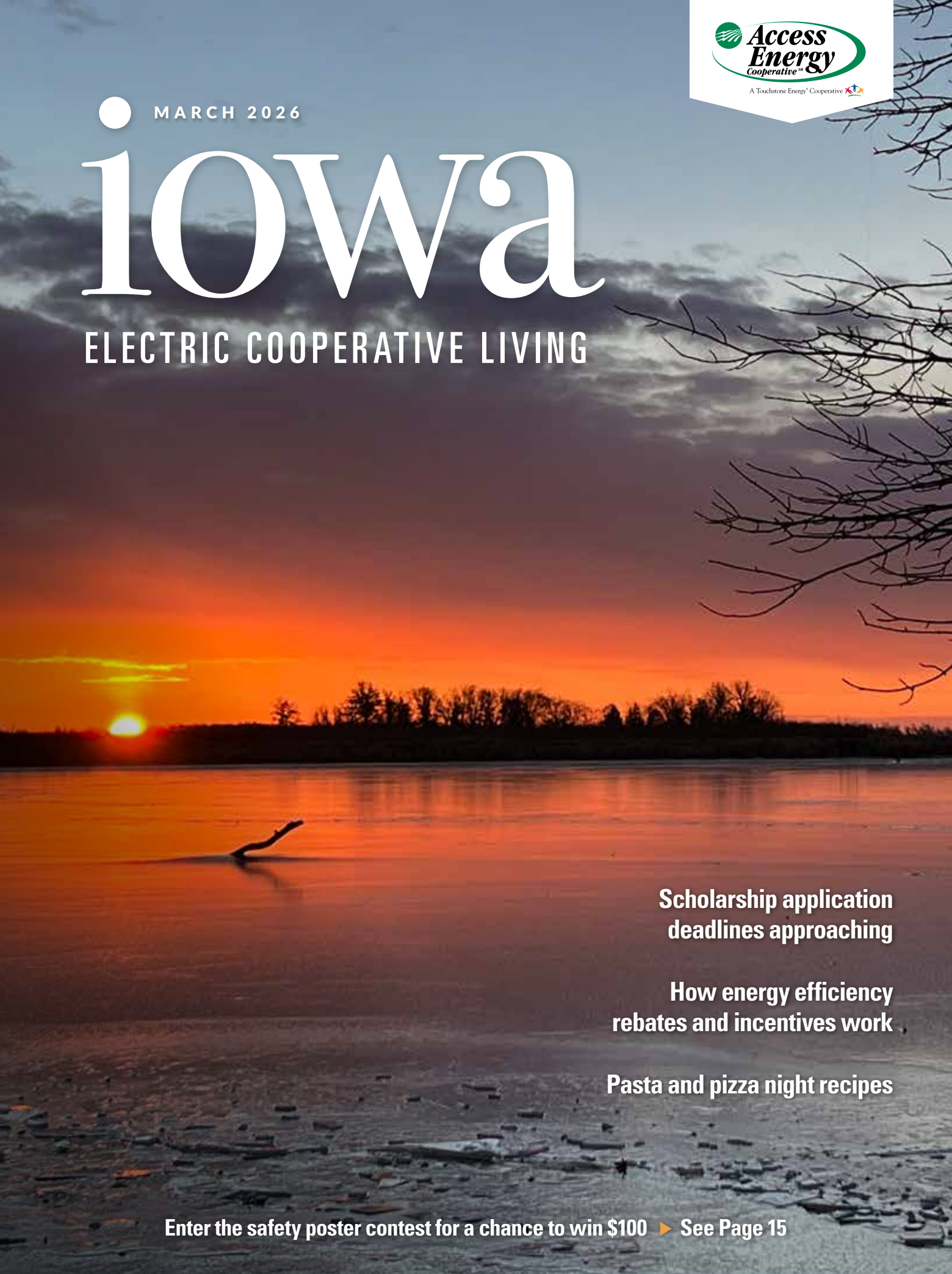

Access Energy Cooperative℠
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MARCH 2026

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Scholarship application deadlines approaching

How energy efficiency rebates and incentives work

Pasta and pizza night recipes

Enter the safety poster contest for a chance to win $100 ▶ See Page 15

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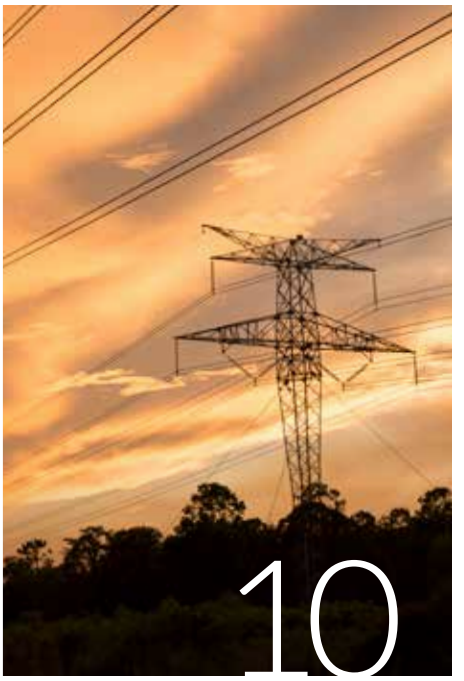

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Stacey Snyder, 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!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CHAMPION UTILITY WORKER SAFETY

BY JAY CEPERLEY

As we enter the month of March, Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to recognize and celebrate the essential work of utility workers across our state. Iowa Utility Worker Appreciation Day, observed each year on March 8, offers an important opportunity to honor the dedication, professionalism and service of the men and women who keep our communities connected, safe and reliably powered. These workers respond at all hours, often in hazardous conditions, to restore electricity and maintain the systems that power modern life. Their commitment ensures that Iowa families, farms and businesses receive dependable service every day.

