

● JUNE 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



2025 board  
candidates named

Blinks are a good thing

Camping recipes

Dividends are coming ► See Page 15



# CONTENTS



VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 6

3

## STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Advocating for smart energy policies

3

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Blackstone camping griddle

13

## EFFICIENCY MATTERS

Keep your home cool this summer

15

## HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

Dividend payments are coming soon

**EDITOR**  
Ann Foster Thelen

**DESIGNERS**  
Megan Walters  
Bree Glenn

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**  
Erin Campbell

**IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**  
Leslie Kaufman

**IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
Jim Miller, District 5 – President  
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President  
Tony Lem, District 2 – Secretary/Treasurer  
Jerry Keleher, District 3– Asst. Secretary/Treasurer  
Travis Harris, District 1  
Steve Inskeep, District 4  
Bruce Amundson, District 7  
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative  
Terry Sullivan, Linn County REC – Managers' Representative

*Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase **Iowa Electric Cooperative Living** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

**Editorial Office**  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

**Email Address**  
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

**Website**  
[www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com)

**Postmaster**  
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

**Change of Address**  
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2025, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Nate Fluit, a Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!

# TAKING OUR MESSAGE OF POWER RELIABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ETHAN HOHENADEL



Electric cooperatives exist to improve quality of life for our member-consumers, plain and simple. A big part of our success over

the decades has been our ability to advocate for rural Iowa priorities on state and federal levels.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we organize legislative fly-ins to Washington, D.C., each year so electric cooperative leaders can talk face-to-face with our elected legislators about timely issues and concerns. We have built a strong reputation for effective grassroots advocacy, and these fly-ins help ensure that Iowa electric co-op employees and directors can speak directly to policymakers about how federal legislation impacts our member-consumers and communities on the local level.

In late April, IAEC coordinated a group of nearly 30 advocates who were able to meet with all six members of the Iowa congressional delegation, including Sen. Chuck Grassley, Sen. Joni Ernst, Rep. Randy Feenstra, Rep. Ashley Hinson, Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks and Rep. Zach Nunn. Our discussions during the individual meetings centered on these issues:

- Requesting continued funding of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan program. Electric co-ops repay these loans with interest as they build a more resilient grid.
- Asking our legislators to oppose cuts to USDA and U.S. Department of Energy infrastructure grant programs as electric co-ops work to deploy new energy technologies, build a more resilient grid and defend against cyber threats.
- Imploring legislators to support Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery programs and mitigation programs that are essential for electric co-ops as they restore power and rebuild the electric system following major storm events in Iowa.
- Asking legislators to support and pass additional permitting reform legislation, so we can keep electricity reliable and affordable for the member-consumers we serve.
- Asking our legislators to optimally fund the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. Over the decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have served as resourceful intermediaries for these grants and loans, which boost rural economies and create or retain local jobs.

We are grateful to all members of the Iowa congressional delegation and their staff for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with us in their D.C. offices. We were able to share local stories of how federal programs help keep power affordable and reliable for the members we serve, and our group also provided specific examples of rural development success.

It takes a lot of effort to organize these meetings each year, but IAEC's policy and advocacy team believes in the adage that if you're not at the table, you could find yourself on the menu. We are proud to carry on our statewide legacy of advocating for Iowa's member-consumers at the legislative table.

*Ethan Hohenadel is the director of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A BLACKSTONE CAMPING GRIDDLE!

Satisfy your hunger for amazing food with this Blackstone 22-inch Adventure Ready propane griddle. This Blackstone also comes with a matching hard cover to help keep your griddle clean between uses.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than June 30. 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 Cuisinart® electric skillet from the April issue was **Abby Schulz**, a **Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 19	Board meeting
JULY 4	Office closed
JULY 8	Board election voting packets mailed, online voting begins
JULY 17	Board meeting
AUG. 4	Online voting ends at 4:30 p.m.
AUG. 5	2025 Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members
AUG. 21	Board meeting

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) or through the SmartHub app for mobile devices. Use SmartHub to report outages to save time and ensure that it goes directly into our system to notify us. You can also call our office at 866-242-4232 for account information or to report service-related concerns.



