

Pipelines deliver natural gas safely

Learn how to prevent damage, recognize potential problems

Rock Energy Cooperative operates 173 miles of natural gas main in northern Illinois with nearly 9,000 natural gas services.

Pipelines are the safest and most economical method of transporting natural gas, according to the National Transportation Safety Board. Federal pipeline safety code mandates that Rock Energy and other distribution systems comply with tough requirements for design, construction, testing, inspection, operation, and maintenance from the point of connection to the meter on your house.

Natural gas is completely safe when used properly. The following information will help you and your families stay safe around natural gas.

How can I recognize a natural gas leak?

- **By smell:** Natural gas is colorless and odorless, but gas providers add a chemical that makes it smell like rotten eggs so any leaks can be easily detected. It is extremely important that you call us as soon as you smell the gas and not wait several hours or days before calling.
- **By sound:** A hissing or roaring sound coming from a natural gas line might be a sign of a leak.
- **By sight:** If you see unexplained dead grass, natural gas might be leaking. Dirt or debris blowing in the air and water bubbling in a puddle, pond, or creek are other signs.



What should I do if I suspect a leak?

If you smell a faint gas odor:

- Make sure all gas appliances and burners on your stove are turned off completely.
- Open one or more windows and wait a few minutes for the gas odor to dissipate before investigating further.
- Check the pilot lights on your gas furnace, water heater, stove, and oven.
- Don't try to relight a gas appliance while you can still smell gas.
- If you need assistance relighting the pilot light, call a heating or plumbing contractor.

If you smell a strong odor:

- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not use the telephone or cell phone until you reach a safe location away from the suspected leak. Then call Rock Energy at 866-752-4550 to report the location.
- Do not light a match or turn on or off any switches, flashlights, garage door openers, or other appliances because an electric arc might ignite the gas.

How can I prevent pipeline damage?

- Call 811 before you dig or excavate to avoid hitting a natural gas pipeline or other buried utility line. State law requires people to call at least two days before any digging project. Utilities then will send a representative to the site so all underground lines can be marked. The call and service are free.
- Remember that Rock Energy maintains buried gas pipes up to your meter. All pipes beyond that are the member's responsibility and should be periodically inspected for corrosion and leaks.

How can I get additional information?

- If you have any questions about natural gas safety, we would be happy to provide you with further information. Just call us at 866-752-4550. You also can visit www.rock.coop, www.call811.com or www.illinois1call.com.





More Power to You NEW METERS COMING SOON!

Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive
Officer

We live in a technology era that is truly amazing, which makes it an exciting time to work in the energy industry.

Starting later this month, Rock Energy Cooperative will begin replacing our current Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system with a new one that requires the installation of different meters. The new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system will help us operate more efficiently, improve reliability, and serve you better.

We will begin the process by deploying about 600 new meters in the South Beloit area. Once completed, we will move on to full deployment. The entire process is scheduled to take about seven months. By the end of 2018 or early in 2019, we expect our new system will be fully operational.

The most electrifying part (pardon the pun) of the new system is the fact



This pole being set at the Orfordville Substation is one of 12 new poles needed for the new AMI system. The 110-foot poles are placed 13 feet into the ground and stand 97 feet above ground.

that we'll be able to respond to outages more quickly because your meter will notify us as soon as you lose power. Most likely, Rock Energy will know you have lost power even before you do or, at least, at the same time.

You might ask why the new system is needed because your meter works just fine. The answer is simple: Technology is changing so rapidly that our current system is outdated and no longer supported by the manufacturer. Remember cassette tapes, 8 tracks, VCRs, and a host of other things? They were state-of-the-art when introduced but now have been replaced by better, more advanced technology. The same thing is happening to your meter.

When the current meters were installed during the late 1990s in our Wisconsin territory and in 2009 in Illinois, they replaced the old mechanical meters that were either read by members themselves or by meter readers who were required to trek across our entire territory every month. Those mechanical meters were old workhorses, and the technology lasted many decades.

The first generation of digital meters, which you have now, transmit energy usage information over the power lines. That data is used for billing, but little else.

Your new meter will collect energy consumption and power quality data and then transmit that information to the co-op via radio frequency communication—a licensed, encrypted, secure system. Like I mentioned earlier, the new meter will let us know if you have a power outage. It also will report variances in voltage and other line conditions, so we can maintain a more reliable power distribution system.

If you want to learn more about our new system, I encourage you to read the frequently asked questions, which we have answered, on page 20B. We hope you share our excitement about this next step Rock Energy is taking in the technology era.



A worker mounts an antenna at the top of a 70-foot existing pole at the Shaw Substation. The antennas, which are placed strategically throughout our service territory, will transmit meter information to the co-op via a licensed, encrypted, secure system.

Capital credits distributed

I hope you took a close look at your May statement and noticed one of the many benefits of your co-op membership.

Unlike other utilities, your co-op exists to make sure your needs are always met, not to make a profit. As a member, you share in the profits in the form of capital credits. The cooperative works hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. But when there are profits, they go back to you.

In 2018, Rock Energy is distributing about \$900,000 in capital credits to current members on their May statements and about \$200,000 to past members. Since the co-op was founded 82 years ago, about \$17 million has been paid back to past and current members.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ROCK ENERGY'S NEW METERS

Rock Energy Cooperative is investing in a new AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) system, which requires the installation of new meters. This upgrade will help us operate more efficiently, improve reliability, and serve you better. Here are some questions you might have about the changes.



Why is the new system needed?

Our current Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system was state-of-the-art when it was first implemented but is now outdated and no longer supported by the manufacturer. The AMR meters were installed in our Wisconsin territory during the late 1990s, and Illinois members received the meters in 2009. The new AMI meters will collect and transmit data faster and more reliably.

What's the difference between the current system and new one?

The new AMI meters, made by Sensus, collect energy consumption and power quality data and then transmit that data to the co-op via radio frequency communication. The current AMR meters use power lines to transmit data. If a power line goes down during an outage, communication with the meter is lost. The new meter can automatically report outages, voltage variances, and other line conditions without depending on the power lines.

Will a new meter be installed at my home or business?

Yes, and the new meters will offer these benefits:

- **Improved efficiency**—Reading all meters, residential and commercial, remotely will be more cost effective than having employees drive to remote locations every month.
- **Improved reliability**—Our outage management system will be able to determine outage locations more reliably, which will result in a faster response time.
- **Improved power quality**—The new system will report variances in voltage and other line conditions that will help us maintain a more reliable power distribution system.
- **Improved member service**—You will receive more timely information about your energy consumption, which will help you make wise decisions about how you use energy. We can review that data to help you address any high-bill concerns.

Will I be charged for the new meter?

No, there will be no additional costs to install the new meters.

How will this new meter benefit me?

The new system will allow Rock Energy to respond to outages more quickly because your meter will notify us if you lose power. It also will result in a more reliable power distribution system, improved efficiency throughout the billing system, improved system power quality, and more usage data. You can access that data through SmartHub, our online account management system.

What information will the new meter record?

Initially, the new meter will record energy use on an hourly basis. You can log on to SmartHub to view this information, which will allow you to pinpoint your usage during various weather conditions and different times of the day.

Will I keep the same rate after the conversion?

Yes, members will continue to pay the same rate as they do now.

When will my meter be installed?

Installation of the new meters is scheduled to start in June and will continue throughout the year. You will receive a letter from us about 30 days before work will be done at your house.

Will I lose electrical service during installation?

Yes, for a few minutes. You will need to reset electronic clocks and other devices. The meter installer will notify you before turning off the power. If you are not present, the technician will leave a door hanger to notify you of a successful upgrade.

Will I lose natural gas service during installation?

No, the meter installer is able to make the exchange without any disruption in your natural gas service. The installer will notify you before making the exchange. If you are not present, the technician will leave a door hanger letting you know that we have successfully upgraded your meter.

Who will be installing the meters?

Rock Energy has contracted with Utility Metering Solu-

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Join us Saturday, June 16, for Rock Energy FAMILY NIGHT at the BALLPARK



5:30 p.m.—Gates open at Telfer Park's Pohlman Field in Beloit. The first 30 kids win a special gift. (Must be accompanied by adult member.)

6 to 6:40 p.m.—Enjoy the music of Neil Diamond.

7 p.m.—Beloit Snappers vs. Clinton LumberKings

Enjoy a spectacular fireworks show after the game!

