



IEC ENHANCES OUR PHONE SYSTEM FOR 24 HOUR ACCOUNT ACCESS

IEC will be installing an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system around the middle of March. The IVR allows IEC to offer more options for its members available 24 hours a day. Some of

the benefits of an IVR system include: the outage assists in decreasing restoration time. The IVR system offers features to call a member's contact phone number confirming power restoration if requested. "The IVR system will integrate into the existing phone infrastructure", says IT Administrator Don Lawrence. "Members will have the option to interact with their account even when the offices are closed" says Lawrence.

the benefits of an IVR system include:

- Account Query and Information
- Member Information Updates
- Payment options
- Outage Reporting and Callback Verification

Utilities and Co-ops like IEC have been using IVRs to help avoid busy signals and speed up call queue times. IEC prides itself on answering every phone call with an operator or Customer Service Representative (CSR) during business hours. But during high call volumes typically associated with outages members tend to remain on hold as each CSR handles every member's concern.

By offering account information and payment options through the IVR, IEC gives members the choice in calling the IVR to make a payment over the phone 24 hours a day. IEC will publish a direct line into the IVR system for members to call anytime day or night. If you find yourself on hold for a CSR, members will be given the option to transfer into the IVR to handle that quick account payment. Members will even be able to call in after business hours to update home, business and mobile phone numbers to help keep the cooperative's records up to date and accurate.

When the power goes out, members want to report their outage quickly and accurately as possible. Quick and accurate identification of an

The IVR also gives IEC more options to contact members about their accounts. IEC will have the ability to notify members of upcoming planned outages, upcoming district and the annual meeting. IEC will be able to notify members of planned outages in their area to help make arrangements. District meetings and the annual meeting are important functions and the IVR system will help provide another way to remind members to mark their calendar.

As IEC grows in members and expands its services, so does its customer service options. Be on the lookout for the IVR phone number and the Member Contact Information Update phone number to be in the Lamp. ♦



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IEC WORKS TO KEEP CONSUMERS OUT OF THE DARK

BY C.L. HARMON

Restlessness and discontent are the first necessities of progress Thomas Edison said. It would appear he was right. The restlessness and discontent of members who were powerless necessitated a progression that Indian Electric employees believe will help keep the lights on.

In 2007, during a disastrous ice storm, electric members learned a valuable lesson as to how quick the lights can go off and how long it can take for them to come back on.

Thousands of people throughout the Indian Electric service area were without power, many for several days. Due to relentless hours of pelting ice, IEC crews worked around the clock to restore power only to realize that a short time later, the falling ice had broken another branch knocking power out again to an area they had just left.

It was hours of fighting mother nature, who IEC Operational Supervisor Doyle Whittenburg says, always wins when she takes the notion. None-the-less, after the storm had passed IEC began to aggressively attack the problem that had caused 327 poles to go down leaving thousands without power.

The outages could have been worse. For 15 years IEC management and its board of directors saw the importance of minimizing damage through preventative maintenance practices.

It had moved its right-of-way operation in-house at that time so it could keep close tabs

on trouble areas such as those with high brush growth and reaching tree limbs.

Poles and power lines are vulnerable in these areas during violent weather such as high winds, snow and ice storms, according to right-of-way supervisor Jamie Garrison.

“It is the weight of the ice on the lines and the ice that forms on tree branches, breaking them and then falling into power lines disrupting power”, Supervisor over Engineering Paul Grantham said.

One way to combat this problem was to widen the right-

of-ways and keep tree limbs away from the lines. So when ice does cause them to break, they would fall free of the lines.

“People are concerned because we cut such a wide right-of-way,” Garrison said. But these measures will lessen the negative effects of a future ice storm.

IEC continues an aggressive preventative maintenance program to reduce outages. Last month’s bout of bad weather showed the fruits of these labors.

“We were geared up and ready this time,” Whittenburg said. Although these storms were not the magnitude of the one in 2007, it did cause lines and trees to ice over. Only this time the number of limbs hanging over power lines had been drastically reduced.

Garrison explained that it is standard for them to cut back 15 feet from the center of a pole unless it is three phase and then it is 25 feet. His six crews operate full time to keep that right-of-way clear. In the summer months spraying herbicides is also routine maintenance to slow the growth of what has been cut.

“It’s a constant maintenance job. Some areas have a lot of growth,” Garrison said. Since the project began, crews have cleared 85 percent of the right-of-ways through the IEC system





which consists of 81,000 poles providing power to 18,000 consumers in multiple counties.

“Our board is committed to providing excellent service,” Grantham said. He explained that the board members have approved the purchase of equipment for the right-of-way crews to use in order to minimize power outages due to falling trees and limbs.

In addition to their efforts in battling mother nature, IEC also uses a pole inspection cycle to keep old rotting poles from collapsing and disrupting power. The inspectors checked 25,000 poles last year and changed 1,762. This is another area which board members allocate resources to achieve excellent service, Grantham said.

Whittenburg explained that times will ultimately come when power is lost as mother nature can be overwhelming at times.

“In spite of what it looks like, we are not just running up and down the road when the power is out. There is a method to restoring power to the system,” he said.

“Members aren’t familiar with the distribution system,” Grantham said. He explained that certain lines must be repaired before others. Main feeders first and then the lines which restore power to the largest areas next.

“Just because a line is down in your yard, that does not mean that your power will be restored if it is repaired. If the line several miles down the road, which feeds your line, is down, then that line must be repaired first,” Grantham said.

“It is the top priority of every employee here that our members have power,” He added that it is not only during outages that the crews work to keep the lights on but everyday as is seen in the pride the employees show everyday in their individual jobs.

“We have made great strides in preventative maintenance and everyone is conscious of that maintenance,” Whittenburg said.

What does this maintenance cost the Co-op? Some power companies charge an added fee on monthly bills to pay for the costs of clearing right-of-ways. IEC chooses to absorb the costs into its Engineering and Operations budget, Member Services Manager for IEC David Wilson said.

It’s been a group effort to make us less vulnerable to weather-related outages and I think members really do understand what we are trying to accomplish,” Garrison said. ♦

*Dear IEC,
I know you hear complaints but
probably don't hear so many thank
you's, but this is a Great Big Thank
You! Our electricity stayed on all
through the bad weather, not even a
blinking. Just wanted you to know
how much we appreciate your hard
work.
Thanks again,
Silver City area*

Recipe: Butter Pecan Bread

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour	2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. cinnamon	1 cup chopped pecans
1/4 tsp. nutmeg	1 egg - slightly beaten
1 cup brown sugar	2 Tbls margarine - softened
1/2 tsp. baking soda	1 cup butter milk
1/2 tsp. salt	
Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl combine flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, baking soda, salt, baking powder, and pecans.	
Add egg, butter milk and margarine stir until the mixture is moistened. Spoon the batter into 1 large greased loaf pan. Bake for 1 hour.	
Cool slightly in the pan on a wire rack, then remove from pan.	

REDUCING ENERGY USE WITH ENERGY STAR®

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created the ENERGY STAR program in 1992 to protect the environment with energy-efficient products and practices. This voluntary partnership between the government

and more than 8,000 organizations now includes more than 50 product categories. ENERGY STAR also offers best-practice solutions, like home sealing and duct sealing, that can make your home more comfortable and reduce your energy costs.



The program is making a difference. In fact, EPA estimates that in 2006, ENERGY STAR saved 170 billion kilowatt-hours of energy—about 5 percent of that year’s total U.S. electric demand.¹ Americans have purchased more than a billion ENERGY STAR-qualified products.²

One of the easiest ways to put the benefits of the program to use is to upgrade your home’s less efficient products. Products that can earn the ENERGY STAR include appliances, lighting, home office equipment, consumer electronics, and heating and cooling equipment.

Many ENERGY STAR-qualifying products involve no

extra cost at the time of purchase. Other products such as kitchen appliances and heating and cooling equipment may have extra costs. These products are designed to make up the initial cost difference through savings on your energy bill.

As part of the national effort, IEC is encouraging the use of products that have earned the ENERGY STAR label. IEC provides rebates for ENERGY STAR-qualified clothes washers and dishwashers, room air conditioners, and ground source and dual-fuel heat pumps. There are specific qualifications for these rebates; be sure to contact IEC at 918-358-2514 before purchasing. ♦

¹ Tertia Speiser “Shine on with Energy Star in Your Portfolio; Results from an E SOURCE Roundtable Discussion” 2007

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency “ENERGY STAR—The Power To Protect The Environment Through Energy Efficiency” EPA 430R03008 July 2003

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