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

**Office:** Access Energy Cooperative  
1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641  
**Phone:** 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232  
**Fax:** 319-385-6873  
**Website:** [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)  
**Facebook:** [facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop](https://facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop)  
**Twitter:** [twitter.com/AccessEnergyC](https://twitter.com/AccessEnergyC)  
**Email:** [contactus@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:contactus@accessenergycoop.com)  
**Office Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577

Payments can be placed in dropbox under flag pole in front of office. Visa, MasterCard and Discover accepted.  
**Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):** 8-1-1

**General Manager/CEO:** Kevin Wheeler

**Editor:** Kimberly Davis

**Officers and Directors:**

**Marvin Larson**, District 1, President  
[mlarson@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mlarson@accessenergycoop.com)

**David Hollingsworth**, District 1, Vice President  
[dhollingsworth@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:dhollingsworth@accessenergycoop.com)

**Michael Holtkamp**, District 3, Secretary  
[maholtkamp@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:maholtkamp@accessenergycoop.com)

**Robert P. Smith**, District 2, Treasurer  
[rsmith@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:rsmith@accessenergycoop.com)

**William Benjamin**, District 3, Director  
[wbenjamin@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:wbenjamin@accessenergycoop.com)

**Jerry Barker**, District 2, Director  
[jbarker@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:jbarker@accessenergycoop.com)

**Fred Hickenbottom**, District 1, Director  
[fhickenbottom@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:fhickenbottom@accessenergycoop.com)

**Marvin Newton**, District 3, Director  
[mnewton@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mnewton@accessenergycoop.com)

**Larry White**, District 2, Director  
[lwhite@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:lwhite@accessenergycoop.com)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

HOW EXTREME SUMMER TEMPS  
IMPACT RELIABILITY AND YOUR BILL

BY KEVIN WHEELER



When outdoor temperatures soar, our electricity use increases. That's because our air conditioners are running longer and more often to counteract sweltering outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times – in the morning and early evenings – and that equals increased strain on our electric grid.

At Access Energy Cooperative, we work closely with Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative (Northeast Power), our power supplier, in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and their power suppliers.

**Everyone plays a part**

We work proactively with Northeast Power to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

In summer months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if a prolonged heat wave occurs. If this happens, which is rare, our power supplier, Northeast Power, may call on members to actively reduce their energy use to avoid initiation of rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid. Access Energy Cooperative will always keep you informed about situations like this.

As we face the challenges posed by soaring summer temperatures, understanding the impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme heat, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the grid, keeping our local community cool and connected.

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

**See Page 13 of this issue for summer energy-saving tips.**

## 5 WAYS to Reduce Use During Extreme Heat

During periods of extreme heat, the demand for electricity can skyrocket, placing additional strain on the grid. By working together to lower our electricity use, we can reduce pressure on the grid.

Here are five effective ways to lower use at home.

- 1. Raise your thermostat** setting a few degrees higher than usual. Every degree can reduce cooling energy consumption.
- 2. Cook with smaller appliances** to save energy and reduce heat gain in the kitchen.
- 3. Keep blinds, curtains and shades closed** during the hottest part of the day to block direct sunlight.
- 4. Use fans** to circulate air, which can make you feel cooler without needing to lower the thermostat.
- 5. Shift activities** that require a lot of energy consumption to **off-peak hours** when demand is lower.



# BLINKS: A GOOD THING

BY TYLER THEIN, P.E.



Access Energy Cooperative's primary goal is to deliver the highest possible quality of electric service at the lowest possible price. Perhaps the key measure of quality in the eyes of members is the number of times their lights blink or go out.

Along the power lines that bring electricity to your home, Access Energy Cooperative installs protective devices in the form of fuses and reclosers (high-voltage circuit breakers). Fuses and reclosers serve the same purpose as the fuses and circuit breakers in your home. A fuse is a one-shot device. When a fault occurs, the fuse blows and everyone downstream from it loses

power. Reclosers are multi-shot devices, meaning they can operate a certain number of times before they stay open and an outage occurs. A common setting is what's known as a triple-shot. Here's how that works. A tree limb contacts the power lines and creates a fault. The recloser senses it and opens, creating the first blink.

This is where a recloser differs from your home circuit breaker. It waits a certain amount of time (typically a few seconds), then it recloses to try and complete the circuit. If the fault is still there, it opens again. This creates a second blink. Triple-shot settings allow the device to reclose a third time and if the fault is still there, it stays open and the members downstream experience a power outage.



Blinks are a nuisance, but they eliminate a lot of outages and also can protect wires and equipment from serious damage. For more information on blinks, you can watch a video on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com/power-blinks](http://www.accessenergycoop.com/power-blinks).

*Tyler Thein is the director of engineering for Access Energy Cooperative.*

## SAVE THE DATE: 2025 ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS AUG. 5

### WIN A \$250 BILL CREDIT!

- Tuesday, Aug. 5
- McMillan Park, Mount Pleasant
- 5 p.m.

The grand prize this year is a \$250 bill credit. The member whose name is drawn must be present to win. If the member is not present at the meeting at the time of the drawing, no grand prize will be awarded this year. However, if the \$250 bill credit is not awarded the 2026 grand prize will be \$500.