A longstanding commitment to safety

Iowa's electric cooperatives have always maintained a strong and unwavering commitment to safety. This priority is deeply rooted in our mission of powering lives and informs how we serve our members, support our employees and protect the communities we operate in. We have consistently championed initiatives that improve the safety of Iowans, including hands-free driving legislation designed to reduce distracted driving, as well as the "Move Over, Slow Down" law, which requires motorists to move over and slow down when passing work vehicles on the roadside. These efforts reflect a broader goal: ensuring that not only utility workers, but all community members, can work and travel safely throughout our state.

With the 2026 Iowa Legislative Session fully underway, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged at the Capitol to ensure that our members' voices are heard. Safety remains one of our highest priorities, shaping not only our daily operations but also our advocacy efforts.

Strengthening protections for utility workers

This year, our ongoing commitment to safety is reflected in new legislation proposed by Iowa's electric cooperatives that would increase penalties for individuals who threaten, harass or assault utility workers while they are performing their duties. Lineworkers are often required to enter unpredictable, high-risk environments to restore power, post for disconnection and trim vegetation. When they encounter hostile or aggressive behavior, the dangers they face increase significantly. Because Iowa law requires these workers to respond in such situations, they deserve the strongest possible legal protections already given to other public servants like first responders, corrections officers and healthcare workers.

Regardless of the outcome of this year's legislation, Iowa's electric cooperatives will continue advocating for robust protections for utility workers. Our commitment to safety remains steadfast. These efforts reflect our longstanding mission: to champion safety, support our workforce and serve the best interests of the communities we proudly power.

Jay Ceperley is the advocacy coordinator for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

March 8 is Iowa Utility Worker Appreciation Day

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN EMILE HENRY PIZZA STONE AND COOKBOOK!

Finished with Emile Henry's proprietary glaze, this 16-inch pizza stone produces perfectly crispy crusts. The piece withstands exceptionally high heat, so it can be used in the oven or on the grill. Plus, chef and author Alexandra Stafford showcases pizza in her latest cookbook. Each recipe focuses on seasonal ingredients and is paired with a complementary salad.

Visit our website and win!

ENTER ONLINE BY MARCH 31!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than March 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 Ninja Crispi Air Fryer from the January issue was **Ray Netherton**, a **North West REC** member-consumer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 12	Youth Tour interviews
MARCH 15	Scholarship application deadline
MARCH 15	Lineworker Scholarship application deadline
MARCH 19	Board meeting
MARCH 31	Poster contest entry deadline
APRIL 3	Office closed for Good Friday
APRIL 7	Scholarship awards banquet
APRIL 21	Board meeting (rescheduled from regular date)

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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FEMA PARTNERSHIPS HELP KEEP THE LIGHTS ON

BY KEVIN WHEELER

When a storm rolls through the area, Access Energy Cooperative is ready to respond. Our crews work around the clock to restore power, repair damage and make sure every member's lights come back on as quickly and safely as possible. But when the damage is severe, the cost of rebuilding can add up quickly – and that's where the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) steps in to help.

Most people think of FEMA responding to natural disasters that make national news such as hurricanes or widespread wildfires. But electric co-ops also rely on FEMA after smaller, localized events – the kinds of storms that may not always make national headlines but can still cause significant damage.

FEMA assistance is essential

A thick coating of ice or a sudden flash flood can snap utility poles, damage substations and leave miles of power lines on the ground. In rural areas, where electric co-ops serve fewer members across larger territories, repairing that damage can be especially challenging and expensive. FEMA assistance helps ensure those costs don't fall entirely on co-op members and power can be restored quickly without putting financial strain on small communities.

FEMA's Public Assistance Program helps co-ops like ours rebuild critical infrastructure after disasters, large or small. This essential partnership ensures that we can focus on restoring power and supporting our community instead of worrying about how to fund large-scale repairs.

The FEMA Act of 2025 is making its way through Congress and aims to modernize the agency's programs, making it easier and faster for essential service providers like Access Energy Cooperative to restore and rebuild. It's an important step toward keeping disaster recovery fair, efficient and focused on the people who depend on reliable electricity every day.

Whether it's a large-scale storm or a localized event that only affects a few towns, FEMA's support helps electric co-ops do what we do best – serve our members and keep the lights on, no matter what Mother Nature brings.

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

TREE TRIMMING FOR SAFETY, RELIABILITY, EFFICIENCY

BY KURT LOWENBERG

Trees and plants provide many benefits, but poorly placed vegetation can lead to big problems. Fallen limbs, branches and trees are a top cause of power outages in Iowa. Access Energy Cooperative has a vegetation management program in place, which is a proactive approach to safely and efficiently keeping trees away from power equipment.

Safety first

Overgrown vegetation poses a safety risk. For example, a tree touching a power line in a member's yard can pose a danger to the family living there. Maintaining vegetation helps keep trees away from power lines and reduces the risk of limbs falling during a storm. This not only makes the property safer for the member, but it also allows a line worker to restore power more quickly and work in a safer environment.

Reliability impacts

Strategically keeping the lines clear of trees and other vegetation reduces the frequency of outages caused by downed lines due to limbs falling into them.

Efficiency matters

Access Energy Cooperative is an electric cooperative, which means we operate for the needs of our members, not to secure a profit. Trees growing too close to power lines can cause expensive repairs. Taking care of trees efficiently and proactively reduces costly outages that can occur at inconvenient times.

We strive to inform members when we will be working in their area to maintain vegetation. If you have any questions about our vegetation management program, please contact us at 866-242-4232 or visit www.accessenergycoop.com.

Kurt Lowenberg is the director of operations for Access Energy Cooperative.

JACKSON POWELL PROMOTED

Congratulations to Jackson Powell, who was recently promoted to crew foreman at Access Energy Cooperative. We are grateful for your commitment to the co-op's members.

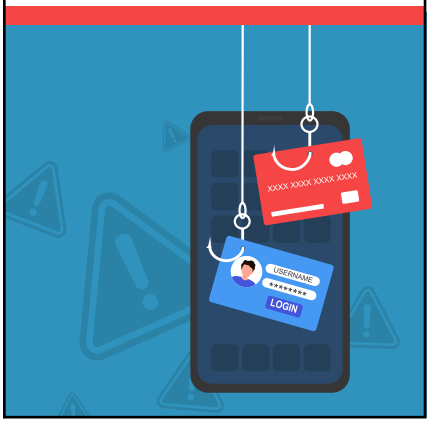
CONGRATULATIONS, DANIEL PHILIPS!

