Access Energy Cooperative℠
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DECEMBER 2023

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Youth program deadlines announced

Tips for integrating smart tech

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ON THE COVER Special thanks to Brent Koops, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

HEARTFUL GRATITUDE FOR SERVING MEMBERS

BY ROGER SOLOMONSON

Oh, the people I have met and the places I have been during my two years as the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC)! As my term ends this month at the IAEC annual meeting, I want to share some important memories.

The highlight of serving as your statewide president was traveling around Iowa to attend 36 electric cooperative meetings and talking with over 300 directors and 35 co-op managers in their own board rooms. These folks are dedicated men and women who are passionate about serving their communities. They are committed to making sure there is safe, reliable and affordable electricity available when member-consumers flip the switch to power their lives every day.

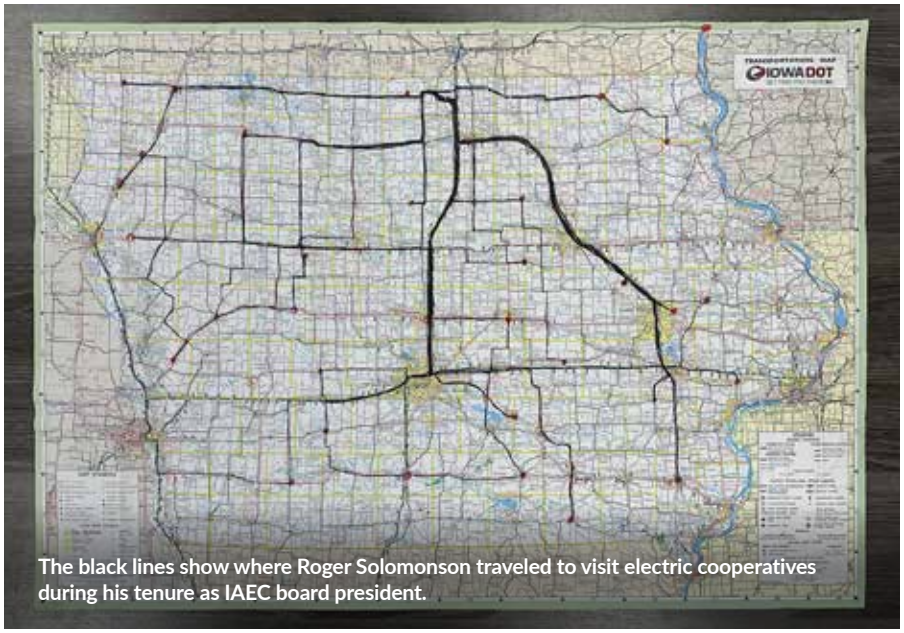
Raising our collective voice

Another high point was attending statewide legislative fly-ins to Washington, D.C., to speak with our elected officials along with industry lobbyists and experts in various fields. Watching our national government work (or sometimes not work) is always interesting.

I also often traveled to Des Moines during the Iowa legislative sessions to meet with state legislators to advocate for the members of rural electric cooperatives and to make sure electric cooperative voices were heard. As it was told to me, the rural electric movement was started by politics and may someday die in politics if we aren't active and vocal.

Iowa nice, regional connections

In September, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association held a regional meeting in Des Moines for attendees from six Midwestern states. We spent time learning from experts in several fields and receiving national updates. I also had the pleasure of meeting with other statewide board presidents to discuss mutual goals. I heard several comments about how friendly and clean Des Moines is, to which I shared we're all about "Iowa nice" and encouraged them to come back soon.



The black lines show where Roger Solomonson traveled to visit electric cooperatives during his tenure as IAEC board president.

Leadership search

One of my final duties as your statewide board president has been starting the search for IAEC's next executive vice president and general manager, as Chuck Soderberg has announced plans to retire in July 2024 after almost nine years serving in that role. This is the most important job for the statewide board, and I know they will do an excellent job selecting the right person to lead Iowa's electric cooperatives into the future.

As I leave the IAEC board in capable hands, I want to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to all I have served with in the past eight years, including fellow statewide board members, IAEC staff, Iowa electric co-op managers and directors.

It has been a pleasure to serve, and I wish you all blessings in the years ahead.

Roger Solomonson is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a director at Heartland Power Cooperative.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

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Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Dec. 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the $100 gift card from the October issue was Beverly Summers, a Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DEC. 15	$50 drawing for member account updates
DEC. 21	Board meeting
DEC. 25-26	Office closed in observance of Christmas
JAN. 1	Office closed in observance of New Year's Day
JAN. 18	Board meeting

You can access your account information 24/7, year-round on our website or through our SmartHub app for mobile devices. You can also call our office to report service interruptions and request account information at 866-242-4232.