## 2025 BOARD CANDIDATES NAMED

The nominating committee has met and chosen the candidates to run for a seat on the board of directors in the 2025 election. Election materials will be mailed to all members on July 8, and online voting will begin at 9 a.m. Online voting will end at 4:30 p.m. on Aug. 4, after which members can come to the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 5 to cast their votes. Below is the report of the nominating committee.

### Nominating committee report TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Nominating Committee of Access Energy Cooperative, duly appointed by the Board of Directors, hereby nominates the following members of the Cooperative for the office of Director, all to be elected at the Annual Meeting to be held August 5, 2025.

#### THREE-YEAR TERM (Three to be elected)

DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	DISTRICT III
Joseph (Joe) Heckethorn Virgil Symmonds	Robert (Bob) Breazeale Mitch Yaley	Shirley Deck Marvin Newton

### Nominating Committee

**Chairman: Randy White** and **Secretary: Tina Mullin**





# YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT NEW HOME

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Prioritizing energy efficiency when building a new home can create future savings and make living more comfortable. It might cost a little more upfront, but it will pay off in the long run.

Let's explore two approaches: Following an energy efficiency certification plan or adding energy-efficient designs and equipment to your construction project.

There are several efficiency certifications available for new-construction homes that may qualify for discounted homeowner's insurance, tax credits and other incentives.

## Boosting savings of efficiency certifications

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification ensures the home uses less energy while prioritizing sustainable resources and healthy indoor air quality. LEED-certified homes use 20% to 30% less energy than the average home – with some homes saving up to 60% – and can cost the same as non-LEED homes with proper planning, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

Passive House Certification requires the home to be so efficient it needs little to no heating and

cooling equipment while remaining comfortable for its occupants. To achieve up to 90% less energy use than the average home, the certification focuses on maximizing the efficiency of the building envelope – all components that separate the indoors from the outdoors – including proper insulation levels, air sealing and high-efficiency windows.

ENERGY STAR® NextGen Certification for New Homes recognizes houses that are 20% more efficient than the average home and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% to 80%.



Although various certifications are available, you don't have to follow a set guide.

### Incorporating efficiency principles

In addition to integrating a certification into your home, consider adding these energy efficiency principles to your new home build.

■ **Advanced framing.** Advanced framing techniques maximize the amount of insulated area and save on material costs in wood-framed homes. This technique can save up to \$500 for a 1,200-square-foot home and \$1,000 for a 2,400-square-foot home on material costs, between 3% to 5% on labor costs and up to 5% on annual heating and cooling costs, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Choose a contractor who is familiar with these techniques, and check with your local building officials to ensure compliance with local codes.

■ **Orientation to the sun.** The importance of a home's orientation is often overlooked. According to the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, homes oriented to the sun's path use less energy for heating and cooling to reduce energy bills and improve comfort.

■ **Attic insulation.** If you are building or buying a new home that doesn't allow options for orientation or framing, you might be able to request higher insulation levels in the attic. Increasing the insulation levels likely won't cost much more for materials and labor, but it can help you use less energy and save money in the long run.

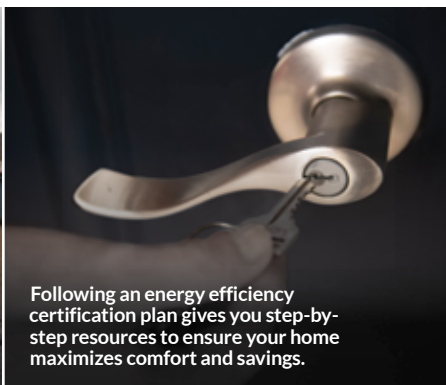
■ **Heating and cooling equipment.** By using energy modeling tools that calculate the home's heating and cooling needs, equipment can be purchased in the correct size. Investing in a more efficient building envelope that is well-insulated and air-sealed can reduce the home's heating and cooling load, making it possible to have a smaller, less expensive heating and cooling system. This saves money on equipment costs and lowers energy use.

Optimizing the efficiency of a new home requires a whole-house approach. Analyze all systems and how they work together to ensure maximum efficiency for a safe and comfortable home.

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



Properly insulating while building a home can reduce the expense of your heating and cooling equipment and lead to long-term energy savings.



Following an energy efficiency certification plan gives you step-by-step resources to ensure your home maximizes comfort and savings.



Consider framing techniques, insulation levels, and heating and cooling equipment to maximize your new home's energy efficiency.

## EFFICIENCY ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR NEW HOME PLAN

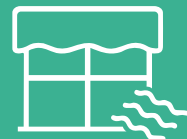
A few thoughtful additions to your building plans can make a big difference in how efficiently – and comfortably – you'll live for years to come.



### Seal it tight.

Thorough air sealing around doors, windows and ductwork prevents drafts

and reduces energy loss. Proper air sealing can lead to savings on heating and cooling costs and improve indoor air quality.



