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MAY 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Shine the Light contest returns

Advocating for members at REC Day on the Hill

Beef burger recipes

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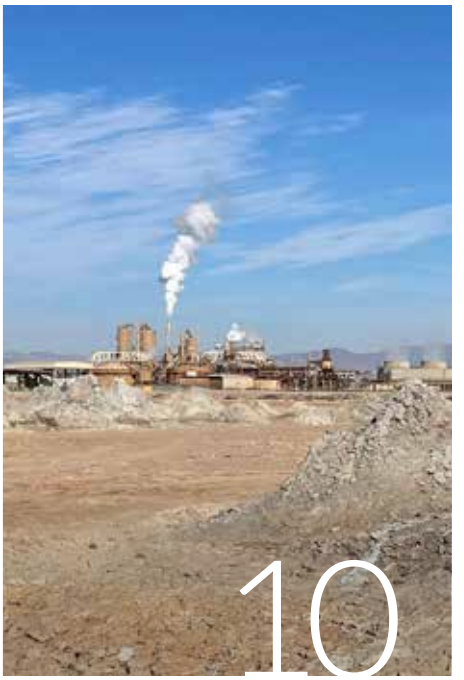

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Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

ON THE COVER Special thanks to Alannah McKibben, a T.I.P. REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

WE ALL KNOW A LOCAL VOLUNTEER WORTH CELEBRATING

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

This is one of my favorite times of the year. While I enjoy the lovely weather and vibrant blooms, what makes it extra special is seeing your entries come in for our annual Shine the Light contest!

Celebrating volunteers across Iowa

Now in our sixth year, the Shine the Light contest is a statewide effort where Iowa's electric cooperatives celebrate our commitment to the communities we serve. During the month of June, member-consumers, employees and retirees of Iowa electric co-ops are encouraged to nominate volunteers in their communities who are making a positive difference. If you live in Iowa and receive electricity from an electric cooperative, you are eligible to enter our contest.

After the contest closes on June 30, our panel of judges will take on the difficult task of selecting three volunteers, and each will receive a $3,000 donation to their local charity. We also feature each winning volunteer in the September issue of this magazine so our readers can learn more about the important work they do.

Who you can nominate

We are a few weeks away from accepting nominations but start thinking now about who you would like to recognize this year. You can nominate a friend, neighbor or relative for our Shine the Light contest starting June 1; nominees do not need to be electric cooperative member-consumers. Nonwinners who were nominated in previous years are welcome to be nominated again. Minors can be nominated as long as you have permission from their parents or legal guardians. Each co-op household can make one nomination per year.

How to submit a nomination

In the contest entry, we ask for some of your basic contact information (the nominator), contact information for the person you are nominating, and a summary (in 500 words or less) of how your nominee has made a difference in the community and how their local charity/nonprofit might use the $3,000 donation. We try to keep the nomination process simple while still providing essential details for our judges to consider.

This program is such a success because co-op members like you take time to celebrate those who go above and beyond in your community. Thank you for supporting our Shine the Light contest and consider making a nomination during the month of June at www.IowaShinetheLight.com!

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN $100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away $100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 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 pizza stone and cookbook from the March issue was **Bob Toms,** a **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 10	Happy Mother's Day
MAY 21	Board meeting
MAY 25	Office closed for Memorial Day
JUNE 18	Board meeting
JULY 3	Office closed for Independence Day
JULY 7	Board election voting packets mailed and online voting begins
JULY 16	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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ADVOCATING FOR LINEWORKER PROTECTIONS DURING 2026 REC DAY ON THE HILL

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Green was the dominant color at the Iowa State Capitol on March 17, but it wasn't only for St. Patrick's Day. Nearly 200 advocates were wearing green in support of Iowa's rural electric cooperatives during their 2026 REC Day on the Hill advocacy event, including board members and staff from Access Energy Cooperative.

This annual advocacy day at the statehouse is a powerful opportunity to meet face-to-face with our state legislators and share a local perspective on issues that impact the members and communities we serve.

The advocates were in full force on the rotunda floor to discuss utility worker protections as outlined in SF 2400. Through this legislation, those who harass, threaten or assault utility workers out on the job would face stronger penalties. Lineworkers are required by law to enter dangerous situations and work in hazardous conditions and should be protected to the fullest extent of the law.