Access Energy Cooperative congratulates Daniel Philips on his retirement after 38 years of dedication to the cooperative. From journeyman lineman to director of operations, Daniel gave a big part of himself and his life to keeping the power on for our members. We sincerely wish him happiness and joy as he moves forward with new beginnings in his life.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers and cyber criminals look for weak points to exploit before software companies can fix them. Update software programs on your computer, tablet and mobile phone as soon as possible when a newer version becomes available. Software updates often contain critical patches and protections against security threats. Turn on automatic updates to automatically update your security software, internet browser, operating system and mobile apps.

Source: consumer.ftc.org



SUMMER INTERNSHIP OPENING

Access Energy Cooperative has a position available this summer for an intern in the engineering department. Applicants must graduate high school before this summer and be enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall. Contact Diane Magnani at **dmagnani@accessenergycoop.com** to apply.

HOW TO SAFELY USE A PORTABLE GENERATOR

Iowa's changing seasons often bring times of extreme weather. Tornadoes, derechos and ice storms can lead to power outages. When outages occur, your Access Energy Cooperative team works to safely and efficiently restore service. During an outage, you might be inclined to use a portable generator. If you use a generator, it's essential to use it safely. Nearly 70% of deaths caused by portable generators occur at home.

What is a portable generator?

Portable generators offer a reliable backup source of power during electrical power outages, and can provide relief during severe weather such as ice or wind storms. However, these helpful devices must be used and maintained properly to avoid serious health and safety risks. The best way to ensure you and Access Energy Cooperative's line crews stay safe when you are using a generator is to educate yourself and plan ahead.

What are the safety risks?

The main risks to be aware of when using a portable generator are electrocution, carbon monoxide poisoning, electrical accidents and fire. A portable generator should only be used when necessary and only to power essential equipment or appliances. Do not overload the generator by operating more appliances and equipment than it can handle.

In addition:

- Keep your portable generator outside (not in a garage) and away from doors and windows to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure the portable generator is on a flat, dry surface.
- Do not refuel when the generator is running or hot.
- Give your generator several breaks during the day. Most portable generators are not designed to run 24/7, so shut down the unit several times a day to let it cool down.

Proper installation is critical

Properly connecting the generator is a critical step for your safety since improper installation or use could be deadly. A licensed electrician should be consulted to determine the best equipment for your needs to be sure it meets local codes.

Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring without having an appropriate transfer switch installed. The transfer switch breaks the path of electricity between the power lines and your main electrical panel. This is the best way to protect you, your neighbors and utility crews from "back feed." Back feed occurs when an improperly connected generator begins feeding electricity "back" through the power lines.

If you have questions about using a portable generator, please contact us at 866-242-4232.

IS YOUR WATER HEATER APPROACHING THE END OF ITS LIFE?

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Nobody wants to get caught off guard with an unexpected cold shower or failed water heater. We all take for granted having reliable hot water in our homes. We also tend to live in the "if it isn't broken, don't fix it" school of thought; but a failed water heater can cause damage to your home and property. Emergency replacement of a water heater can add unnecessary cost, not to mention inconvenience. Evening or weekend replacement or repair can lead to higher costs charged by a plumbing company.

Here are four signs that your water heater might be approaching the end of its life.

The serial number on the water heater's sticker or metal plate can help determine its age.


Everyone loves a hot shower. Installing an efficient showerhead helps reduce your hot water use.


Be aware of your water heater's age and performance to avoid emergency replacement and damage to your home.

1 **Age.** The typical lifespan of a storage water heater is 10 to 15 years, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). If your water heater is older than that, plan to replace it soon. Don't have records of when it was installed? No problem. Find the serial number on the water heater's sticker or metal plate. Look up the serial number online or call the manufacturer to find its age.

2 **Leakage.** Sediment or water on the floor or at the bottom of the water heater could mean its days are numbered. Sediment can be a sign of corrosion, which leads to a leak or failure.

3 **Discolored water.** Seeing rusty or discolored water when you turn on your faucets can be a sign the tank is rusting inside. If water is not getting as hot as it used to, it could be a sign of a failing electric element or a gas burner not functioning properly.

4 **Noises.** Odd noises could indicate an issue with the components. If you're hearing unusual noises from your water heater, schedule a checkup with a plumber. Well-functioning water heaters typically don't make much noise. A professional plumber may be able to replace failing components. If you are having issues with the tank itself, it's likely time for a new unit.

If you're in the market for a new water heater, a heat pump water heater might be a good fit for your home. These systems are two to three times more energy efficient than conventional electric-powered tank water heaters, according to the DOE. Access Energy Cooperative also offers up to $700 in rebates for qualifying purchases.

Even if your water heater is in great shape, you can save at home by lowering your hot water use. Washing laundry in cold water can help, as well as installing high-performance aerators on faucets and showerheads. Install a timer on your water heater to prevent it from operating during peak energy use hours, which can help control your costs for demand. It also helps lower the strain on your electric cooperative.

Knowing the signs of water heater failure can save you from home damage and offer opportunities to explore options for more efficient equipment to lower your electric use.

