
ILLINOIS ENERGY FORUM

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 8

AUGUST, 2020

Downed Power Lines Can Kill

If you are in a car accident or equipment snarl with a power line, do not get out. Your vehicle and the ground could be energized. Stay in your vehicle or cab and call 9-1-1 and wait for the local electric utility or electric cooperative to de-energize the area.

The dangers of downed power lines became all too real when an Illinois man was apparently electrocuted and died June 29, 2020. He struck a utility pole with his car, got out, and was exposed to live, stray voltage. And this accident is not an isolated case; unfortunately, they happen across the nation and world.

“Although your first instinct might be to get out and run when you see a downed power line, doing so could cost you your life,” says Erin Hollinshead, executive director of [Safe Electricity](#).

ICC Announces Moratorium on Disconnections Voluntarily Extended by Several Utilities

The Illinois Commerce Commission has announced that several of the state’s large and small regulated electric, natural gas, water and sewer utilities have voluntarily agreed to keep residential customers connected for an additional month due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns.

The moratorium on disconnections expired on July 26, 2020, however, with the voluntary extension, disconnections for residential customers will not occur for most customers until September 2020. Several utilities have also extended sim-

ilar relief to business customers and have agreed to continue waiving late fees. Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, Consumer Gas, ComEd, Illinois American Water, Liberty, Nicor, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas, Utility Services of Illinois are among the utilities with extended moratoriums on service disconnections.

“The Commission appreciates the companies’ recognition of the continuing public health emergency and their voluntary efforts to provide much needed additional relief to affected customers,” said ICC Executive Director Christy George. On June 18, 2020, the Commission approved the landmark COVID-19 utility relief agreements in Docket No. 20-0309, which were the product of

Inside This Issue

- 2 From The Staff**
 - 2 Ameren Illinois Providing \$8 Million in Bill Payment Assistance for Qualified Customers**
 - 3 Energy News**
 - 4 Energy Association Activities**
-

FROM THE STAFF

Well it's certainly been an interesting summer. Like the rest of 2020, summer has been one surprise and one challenge after another in the energy policy world. And, because of COVID-19, there aren't even conferences and conventions to provide a break from the normal workday activities (probably being undertaken from home). Let's hope things get better as we move into Fall and Winter. **IEF**

(Continued from Page 1) —

Safe Electricity

Incidents with power lines or other electrical sources can break the electrical current's usual path, making the ground, vehicles and anything else in its trajectory electrified.

"The only reason you should get out of a car, truck, tractor or other equipment is if it is on fire or you see or smell smoke. Otherwise stay put and call 9-1-1," Hollinshead advises. "Knowing what to do in a situation like this can save your life."

After telling the dispatcher where you are, be sure to report that there is a downed power line near or on your vehicle. The same safety know-how applies to other sources of electricity, including a pad-mounted transformer ("green box"), substation, or other type of electrical equipment or cabinet. **IEF**

(Continued from Page 1) —

ICC

negotiations between thirteen utility companies and numerous consumer advocacy groups.

For more information on the Commission's response to COVID-19, please visit www.icc.illinois.gov and parties.

In addition to extending the moratorium on disconnections and late payment fees, the original agreement provided historic consumer protections involving utility credit and collection practices, deferred payment agreements, and temporary waivers of reconnection fees and new deposit requirements. **IEF**

Ameren Illinois Providing \$8 Million in Bill Payment Assistance to Qualified Customers

Ameren Illinois has allocated \$8 million in bill payment assistance to help qualified residential customers reduce or eliminate a past-due account balance. Under the "Fresh Start" program, up to \$700 is available for customers struggling to pay energy bills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the program opened on July 9, nearly 5,000 Ameren Illinois customers have received bill payment assistance.

"This has been a very difficult stretch for many of our customers," said Richard J. Mark, Chairman and President, Ameren Illinois. "While we're seeing some indications that the economy is improving and people are getting back to work, the need for assistance remains high. We're glad to be in a position to provide additional financial support and offer a fresh start for customers who are most in need."