### Choose the right windows.

Select ENERGY STAR®-certified windows with a low U-factor

and the appropriate solar heat gain coefficient for Iowa. This helps enhance insulation and can lower energy bills.



### Plan smart lighting.

Use LED lighting throughout the home, and install fixtures with occupancy sensors or smart switches. These strategies

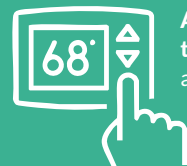
can reduce lighting energy consumption by 10% to 90%.



### Select efficient appliances.

Choose ENERGY STAR-rated appliances, such as refrigerators, dishwashers

and washing machines, to decrease energy use by 10% to 50% and reduce utility costs.



### Add a programmable thermostat.

Installing a programmable or smart thermostat can save up to 10% annually

on heating and cooling expenses by adjusting temperatures when you're asleep or away.



## BREAKFAST HASH

- 1 16-ounce package bacon, chopped
- 1 20-ounce package hash browns
- 16 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 2-3 red and green peppers, chopped
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 3-4 eggs

Cook chopped bacon in cast iron skillet over campfire or stove on high heat. When cooked, drain some grease, if desired, then add hash browns. Continue cooking, adding cheese and peppers. Stir occasionally until hash browns are almost ready and cheese is melted. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add eggs and stir, cooking eggs until set. Serves 3-4

Ben Sinclair • Brooklyn  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## HAMBURGER MEAL IN A PACKET

- 1 large ground beef patty
- 1 slice onion
- ¼ cup carrots, cut small
- ½ cup potatoes, cut small
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- 1 teaspoon water

Put beef patty on a large sheet of aluminum foil. Top with onion, carrots and potatoes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add margarine and water. Close packet and grill or bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes. Serves 1

Pat Lynch • New Hampton  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

## HICKORY SMOKED BAKED BEANS

- 1 pound hamburger
- 1 pound bacon
- 1 32-ounce can pork and beans
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 3 tablespoons liquid smoke

Brown hamburger and fry bacon separately. In a large bowl, combine both beans, hamburger and bacon and mix well. Add remaining ingredients and cook 6-8 hours in slow cooker.

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## SAUSAGE AND PEPPERS FOIL PACKS

- 8 Italian sausage links
- 4 bell peppers, thinly sliced
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- fresh parsley, chopped

Heat grill to high. Grill sausages 3 minutes per side, until charred. Divide sausage between four sheets of foil. Top with peppers and onions. Drizzle each with olive oil, then season with salt and pepper. Fold foil to close into packets and grill for 13-15 minutes, until peppers and onions are tender and sausage is cooked. Garnish with parsley. Serves 4

Marta Smigowska • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy



## CAMPERS' DELIGHT

- 2 envelopes instant chicken and noodles soup mix
- 5 cups water or chicken broth
- 1 can chicken
- 2 cups Bisquick mix
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Mix the chicken and noodle soup mix with water or broth until dissolved. Add the canned chicken and bring soup mixture to a rolling boil in a large camping pan, 6 quarts or larger. Meanwhile, mix the Bisquick with milk and vegetable oil following the biscuit recipe. Drop the dough on top of the soup by spoonful. Lower the temperature, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Mark Smith • Osceola  
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CRESCENT ROLL CAMPFIRE TREATS

- 1 package crescent rolls
- butter
- filling options: pudding, pie filling, whipped topping, chocolate, peanut butter, etc.

Butter the end of a dowel rod. Press a crescent roll around the buttered end, sealing any holes by pressing the dough together. Roast over the campfire until golden brown and the dough slides off the dowel rod easily. Fill with your choice of filling. Be creative!

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## BASQUE REGION POTATOES

- $\frac{1}{2}$  pound bacon, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 12-ounce package Little Sizzlers link sausages, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 8-10 medium size potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2 12-ounce cans/bottles beer
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Heat a cast iron Dutch oven over campfire. Add bacon, sausages and onion. Fry until cooked through. Stir in the potatoes and peppers. Add one can of beer and cover. Stir often and add additional beer as needed. Serve when potatoes are tender. Salt and pepper as desired. Serves 6-8

Deb Foster • Greene  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

## BEST BURGERS

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 pound ground beef
- condiments
- buns

Mix all ingredients together and form into four patties. Cook on grill or stove top. Serve with condiments and buns. Serves 4

Debra Bartholomew • Ollie  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## CAMPFIRE DUTCH OVEN SCRAMBLE

