Ameren Illinois to Accelerate Upgrades to Electricity Grid

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has approved Ameren Illinois’ plans to accelerate upgrades to its electric grid, an effort that has already resulted in more than 235,300 fewer outages and saved customers an estimated $46 million each year. The ICC order will enable Ameren Illinois to accelerate its smart meter deployment and install new meters at all customer premises by 2019.

Ameren Illinois, a subsidiary of Ameren Corporation, launched its grid improvement initiative in 2012 after the state passed the Energy Infrastructure Modernization Act (EIMA). The landmark legislation enables the company to recover the costs of capital for infrastructure improvements and enhancements to the electric distribution system.

Under the modernization plan, Ameren Illinois has installed storm-resistant utility poles, stronger power lines, and outage detection technology in communities throughout central and southern Illinois. In addition, more than 345,000 customers have received new two-way meters that facilitate

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FROM THE STAFF

The calendar has turned to Fall and the General Election campaign is in full swing. The current popular saying is “elections have consequences” and from top to bottom of the ballot this year’s races perhaps hold more consequences for energy policy and a whole range of other major policy areas than any other election in recent times. So, engagement is even more critical this year than ever. Register to vote and follow through either in early voting or on Election Day. Everyone’s voice needs to be heard.

Ameren Illinois

Access to energy-saving tools and programs.

“We’re grateful to have earned the Commission’s continued confidence in our long-term plan to build a stronger energy grid,” said Craig Nelson, senior vice president, Regulatory Affairs and Financial Services for Ameren Illinois. “Today’s decision ensures that all of our customers will have access to technology to help them manage their energy use and save money on their utility bills.”

Over time, customers with a smart meter will be able to view energy usage online and to participate in pricing options and programs. In one example of a cost-savings program enabled by smart meters, more than 7,000 customers voluntarily used less electricity during two high-demand, or “peak,” high-temperature days in August and September. These customers earned bill credits ranging from a few dollars up to $63.

“The state is supportive of the smart grid initiative because we’re not only making critical enhancements to an aging energy infrastructure and creating thousands of new jobs, we’re also enabling our customers to take control of their energy costs,” Nelson said.

(Continued from Page 1)

ICC

Compare offers and make informed decisions. Descriptions of “fixed rate” offers must include only those rates that do not change; rates that can change must be called “variable rates.” Suppliers are to follow appropriate restrictions when marketing “renewable” or “green” energy offers.

- Requirement that retail electric suppliers post their residential offers on the ICC’s PlugInIllinois.org website. The website will be enhanced and promoted to make consumers better aware of their rights and options as they shop the market, which will include comparisons between the rate offered by the retail electric supplier and the utility’s supply rate.

“These rules ensure a robust competitive market balanced with strong consumer protections,” said Cholly Smith, ICC Executive Director. “With today’s action, we look forward to entering the public comment period of the rulemaking process.”

EEI Applauds Senate Passage of the Water Resources Development Act

Edison Electric Institute (EEI) President Tom Kuhn issued the following statement on the Senate passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016.

“We are pleased the Senate has passed the Water Resources Development Act, which contains critically important provisions for the management of coal ash. As the EPA’s coal ash regulation goes into effect and the industry begins to close coal ash basins, these legislative provisions will enable states to be more involved in the permitting process for the closure of basins. Permanently closing basins in a manner that puts safety first, protects the environment, and minimizes impacts to communities and customers is vitally important to our industry.

“EEI thanks Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer for their leadership in advancing this important legislation. We hope the House will advance its version of WRDA so the House and Senate can move quickly to conference.”
North Shore Gas and Community Action Partnership of Lake County Join Forces to Provide Affordable Housing to Veterans in North Chicago

Mary Lockhart White, executive director and CEO of Community Action Partnership of Lake County (CAPOLC) joined Lori Flores Rolfson, vice president – operations and maintenance, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas and a group of North Shore Gas employees on Patriot Day weekend to honor two veteran families with affordable re-habbed townhomes in North Chicago.