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

Pasta AND Pizza FAVORITES

RASPBERRY-CHIPOTLE BARBECUE CHICKEN PIZZA

- 1 thin ready-made pizza crust
- ¼ cup red raspberry preserves or jelly
- ¼ cup hickory smoke flavored barbecue sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ground chipotle chili powder
- 6 ounces chicken, cooked and cubed
- 2-3 tablespoons onion, chopped
- 1½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Place pizza crust on a pizza pan. Mix preserves, barbecue sauce and chili powder. Spread mixture evenly over dough. Top with chicken, onion and cheese. Bake at 425 degrees F for 12-20 minutes, until cheese is melted and pizza crust edges are golden brown. Raspberry preserves can be substituted with Concord grape jelly. *Serves 4, two pieces per person*

Mary Grossman • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

SPINACH AND CHICKEN PESTO PIZZA

- 1 ready-to-serve, 12-14-inch pizza crust
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup pesto
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 cups fresh baby spinach leaves, washed
- 1 cup chicken, cooked and diced
- ¼ cup roasted red bell peppers, chopped and drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- hot pepper flakes, to taste

Place pizza crust on an ungreased pizza pan and brush the edges with olive oil. Spoon pesto onto the middle and spread evenly out to the crust. Top with mozzarella, spinach, chicken, red bell peppers, garlic salt and hot pepper flakes. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10-12 minutes, or until crust is golden brown. *Yield: 6 servings*

MacKenzie Rutter • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TOMATO AND FETA BAKED PASTA

- 12 ounces rigatoni pasta, cooked and drained
- 1½ cups ham, chopped
- 4 large plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup feta cheese
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 cup half and half
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Place cooked pasta in a buttered 9x13-inch dish. Mix ham, tomatoes, cheese and thyme. Spread over pasta, then pour half and half over top. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes. Stir and continue baking 40 minutes longer. *Serves 6*

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

GOAT CHEESE MUSHROOM PASTA

- 1 8-ounce box of your favorite pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ red onion, diced
- 1 package baby bella mushrooms, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 4 ounces plain goat cheese, cubed
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme

Boil noodles until al dente. While boiling, place a pan on medium heat, add olive oil and onion. Cook until translucent, then add mushrooms. As the mushrooms soften, add garlic and sauté for another 30 seconds. Place the goat cheese in the pan and add heavy cream. Add rosemary and thyme. Once goat cheese is combined with the cream to create a smooth sauce, toss drained noodles into the pan and coat. *Serves 3-4*

Monika Olmstead • Huxley
Consumers Energy

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

UPSIDE DOWN PIZZA

- 1½ pounds ground beef, pork or turkey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- optional vegetables: mushrooms, onion or green pepper (chopped)
- pepperoni
- 1 16-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- Parmesan cheese

Brown meat with salt, pepper and optional vegetables. When the meat is cooked, drain fat. Mix the meat with pepperoni and spaghetti sauce. Add mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix together flour, eggs, milk and oil into a pizza dough. Sprinkle the mozzarella cheese on meat mixture in baking dish then top with dough. Finally add parmesan cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Yield: 12 servings*

Judy Jackson • Hedrick
Access Energy Cooperative

SALMON PASTA

- 1 12- or 16-ounce salmon filet
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ package Gustare Vita tagliatelle (8 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup white wine
- ⅓ cup sundried tomato paste
- 1 12.5-ounce jar alfredo sauce
- fresh basil, optional for garnish

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place salmon on prepared baking sheet. Pat salmon dry with paper towel. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Bake at 425 degrees F for 4-6 minutes per half inch thickness, until 145 degrees F and salmon flakes easily with fork. Meanwhile, cook tagliatelle according to package directions in a large pot of boiling salted water. Drain, reserving ½ cup pasta water. Return pasta to the pot and keep warm. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add butter and sauté onion until translucent. Add garlic and cook about 30 seconds, until fragrant. Pour in wine and simmer until reduced by half. Stir in sundried tomato paste and alfredo sauce. Cook until heated through. Add sauce to cooked pasta and toss until coated. If sauce is too thick, add reserved pasta water until desired consistency. Flake salmon into large pieces and gently stir into pasta. Garnish with fresh basil if desired. *Serves 4*

Pam Dick • Dexter
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CHICKEN ORZO

- 2 chicken breasts
- salt
- black pepper
- paprika
- onion powder
- red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1½ cups orzo pasta
- 1 16-ounce can chicken broth
- spinach leaves, to taste
- splash heavy cream
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan

Cut chicken into large serving size pieces and add seasonings to taste. Sear chicken on both sides in medium skillet, then lower heat and add butter. Cover and continue until cooked through. Remove chicken and brown garlic and onion in the drippings. Add orzo, allow to toast while stirring. Add chicken broth, spinach and heavy cream. Stir slowly on medium heat while distributing all evenly. Add chicken and cook on low until orzo is done and all flavors have permeated throughout. Serve topped with parmesan cheese. *Serves 4*

