEO, and Attorney for the Board Tyra Cycholl. The meeting was opened by Bob Pierson, who presided, and Neil Gould acted as secretary thereof.

The invocation was given by Frank Czyzewski and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following proceedings were had [all action being first duly moved and seconded, and all action taken being upon the unanimous vote of the Board or without dissenting vote of abstention unless otherwise stated]:

APPROVED, the Suggested Agenda.

HEARD, the Manager's Report on Safety including:

- The Monthly Safety Report;
- Monday Morning Safety meeting held Dec. 15, 2025;
- The Quarterly Safety Committee Meeting Report.

APPROVED, the Consent Agenda including the following:

- **APPROVED**, the prior meeting minutes;
- **APPROVED**, (a) to admit to membership those applicants connected for service since the last such review by the board, and (b) cancel those former members shown on the Manager's Report since the last such review by the Board,

said members no longer taking service.

REVIEWED, the Consent Agenda including the following:

- **REVIEWED**, the Work Orders;
- **REVIEWED**, the Disbursements;
- **REVIEWED**, the Credit Card Statements;
- **REVIEWED**, the Attorney Retainer;
- **REVIEWED**, the Account Summary Report.

APPROVED, the retirement of capital credits for the Deceased Estates as presented.

APPROVED, December write-offs for two accounts.

REVIEWED, Board Pier Diem.

REVIEWED and **APPROVED**, policy reviews to 1000-44.

UPDATED, on Federated issues.

HEARD, a report by Bob Pierson regarding SIPC.

REVIEWED, Events and Training.

HEARD and **APPROVED**, a financial report by Matt Conklin as to the following:

- Monthly Reconciliation;
- SIPC Power Delivered in November 2025;
- November 2025 Cash Flow;
- Line Loss;
- November 2025 Form 7;
- November 2025 Balance Sheet;

REVIEWED, the Cybersecurity Report.

APPROVED, Bill Croy as AIEC Alternate Director and Delegate.

APPROVED, 2026 voting delegates as presented with Bill Croy as AIEC Alternate Director and Delegate.

REVIEWED and **DISCUSSED** the 2026 Budget including:

- SIPC Power Cost;

- Capital Credits;
- Advertising and Donations;
- Capital Items;
- Construction Work Plan Projects;
- 2026 Budget.

APPROVED, Health Insurance change for non-union staff to better align with union benefits with the company.

APPROVED, the 2026 Budget as presented with the new health insurance numbers factored into the budget.

HEARD and **APPROVED**, the Manager's Report by Matt Conklin on the following topics:

- Operations Report;
- Communications Report;
- Upcoming meetings.

REVIEWED, the Operations Report including the SAIDI report and CECI Reliability Report.

REVIEWED, the Communications Report.


WERE REMINDED, of upcoming meetings on Jan. 26, 2026, at 3:30 p.m., Feb. 23, 2026, at 3:30 p.m., March 23, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. and April 27, 2026, at either 3:30 p.m. or 7 p.m. **14019-002**

There being no further business to come before the Board, said meeting was declared adjourned at 5:05 p.m.



Every month we will have three member numbers hidden throughout Clay Electric News. If you find your member number that corresponds to the one found on the upper right corner of your bill, call our office and identify your number and the page it's on. If correct, you will win a \$5 credit on your next electric bill.

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