Dozens of volunteers, including two veterans who are employees of North Shore Gas, participated in Volunteer Day with the theme of “Home and Honor” – an opportunity to serve those who have served others. North Shore Gas volunteers painted, installed blinds, assembled beds, hung picture frames and moved in furniture to make the homes move-in ready. The volunteers also decorated a nursery for an expectant veteran mother.

In addition to volunteers, the North Shore Gas’ energy efficiency team was on site to perform home energy audits. As part of the company’s Home Energy Jumpstart program, energy-saving products were installed, including showerheads, faucet aerators, pipe insulation and CFL bulbs.

“We are proud to partner on this project with North Shore Gas, whose commitment to serving the community closely aligns with our mission to promote self-sufficiency of families and individuals with low incomes and improve the standard of living in Lake County,” said Lockhart White.

CAPOLC has rehabbed 10 three-bedroom homes for veterans this year. This partnership will bring new homes to two additional veteran families who have struggled to find homes since their return from serving in Iraq.

In preparation for the Volunteer Day, North Shore Gas employees had been making home improvements for the past two weeks that include building decks in the front and rear of the homes, installing four basement windows and eight ceiling fans, repairing one home’s stove, purchasing and installing a new stove, repairing drywall, and performing an inside safety inspection.

Exelon Foundation Donates $1 Million to Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture

On Saturday September 24, The Exelon Foundation announced that it is donating $1 million to the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The Smithsonian’s newest museum opened Sept. 24, 2016.

The donation will support the museum’s exhibitions and programs, which are designed to use African American stories and contributions as a lens into a deeper understanding of U.S. history and its links to the world.

“We’re proud to support this museum and its essential role in telling the story of America in all its richness and complexity,” said Chris Crane, Exelon president and CEO, and chairman of the Exelon Foundation. “Diverse perspectives and backgrounds are fundamental to understanding and celebrating who we are as a nation. They also are fundamental to our business and our core values. At Exelon, we embrace those same ideals in everything we do as a company.”

“The millions of people who visit the National Museum of African American History and Culture will benefit mightily from the generosity of the Exelon Foundation,” said Lonnie G. Bunch III, founding director of the museum. “We are grateful for the foundation’s belief in this museum and its love for the country whose history we are committed to exploring in a new and compelling way. With Exelon as a member of the museum family, we are strengthened in our resolve to examine a people’s journey and a nation’s story.”

The National Museum of African American History and Culture is the 19th Smithsonian campus. The museum’s 12 inaugural exhibitions focus on the themes of history, culture and community. In total, the museum features a collection of nearly 40,000 artifacts dating from the 17th century to modern times. Among the highlights -- remnants of a Portuguese slave ship that sank in 1794 with nearly 500 enslaved Africans on board, an open-cockpit biplane used to train the Tuskegee Airmen for World War II compact duty; Louis Armstrong’s Selmer trumpet, c. 1939, and a lace shawl given to underground railroad conductor Harriet Tubman by England’s Queen Victoria.
Energy Association Coordinates Illinois Night Reception

The Illinois Energy Association will coordinate the Illinois Night Cocktail Reception at the 128th Annual Convention of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners in La Quinta, California. The reception will be held from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 15, at The La Quinta Resort and Spa.

Illinois Night provides an opportunity for all convention attendees from the state to get together for a social hour during the four-day convention.

Reservations to attend the Illinois Night event can be made until November 8 by contacting the Energy Association offices at 217-523-7348.

NARUC Annual Convention in La Quinta, California

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) will hold its Annual Convention in La Quinta, California, from November 13-16, 2016. State Commissioners and staff members from around the country will meet in various committees and subcommittees with an eye toward developing NARUC policy on several important issues of interest to the regulatory community.

Members of the Illinois Commerce Commission serve on key NARUC policy committees. An Illinois Night Reception will be held on Tuesday, November 15.