Marilyn Alfers • Neola
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

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I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream! We're looking for your favorite **ice cream recipes** – anything from homemade blends to desserts with ice cream or tasty toppings. Selected submission will appear in our July issue to celebrate National Ice Cream Month. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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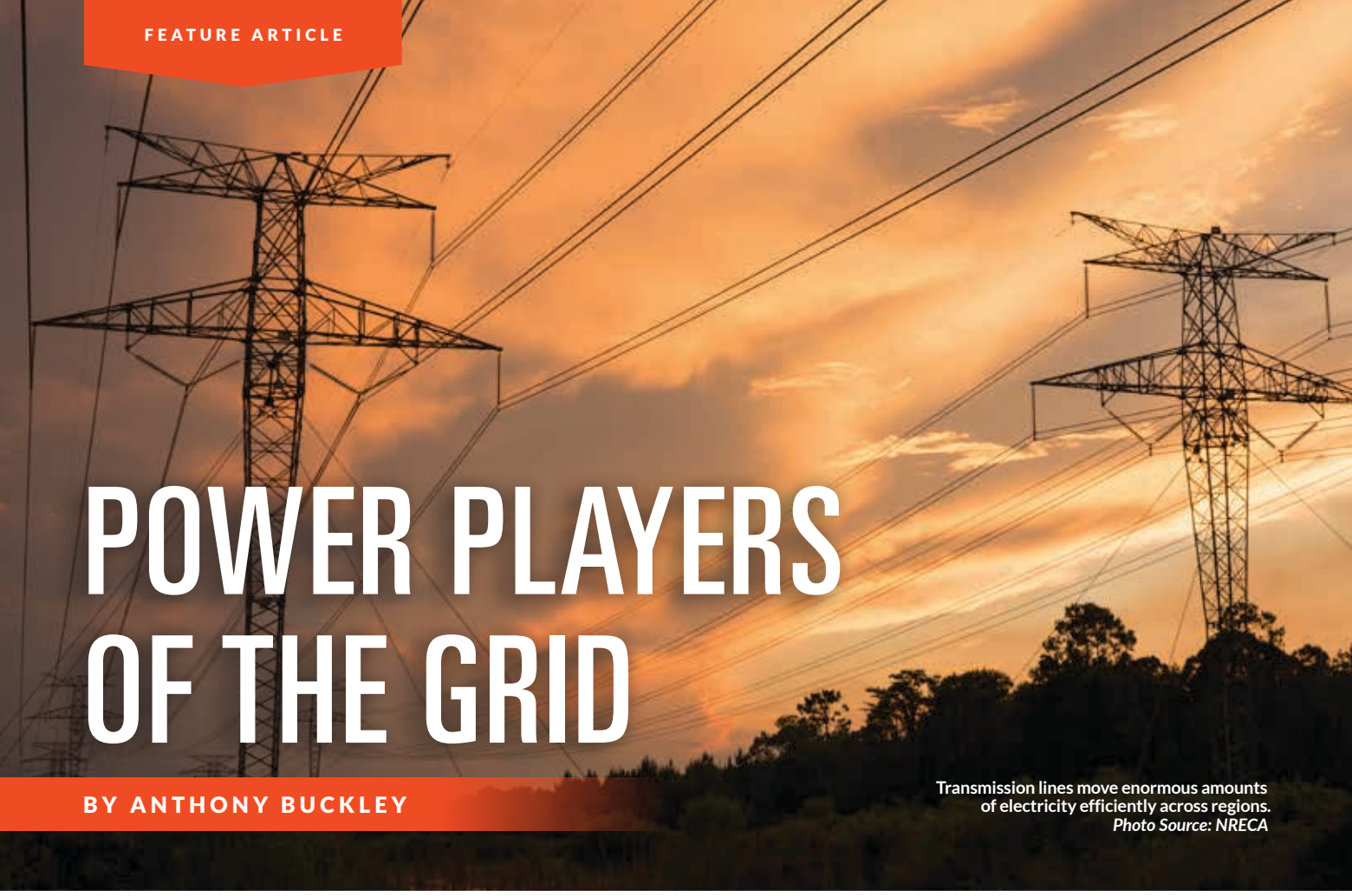


POWER PLAYERS OF THE GRID

BY ANTHONY BUCKLEY

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. *Photo Source: NRECA*

Every time you flip a switch, you're connecting to one of the most complex systems ever built, also known as the North American electric grid. Often called the largest interconnected machine in the world, this network spans the U.S., Canada and parts of Mexico. It includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night.

But how does electricity actually get from a power plant to your home? And where do electric cooperatives fit in? Let's break it down.

The U.S. electric grid has three major components: generators, transmission and distribution. Each plays a critical role in delivering electricity where and when it is needed.

Generators: Making the power

In the U.S., most power plants produce electricity by burning fossil fuels or by harnessing renewable resources like solar, wind and water. To ensure that enough electricity is generated to keep the lights on at an affordable price, two main structures exist.

The first is a "vertically integrated" model, where in some regions, a single utility owns everything from power plants to power lines and delivers electricity directly to consumers.

In other areas, a second model is used. Instead of one company making and delivering power, many companies sell electricity in a competitive market. Utilities buy electricity from these generators and deliver it to consumers like you. In this model, a group called a regional transmission operator (RTO) or independent system operator (ISO) helps keep everything running smoothly. They make sure enough power is available every second of the day. This system is called a wholesale market, and it lets utilities buy extra power when they need it.

Most electric cooperatives don't own large power plants. Instead, they purchase power through long-term contracts, wholesale markets or from their generation and transmission cooperative (G&T), a member-owned utility that serves multiple co-ops in a designated region. G&T cooperatives are owned by distribution co-ops like yours. There are 64 G&T cooperatives across the U.S., and they often own power plants and transmission lines. G&Ts also plan for the future by investing in new generation sources, building infrastructure and integrating renewables, all while staying true to the cooperative model: member-focused, not profit-driven.

Once electricity is generated, it doesn't stay at the power plant. It begins a long journey to reach homes, farms and businesses. Power must travel across regions to where it's needed most, and that's where the transmission system comes in. These high-voltage lines act like energy superhighways, moving electricity efficiently over hundreds of miles before it's stepped down for local distribution and, ultimately, for the devices you use every day.

Transmission: The energy superhighway

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. Most distribution co-ops don't own these transmission lines, but they rely on their G&T cooperative to handle this part of the journey. G&Ts make sure power gets from the plant to your local co-op.

However, the electricity carried by transmission lines cannot be used as is because the voltage levels are too high. That's the job of the distribution network, which is the final step that brings power to your lights, appliances and devices.

