

HI-LINES

A NEWSLETTER FOR JO-CARROLL ENERGY MEMBERS

APRIL 2021 |

Voluntary and open membership • Voluntary and open membership • Voluntary and open membership • Voluntary and open membership • Voluntary and open membership

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Elizabeth, Illinois

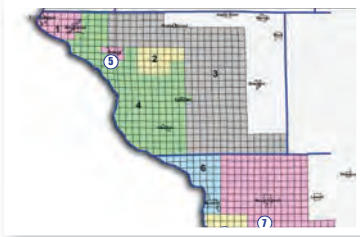


800-858-5522



www.jocarroll.com

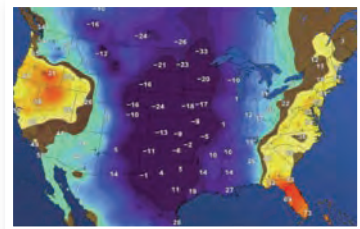
Why was my March bill so high?



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Polar vortex

Natural gas cost spikes



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Slow down

Work Zone Awareness Week



Most of the snow has melted and temperatures are warming up. So why is my energy bill that I received in March so high? I too would like to forget about the two frigid weeks of temperatures in February, but your bill(s) in March reflect your usage in February. You probably remember hearing about what happened in Texas due to the extended cold snap that hit that area, as well as much of the nation, which disrupted energy production and drove up demand and pricing, especially for our natural gas members.

Natural gas market or "swing" prices held at catastrophic, historic highs. In that week, the price on one of the pipelines that delivers natural gas to our area jumped 75 times higher, impacting the cost of natural gas that the co-op and others had to purchase on the market. Not only was your usage up due to the frigid temperatures, but prices for natural gas spiked to historic levels for nearly a week. The combination of higher use and historic market prices led to the highest bills our natural gas members have ever received.

Because of Jo-Carroll's natural gas contract and storage strategies, we reduced the overall impact of this event by approximately \$2.77 million.

As a cooperative, we purchase natural gas from suppliers and deliver it to members. We do not set the purchase price that is paid for gas or add a mark-up. The cost



CEO'S REPORT
by Mike Casper

of natural gas is a pass-through to members, and why you were seeing an amount on the Purchased Gas Adjustment line if you receive a standard bill or on the Power Cost Adjustment line if you receive an invoice bill.

While Jo-Carroll was able to maintain reliable energy to your homes during this critical time, we understand the impact that these higher bills will have on you. Jo-Carroll chose to include the impact of this extreme weather event on one bill instead of spreading it across multiple months. We did this to clearly show our members the financial impact of this extreme event and so those who are eligible for assistance funds can apply before they are no longer available.

We also wanted to allow time for your household or business to prepare if you find yourself in need of assistance. We are working with you, our member consumers, on an individual basis to make payment arrangements and discuss payment options and available assistance programs. If your household or business is in need of assistance, please contact Jo-Carroll Energy at 1-800-858-5522. Please know, we are here

▶ Continued on 20C

For your information

Your Board of Directors:

David Senn
Chairman
District 7

Russell Holesinger
Vice Chairman
District 8

Marcia Stanger
Secretary
District 3

Martin Werner
District 1

Joseph Mattingley
District 2

Dan Tindell
District 4

Patricia Smith
District 5

Thomas Lundy
District 6

Larry Carroll
District 9

Robert Kuhns
Treasurer
District 10

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

Elizabeth
793 U.S. Route 20 West
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Savanna
103 Chicago Ave.
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4 p.m.

Geneseo
1004 S. Chicago St.
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4 p.m.

Services and Billing Questions:

(800) 858-5522
www.jocarroll.com

For emergencies and outages call:

(800) 858-5522

Jo-Carroll Energy board meeting minutes summary

Board Meeting Minutes Summary - January 27, 2021

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held via video phone conference on Wednesday, January 27, 2021 at 9 a.m.

A Safety Moment was provided by Director Larry Carroll.

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Report – Chairman Senn discussed the highlights from the AIEC and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) reports.

American Public Gas Association (APGA) Report – Director Carroll discussed the latest topics within the gas industry and shared a press release, APGA Statement on Incoming Biden Administration, that was issued by the APGA to Congress.

Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) – Director Mattingley provided an overview of current topics being discussed at DPC, adding that the new CEO is making a positive impact to the organization. Mattingley also noted that the DPC highlights will be emailed after their board meeting.

Prairie Power Incorporated (PPI) Report – Director Kuhns provided a summary of the most recent generation numbers. Kuhns noted that PPI is reviewing a policy to consider adding more solar generation into their mix.

Policy 140 – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve Board Policy 140/ Fraud Detection and Mitigation.

Policy 142 – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve Board Policy 142/ Social Media.

Policy 143 – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve Board Policy 143/ AMI Opt Out.

Financial Operating Report – CFO Woods provided a summary of the financial operating report for December. YTD revenue is approximately \$59.4 million vs. a budgeted amount of \$60.8 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses were approximately \$718,000 over budget of \$50.1 million. The difference was due to the cost of purchased power. All other O&M expenses are over budget by \$223,699. YTD margins are approximately \$941,106 vs. a budgeted amount of approximately \$2.1 million. By general consent,

the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor. In addition to the financial summary report, Woods also provided an audit update.

Board Issues and Action Items

A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the electric and natural gas rates as part of the approved 2021 budget.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the Dairyland Wholesale Rate Option, and carried by a vote of 9-0. Director Mattingley abstained from voting.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the Customized Commercial Account Authorization Resolution.

Closing Documents were presented for the 2020 RUS ReConnect Award IL 1703-A65 fiber grant. Documents were reviewed and motions were made, seconded, and carried unanimously to authorize signatures on the closing documents.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve a Resolution to change the Registered Agent from Christopher D. Allendorf to Michael J. Casper for Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP).

Attendees were selected for the Virtual Dairyland District Meeting.

Operations and Regulatory Update

Operations Update – Kyle Buros, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer provided an operations update and discussed Jo-Carroll Energy's 2021 goals with a focus on growth and our core business systems.

Covid Update – Merri Sevey, V.P. of Human Resources, provided an update on Covid statistics in our region and offered information for each county on how to register for the vaccine.

Action Resulting from Executive Session – None.

Other Business – None.

Adjournment

Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.

Reader prize

Each month we print the name of a Jo-Carroll Energy member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact Jo-Carroll Energy.

Director's Scholarship deadline is May 1

High school seniors still have time to apply for Jo-Carroll Energy's "Director's Scholarships" that are typically awarded at the co-op's Annual Meeting of Members.

Up to 10 Director's Scholarships of \$500 each are awarded, one in each of the cooperative's 10 director districts. (If no applications are received from a district, that scholarship will become an "at-large" scholarship.)



Current high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Jo-Carroll Energy, and who have not won another JCE scholarship, are eligible to receive a Director's Scholarship. The applicant and at least one of their parents or guardians must attend the annual meeting.

Application forms and details are found under the Community tab of our website.

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for you.

Please also know that Jo-Carroll Energy is exhausting every means to get to the bottom of why this price travesty occurred. We are working with our industry partners challenging the nature of the gas market purchasing process so that this will not happen in the future.

I would like to end by thanking you for your cooperation to conserve energy where you could during this unprecedented event.

Director nomination petitions available

Nomination petitions are available for four districts up for election on the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors in 2021.

The director districts up for election include Districts 5, 7, 8 and 10. Any Jo-Carroll Energy member residing in a district up for election – including the incumbent – may petition for nomination in that district.

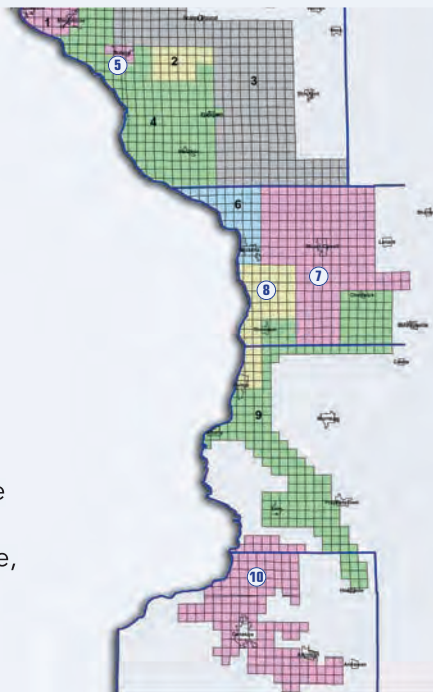
The board of directors is made up of members and consumers just like you who live in and are a part of communities we serve. Running for the board and voting in elections are benefits of being a co-op member.