Access Energy Cooperative is dedicated to exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable and efficient service, while being a good citizen in our communities.

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ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING COSTS

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Last month, as part of our ongoing journey with the Ford F-150 Lightning electric pickup, we explored Level 2 and Level 3 charging. This month, we turn our attention to a crucial aspect of electric vehicle (EV) ownership: charging costs. Our goal is to provide valuable insights and guidance to current and future EV owners.

When it comes to finding charging stations, technology is our greatest ally. By utilizing smartphone apps, in-vehicle systems or internet searches, we can effortlessly locate charging infrastructure. These tools not only reveal charging locations, but also provide essential information such as charger type, availability and most importantly – the cost of charging.

Understanding the costs

For many EV owners, Level 2 home chargers are a reliable and cost-effective choice. The cost of charging at home is directly linked to the local electricity rates. In our case, the kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge stands at $0.1052.

It is important to remember this rate does not encompass additional expenses like the base charge or the initial investment in the charging station and installation. Residential Level 2 charging stations typically have a base price of around $600. Installation costs can vary depending on factors such as available space within your electrical panel and your home's service capacity.

DC Level 3 charging, known for its speed and efficiency, offers a wide range of pricing options. We have paid between $0.15 and $0.39 per kWh at various locations when charging the Ford Lightning. Occasionally, free charging is available; but it often comes with a time limit before disconnection. For example, there is a DC Level 3 charging station in Des Moines located in a public parking lot where we have charged under this scenario. In this case, there is a parking fee, but it can be waived by validating your ticket with one of the merchants in the building. You may still have to pay an $0.18 per kWh charging fee.

Discrepancies and needs for further improvement

One common issue we have found is a discrepancy between the information provided by charging apps and the actual working condition of charging stations. This unpredictability can sometimes disrupt travel plans, requiring adaptability and collaboration with relevant authorities to enhance charging infrastructure.

As we navigate the dynamic landscape of EV charging costs, Access Energy Cooperative aims to be a source of knowledge. Charging costs are a pivotal part of the EV experience. In upcoming months, we will continue our journey exploring EVs and sharing our overall experience driving an electric pickup.

Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/ CEO of Access Energy Cooperative.

BY THE NUMBERS

The following is the data for the cooperative's Ford Lightning pickup from last month.

- 1,288 miles driven.
- Total charge time of 82 hours and 18 minutes with a Level 2 charger.
- Total 762 kWh for charging.
- $91.44 in total electricity costs at $0.12 per kWh.
- Converted to gallons of gas, this compares to 26.13 gallons of fuel at $3.50 per gallon.
- Average 49 miles per gallon.

SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS: WIN A FREE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Access Energy Cooperative will send up to two students on an all-expense-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June!

At Access Energy Cooperative, one way we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders is by participating in the national electric cooperative Youth Tour program. We're looking for high school juniors or seniors with a passion for government and public service to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital.

Two students will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the Youth Tour from June 15-21, 2024, along with 40 other student leaders from Iowa. Participants will learn more about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums and historical landmarks. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

Application details

We are accepting Youth Tour applications through Feb. 29, 2024. Students must attend a school in southeast Iowa in one of the 10 counties served by Access Energy Cooperative. Applications can be found at your guidance counselor's office or on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com. Personal interviews to choose our student representatives will be held at our office March 6, 2024. You must be able to participate in an interview on that date to apply.

For more than 65 years, Access Energy Cooperative has sent deserving students to D.C. This program is a great resume builder for student leaders and a wonderful opportunity to kickstart one's passion for government affairs or advocacy.

ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Access Energy Cooperative is offering $9,000 in scholarships to high school seniors! This includes six $1,500 awards, one in each of the cooperative's three districts.

Applicants must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative. More details can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com.

Applications can be found:

- At all area high school guidance counselor offices.
- By visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, downloading the application and faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office; the form also can be submitted online.
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mt. Pleasant at 866-242-4232.

Applications are due in our office March 15, 2024. Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.

When are the scholarships given?

A portion of the scholarship ($500) will be awarded to recipients at the completion of their first semester of post-secondary education, with proof of enrollment for the second semester. The remaining $1,000 will be awarded after completion of the third semester, with proof of enrollment of the fourth semester.