- 1 pound ground breakfast sausage
- 1 dozen eggs
- 3-4 potatoes, cubed
- 1 8-ounce package shredded cheddar cheese
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Cook sausage in the bottom of an open Dutch oven over a fire. No need to drain the grease. Meanwhile, beat eggs in a bowl. Add potatoes on top of sausage and pour eggs on top. Cover with cheese. Place lid on Dutch oven, cover with coals and bake for 25-45 minutes, depending on the heat. Check the doneness of the eggs after 25 minutes and cook longer if needed. Potatoes can be substituted with sweet potatoes or one bag of shredded hash browns. Serves 8

Tefna Greiner • Packwood  
Access Energy Cooperative

## CAMPING BISCUITS AND GRAVY

- 1 pound bulk breakfast sausage
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon butter
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 8 premade biscuits

Crumble sausage and cook in frying pan on stove or campfire. Add flour, stir and cook for 2 minutes. Add milk, stirring constantly. Bring just to a boil, then lower to medium heat and continue to stir until desired thickness. When ready to serve, add butter and thoroughly stir into gravy. Season with salt and pepper if needed. Split biscuits and spoon hot gravy on top. Serves 8

Richard Foreman • Birmingham  
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

## HARVEST SEASON FAVORITES

THE REWARD:  
\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is June 30

Submit your favorite harvest season recipes. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322





# POWERING ON: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MAJOR RESTORATION EFFORT

BY ANGELA CATTON

When Winter Storm Nyla's ice, snow and gusty winds toppled 11 miles of transmission lines and rendered 20 substations inoperable on March 19, the staff at Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) knew they were facing one of their most significant challenges in recent history.

NIPCO – a generation and transmission cooperative – supplies wholesale electric power to seven distribution cooperatives covering 6,500 square miles in western Iowa. These distribution cooperatives supply retail power to more than 30,000 member-consumers.

“We started getting reports of damage Wednesday morning,” explains Matt Washburn, NIPCO executive vice president and general manager. “By noon, we realized this wouldn’t be a typical outage response.”

The storm wreaked havoc across Crawford, Harrison, Monona, Shelby and Woodbury counties, with Harrison and western Monona counties bearing the brunt of the damage. Thousands of member-consumers served by NIPCO member cooperatives faced outages lasting up to 84 hours, including those in Onawa and surrounding areas.

The restoration effort would require strategic and well-timed behind-the-

scenes coordination across multiple departments at NIPCO and tapping external partners. While NIPCO routinely updates and practices its documented emergency response plan for widespread damage and prolonged outages, carrying it out in a real-world situation felt both familiar and unnervingly unpredictable.

## **Glimmers of hope in the darkness**

As soon as the weather cleared, NIPCO crews began assessing the damage. The cooperative contracted with a local pilot to get aerial views of damaged lines in harder-to-access areas. Washburn immediately recognized the co-op would need extensive support.

“In a situation like this, you quickly realize the value of the cooperative model,” Washburn explains. “A few phone calls set in motion a cascade of support that would have been impossible to coordinate without our existing relationships.”

Support arrived from East River Electric Power Cooperative (Madison, South Dakota) with eight crew members and Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Humboldt) with 15 crew members. Contractors from Watts Electric were redirected from routine upgrade work to restoration efforts, bringing the total to 43 transmission lineworkers. Each team provided specialized equipment to

navigate difficult conditions like thick mud from melting snow and ice.

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), based in Cedar Rapids, and L&O Power Cooperative, based in Rock Rapids, offered access to their surplus replacement poles, conductors and specialized equipment inventories, helping NIPCO overcome supply challenges.

## **Spotlighting communications efforts**

NIPCO's communications team informed member cooperatives and the public through news releases, social media and a storm update page on their website.

At the end of the first day, there were a lot of end-users still in the dark, both literally and figuratively. The communications team asked Washburn if he would livestream a message via NIPCO's Facebook page. It was raw, unedited and authentic.

Within hours, Washburn's video update was viewed nearly 3,000 times; by the next morning, that number had more than doubled.

Washburn became the face of the restoration effort, recording twice-daily video updates from the field shared across social media, with some updates garnering almost 25,000 views.



Seeing the work being done and showing that getting the power back on was personal to the entire team working on the restoration built a strong coalition of support from those without power. The team's commitment to keeping crews safe was on display, and the videos gave member-consumers information, hope and heroes to root for throughout the storm's aftermath.

### Support from state partners

By the second day, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) contacted state emergency management officials to request a disaster declaration.

"The response from the state was immediate," notes Scott Meinecke, IAEC director of safety and loss control. "Gov. Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation on March 20 for five of the heaviest-hit Iowa counties that gave us access to additional resources and established a clear channel for ongoing state support."

The proclamation temporarily suspended regulatory provisions related to hours of service for disaster repair crews and transportation requirements for disaster repairs.