Distribution: The last mile

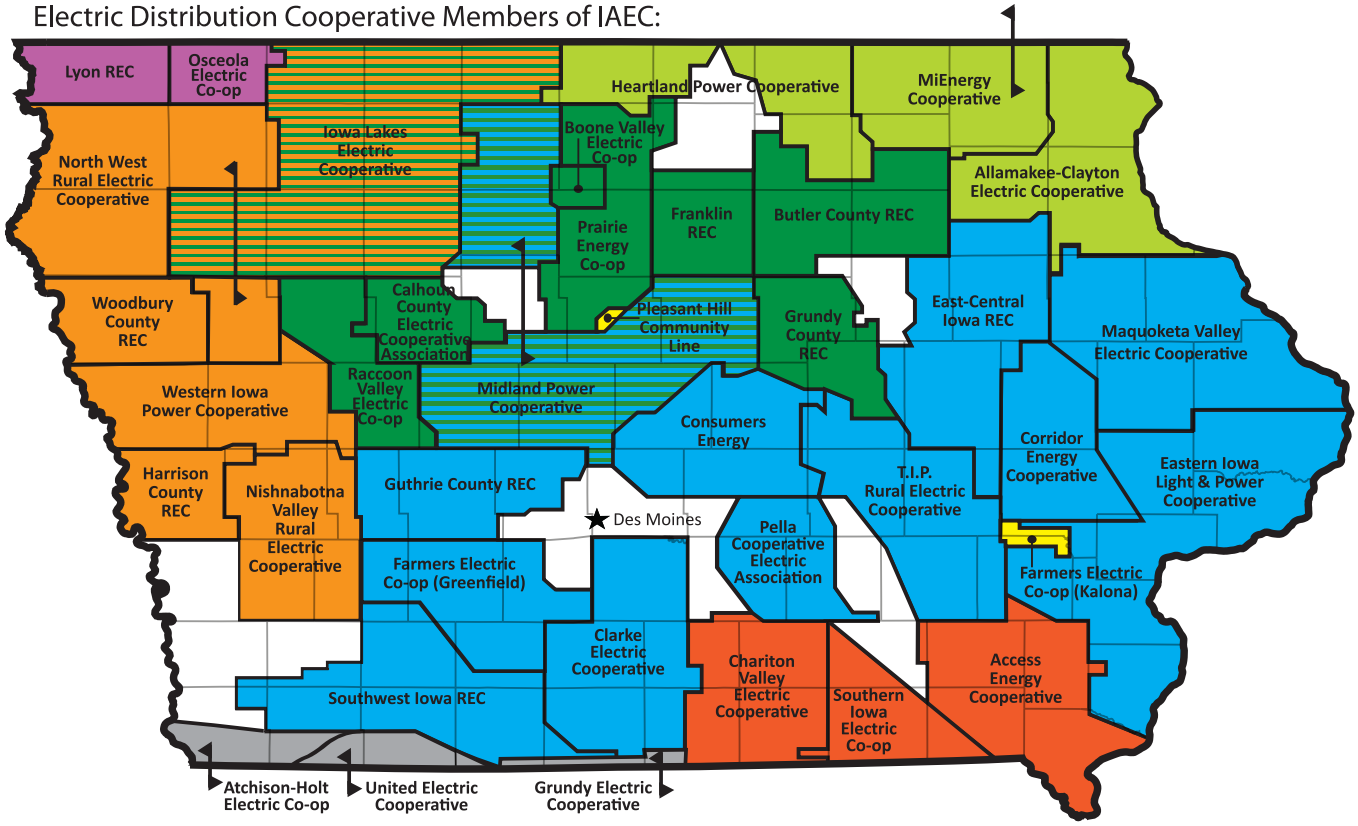
The distribution network is the "last mile" segment of the electric grid and delivers generated energy from the transmission network to consumers. The high-voltage power from transmission lines is converted to lower voltages that home appliances, electric vehicles and personal devices can use. This is where your electric cooperative comes in to keep local lines maintained and power flowing to members 24/7.

Understanding how power moves from generation to your home helps explain why reliability and affordability depend on teamwork and collaboration between your local co-op, its G&T partners and the broader grid. Together, co-ops are preparing for tomorrow's challenges, so you can count on safe, reliable power for years to come.

Anthony Buckley writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The complex electric grid includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night. *Photo Source: NRECA*

Your local electric co-op maintains distribution power lines to keep electricity flowing to members 24/7. *Photo Source: Dairyland Power*



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- Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Basin Electric Co-op

Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
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HOW ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES AND INCENTIVES WORK

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

One of the most common questions electric cooperatives receive about energy efficiency rebate programs is, "Why would the company that sells me energy want me to use less of their product?"

Helping consumers save energy is a powerful tool for electric co-ops. Instead of building or paying for more power generation to meet rising needs in the local community, co-ops create programs that help people save energy in their homes and businesses.

Rebates provide financial incentives for people to use less energy in their homes by reducing the costs of efficiency upgrades, such as insulation, new HVAC systems, water heaters or other appliances. This helps your electric cooperative save money by eliminating or delaying the need to buy additional power or build new power generation facilities. Using less energy also helps lighten the load on existing generation and transmission infrastructure that delivers power to your home through your electric cooperative.

How energy efficiency rebates work

Your cooperative and other local organizations may offer efficiency programs with special incentives for home upgrades, such as rebates paid after a project is completed. State and federal tax credits may also allow you to reduce the amount of taxes you owe for completing eligible home purchases or upgrades. Federal energy efficiency tax credits ended Dec. 31, 2025. If you completed any upgrades before that date, you can still apply for credits on your 2025 federal filings.

Energy efficiency programs are funded through a variety of sources, including surcharges on customer utility bills, grants, and state and federal funding. Some states and regions are required by law to provide energy efficiency programs.

If you are planning to purchase new appliances, equipment or complete an efficiency upgrade, do your research first. Ask your electric cooperative if they offer energy efficiency programs. Also check with your state energy office, which might have additional programs to help. The Inflation Reduction Act allocated federal funds to state-administered programs, including home efficiency rebates and home electrification and appliance rebates, to help residents with retrofits such as windows, insulation, air sealing, HVAC equipment and appliance upgrades.

There are also income-eligible programs available for energy assistance and weatherization, such as the U.S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program, typically administered by a local community action agency.

Steps to apply for rebates and incentives

Once you identify a rebate, tax credit or financing option you're interested in, review the criteria carefully. Criteria can vary by program, so make sure you know the eligibility requirements before making a purchase to avoid missing out on energy-saving opportunities.

Some programs require preapproval before you begin a project. Proof of existing equipment or conditions may be required, such as insulation levels or window types. You may also need to schedule an energy audit conducted by a program representative or photo documentation.

If your project meets the requirements of any available programs, you can proceed with installation. You will likely need to fill out an application and submit a final invoice to prove the project is complete. You may also need to submit pictures or have an inspection from a program representative.

Once approved, your rebate will typically be issued as a bill credit or check, depending on the source.

Participating in a rebate program can help you lower your energy use, save money and improve comfort in your home. It can also help your electric cooperative and the electric grid. Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about available rebates and incentives.

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

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL AND DEMAND

At Access Energy Cooperative, we understand that electric bills can be complicated, but understanding your bill can help you learn how to control it.