IDLE SERVICE INVOICES TO BE MAILED IN JANUARY

Notices for idle services (any service that has been in place but not used for 12 months or longer) will be mailed in January with an invoice for the annual fee. If you receive a notice, please review it and determine if you wish to retain the service. If you no longer wish to retain the service, please complete and return the notice to our office.

The annual fee for an idle service is currently $300. This covers the cost of the cooperative's investment in facilities. It cannot be divided into monthly installments.

If you receive an idle service letter and are no longer the owner of the property, please notify our office at 866-242-4232.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL CAN HELP YOU SAVE MONEY

BY JENNIFER HELLING

Understanding your bill is the first step in learning how to manage your energy use and how much you pay each month. Access Energy Cooperative single-phase bills are typically comprised of three parts: base charge, energy charge and demand charge.

At this time, the cooperative does not have a fee associated with the demand charge. It is provided on your bill to help you be aware of how much demand your account puts on the cooperative's system. Demand can be thought of as the total amount of energy you require of the system at one time. If you add up the amount of kilowatt-hours (kWhs) of each electrical appliance running at one time, that totals your demand for that moment. The demand shown on your bill is the highest KW of a 15-minute period during the month for your account.

Jennifer Helling is the customer service manager for Access Energy Cooperative.

Shown (right) is what the current Access Energy Cooperative bill looks like, with an explanation of each piece. This can also be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com under the "YOUR ACCOUNT" tab.

ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE LINEWORKER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Up to two $2,000 scholarships will be awarded per year to students enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a one- or two-year electric lineworker program, such as the Northwest Iowa Community College Powerline program in Sheldon or the utilities/lineman program at State Technical College in Linn, Missouri.

2024 timelines

- March 15 – Application deadline
- April 30 – Awards announced
- Award recipients have until March 31, 2025, to apply for initial scholarship payment

Eligibility requirements

- Must be a high school graduate
- Must maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or above
- Must reside in southeast Iowa in the general Access Energy Cooperative service area (not limited to Access Energy Cooperative territorial boundaries)

Application process

Find an application:

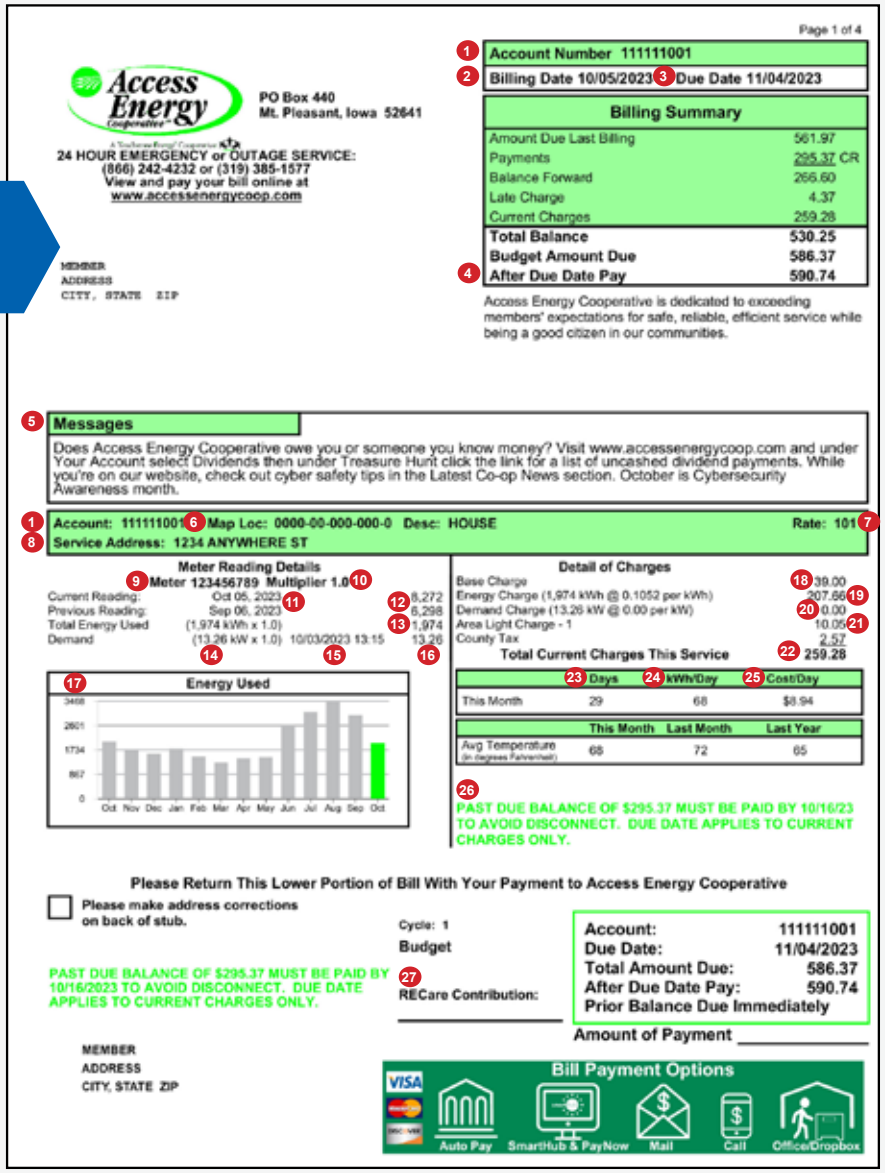
- At all area high school guidance counselor offices
- By visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mt. Pleasant at 866-242-4232