The Fresh Start program is designed to help those customers impacted most by the coronavirus. Income-qualified Ameren Illinois customers with past-due account balances may be eligible for funding. **IEF**

NARUC Announces Natural Gas Partnership with U.S. Department of Energy

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners has initiated a new Natural Gas Partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy.

Building on the success of the NARUC-DOE Natural Gas Infrastructure Modernization Partnership, the new partnership will continue to facilitate the exchange of information on emerging technologies and investments in natural gas for electricity generation and thermal load.

The NGIMP was established in 2016 and remained active through June 2020. The partnership convened state regulators, federal agencies and other stakeholders to discuss natural gas pipeline leak detection and measurement tools. Partnership members also explored new technologies and cost-effective practices for enhancing pipeline safety, efficiency and deliverability. Under the NGIMP, NARUC produced numerous educational resources for state public utility commissions. Some of the most notable products from NGIMP include the following publications and resources:

- [Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Replacement and Modernization: A Review of State Programs](#)
- [Sampling of Methane Emissions Detection Technologies and Practices for Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure: An Educational Handbook for State Energy Regulators](#)
- [Renewable Natural Gas Workshop Summary](#)
- [Methane Leak Detection Technologies Site Visit and Technical Workshop Summary](#)



New NEPA Helps U.S. Continue to Build World-Class Natural Gas Infrastructure

The final rule released today by the Council on Environmental Quality to update the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will help promote predictability and transparency in the permitting process by clearly identifying which federal agencies need to review proposals, improving coordination between federal agencies and reducing unnecessary delays in the review process.

“More than 179 million Americans use natural gas in their homes and one new customer signs up every minute which requires expanding and maintaining our world-class energy infrastructure,” said AGA President and CEO Karen Harbert. “America’s natural gas utilities are making significant investments in modernizing our vast pipeline network while also drastically reducing the emissions profile for each customer through energy efficiency gains and advanced technologies. A reformed permitting process will enable natural gas utilities to continue to deliver affordable and clean natural gas which will be essential for our nation’s economic revival and achieving our shared environmental goals.”


The American Gas Association, founded in 1918, represents more than 200 local energy companies that deliver clean natural gas throughout the United States. There are more than 75 million residential, commercial and industrial natural gas customers in the U.S., of which 95 percent — more than 71 million customers — receive their gas from AGA.



AGA Accounting Principles Committee Virtual Meeting

Registration is now open on AGA's website for the AGA Accounting Principles Committee virtual meeting in 2020. We hope you or someone on your staff will take advantage of AGA's gracious offer (as described in the Meeting Information section below) and attend the 2020 AGA Accounting Principles Committee virtual meeting to be held August 18 and 19.

Scheduled speakers include Sean Riley, PwC, James Barker, Deloitte and Nick Capiello, Supervising Project Manager, FASB. The full agenda is also available on AGA's website.

CPE will be offered for all registered attendees. Feel free to share with others in your organization. 

NCSL Annual Meeting in Indianapolis is Cancelled

The Annual Meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), which was scheduled for Aug. 10-13 in Indianapolis, Indiana has been cancelled because of the ongoing COVID-19 national emergency.

The NCSL's mission is to "improve state legislatures, foster communication among states and ensure a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system." Several Illinois legislators serve on key NCSL committees. The NCSL serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. It is funded by the states and governed by a 56-member executive committee.

For more information go to www.ncsl.org.



Illinois Energy Forum is published monthly by the Illinois Energy Association, Springfield, Illinois. For questions or comments, please contact James Monk at 217-523-7348 or e-mail at jmonk@ilenergyassn.org.

For name or e-mail address changes, contact Erica Drake at 217-523-7348, fax at 217-523-0643, or e-mail at edrake@ilenergyassn.org.