Generally, utilities charge a basic fee for service, which for Access Energy Cooperative members is called the "Base Charge." The "Energy Charge" on your bill is the charge for how many kilowatt-hours (kWh), or the amount of electricity, you used for the month. Understanding the "Demand Charge" of an energy bill is more complicated and may require additional information to comprehend.

What is demand?

Electric demand is the rate at which electricity is used at a given time and is measured in kilowatts (kW).

The "Demand Charge" listed on your bill represents the 15-minute interval when you used the highest amount of electricity during that billing period. The date and time are printed next to the demand, indicating when you set that demand.

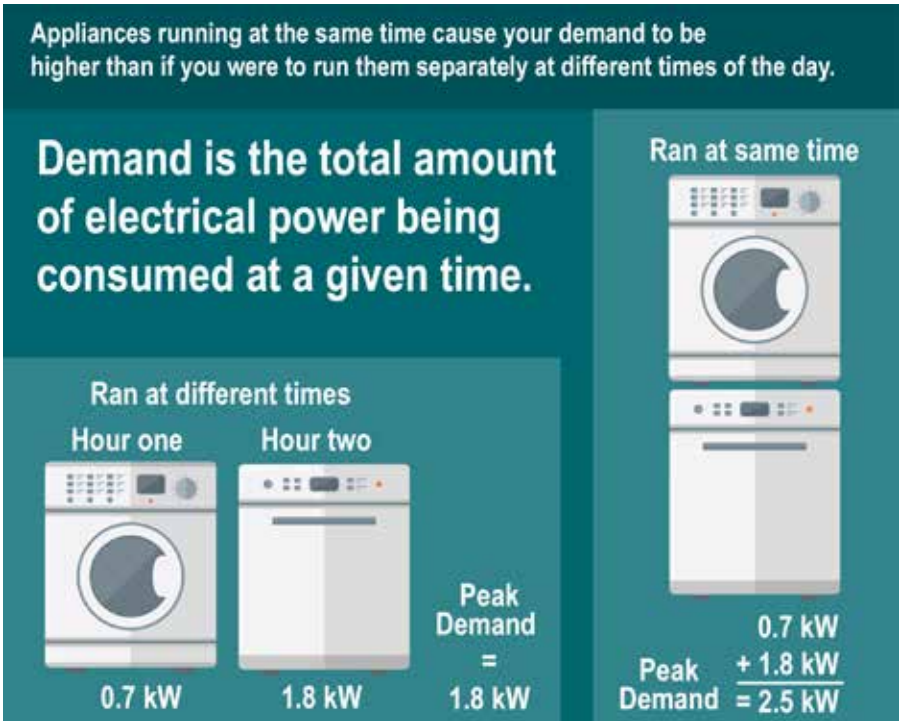
To put this into context, your dishwasher and washing machine both use electricity at their same unique rate regardless of when you use them. If you use them at the same time, you demand more electricity at that time. If you use them at different times, your demand will be lower.

How setting demand works

When your washing machine runs for an hour, it uses about 0.7 kW, which is your demand on the cooperative system for power. When your dishwasher runs for an hour, it uses about 1.8 kW. If you run both of them at the same time, your demand will be 2.5 kW. Your demand becomes the total of the two added together because you need that much power at the same time.

If you change your habits and run only one at a time, your highest demand for those two hours will be 1.8 kW, because it is the most demand you require at one time. The highest demand you set in one month is the highest amount of electricity used at once during a 15-minute interval in your billing cycle. The best way to reduce demand is to spread out your electric usage over time.

If you have questions about your electric bill or questions about demand, please contact us at 866-242-4232.



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINES APPROACHING

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting youth and education, we're proud to offer a variety of programs designed to inspire and empower young people.

Scholarship program

Access Energy Cooperative offers $1,500 scholarships to high school seniors. Applications are accepted through March 15. The parent or guardian of the applicant must be a member of the cooperative and live at a property receiving service from the cooperative. Applications and details can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, at all area school guidance offices or by calling our office at 866-242-4232.

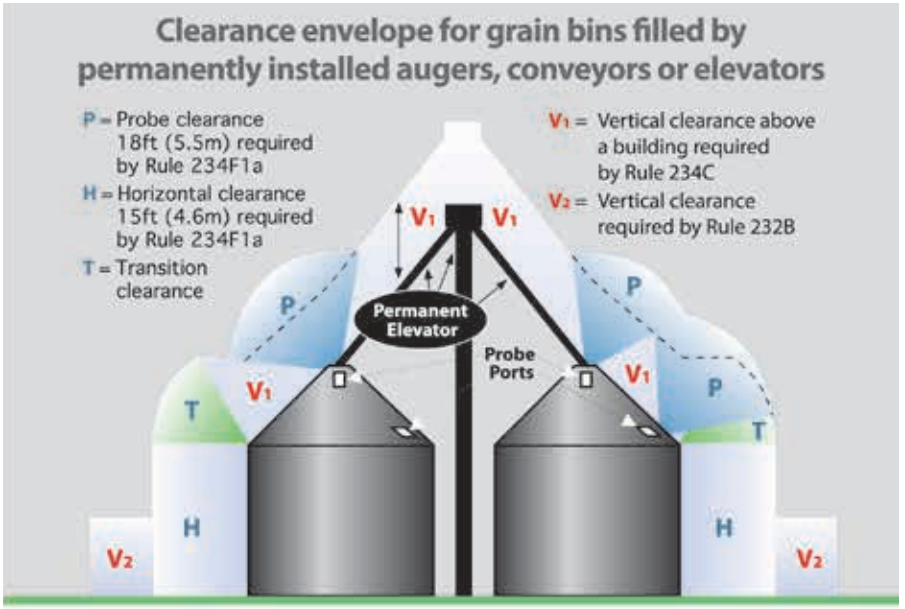
Scan the QR code for more information.