### Let there be light

NIPCO's transmission network was designed with multiple pathways to

deliver power, allowing operators to reroute electricity around damaged sections. However, NIPCO's Vice President of Engineering and Operations Jayme Huber explains, "Winter Storm Nyla brought down three transmission lines that support the looped system, rendering the system serving western Monona County and Harrison County inoperable."

By Saturday evening, crews had repaired the transmission mainlines, restoring power to several substations by redirecting electricity through intact portions of the system while repairs continued. This redundant design feature allowed NIPCO to announce system functionality at 9:10 p.m. on Saturday, March 22, less than four days after the monumental storm.

### Power and gratitude

At its April 29 meeting, NIPCO's board of directors unanimously passed a resolution of appreciation for all who contributed to the restoration.

"These aren't just workers; they're neighbors helping neighbors," says NIPCO Board President Louis Reed, who also serves on Western Iowa Power Cooperative's board. "Some of these folks put cooperative members before their own families. That deserves more than just a thank you."

As NIPCO completed final repairs in early April, staff began documenting lessons learned to improve future emergency response.

"Every crisis teaches you something," reflects Washburn. "This experience truly reinforced that the cooperative difference isn't just marketing language – it's a tangible advantage when facing challenges of this magnitude."

For the communities served by NIPCO and their member distribution cooperatives, that advantage meant the difference between days and potentially weeks without power. As one Onawa resident commented on social media: "There are not enough THANK YOUS to say for all you are doing ... After seeing the downed lines between Turin and Onawa today, it could have been so much worse. Situations like these only make us stronger. Go Team Power!"

That spirit – embodied in NIPCO's "Power On" message throughout the crisis – represents both the literal restoration of electricity and the enduring resilience of rural Iowa communities coming together to support the cooperative model that serves them.

*Angela Catton is the vice president of communications and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.*



Heavy coatings of ice on transmission lines paired with high winds produced galloping lines that brought down scores of transmission structures in the NIPCO system.



Melting snow and ice created muddy conditions that trapped trucks and slowed restoration efforts.

Line crews took a quick break for lunch, served buffet-style off a truck bed.



Transmission structures were snapped in half and lying on the ground in west Monona County.



# FIVE TIPS TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISKS

BY ABBY BERRY

Wildfires are no longer confined to the western U.S. Traditionally associated with dry, fire-prone regions like California, wildfires are now affecting areas in the Midwest and even parts of the Southeast.

This shift is driven by rising temperatures, prolonged droughts and changing weather patterns, which are creating conditions ripe for fires in regions that historically saw fewer of them. As a result, more communities are now facing growing threats from wildfires, prompting a need for broader awareness and preparedness nationwide.

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

## STEPS TO PREVENT WILDFIRES

- 1 **Properly extinguish campfires.** Always douse your campfire with water, stir the ashes and ensure everything is cool to the touch before leaving the area.
- 2 **Don't burn on windy days.** Avoid outdoor burning when it's windy or dry, as embers can easily spread and ignite surrounding areas.
- 3 **Clear vegetation and debris.** Maintain a defensible space around your home by removing dry leaves, dead branches and other flammable materials.
- 4 **Use equipment safely.** Tools like lawnmowers or chainsaws can spark fires. Use them during cooler times of the day and keep them in good working condition.
- 5 **Follow local fire regulations.** Always check for burn bans or restrictions in your area before burning anything or using open flames outdoors.

For more information on wildfire prevention and preparedness, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

## ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Copies of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Access Energy Cooperative are available to anyone who is interested, either members of the cooperative or the public. They are located in the lobby of our office in Mount Pleasant. They are also available to download at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) under the "My Cooperative" tab. You may also call our office to request a copy at 866-242-4232.

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Some scammers will pose as utility workers or contractors affiliated with your electric utility by knocking on your door and claiming to be employed or hired by the utility company. They may claim they were hired to reset, repair, replace or inspect your electric meter or other utility-related device. If a utility employee or authorized contractor needs access to your home, we will schedule an appointment in advance, and proper identification will be provided for your review.

*Source: Utilities United Against Scams*



## 2025 ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE REBATE PROGRAM

Updated rebates are effective starting July 1. For details, requirements and application forms, visit [www.accessenergycoop.com/rebates-and-low-interest-loans](http://www.accessenergycoop.com/rebates-and-low-interest-loans).

### EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025

REBATE	TOTAL TO MEMBER
Water heater - through Dec. 31, 2026	\$100
Water heater - heat pump	\$1,050
Air source heat pump - new - ducted minisplit (dual fuel)	\$500 per ton
Air source heat pump - replace existing - ducted minisplit (dual fuel)	\$300 per ton
Ground source heat pump - new	\$750 per ton
Ground source heat pump - replace existing indoor unit	\$400 per ton
EV charging station level 2	\$250
Minisplit ductless air conditioning	\$250
Weatherization rebates	up to \$750
Thermostat	\$50
Lighting rebates	varies up to 40%



# KEEP YOUR HOME'S SECOND FLOOR COOL IN THE SUMMER

Are you struggling to keep the second story of your home cool on these sizzling summer days? As heat and hot air rises, so does the temperature in your upper level. Keeping it cool can be a challenge, even if you have an air conditioner. The key is to limit heat gain and to keep the air circulating.