Additionally, electric co-op representatives talked with their legislators about concerns with third-party solar provisions outlined in HF 2672. Iowa's electric cooperatives support solar development when it makes sense locally, but allowing third-party programs sets a concerning precedent statewide. Additionally, third-party solar developers would not be held to the same consumer protection standards or regulatory oversight as Iowa's public utilities.

During the event, co-op advocates educated legislators on the benefits of the not-for-profit cooperative business model, including local ownership, member governance and cost-based rates. Several electric cooperatives displayed booths in the rotunda, which provided information on several topics, including economic development, investments in technology, electric safety, reliable power generation and student programs.

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

Learn more about the legislative priorities of Iowa's electric cooperatives and Iowa Rural Power grassroots advocacy at www.iaruralpower.org.

Rep. Heather Hora discussed issues with Access Energy Cooperative representatives, including Director Marvin Newton and General Manager/CEO Kevin Wheeler, and Bruce Nuzum from Iowa Area Development Group.

Access Energy Cooperative Safety Director George Jones discussed lineworker safety.

PAD-MOUNT TRANSFORMER SAFETY

Pad-mount transformers are the large green metal boxes you often see sitting on concrete pads outside in neighborhoods. They convert high-voltage electricity from underground distribution lines to a lower voltage that can be safely used by members. Unlike overhead transformers mounted on poles, pad-mount units are installed at ground level in locked enclosures.

The equipment inside the metal box contains energized components, including wiring capable of carrying thousands of volts of electricity. They are designed with durable, locked steel enclosures to keep the public away from the energized wiring inside. The pad-mount is designed to allow us to install it safely at ground level, avoiding the need for overhead equipment and giving easy access for maintenance by lineworkers.

Why pad-mount transformers can be dangerous

Although pad-mount transformers are engineered with multiple safety features, they still pose a serious hazard if tampered with or damaged. The high-voltage electricity inside is powerful enough to cause severe injury or even death if someone comes into contact with energized parts.

External factors can also increase the danger. For instance, if a vehicle accidentally hits a transformer or if vandalism or extreme weather causes the cabinet to crack open, the internal wiring may become exposed. Such exposure can lead to electrical arcing, fires or shocks. Even a small dent or leak should be taken seriously, as it may indicate internal damage or insulation failure.

How to stay safe

Following a few simple safety precautions can greatly reduce the risk of injury:

TIP **Keep a safe distance:** Maintain at least 10 feet of clearance around pad-mount transformers. Never sit, lean or place items such as bicycles, tools or trash near them.

TIP **Teach children safety:** Remind kids that these boxes are not to draw or sit on. Playing around or climbing on a transformer is extremely dangerous.

TIP **Report damage immediately:** If you notice an open door, dents, leaks or any other signs of damage, do not approach the unit. Instead, stay away and contact your local electric cooperative right away.

TIP **Avoid landscaping too close:** Keep trees, shrubs, fences and other obstacles at least 10 feet away from the transformer. This clearance ensures that lineworkers can access the equipment quickly and safely for maintenance or repairs.

TIP **Never attempt to open one:** Only trained cooperative lineworkers are authorized to unlock or service pad-mount transformers.