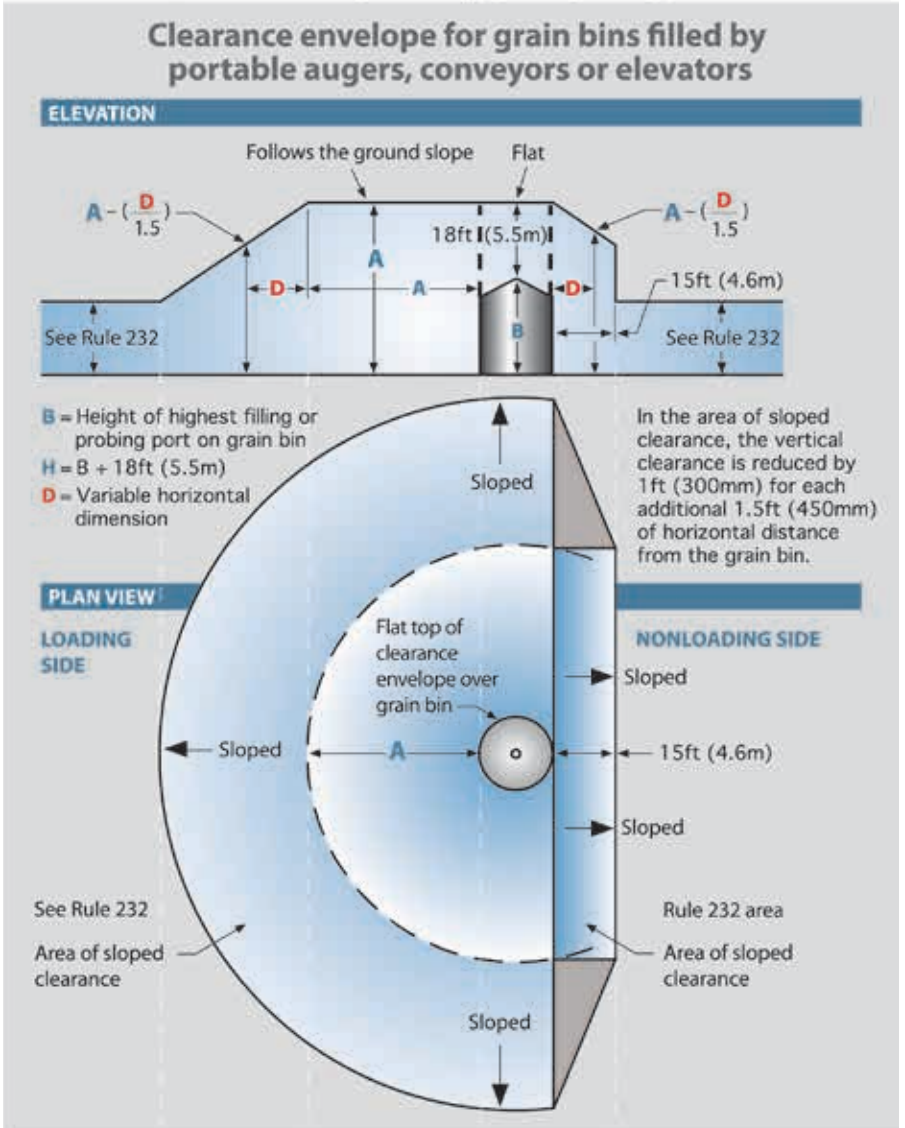
Lineworker Scholarship program

Access Energy Cooperative offers $2,000 scholarships to students enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a one- or two-year electric lineworker program.

Applications are accepted through March 15. The applicant must reside in southeast Iowa in the general service area of the cooperative but is not required to be a member. Applications and details can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, at all area school guidance offices or by calling our office at 866-242-4232.

Scan the QR code for more information.





MAINTAIN PROPER CLEARANCE AROUND GRAIN BINS

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b: *An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2023 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997.* The Iowa Utilities Commission has adopted this language.

Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Commission to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op's policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call your electric co-op for help.

These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives' annual public information campaign and are based on the 2023 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

2026 POSTER CONTEST

FOR ALL AGES

WIN $100!

Deadline March 31, 2026

For the 2027 Calendar (2025-2026 contest), Access Energy Cooperative is doing something a little different. We are taking a break from the annual collection of photos for our calendar and will be seeking to fill it with posters about electrical safety instead. Entries chosen can win $100!

PURPOSE

- To help educate members and the public on how to act safely around electricity

WINNERS

- Thirteen posters will be chosen to be featured in the 2027 Access Energy Cooperative Calendar
- $100 will be awarded for each poster chosen as a winner
- Winning posters will be featured not only on the calendar, but on our website, social media, in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine (the cooperative monthly member magazine) and at the annual meeting of members

THEME

- Electrical safety
- Cooperative appointed judges will only consider posters submitted that are in line with the theme
- Posters should include a brief electrical safety message with visually appealing graphics, pictures or images that support the theme

CONTEST RULES

- Posters must be 11 inches wide by 8.5 inches tall
- Posters must be HORIZONTAL
- Posters must be original 2-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 enter more than one poster, but can only win once
- Posters should be appropriate for an audience of children

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 in southeast Iowa where Access Energy Cooperative serves members

WHERE TO SUBMIT

Posters can be delivered to:
Access Energy Cooperative
1800 West Washington Street
Mt Pleasant, IA

Or mail to:
Poster Contest
Access Energy Cooperative
PO Box 440
Mt Pleasant, IA 52641

Visit our website accessenergycoop.com/posterphoto-contest

TIMELINE

- 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

INCLUDE ON BACK OF POSTER

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

- Entrant's name(s) with age(s)
- Address, phone number, 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

All entries will become the property of Access Energy Cooperative and may be used by Access Energy Cooperative for any purpose Access Energy Cooperative deems valid.

Entrants agree to authorize Access Energy Cooperative to announce and publish their name and poster in any forthcoming publicity without further remuneration.

By submitting an entry in the contest, the entrant agrees to grant Access Energy Cooperative permission and all rights to use the poster entry indefinitely for public relations purposes, which include but is not limited to a calendar, social media, or other electronic or printed materials promoting Access Energy Cooperative and electrical safety.

Access Energy Cooperative℠
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine for members of Iowa's electric cooperatives

March 2026

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com