These steps can help cool down your upper floor, as well as keep your entire home cool through the end of the season.

**1 Keep blinds and drapes closed.** Close blinds or curtains when the sun is shining to reduce solar heat. Remember that light colored window coverings are most effective at blocking heat energy from the sun. Consider investing in thermal blocking drapes or insulated shades to keep your rooms cool and reduce demand on your air conditioning (AC) system.

**2 Limit heat being created upstairs.** Devices such as computers and hair dryers emit hot air. Use them downstairs to help reduce heat upstairs.

**3 Use ceiling fans.** Ceiling fans make you feel cool by circulating air and providing a cooling sensation on your skin. Be sure to set ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise in the summer to push cool air downward and turn them off when you leave to conserve energy.

**4 Adjust the dampers.** Control airflow by adjusting dampers to restrict or increase airflow. If the second floor is warmer in the summer months, keep dampers on second-floor vents fully open, and only partially open the vents on the first floor to force more cool air to the second floor.

**5 Check for air leaks.** [www.EnergyStar.gov](http://www.EnergyStar.gov) estimates that between 25% and 40% of the money spent on cooling and heating homes is lost due to

air leakage problems. Identify air leaks in your home and use caulking, weatherstripping and insulation to seal the gaps.

**6 Turn the fan from auto to on.** Use "on" instead of "auto" to keep your thermostat fan on and maintain air circulation throughout the home. This allows the entire house to stay cool, whether or not the air conditioner is running.

**7 Evaluate ductwork.** Check your ductwork for leaks or improper sizing to ensure even air distribution in every part of your home. If you don't feel cold air coming from second floor vents, or you see old and cracked seals in your ductwork, it could be time for maintenance.

**8 Check your air filters.** Regularly change your air filters to optimize airflow — dirty filters decrease air movement.

**9 Add portable air conditioners.** Use portable AC units in specific rooms that need extra cooling. They are relatively easy to install, effectively remove heat and provide a cool environment for sleeping.

**10 Adjust HVAC systems.** Consider a zoned HVAC system, with thermostats on each floor, to control the temperature on each floor separately.

**11 Keep heat-generating appliances off during the hottest hours.** Your dryer, oven and television produce heat, causing your air conditioner to work harder. Limit use of these appliances to early morning or evening when possible and consider grilling outdoors if you plan to cook.

**12 Don't forget the attic.** If your roof and attic area are not properly insulated, heat will seep in through the roof and heat the second floor. You can also have an attic fan or vents installed to help remove hot air from the attic.

## HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

Access Energy Cooperative wishes all fathers a special day!

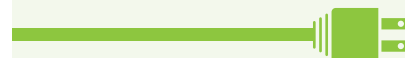


## FORD LIGHTNING EV

As part of a research project, Access Energy Cooperative is tracking data from the cooperative's Ford Lightning electric vehicle to share with members. The following is the data for April.

- 1,362 miles driven
- 3,524 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 673 total kWh for charging
- \$84.10 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 77.80 gallons of gas equivalent
- \$217.10 total cost of gas equivalent at \$2.79 per gallon

*Note: Dollar values are dependent on electric and gas prices.*



# PRIVACY POLICY

## Information we collect

Access Energy Cooperative will receive and retain information about member-consumers/customers through applications or other forms; transactions with us, our affiliates or others; from a consumer-reporting agency; and advanced metering infrastructure.

Access Energy Cooperative will limit the use and collection of nonpublic personal information to that which is necessary to maintain and administer financial services, beneficial in designing, operating and maintaining the cooperative's electric system to offer affordable and reliable electric service.

This information will not be shared with third parties unless: the information is provided to help complete a member-consumer/customer-initiated transaction; the member-consumer/customer has requested it; the disclosure is required by law, warrant or court order; or the disclosure is required by banking regulation.

"Third Party" is defined as any person or entity other than: employees of the cooperative; the cooperative's designated legal counsel; or any entity contractually bound to the cooperative to provide billing or collection services

for electric cooperative accounts. When member-consumer/customer information is provided to any third parties, that third party must be bound by appropriate confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations.

Access Energy Cooperative limits employee access to member-consumer/customer information to those with a business reason for knowing such information. All employees are educated on the importance of confidentiality and member-consumer/customer privacy. Any employee that violates the privacy of our member-consumers/customers will be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures and possible termination.