Members interested in seeking election may download a petition from the

cooperative's website at jocarroll.com. Petitions must be signed by at least 25 JCE members residing in the district for which the director is to be elected. Petitions must be filed at the cooperative's headquarters no later than June 4.

In order to qualify to have their name on the ballot, all nominees must participate in an orientation process provided by the attorney for the cooperative, assuring that all nominees fully understand the expectations and responsibilities of directors. These include, but are not limited to: time demands, education expectations and fiduciary duties.

All eligible candidates will be listed on the cooperative's website and in Hi-Lines.



Polar vortex fuels natural gas cost spikes

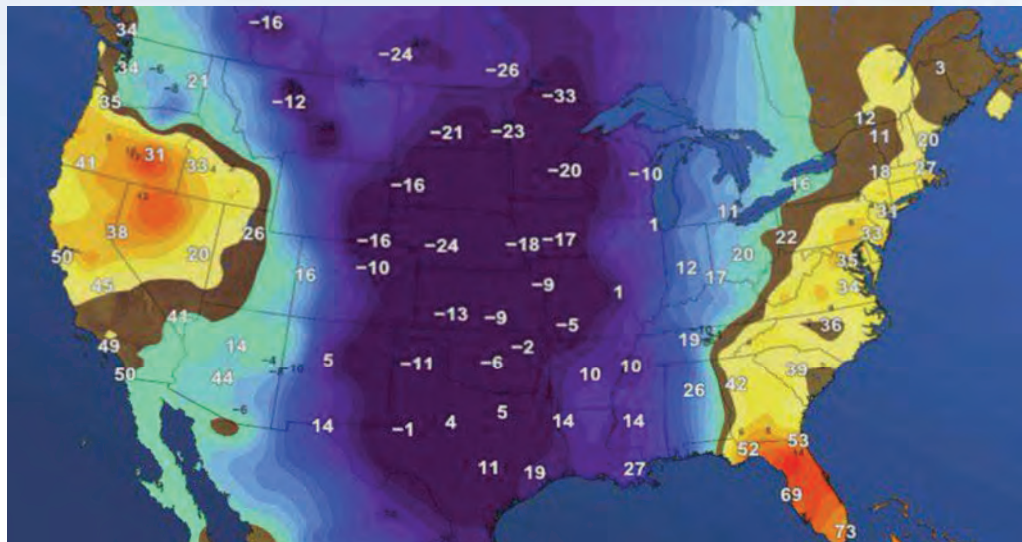
While the first two months of winter were in the top 10 warmest nationally and the opening months of 2021 forecast to be warmer than average, mid-February was a much different story.

The 2021 polar vortex caused historically low temperatures and ice and snow to grip many regions of the country, stressing energy supplies and transmission. Temperatures remained in single-digits to sub-zero for over a week, with frigid temperatures extending into Texas.

Those extremely low temperatures caused natural gas and oil wells to freeze at the same time demand from homes and businesses was significantly above normal. Interstate pipelines, including two that supply natural gas to Jo-Carroll Energy, were limiting flows into Illinois.

Increased use due to the record cold coupled with decreased production and supply caused prices to skyrocket. According to the American Public Gas Association, natural gas, which was selling for around \$3 per MMBtu skyrocketed to over \$300 per MMBtu. These prices were over 100 times greater than the price of natural gas in the beginning of February, similar to the prices JCE was seeing.

These soaring prices, along with the increases in demand, placed strains on natural gas systems. "We had no other choice but to purchase gas at



inflated prices so our members could continue to heat their homes and businesses," said Mike Casper, Jo-Carroll Energy president and CEO.

As a not-for-profit distribution cooperative, JCE purchases natural gas from suppliers and delivers it to members. The cost of natural gas is a pass-through to members; the co-op does not set the purchase price that is paid for gas or add a mark-up.

Fortunately, Jo-Carroll had advanced purchased natural gas and storage to cover 85% of our member's normal usage in February. If we had not, the cost impact could have been more than double.