Stop at either our Janesville or South Beloit offices to buy game tickets. Tickets are \$2 each (\$8 value) and good for any 2018 regular season Snappers home game.



PERFORMER WILL SING NEIL DIAMOND TUNES

Denny Svehla, also known as Denny Diamond, will perform Neil Diamond hits from 6 to 6:40 p.m. Saturday, June 16, as part of Rock Energy Family Night at the Ballpark.

During his 20-year career, Svehla has performed his Branson-style performance for thousands of people across the United States and is best known for his tribute to the music of Neil Diamond. His baritone pipes have an amazing resemblance to Neil Diamond's distinctive timbre.

To accommodate Svehla's performance, the gates at Pohlman Field will open at 5:30 p.m.



Show your Co-op Connections Card at the ballpark on June 16 to buy reduced-price food vouchers. Get a hot dog, chips, and soda or pizza and soda for just \$2. If you don't have a card, stop by our office to get yours free!



HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Wednesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, July 5. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices during the holiday. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call 866-752-4550.

More Power to You (Continued from page 20A)

Your May statement shows your share of the co-op's 2017 earnings as well as your percentage credit for the current and past years' allocations. The statement also shows your capital credits balance, which represents your equity in the co-op. That money is used to maintain and upgrade the system and repay associated indebtedness.

Allocating and retiring margins to members helps distinguish energy cooperatives from investor-owned utilities. We're proud to support our communities by putting money back into the local economy and into the pockets of those we serve.

See you at the ballpark

Please plan to join us on Saturday, June 16, for our annual Rock Energy Family Night at the Ballpark. All the details are on page 20C.

We're excited to have Denny Svehla, aka Denny Diamond, entertain us before the game. He'll sing Neil Diamond tunes from 6 to 6:40 p.m. The gates at Pohlman Field will open at 5:30 p.m. so you'll have time to get to your seats before the show starts.

I'm proud to say that Neil Diamond is one of my favorite singers. I'm sure many co-op members share my enthusiasm and will be singing right along. "Sweet Caroline! Ba-ba-ba!"

You'll also see the Beloit Snappers play the Clinton LumberKings and can collect player autographs, join in some fun games between innings, eat tasty ballpark food at reduced prices, and enjoy fantastic fireworks later in the evening.

As always, I want to thank you for allowing us to be your energy provider. If we can do anything to improve our service, please let us know.

New Meters (Continued from page 20B)

tions (UMS) to install the new meters. The company's employees and vehicles will have co-op identification, so you will know they are acting on behalf of the co-op. UMS has installed hundreds of thousands of AMI meters throughout the country.

How will I know if my meter has been changed?

UMS will leave a green door hanger on your front door to let you know they have changed the meter. You do not have to be present during the meter change. If workers are unable to access your meter because of a locked gate or other obstruction, they will leave a red door hanger notifying you of the problem. If you receive a notice like this, please follow the instructions and respond as soon as possible.

How will my new meter work?

Rock Energy can read the meter remotely from our offices. Information from the meter is transmitted to the co-op via a licensed, encrypted, secure system. The collected data includes usage readings, voltage levels, and outage/blink information.

Will the new meter notify the co-op when my power goes out?

Yes, in most cases. The new meters can report outages, voltage variances, and other line conditions without being prompted by our office. However, Rock Energy still recommends that you report your own outages by phone to ensure that your outage is documented.

Will the communications system interfere with any equipment in my home?

No, our system meets criteria set by the Federal Communications Commission and should not interfere with any equipment inside a home or business.

Is my data secure?

Yes, the metering data will be transmitted via a licensed, encrypted, secure system. No personal information about members is stored inside the meter, and it cannot identify or control individual appliance usage. Instead, the meter records whole-house energy usage just like your existing meter.

How can I get answers to my specific questions?

You can call us at 866-752-4550 or send us an email at questions@rock.coop.

Shane Larson, CEO

P.O. Box 1758, 2815 Kennedy Rd., Janesville, WI 53547
P.O. Box 126, 15229 Willowbrook Rd., South Beloit, IL 61080
608-752-4550 • 866-752-4550

Barbara Uebelacker, Editor



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COOPERATIVE**
Empowering Members Since 1936