Appropriate physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure information are put in place to prevent unauthorized access, maintain data accuracy, and to ensure the correct use of information.

## Right to be informed

Information regarding operational aspects of the cooperative's advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and related programs will be made available to members as requested.

Member-consumers will be better informed about their electricity consumption.

Member-consumers will have access to information that helps explain available billing rate structures and options, outage information, peak demand and the impact of energy consumption habits with the AMI.

The purpose of the collection, use, retention and sharing of energy consumption data shall be made known to the member-consumers in a clear and transparent manner.

Member-consumers will be informed of the available choices and consent options regarding the collection, use and disclosure of energy consumption data.

Requests to correct inaccurate information will be responded to in a timely manner.

Member-consumers who wish to file a privacy violation complaint have the right to submit the same to the cooperative for resolution. If not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the cooperative staff, the same may be submitted to the cooperative's board of directors for a resolution.

If the issue is still not resolved to the member-consumer's satisfaction, the member-consumer may pursue alternative remedies.

## GETTING STARTED WITH SMARTHUB IS EASY



Don't have a SmartHub account? Create one today.

### Follow these simple steps:

1. Look up your account number
2. Go to our website: [accessenergycoop.com](http://accessenergycoop.com)
3. Click "Access Account Online" in the banner at the top
4. Find "New User?" and click the link to enroll



accessenergycoop.com  
319-385-1577 | 866-242-4232  
1800 West Washington Street  
PO Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641

## SmartHub on the GO!

The app is also available from the Apple App Store and Google Play. Simply use the camera on your smart device to scan the QR code below or search for SmartHub (by National Information Solutions Cooperative).





# DIVIDENDS ARE COMING

Each member of Access Energy Cooperative has a dividend account at the cooperative where your dividend allocations accumulate. When the board allocates margins, your portion is added to your dividend account. Notices are then printed on your bill to let you know how much was allocated to your account.

The board of directors reviews the financial condition of the cooperative to determine if a retirement of dividends will be made, and if so, how much will be retired and what years it will apply to.

In 2025, the board approved a dividend payment to the members in the

amount of \$1,065,831. If you were a member of the cooperative during 2006, 2009, 2010 and/or 2024, you may receive a dividend payment.

## How to get your payment

Dividend checks, for those not signed up to receive dividends as bill credits, will be available to pick up at the annual meeting on Aug. 5. Any checks not picked up will be mailed after the annual meeting. Checks will be sent to the most current address we have on file. The cooperative will not be printing checks for amounts under \$5. These amounts will be added to next year's refund.



Members also have the option to receive their dividend payments as a bill credit. Members signed up for paperless dividend payments will receive their dividend payment(s) on their July bill. To take advantage of this option, please call our finance department or email them at [finance@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:finance@accessenergycoop.com).

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS!

The winning photos will appear in the 2026 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. This marks the 21st year of this event. The winners will receive \$75 each, plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are members of the cooperative.

The calendars will be distributed at the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 5. If members cannot make it to the annual meeting, they will be able to pick up a calendar in our office beginning in August until they run out.

PHOTO NAME	PHOTO COUNTY	ARTIST NAME
Settled in the Snowfall	Henry County	Kim Kingery
Aurora Borealis in My Backyard	Henry County	Sami Wibben
Red Sun at Night	Van Buren County	Lindi Harryman
Gravel Travel	Van Buren County	Lindi Harryman
After the Storm	Henry County	Susan Sammons
Shades of Blue	Van Buren County	Christy Vickerman
Iowa Sunset	Jefferson County	Andrew MacKenzie
Goodbye July	Lee County	Dawn Kern
Glistening Petal	Des Moines County	Kristan Barclay
Summer Sunset on Aunt Kim's Farm	Clarke County	Lenore Maybaum
Shimek Forest, Hickory Lake	Van Buren County	Diane Jennings
Pot of Gold at the End of the Rainbow	Hancock County	Chloe Savoy
Twin Majesties	Des Moines County	Diane Jennings

## COMING JUNE 2: UPDATED WEBSITE

A new look and more user-friendly environment are coming for the Access Energy Cooperative website! With the updated website, users will find:

- ✓ Improved search functionality
- ✓ Enhanced mobile capabilities
- ✓ Mobile-friendly enhancements
- ✓ Accessibility tool enhancements

We are working to make things easier to find, plus incorporating a powerful search engine on the site.

The updated site will include new calculators, energy efficiency assistance tools and more safety information.

It will be fully responsive, ensuring a smooth experience whether you are using a desktop, tablet or smartphone.





IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives

June 2025

Visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Join Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in celebrating  
the power of human connections.



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa