

● AUGUST 2025

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Students attend Youth Tour
in the nation's capital**

Dividend checks are coming

Garden-fresh recipes

New poster contest, you could win \$100 ▶ See Page 15

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Announcing a new
poster contest

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Lindsey Wulff, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

THE MAGIC OF YOUTH TOUR

BY SHELLY YORK



Magic? Really? Yes!

The electric cooperative Youth Tour traces its origins to a national electric cooperative annual meeting

in 1957, when then-Sen. Lyndon Baines Johnson said in his address to the crowd, "If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."

And that is how Youth Tour was born!

In the following years, some Texas cooperatives sent groups of young people to Washington, D.C., to work during the summer in Johnson's office. In 1958, Iowa's electric cooperatives sponsored the first group of 34 young people on a weeklong tour of our nation's capital. By 1959, the "Youth Tour" had grown to 130 students. In 2025, there were nearly 2,000 student delegates and chaperones that made the annual Youth Tour pilgrimage to our nation's capital.

What's so magical about that, you ask?

- A movement like Youth Tour was hatched from a simple comment. To date, more than 50,000 young people have participated, and we never get tired of hearing how it truly is a trip of a lifetime!
- For the Iowa delegation, these 35-40 students meet in Des Moines for orientation without knowing each other. By the end of the week, we are a family of sorts, and many tears are shed when we must go our separate ways.
- The things we get to do and see in one week are truly remarkable (magical, if you will!). We experience and see the Arlington National Cemetery, all the monuments and memorials, the National



Iowa's 2025 Youth Tour participants.



Iowa's Youth Tour participants in 1958.

Mall, the U.S. Capitol, the Marine Corps Sunset Parade and more museums than we can count.

- After a week in D.C., regardless of your political views, you cannot help but come away with a better understanding of your role as an American citizen.
- Learning about the cooperative business model and the seven principles that guide Iowa's electric cooperatives is often an eye-opener for our student delegates. They leave Youth Tour with a much broader view of how co-ops support their community.

Do you know a high school student interested in history, leadership or public service? Youth Tour might be the perfect (or magical!) fit.

Next year's Youth Tour dates are June 14-20, 2026.

Look for more details about the trip from your local electric cooperative toward the end of the year or find more details at www.iowayouthtour.com.

Shelly York is the office manager and Iowa Youth Tour director for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN IGLOO ICE MAKER!

Convenient and compact in size, this Igloo Automatic Portable Countertop Ice Maker looks good on a countertop while producing ice for whenever or wherever you need it. Keep the 2.5-quart water tank filled and this unit will produce 33 pounds of ice in a 24-hour period – enough to keep drinks cold all day long.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Aug. 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 Blackstone propane griddle from the June issue was **Phil Stukenholtz**, a **Guthrie County REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY AUG. 31!

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG. 4	Online director voting ends at 4:30 p.m.
AUG. 5	2025 Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members
AUG. 21	Board meeting
SEPT. 1	Office closed for Labor Day
SEPT. 18	Board meeting

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at 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.

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KEEP YOUR HOME'S SECOND FLOOR COOL IN THE SUMMER

BY KEVIN WHEELER



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.

The following tips 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 the 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.

The U.S. Department of Energy 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. 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.

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

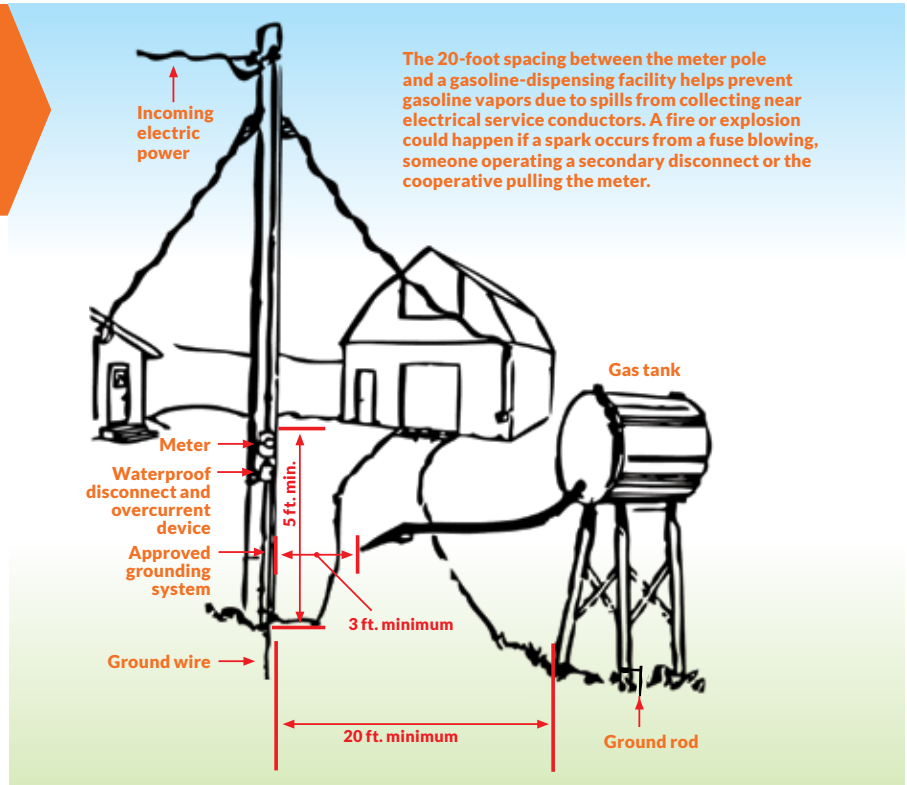
PRACTICE SAFETY WITH GASOLINE DISPENSING FACILITIES NEAR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

One of the most common safety violations found near electrical lines is the location of the gasoline dispensing facilities in relation to the meter pole or buildings.

The National Electrical Code (NEC) shows the requirements farm wiring systems should follow. One section of the wiring code covers the requirements for electrical equipment and wiring for all voltages in locations where fire or explosion hazards may exist due to flammable gases or vapors, flammable liquids, etc.

The National Electric Safety Code (NESC) outlines the standards that utilities follow. Because of the hazards that exist in the vicinity of gasoline dispensing facilities, and especially for Access Energy Cooperative personnel working with electricity, the NESC suggests that electric utilities not permit the installation of meter poles or service entrances within 20 feet of a gasoline dispensing barrel or tank, or within 3 feet of any point that could be reached by a gasoline dispensing nozzle. In addition, it is recommended that existing installations with less than required clearances be modified to provide the required clearances.

It is costly for Access Energy Cooperative to change the location



of existing meter poles. Therefore, we ask every member to check to make sure their gasoline dispensing facilities are located at least 20 feet from the meter pole. The end of the dispensing nozzle should not be within 3 feet of the meter pole.

If Access Energy Cooperative discovers a violation of this requirement near our equipment, we have no choice but to

disconnect the electric service at the site until the hazard is corrected.

In addition to these location requirements, please make sure your gasoline dispensing facilities are electrically bonded to the electrical ground of the farm wiring system. Install a ground rod at your gasoline tank and connect the tank to the ground rod and the farm wiring ground.



ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE IS A PROUD SPONSOR OF DRIVE A TRACTOR AT MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS

Many people who visit the Midwest Old Threshers in Mount Pleasant over Labor Day weekend have never experienced life on a farm. What was once a common way of life is now only a memory to many of the older visitors.

Access Energy Cooperative has been a proud sponsor of the Drive A Tractor event since making its debut at the 2001 Reunion. It has become a very popular event, where visitors of all ages can feel what it is like behind the wheel of a tractor.

The exhibit features antique tractors that have been modified with a kill switch and low-throttle speed and gears. The safety person riding with each visitor can easily reach the kill switch, master clutch and handbrake, making it a fun and safe experience.

YOUTH LEADERS VISIT NATION'S CAPITAL

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Search for **Iowa Youth Tour** on Facebook or Instagram to see the group's recent adventures from 2025.



"The sights were truly amazing and the people even more so."

Miah Bugher, Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative

"Going to Washington, D.C., was like stepping onto Aladdin's magic carpet for the first time; it really is a whole new world."

Annabelle Baggett, Guthrie County REC

"Because of my opportunity to attend the Iowa Youth Tour, I have been able to make lifelong friendships and have many doors open for my future. This has truly been one of the best experiences of my life!"

Lilly Morey
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative

"This trip was some of the most fun I've ever had. I made so many new friends and learned a lot about co-ops. I think everyone should apply for the trip because it will really open your eyes to the impact you and the co-op as a team make on the world around you."

Joseph Thielen
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative



Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have been sending high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since 1958! This year, 35 high school students and six chaperones representing Iowa's electric cooperatives journeyed to the nation's capital for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2025 Youth Tour.

On the weeklong tour, students learned about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walked away with a greater understanding of their role as an American citizen. They participated in National Youth Day, visited with their elected legislators and explored the sights around the nation's capital.

Earlier in the year, students applied for the trip through their local electric cooperatives. The Iowa students joined students from co-ops around the country for the national Youth Tour.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

2026 Youth Tour

June 14-20

www.iowayouthtour.com



2025 PARTICIPANTS

Drew Alleman-Hunter – TIP REC
Annabelle Baggett – Guthrie County REC
Jake Buell – Consumers Energy
Miah Burgher – Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
Kase Coleman – United Electric Cooperative
Brooke Davis – Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Olivia Enyart – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Tyler Friedrichsen – North West REC
Nolan Gannon – Clarke Electric Cooperative
Hudson Gibb – Access Energy Cooperative
Emma Godman – MiEnergy Cooperative
Jaden Gukeisen – Lyon REC
Ray Helvie – Southwest Iowa REC
Ava Meinders – Heartland Power Cooperative
Braylen Milstead – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lilly Morey – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Nora Nelson – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Ricardo Noh Mejia – Prairie Energy Cooperative
Isabel Nunez – Harrison County REC
Brady Olson – Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative
Logun Ostermeyer – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
Taryn Oxendale – Western Iowa Power Cooperative
Hayden Palmer – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Hanna Paulson – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Nick Quasdorf – Franklin REC
Ranger Reed – East-Central Iowa REC
Mia Sanchez – Midland Power Cooperative
Rachel Schany – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lillie Spencer – Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association
Natalie Steele – Access Energy Cooperative
Joseph Thielen – Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative
Amelia Thompson – Butler County REC
Cassidy Thompson – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
Myles Tjaden – Heartland Power Cooperative
Elsie VanBeek – North West REC



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS DID AND SAW ON THIS YEAR'S YOUTH TOUR:

- » Albert Einstein Memorial
- » Arlington National Cemetery
- » Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- » CoBank (information about cooperative careers)
- » Ford's Theater
- » Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- » Gettysburg
- » Gettysburg National Military Park
- » Holocaust Memorial
- » Iwo Jima Memorial and Sunset Parade
- » Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- » Korean War Veterans Memorial
- » Lincoln Memorial
- » National Archives
- » National Museum of the U.S. Army
- » Pentagon 911 Memorial
- » Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center
- » The National Mall
- » U.S. Capitol
- » Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- » Washington Monument
- » White House
- » World War II Memorial





garden fresh

RECIPES

BLACK BEAN SALSA

- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can corn, drained
- ½ cup green pepper, diced
- ½ cup red pepper, diced
- ½ cup red onion, diced
- ¼ cup jalapeño pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Mix all ingredients and chill. Canned black beans can be substituted with boiled fresh black beans. Serve with your favorite tortilla chips or enjoy on a fresh garden salad.

Connie Nedved • Moravia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

SUPER EASY DAIKON RADISH PICKLES

- 2 pounds Daikon radishes
- 1 cup sugar
- 2½ tablespoons white vinegar
- 2½ tablespoons salt
- optional: jalapeño or dried chili pepper

Wash radishes well and cut off leaves and roots. Slice in ½-inch pieces with the skin on, then cut into sticks. Put radishes and remaining ingredients in a food bag and shake to mix. Soak in a refrigerator for 1-2 days, occasionally turning the bag upside down. Celery, turnips, tomatoes and onions would also be delicious. Serves 6

Erina Westphal • Guthrie Center
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

CUCUMBER RELISH

- 2 teaspoons salt
- 9 cups cucumber, sliced
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon celery seed

Pour salt over cucumbers and set for 1 hour. Pour off brine and discard. Dissolve sugar in vinegar. Add all ingredients to cucumbers. Keeps in fridge for months and freezes well in smaller containers.

Karen De Boer • Sioux Center
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

GARDEN GAZPACHO

- 6 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cucumbers, cored
- ½ red onion
- ¼ cup fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- a few dashes hot sauce
- sour cream

Mix tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, parsley, garlic, lemon juice, sugar, salt and hot sauce in food processor, leaving it a bit chunky. Serve chilled and topped with a dollop of sour cream. Serves 6

Barb Sowers • Fredericksburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

GARDEN-FRESH BRUSCHETTA

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 loaf French or Italian bread, cut into ½-inch slices
- 4 medium Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
- ¼ cup red onion, diced, optional
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- 1 teaspoon wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon parsley, minced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional
- Parmesan cheese, optional

Lightly brush olive oil on one side of bread. Place bread on ungreased baking pan, oil side up. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes or less. Combine the remaining ingredients, adding parmesan if desired. Use a slotted spoon to top bread pieces with tomato mixture. Serves 14

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

BUBBLE AND SQUEAK

- 3 potatoes, unpeeled
- 3 slices bacon
- 4 cups cabbage, shredded
- ½ medium yellow onion, sliced
- 1 zucchini, grated
- ¼ cup ham, chopped
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Cut potatoes into bite-sized pieces and boil. Once cooked, smash slightly. Chop and brown bacon, reserving fat. Gently mix potatoes, cabbage, onion, zucchini, bacon, ham, salt and pepper. Heat bacon grease in a non-stick skillet, add the mixture and stir so it is coated with grease. Cover and cook until the cabbage and onion are tender. Remove lid and brown on medium heat, stirring occasionally. Once browned to your liking, remove from heat and serve. Serves 4-6

Jean Longnecker • Huxley
Consumers Energy

GARDEN CASSEROLE

- 1 cup onion, sliced
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 4 large, firm tomatoes, quartered
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 3 cups seasoned mashed potatoes
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- parsley springs, for garnish

Lightly brown onions and beef. Add green pepper, celery, carrots, tomatoes, seasonings and brown sugar. Simmer 20 minutes. Pour into a 2-quart casserole dish and top with mounds of fluffy mashed potatoes. Brush lightly with butter. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-45 minutes, until golden brown. Garnish with sprigs of parsley. Serves 6-8

Amanda Markovich • Burlington
Access Energy Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



GARDEN-FRESH DILL PICKLE SALAD

- 4 large radishes
- 3 scallions
- 1 large carrot
- ¼ cup dill pickles, sliced
- 1 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds
- romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1 ripe avocado
- ½ cup dill pickle juice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk
- ¼ cup parsley, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves or 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon onion powder

In a food processor, add radishes, scallions, carrot and pickles. Pulse into combined, small bite-sized pieces. In a medium bowl, add cucumber and pumpkin seeds. Line four serving bowls with lettuce and top with a ½ cup vegetable mixture. In a blender, combine avocado, dill pickle juice, coconut milk, parsley, garlic, thyme, salt and onion powder. Serve avocado dressing over salad. Serves 4

Anita Doughty • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

WANTED:

HOLIDAY APPETIZERS

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

Deadline is Aug. 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

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BATTERY-POWERED HOME ENERGY SYSTEMS: BASICS, BENEFITS AND SAFETY

BY TYLER THEIN, P.E.



Battery energy storage systems (BESS) are devices that store energy for later use. They can be paired with renewable energy

sources to provide reliable energy, given that renewable energy sources like solar and wind depend on natural elements that don't always match energy demand.

If you are considering adding a BESS that ties into the electric grid, contact Access Energy Cooperative early in the process to coordinate safe and proper connection.

How does a battery energy storage system work?

The base capacity for residential systems ranges from 10 to 13.5 kWh, which can power an average home. Your energy needs will vary depending on the appliances you have, how often they run and how much backup power you want. Appliances such as air conditioners and water heaters may drain the capacity more quickly, and you may want to disconnect them during an outage.

► Battery

The battery stores the energy generated from renewable sources and releases it when needed. There are two main types used in residential installations:

- **Lead-acid** is the oldest and cheapest storage technology and is used in small projects with a lifespan of three to seven years.
- **Lithium-ion** is the most common type for home systems, with a lifespan of five to 20 years. They have a higher energy density,

faster charging capabilities and are lighter and more compact than lead-acid batteries.

► Monitoring system

- The monitoring system provides data about the performance of the BESS such as energy consumption, charge and system efficiency. This system provides data and may provide alerts if issues are detected.

► Inverter

- This converts the direct current (DC) electricity from the battery into alternating current (AC) electricity, which is used by home appliances and the grid. Stand-alone inverters are used for off-grid setups or as backup power. Grid-tie inverters sync with the grid, allowing electricity to flow back when demand is low or during peak pricing.

Safety risks

According to the National Fire Protection Association, four situations can cause batteries to fail, which could lead to dangerous conditions.

- 1 **Mechanical abuse:** The battery is dropped, crushed or penetrated.
- 2 **Thermal abuse:** The battery is exposed to external heat sources.
- 3 **Electrical abuse:** The battery is overcharged, charged too quickly, discharged too fast or the voltage is too high.
- 4 **Environmental impacts:** Earthquakes, rodents damaging the wires, extreme heat and floods.

The most significant safety concern is that these can cause thermal runaway. This is very rare and happens when heat builds up in the battery cell faster than it dissipates.

Safe installation

- Purchase a BESS from a reputable, certified manufacturer and hire a licensed electrician who follows the manufacturer's instructions.
- Ensure compatibility among the battery, inverter, controller and solar system (if using one).

BENEFITS OF ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS

- ✓ **Demand management:** They can help balance energy demand by charging when demand is low and discharging when it's high.
- ✓ **Backup power:** They provide backup energy during outages and blackouts. They can replace diesel-powered generators, offering an environmentally friendly backup source.
- ✓ **Grid support:** They ease grid pressure during high-demand situations, including extreme weather events.



Access Energy Cooperative requires members to complete a Distributed Generation Interconnection Request Application Form and Agreement for safety requirements.

- Install it in an attached or detached garage, utility closet or outdoors as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Use nonflammable materials like masonry or metal and follow the manufacturer's clearance recommendation or maintain a 3-foot clearance around the BESS for cooling and fire safety.
- Consider environmental hazards like flooding, extreme temperatures, snow accumulation, falling objects or vehicle impact, and keep the system away from heating equipment.
- Ensure the area is well ventilated, and check if permits are needed.

Ongoing safety tips

- Register your BESS with the manufacturer and connect to Wi-Fi for monitoring. Stay updated on firmware and safety recalls.
- Regularly test smoke detectors and maintain the manufacturer's recommended clearance, removing any objects or debris and trimming vegetation as needed.
- Though you should keep a fire extinguisher nearby for non-battery-related fires, never use it on a BESS fire. If you notice smoke, gas or chemical odors, evacuate immediately and call 911.
- Keep inverters and all BESS equipment out of the reach of children and pets.

Tyler Thein, P.E., is the director of engineering for Access Energy Cooperative.

LOCAL TEENS ATTEND NATIONAL YOUTH TOUR PROGRAM

Natalie Steele of Lockridge and Hudson Gibb of Burlington recently participated in the electric cooperative Youth Tour and were sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative. They traveled to Washington, D.C., in mid-June with 33 other student leaders from Iowa.

Every summer, this weeklong leadership development program provides high school students opportunities to learn about government, the electric cooperative business model and today's pressing issues in the energy industry. Students meet their elected officials, tour historic sites and run their very own snack cooperative.

The annual electric cooperative Youth Tour has been a joint effort of locally owned electric cooperatives, including Access Energy Cooperative, statewide trade associations and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) for over 65 years.

Natalie and Hudson said they were both grateful for the opportunity to go on the Youth Tour trip, where they learned about government and met many new people.

In addition to taking in the sights of the nation's capital, all the state groups convened for the Rural Electric Youth Day, sponsored by NRECA, to learn from public figures and other inspirational speakers. This year's Youth Day agenda included Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic Medalist and two-time world Wheelchair Basketball champion. Schlappi shares his inspiring message for every American, young or old: "Just because you can't stand up, doesn't mean you can't stand out."

Since 1958, Iowa's electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students on Youth Tour for visits to their U.S. congressional delegations, energy and grassroots government education sessions, and sightseeing in Washington, D.C.



For more information on how you can participate in Access Energy Cooperative's 2026 Youth Tour program, contact us at 866-242-4232, visit accessenergycoop.com or www.IowaYouthTour.com.

CHARGE YOUR EV DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS

BY CHRIS LEE

As electric vehicles (EVs) continue to gain popularity, it's increasingly important for EV owners to understand the impact of charging during peak demand hours and how to leverage off-peak charging rates and incentives effectively.

Thoughtful EV charging, particularly during off-peak hours, is a win-win for EV owners, as it potentially results in lower rates. This also helps Iowa's electric cooperatives balance their electrical load.

What is peak demand?

Peak demand occurs when electricity use is at its highest in an area, typically during periods of high energy consumption for homes, businesses and industries. Increased appliance use, business activities and even weather can create spikes in demand, making it more challenging for your electric co-op to maintain a stable grid and manage costs effectively.

While electricity may feel unlimited when powering household devices, it's actually a finite resource constrained by the co-op's capacity to purchase (or produce) electricity and distribute it throughout the local grid. To serve the grid during times of peak demand, electric co-ops may need to activate additional generation resources or purchase higher-cost electricity from the market. These efforts, although necessary to maintain reliability, can lead to increased expenses and put a strain on grid infrastructure.

What is off-peak charging?

Iowa's electric cooperatives play a vital role in managing energy demand and ensuring reliable service for all members. For co-op members who own EVs, off-peak charging provides a strategic solution to help reduce strain on the grid while also lowering costs, because charging when demand is lower eases pressure on the



Thoughtful EV charging, particularly during off-peak hours, can help EV owners through lower rates.



Contact your local electric cooperative to learn about off-peak hours and rate options for EV owners.



For co-op members who own EVs, off-peak charging provides a strategic solution to help reduce strain on the grid while also lowering costs.

electric grid. This helps avoid costly infrastructure upgrades and supports a more reliable, efficient system that benefits everyone in our community.

Off-peak periods – typically during early morning hours and late at night – are times when the overall demand for electricity is lower, allowing co-ops to offer more affordable rates and incentives to shift energy consumption.

Charging your EV during off-peak hours can potentially help you take advantage of reduced electricity rates or incentives, resulting in lower costs compared to charging during peak demand times. Smart scheduling means more affordable EV ownership and better energy budgeting.

The benefits of off-peak EV charging

Off-peak charging provides a win-win solution for members and electric cooperatives by offering cost savings, improved grid reliability and environmental benefits. This practice not only enhances the appeal of EVs but also aligns with the cooperative values of reliability, sustainability and affordability, helping build a smarter and more efficient energy system for future generations.

Contact your local electric cooperative to learn about off-peak hours and rate options for EV owners.

Chris Lee writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

COOL SAVINGS: REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER EFFICIENCY TIPS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

When exploring ways to be more efficient with refrigerators and freezers, we often find ourselves balancing convenience with energy conservation. While you can upgrade to newer equipment, care and equipment habits can be just as important to saving energy.

Here is some guidance on equipment energy use, including tips to keep your current equipment running efficiently and ways to limit overuse of refrigeration in our homes.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) helps us understand what to look for in our existing equipment and new appliances. Generally, the larger the refrigerator, the more energy it uses. The most efficient models are typically 16 to 20 cubic feet in size. Models with the freezer on top tend to use less energy than bottom freezers or side-by-side units. A refrigerator 15 years or older uses about 35% more energy than an ENERGY STAR®-certified model.

Let's explore some tips to keep your refrigerator running efficiently.

Keep it organized. One of the biggest issues with refrigerator energy use is opening the door or keeping it open. An organized fridge makes food items easier to find, minimizing open-door time and keeping cold air inside. Place items in the same spots so they are easier and faster to find. I tell my kids to take a quick look inside at the options and close the door while they are deciding what to eat.

Keep it clean. Regularly cleaning the gasket – the flexible strip around the perimeter of the fridge door – ensures a tight seal between the door and the unit, keeping cold air inside. If the gasket is not sealing tightly, it should be replaced. Removing and cleaning the vent at the bottom of the



Clean the vent cover and remove dust and debris buildup in the vent area under the front of the refrigerator. Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



If you have a second refrigerator or freezer, consider ways to minimize food waste and unplug the extra appliance when it is not in use. Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

unit can help with airflow. For the coils at the back, use an extended cleaning brush instead of moving the fridge, which can cause injury.

Keep food safety in mind. The DOE recommends setting your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees F and your freezer at 0 degrees F.

If you have a second refrigerator or freezer, consider the following three tips to help you save energy.

1 Do you need it plugged in year-round? Perhaps you can keep it empty and unplugged for part of the year. Maybe you only really need it during the holiday season. Unplugging it for the months you aren't using it will save

energy, and you'll still have it as a backup when you need it.

2 If you are a hunter or buy meat in bulk, set a goal to empty your freezer before you restock. This allows you to avoid food waste and unplug the extra appliance when it is not needed.

3 Consider the location. Keeping the second fridge or freezer in a cool basement versus a hot garage requires less energy.

Practicing basic cleaning and proper food storage is an easy way to improve the efficiency of your refrigerator and freezer.

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



THANK YOU SUMMER HELP

Access Energy Cooperative appreciates the dedication and hard work of our summer help employees in the operations department this year: Isaac Stover and Sonya Simon. Good luck with your education plans this fall.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS ⚠️

Delete deceptive emails. If you receive an email that appears to be from your electric utility but you are unsure about it, delete it. Never click on a link, open an attachment or send a reply to an untrusted source. When in doubt, contact your utility directly to report suspected email scams.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



DIVIDEND CHECKS ARE COMING

As an Access Energy Cooperative member, you own the cooperative. Unlike other electric utilities, we exist to make sure your needs are met – not to make a profit. We work hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. We also strive to earn your trust and excel at providing you with reliable service.

As a member-owner, you share in the margins earned in the form of dividend checks. Dividend payments to members for 2025 are being mailed this month to those who did not attend the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 5 or have them applied as a bill credit.

Members have the option to receive dividend payments as a bill credit. Contact our finance department if you are interested in setting this up for future dividend payments. Accounts with payments of less than \$5 will continue to accumulate and will be paid in the year they reach or exceed \$5.

For more information about dividends, visit www.accessenergycoop.com.



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
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).



NEW THIS YEAR – POSTER (NOT PHOTO) CONTEST

We are doing something a little different for the 2027 calendar (2025-2026 contest)! We are taking a break from the annual collection of photos for our calendar and will instead be filling it with posters about electrical safety. Each winning entry will win \$100!

Thirteen posters will be chosen to be featured in the 2027 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Winning posters also will be featured on our website, social media and in this publication. Plus, they will be featured at the next Annual Meeting of Members.



Scan the QR Code
for the complete
contest rules.



WHAT TO SUBMIT AND CONTEST RULES

Theme: The poster should include a brief electrical safety message with visually appealing graphics, pictures or images that support the theme.

Additional requirements

- Posters must be 11 inches x 8.5 inches
- Posters must be HORIZONTAL
- Posters must be original two-dimensional work in any medium (colors, markers, acrylics, oils, etc.)
- Original posters must be mailed or delivered to our office – DO NOT FOLD or BEND
- Photocopies and digital images cannot be accepted
- Entrants may submit more than one poster, but can only win once
- Posters should be appropriate for an audience of families and children

Entries must include the following information on the back of the poster:

- Entrant's name(s) with age(s)
- Address, phone number and email address (if submitted by a group or family, provide only one address)
- Member account number (if entrant is a member)
- Title or main message of poster

Who can enter

- There is no age limit to participate
- Posters may be created by individuals, families or groups
- Posters must be submitted by people living in a county where Access Energy Cooperative serves members (Davis, Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Van Buren, Wapello and Washington counties)

Timeline

- Poster contest entries can be submitted beginning Aug. 1, 2025
- Deadline to submit posters is March 31, 2026
- Winners will be chosen and announced in April 2026
- Winning posters will appear in the 2027 Access Energy Cooperative calendar, which will be distributed at the 2026 Annual Meeting of Members
- All posters submitted will be displayed at the 2026 Annual Meeting of Members

Where to submit

Posters can be delivered to:
Access Energy Cooperative
1800 West Washington Street
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

Or mailed to:
Poster Contest
Access Energy Cooperative
PO Box 440, Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

If you weren't able to attend the annual meeting, you can pick up a 2026 Access Energy Cooperative calendar at our office.

FORD LIGHTNING EV

There are no numbers to report for the month of June as there has been a safety recall on the vehicle and the part is not available. As a result, there will be no miles driven until the parts become available and the vehicle is repaired.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING


The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

August 2025

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A photograph of two utility workers wearing hard hats and safety vests, standing on a bucket truck. The bucket truck is white and has the "Touchstone Energy Cooperatives" logo on its side. The workers are positioned on a raised platform, and the truck is parked on a dirt road. In the background, there are orange traffic cones and a grassy field under a clear sky.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®