Complete details can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com.

Also available at www.accessenergycoop.com

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

1. **Account Number**
   Identifier for your account at Access Energy Cooperative.
2. **Billing Date**
   Date bill is processed.
3. **Due Date**
   Date your payment for current charges is due in our office.
4. **After Due Date Pay**
   Amount due after the due date. Once each calendar year, members shall receive one late payment charge forgiveness.
5. **Messages**
   Check this section for important information.
6. **Location Number**
   Identifier for your service location.
7. **Rate Code**
   Determined by the tariff based on your service equipment.
8. **Service Address**
   Physical address of your service location.
9. **Meter Number**
   Serial number on the face of your meter.
10. **Meter Multiplier**
    Determined by the type of meter installed.
11. **Meter Reading Dates**
    The day the meter was read.
12. **Readings From Meter**
    Meter reading at end of the billing cycle.
13. **Total Energy Used**
    The kWh multiplied by the multiplier.
14. **Demand**
    Highest kW in a 15-minute period in the billing cycle.
15. **Demand Time Stamp**
    Date and time demand was set.
16. **Demand**
    Demand multiplied by the multiplier.
17. **Energy Used Graph**
    More information can be found on your SmartHub account.
18. **Base Charge**
    Fixed charge associated with metering, equipment, and administrative costs to provide service to your location.
19. **Energy Charge**
    Amount of kWhs used multiplied by the current rate.
20. **Demand Charge**
    Amount of demand multiplied by current rate. Single phase accounts are currently not billed for demand.
21. **Area Light Charge**
    If you have any area lights that you lease from us, the current lease charge is listed here.
22. **Current Charges This Service**
    Amount due for this billing cycle for this service.
23. **Days**
    Number of days in billing cycle.
24. **kWh/Day**
    Average number of kWhs used per day in the current billing cycle.
25. **Cost/Day**
    Average cost per day for current billing cycle for this account.
26. **Past Due Balance**
    For members who have a previous balance due, the amount and due date will print here. NOTE: due dates for past due amounts are different than due dates for current charges.
27. **RECare Contribution**
    Voluntary program to help pay bills for other members in financial need.



Contact us for more information

866-242-4232
contactus@accessenergycoop.com

Access Energy Cooperative℠
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Holiday DINNER RECIPES

PECAN PIE

- 3 eggs
- ⅔ cup brown sugar
- ⅓ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 cup white corn syrup
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 pie crust (9-inch), unbaked

Beat eggs, then add brown sugar, salt, butter and corn syrup. Mix, then add pecans. Pour into pie crust. Bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes then at 350 degrees F for 20 more minutes or until set. You can use a pie crust cover for the last 20 minutes to prevent burnt edges. *Serves 8-10*

Stephanie Messner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

PUMPKIN SCRUMPTIOUS

- ½ gallon vanilla ice cream
- 2 cups cooked pumpkin
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 graham cracker pie crust

Soften ice cream. Mix in all ingredients and pour into a prepared graham cracker pie crust. Freeze until firm.

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SALMON PARTY SPREAD

- 1 can (16 ounces) salmon
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated
- 1 teaspoon horseradish
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon liquid smoke
- crackers

Drain salmon, remove skin and bones, then flake. Combine salmon with remaining ingredients, except crackers, and mix thoroughly. Chill several hours. Serve with your favorite crackers.