Casper noted that in response to this crisis, JCE worked with APGA to formally request that the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission begin an immediate investigation into the unprecedented rise in natural gas prices.

"Soon afterward, we were working with legislators

and state and federal associations," said Casper. "We believe it is critical to ensure that the increases in the price of natural gas were the result of market forces rather than manipulation. Our members and communities must be protected from unwarranted price increases."

"Please know that Jo-Carroll Energy is exhausting every means to get to the bottom of why this crisis occurred," he added. "We are challenging the natural gas market purchasing process so this will not happen in the future."

The co-op also worked with APGA to send a letter to President Biden supporting an Emergency Disaster Declaration for impacted regions of the country and has requested that federal funding be made available to assist public natural gas systems and their communities to help mitigate the impact of the historic price increases. JCE is working with state and national associations and agencies to explore other possible relief measures.

Assistance, help available for bills

The cooperative is continuing to work with members to identify ways to minimize the impact of high bills, noted Jennifer Meyer, vice president of member services.

“If they have not already, members are encouraged to contact the co-op to review payment assistance resources and discuss payment options,” she said.

The co-op has a number of tools to help members manage their energy bills. Two assistance programs available to members are LIHEAP and JCE’s own Neighbor to Neighbor program. LIHEAP provides qualifying households with monetary relief for energy bills with eligibility based on several factors including household size and income. The JCE program works in tandem with LIHEAP. Members must first apply for LIHEAP to be considered. If funds are available, a member may receive a grant.

Agencies that handle the assistance application process for JCE are:

Jo Daviess County

Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency (NICAA)
815-232-3141

Carroll and Whiteside counties

Tri- County Opportunities Council
800-323-5434

Henry County

Project Now
309-852-4565

Meyer added the co-op also offers budget billing or levelized billing plans to help keep monthly energy bills manageable. These options average energy use over a 12-month period to avoid big fluctuations in monthly bills.

JCE also has an energy advisor who can talk with members about energy efficiency resources that are available and to help members use energy wisely.

Cold temps = higher energy use

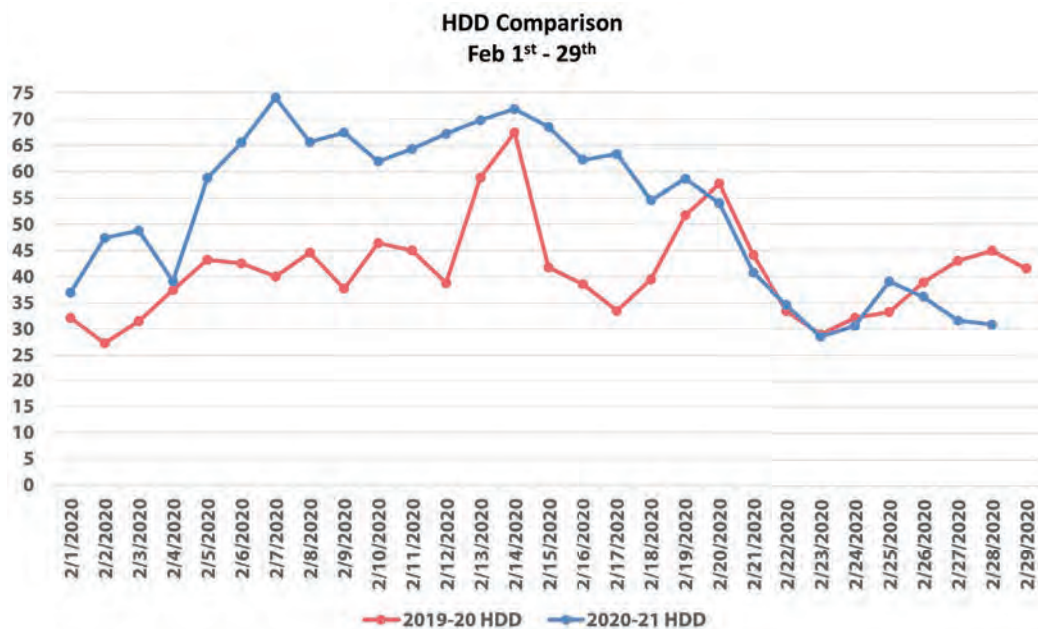
While much attention focused on the natural gas event, anytime the weather is colder our members typically use more energy – both natural gas and electric.

“A cold day here and there will not have much effect on overall energy consumption for heating, but a long period of extreme cold temps like we have seen [in February] will greatly affect energy consumption to maintain expected comfort within a member’s home,” notes JCE energy advisor John Scott.

Several factors can lead to higher energy bills during the winter. Furnaces and heaters are running more; people are inside more; lights, TVs, computers and appliances are used more.

Variations in energy bills often follow closely with degree days. The more extreme the outdoor temperatures, the higher the number of degree days. February 2021 had several degree days, and it’s another thing to consider when looking at your energy bills.

The following graph, prepared by Scott, shows a comparison of heating degree days for February 2020 and 2021. Members are encouraged to call Scott at 800-858-5522, ext. 1339 to discover more way to help control their energy consumption for maintaining comfort.



5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: call811.com

THE ONE CARD THAT DOES IT ALL

Co-op Connections

Save up to 85% at hundreds of local and national retailers when you show your co-op connections card. Another member benefit brought to you by Jo-Carroll Energy.

Save on dining, eyewear, office supplies, home repairs, fitness clubs, cleaning services, prescriptions, pizza, rental cars, hotels, tools and more.

Co-op Connections® Card



Download a digital card with the co-op connections phone app and visit all the ways to save online at connections.coop



Learn more at www.connections.coop

Note the new payment address!

We've received a few questions about why members bill payments are now sent to Alabama. Jo-Carroll Energy now has an agreement with our billing software provider to handle payment processing, a task formerly handled in our office.

As part of our planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the co-op identified this as one item that could be improved to ensure business continuity and uninterrupted

service in the face of future crises. It also allows the Member Services group to focus on other value-added functions that are important to members and the services provided.

This provider works with several cooperatives across the country and is a trusted partner in serving co-op members.

Members are encouraged to mail their bill payment a few days earlier than normal, to give sufficient mail handling time. We have heard from

members who experienced longer than normal delivery times, and are actively monitoring those conditions.

Mail payments to:
Jo-Carroll Energy
Department 1340
PO Box 2153
Birmingham, AL
35287-1340

Work Zone Awareness Week April 26–30

Although road maintenance crews come to mind when thinking of orange directional signs and work zones, other workers perform job duties near the road as well, including utility and tree-trimming crews. **Cynthia Yeager**

Streets and highways are lined with power poles and electrical equipment, and narrow roadways often require crews like ours to place their equipment in traffic lanes. Their work is often taken for granted but benefits us all; and, like everyone, they deserve a safe workplace. Be alert to utility crews and other work zone workers for their safety as well as yours.

According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, 672 fatal crashes and 755 deaths occurred in work zone crashes in 2018. Of those fatalities, 124 were workers. Many other work zone crashes result in injuries. An estimated 123,000 work zone crashes occurred in 2018, resulting in 45,000 people injured.



To help keep roadside crews safe:

- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so allow time for unexpected setbacks in your schedule.
- Obey all signs and road crew flag instructions.
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- Use your headlights at

dusk and during inclement weather.

- Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as operating a radio, applying makeup and eating while driving.

Don't make the jobs of road workers, utility crews, tree trimmers and others who work near traffic more dangerous. Slow down when approaching a work zone and move over for first responders and work crews on the side of the road.

This helps keep you safe as well. Drive safely.

LINEWORKERS BRING THE LIGHT.

Lineworker Appreciation Day

On April 12, remember to
#ThankALineworker.

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<p>\$59.99* per month</p> <p>Fiber-Link Home</p> <p>25 Mbps X 5 Mbps</p>	<p>\$74.99 per month</p> <p>Fiber-Link</p> <p>250 Mbps X 25 Mbps</p>	<p>\$99.99 per month</p> <p>Giga-Link</p> <p>1,000 Mbps X 100 Mbps</p>	<p>\$299.99 per month</p> <p>Hyper-Link</p> <p>2,000 Mbps X 200 Mbps</p>
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*Fiber-Link Home package is for residential use only.



Sand Prairie

A service of Jo-Carroll Energy

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Get connected or express your interest at connectSP.com/iwantfiber