Protecting power and keeping the community safe

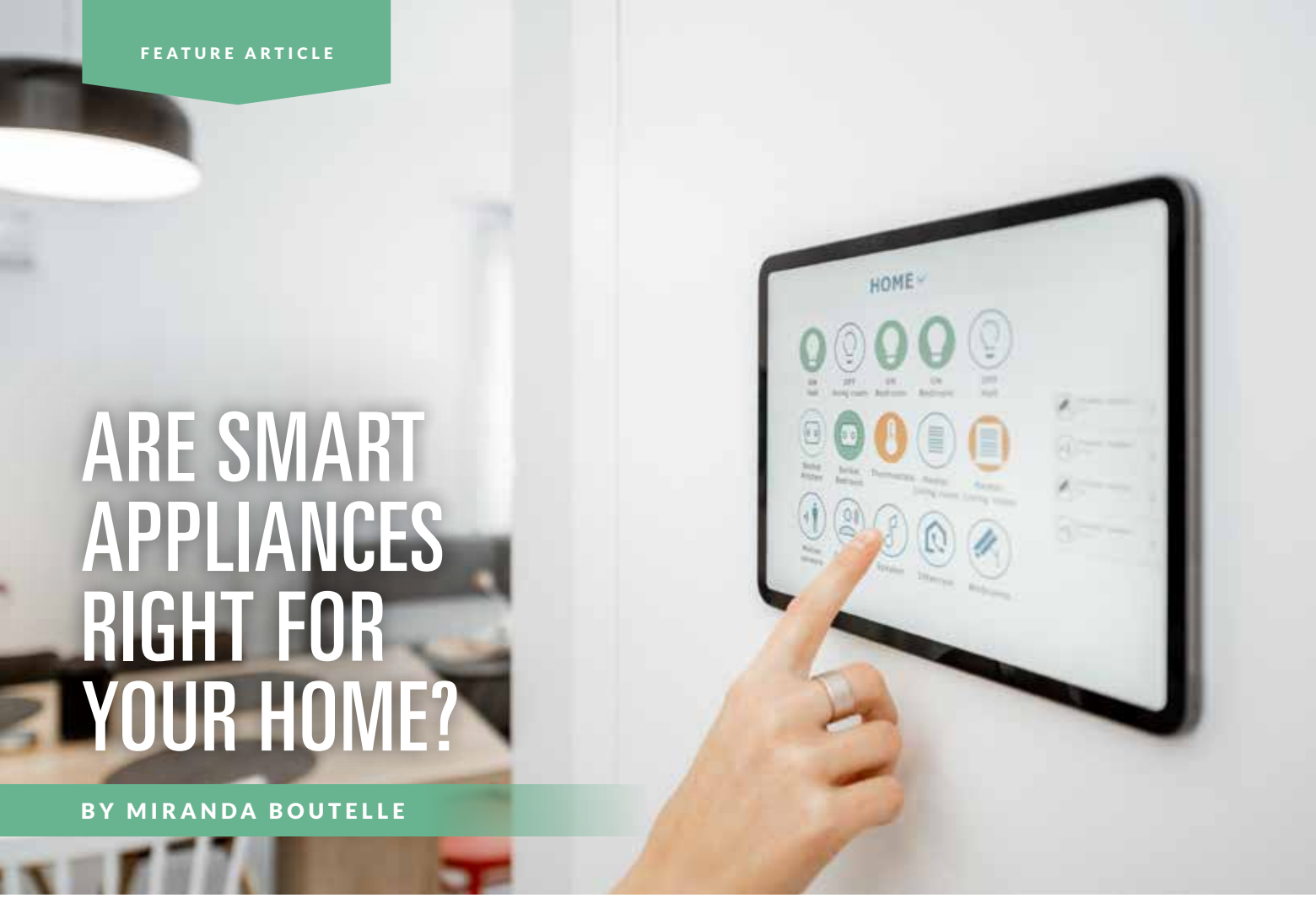
Pad-mount transformers are a crucial part of the cooperative distribution system that keeps communities safe and reliably powered. By respecting safety rules and maintaining a proper distance, you help protect not only yourself but also your neighbors and local cooperative lineworkers. A transformer that is easily accessible and in good condition ensures reliable electric service and minimizes the risk of outages or accidents.

Treat every transformer with caution and awareness. When everyone in the community does their part to stay safe around electrical equipment, we all benefit from dependable, uninterrupted power and a safer environment.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

If you receive a call from someone stating you have overpaid your energy bill and you should provide your banking information or a credit card number to receive a refund, hang up because it's likely a scam. If you overpay your bill, your utility will apply the overpayment credit to your account balance or mail a check. They will not call and request your banking information to issue the refund.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



ARE SMART APPLIANCES RIGHT FOR YOUR HOME?

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Smart technology is quickly becoming part of everyday life, and home appliances are no exception. From thermostats to refrigerators, connected devices promise greater convenience, improved energy efficiency and more control at your fingertips. But are these features truly worth it for every household? Before making the switch, it's important to understand how smart appliances work and whether they align with your lifestyle.

What makes an appliance "smart"?