Barb Haman • Marengo
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

CHEESY POTATOES

- 6 medium potatoes
- 1½ cups sour cream
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 tablespoons onion bits
- Velveeta cheese, sliced

Peel potatoes and slice into 1-inch pieces. Boil about 10 minutes until tender, drain. Add sour cream, cottage cheese and onion bits to potatoes. Mix well and pour into greased casserole dish. Cover and bake at 375 degrees F for 35 minutes. Uncover and add Velveeta cheese slices in a single layer over potatoes. Bake 10 more minutes until cheese melts. *Serves 10-12*

Diane White • Waverly
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

ROASTED TURKEY

- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 15-pound turkey, or larger
- 1 onion, cut in quarters
- 2 stalks celery, chopped in large pieces
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 6 pieces bacon
- ½ cup butter, room temperature
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock

The day before roasting, remove giblets and save for roasting with the turkey, if desired. Combine pepper, salt, mustard, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce into a paste. Rub the thawed turkey inside and out with the paste, cover and refrigerate. On the day of roasting, place onion, celery and parsley inside the turkey. Work butter between the crevices of the legs and wings (the butter will be thick). Lay uncooked bacon across the breast and over the legs. Place the turkey in a roaster and add stock. If using giblets, lay them in the bottom of the roaster next to the turkey. Loosely cover the turkey with tin foil. Bake at 300 degrees F for 30 minutes per pound, or according to package instructions. Baste once or twice while baking. Remove foil for the last hour.

Brenda Zylstra • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HOLIDAY PUMPKIN PECAN PIE

- 4 eggs, divided
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- ⅔ cup pumpkin
- ⅔ cup milk
- 1 deep-dish pie shell (9-inch), unbaked
- ½ cup dark corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 1 cup pecan halves

In a mixing bowl, beat two eggs, sugar, ¼ cup packed brown sugar, 1 teaspoon flour, pie spice and ¼ teaspoon salt until smooth. Mix in pumpkin. Gradually beat in milk. Pour into pastry shell. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 350 degrees F and bake 15 minutes longer. For pecan topping, beat two eggs until foamy. Add corn syrup, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, molasses, 1 tablespoon flour, vanilla and ½ teaspoon salt. Pour over filling. Sprinkle with chopped pecans. Cover with pecan halves. Continue baking at 350 degrees F for 30-35 minutes or until set. Cool. Store in the refrigerator. *Serves 8*

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

SCALLOPED CARROTS

- 1 2-inch chunk Velveeta cheese
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 3 tablespoons butter
- onion to taste, diced
- ¾ bag croutons
- 2 cans (14.5-ounces each) sliced carrots, drained

Cut up Velveeta and mix with soup, butter and onion. Heat in microwave until cheese is melted. Slightly smash croutons in the bag. Stir croutons and carrots into cheese mixture. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes or until bubbly. *Serves 8-10*

Karen Heiden • Dows
Prairie Energy Cooperative

MOIST EASY DRESSING

- 1 small onion, chopped
- 4 ribs celery, chopped
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 10 pieces dry bread, torn
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- Lawry's seasoning salt, to taste
- poultry seasoning, to taste
- turkey neck and gizzard, optional

Sauté onion and celery in butter until tender. Mix with eggs, soup and bread pieces. Season to taste with salt, pepper, seasoning salt and poultry seasoning. If desired, boil turkey neck and gizzard. Remove meat from the bone, chop and add to mixture. Use stock or warm water to moisten mixture as needed. Place mixture in 9x13-inch pan and bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. *Serves 12-15*

Karen Crossland • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

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EGG DISHES

THE REWARD:
$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Dec. 31
Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.
Also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

Photo Source:
Northwest Iowa
Power Cooperative

A STORM IS BREWING:
ELECTRIC RELIABILITY IS IN JEOPARDY

BY CHUCK SODERBERG AND
CONGRESSMAN RANDY FEENSTRA

Editor's Note: *The following column was published in The Washington Times as an op-ed in October to educate Congressional leaders about reliability concerns within the electric industry. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has a strong legacy of working with Iowa's elected officials and policymakers to raise awareness about issues affecting the safety, affordability and reliability of power for the cooperative member-consumers we serve.*

Supply chain delays. Disorderly retirements of dispatchable electric generation. Complex regulations on power plant emissions. Regional warnings about a lack of generation capacity to cover electric demand. Permitting delays for needed electric transmission infrastructure.

Individually, any one of these issues is enough to seriously impact reliability of electric service.

But all these scenarios are playing out simultaneously across the nation and a perfect storm may be on the horizon.

Electric reliability across America is in serious jeopardy, and frankly, it's unacceptable.

The facts about reliability

Dispatchable sources of electric generation like coal and nuclear are being retired far too early. And their generation capacity is being replaced by intermittent sources of generation like wind and solar. The downside: These intermittent sources only work when the wind blows and the sun shines.

Battery storage is not yet feasible for longer durations on a utility-scale level. For all practical purposes, electricity must be generated as it is being consumed. This becomes a problem when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining and energy consumption is high.

Demand for electricity continues to grow as our society becomes increasingly reliant on electricity.

Co-ops prioritize affordable, reliable energy

Locally owned electric cooperatives work hard to provide reliable and affordable electricity for the member-consumers they serve. Co-ops are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities and they make long-term decisions to ensure power is available when it's needed.

That's why we believe in a power generation strategy that prioritizes energy diversity. The same adage used for sound financial investing also applies to power generation: don't put all your eggs in one basket. Iowa's electric cooperatives use dispatchable sources of power like coal and natural gas because they can control the output and ramp up generation when needed to match sudden increases in electric demand. But our ability to provide reliable electricity is in jeopardy.

In May, the Environmental Protection Agency released its proposed rule to limit greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing fossil-fuel-fired electric generating units. The proposal is part of the current administration's misguided regulatory agenda to create a carbon-free power sector by 2035 and net zero emissions economy-wide by no later than 2050. We believe this proposal will further strain America's electric grid and undermine decades of work to reliably keep the lights on across the nation.

Assessment reinforces concerns

But that's not the only threat we face. The 2023 North American Electric Reliability Corporation summer reliability assessment is just the latest in a series of alarming reminders about the new electric reliability challenges facing the nation. Nine states experienced power interruptions last December as the demand for electricity exceeded available supply.

It's imperative that policymakers work to prioritize reliability in every energy policy discussion. Federal policies must recognize the compromised reliability reality facing the nation before it's too late.

The families, farms and businesses served by electric cooperatives deserve affordable AND reliable electricity to power their lives.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, and Congressman Randy Feenstra represents Iowa's 4th congressional district.

HOW ENERGY EFFICIENCY CONTRIBUTES TO A BETTER GRID

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

"Beat the peak" has become a unified energy efficiency message among electric cooperatives as electricity demand grows year after year. Your electric co-op must deliver around-the-clock electricity to power your life. To understand why it is so important for everyone to use less energy when there is high demand for electricity, known as "peak times," it's helpful to learn about the complex system that delivers electricity to your home.

Understanding the power grid

The U.S. power grid is often considered one of the largest machines in the world. Some could argue it is our country's greatest achievement because reliable electricity has become essential to our daily lives and economy.

There are three main interconnected power grids: the Eastern Interconnection, the Western Interconnection and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas. Each interconnection is powered by electric generation from various sources, including hydropower, nuclear, coal, gas, wind, solar and more. Some of these generation sources can supply power constantly or be ramped up or down depending on demand, while others supply intermittent power.

The energy produced by these sources connects to the grid and moves along transmission lines that allow power to travel long distances.

Your electric co-op is known as a distribution utility, which operates the power infrastructure connecting transmission lines to the distribution power lines that bring electricity to your home.

Delivering reliable power

This entire electric system and the more than 2 million people who operate it are continually working behind the scenes so we can take advantage of a 24/7 supply of electricity at the flip of a switch.

Throughout the day, demand for power supply fluctuates. If supply and demand fall out of balance, local or widespread blackouts can occur. To maintain reliable power, especially during peak times, there must be enough power supply to equal demand.

Due to supply and demand, the cost to buy power is higher during peak times. Peak times vary across the country but are typically in the morning as we start our day and in the evening when we return home. This daily fluctuation, paired with growing residential demand for power nationwide, means it is important for everyone to take steps to use less energy every day. In turn, it will help you save on your monthly electric bill and support generation, transmission and distribution utilities in maintaining and protecting our grid.

Thoughtful energy use matters

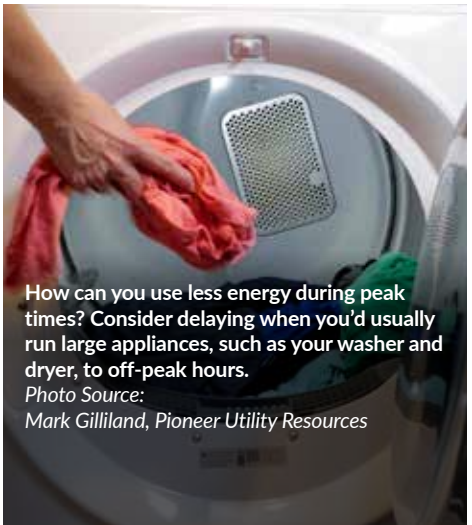
To beat the peak, think about using less energy during peak times. Start with adjusting your thermostat, either up or down a few degrees, depending on the season. A smart thermostat can do this for you automatically.

Also, consider which appliances or devices you wait to run until after peak hours. For example, start the dishwasher or dryer before you go to bed. If you have an electric vehicle, program it to charge overnight instead of right when you return home in the evening.

By embracing energy conservation, we can all make small changes that have a big impact on our community and the intricate system that powers our lives. To learn more about your local peak times and how you can use less energy, contact your electric co-op.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.

The U.S. power grid is often considered one of the largest machines in the world. As energy demand continues to grow, electric utilities nationwide are encouraging energy consumers to save by making small changes to daily energy habits.



How can you use less energy during peak times? Consider delaying when you'd usually run large appliances, such as your washer and dryer, to off-peak hours.
Photo Source:
Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

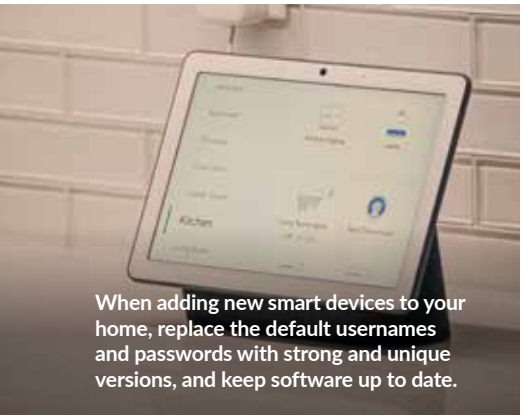
To conserve energy, start with manageable changes around your house. Instead of running your dishwasher after dinner during peak hours, start it right before you go to bed.
Photo Source:
Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

TIPS FOR INTEGRATING SMART HOME TECH

BY MICHAEL LEITMAN

Once pursued by only the most tech-savvy consumers, smart home technologies are becoming an increasingly common way to enhance home convenience, comfort and safety.

Smart technologies have proliferated as the 'internet of things' has grown to include home security and safety systems, lighting, entertainment, HVAC systems, and even appliances.



When adding new smart devices to your home, replace the default usernames and passwords with strong and unique versions, and keep software up to date.

Consumers are interested in a variety of technology combinations and uses for their homes. Regardless of the applications, here are three key tips to keep in mind when integrating smart technologies into your home.

TIP 1

Ensure various devices can talk to each other. This might seem like a no-brainer, but ensuring compatibility is vital to ensuring that convenience is not overcome by annoyance. One way of ensuring compatibility is choosing a single brand for as many applications as possible.

If you're interested in using several smart technologies, you might also look into investing in a central hub to coordinate and control various devices. Many of the hubs available today offer additional features of their own, doubling as speakers, routers or displays. One major consideration for all these technologies is a fast and reliable internet and Wi-Fi connection.

TIP 2

Enable all security measures to prevent hacking. Adding smart devices to your home can increase the surface area that bad actors can use to hack equipment. While common-sense cybersecurity measures are always important, this additional technology in your home increases the importance of being cybersafe.

Choosing smart devices with built-in security features and ensuring these features are all turned on is an important step to reduce these risks. It is also essential to replace default usernames and passwords with strong and unique versions, enable dual and/or biometric authentication, and keep your device software up to date through patches. Finally, if you are controlling your home devices from your phone, tablet or laptop, refrain from doing so while using unsecured public Wi-Fi networks.

TIP 3

Look for technologies to help control and manage home energy use. Smart home technologies can be a great way to control and manage home energy use. If you are looking into home automation, devices like smart thermostats, grid-controllable water heaters and schedulable or motion-controlled indoor and outdoor lighting can be smart ways to save money on your electric bill.

When used wisely and efficiently, smart home technologies can add great convenience to everyday life. Keep these tips in mind as you integrate smart devices into your home.

Michael Leitman writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Smart technologies have proliferated as the 'internet of things' has grown to include home security and safety systems, lighting, entertainment, HVAC systems and even appliances.
Photo Source: James Yarema, Unsplash

Many smart home hubs available today offer additional features of their own, doubling as speakers, routers or displays.
Photo Source: Anete Lusina, Pexels

'TIS THE SEASON FOR SAFETY

12 DAYS OF HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

This isn't just the time of year that we eat more than usual, it's also the time when we have the most household accidents and fires. To help make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary, remember these tips.

1 CANDLES OUT

Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep. And, keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources – especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles.

2 O CHRISTMAS TREE

If you have a natural Christmas tree, water it to keep it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all. Get rid of the tree after Christmas. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard.

3 TREE TOPPERS

The best decorations are safe decorations, so when you are decorating, make sure not to run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows, or across walkways and sidewalks.

4 LIGHTS OFF

Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping. Most deadly fires happen while people are asleep.

5 TWINKLE TWINKLE

Be mindful of how you are using electrical outlets. If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, consider having a qualified electrician add more outlets to your home.

6 KEEP IT DRY

Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, you just can't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights!

7 SAY GOODNIGHT TO ELECTRONICS

Remember that phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to the muffled crooning of Bing Crosby and Michael Bublé, but overheated electronics under pillows and blankets are dangerous.

8 AN ALARMING GIFT

Need a perfect gift idea? How about a smoke alarm? Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas, and on every level, including the basement.

9 CAUTIOUS HEATING

If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible.

10 MERRY & BRIGHT

Inspect your decorations and discard any that are damaged or worn out. Talk to your aunt about that life-sized Elvis-dressed-as-Santa statue. It's falling apart, it's creepy, and it's got to go.

11 NOT SO MERRY BATTERIES

Keep batteries stored safely in their packaging and out of reach of anything that might try to eat them, like small children and pets. Eating a battery can be deadly.

12 OUT ON AN ARC

The best gift for your family is to upgrade to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breakers or outlets. It is estimated that half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented by AFCIs.

FOOD PANTRY DRIVE CONTINUES THROUGH DEC. 15

Access Energy Cooperative has established a collection site for local food pantry donations. If you want to help families in need and add some holiday spirit to their Christmas celebrations, you're invited to drop off nonperishable food or personal items before Dec. 15. Donations can be placed in the box in the cooperative lobby at 1800 West Washington Street, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Items of specific request include nonperishable foods, toothpaste, shampoo, laundry items, cleaning supplies and toilet paper.

Access Energy Cooperative thanks everyone in advance for considering a donation.

We will distribute the gifts to local food pantries in our service area. Happy holidays! And happy giving!

SERVING UP SAVINGS

The holiday season is here, bringing a frenzy of decorating, cooking and family gatherings. Amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may experience higher-than-usual energy bills. To help lower your monthly energy use, Access Energy Cooperative offers the following tips.

Programs designed to help you save
Making minor, low-cost improvements, such as weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows, can make a positive impact on energy bills. If you're not sure where to start, contact Access Energy Cooperative to schedule a free home energy audit.

Be festive without breaking the bank
Making the switch to LEDs can help you save energy. LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about $5 to $7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills can increase by $33 or more.

Cook up energy savings in the kitchen
Cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers and slow cookers. They use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.

When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. When using the stove top, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stove top's efficiency.

Remember, your cooperative is here to answer questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills.

From your friends at Access Energy Cooperative, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season.

MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY

This month, Associated Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. will be performing a satisfaction survey of our members. You may be randomly selected and contacted via email to take this survey. We appreciate the participation of the members who choose to take part in the survey.

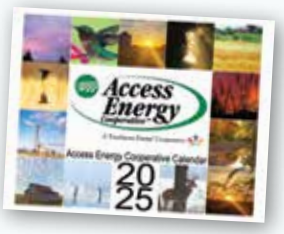
If you ever have questions about any communications that appear to come from Access Energy Cooperative, please contact us at 866-242-4232 or send an email to contactus@accessenergycoop.com.

PHOTO CONTEST:

WIN UP TO $100!

We are now accepting photos for the 2025 Access Energy Cooperative calendar! Horizontal, color photos work best for calendar entries, and we are looking for all seasons of the year. Submissions can be sent to mktg@accessenergycoop.com before March 31, 2024.

Thirteen photos will be chosen and winners will be awarded $75, plus an additional $25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative. Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.



Access Energy Cooperative℠
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IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine for members of Iowa's electric cooperatives.

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