Let's start by defining what "smart" means. Smart appliances – such as refrigerators, washers, ovens, thermostats and water heaters – connect to the internet. Typically, through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, these appliances can be controlled using your smartphone, tablet or voice-assistant device. They are designed to optimize energy use and add convenience. Some smart devices can even learn your habits over time.

Are smart appliances right for your home? The answer depends on your preferences and types of appliances you already have. The better question might be: Are smart appliances right for you? Do you like the newest tech and typically keep your phone within arm's reach? Do you enjoy the convenience of calling out commands to Alexa? Or do you prefer less technology or something in between? Personally, I'm somewhere in the middle.

Where smart appliances can save energy

Many smart appliances allow you to see how much energy each device consumes. That information can be helpful to better understand your energy habits and identify where energy may be going to waste.

Smart thermostats are a popular choice for managing energy use and reducing energy waste. Heating and cooling systems are typically a home's biggest sources of energy consumption. According to ENERGY STAR®, you can save an average of 8% on heating and cooling with a smart thermostat. Savings depend on your climate, the type of system you have and how you use it.

Most energy savings from a smart thermostat come from automating temperature adjustments while you are sleeping or away from home. If you are already good at manually adjusting your thermostat, you likely won't see big savings, but you might prefer the convenience of a programmable device you can control on an app.

Smart thermostats make it much easier to program your heating and cooling schedule. Some have geofencing features that automatically adjust settings based on how far your phone is from home.

Coming in with the second-highest energy user in most homes is the water heater. I like the smart controls on my heat pump water heater. Also called a hybrid water heater, it uses

heat pump technology to move heat instead of using energy to create heat. That makes it two to three times more efficient than a conventional electric resistance water heater. You can save even more energy with smart heat pump water heaters.

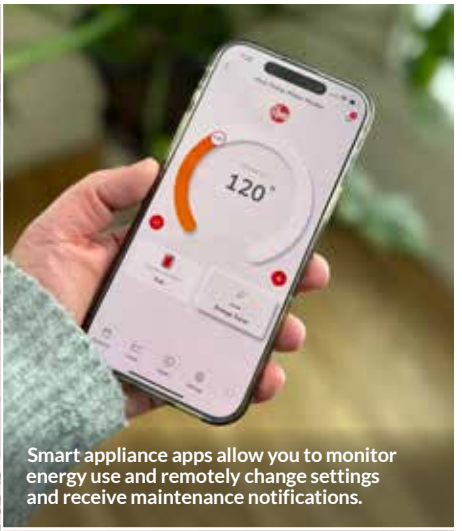
I can monitor energy use, change settings if we need more hot water and check how much hot water is available before I jump in the shower after my kids have used it. The app notifies me when it's time to clean the air filter on top of the unit. I can access that information without having to go down to the basement. I can even set it to vacation mode after I've left the house for a trip. Not all heat pump water heaters have smart technology, so be sure to check before buying.

Balancing convenience with potential drawbacks

My refrigerator is a different story. I like the ability to monitor energy use, but it can be annoying to have my phone notify me that the door is open when I'm thousands of miles away at a work conference. There are certain features that can only be controlled through the app, which I find frustrating. The next thing I know, my husband texts me to make more ice while he's standing right next to it, and I'm on the other side of the country.

Monitoring energy use and making it easier to control your household devices are benefits of smart appliances. Before upgrading, do your research to understand how the features work and whether they benefit your lifestyle. Smart technology can help lower your energy use. But, in some cases, you're better off improving your energy habits with the appliances already in your home.

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



Smart appliance apps allow you to monitor energy use and remotely change settings and receive maintenance notifications.

You can save an average of 8% on your heating and cooling costs with a smart thermostat, according to ENERGY STAR®.

Before buying new appliances, such as a smart dryer, research how the features work to understand whether they are beneficial to your lifestyle and help lower energy use.

COOL THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH SMART APPLIANCES

- Get an alert if your refrigerator door is open.
- Look inside your refrigerator without opening the door and wasting energy each time a family member wants a snack.
- Schedule your laundry or dishwasher to operate when your electricity rates are lowest.
- Have your dryer adjust cycle time automatically with incorporated sensors to help you reduce your dryer's energy use. This feature ensures that your dryer will automatically shut off when clothes are dry.
- Turn your room air conditioner off remotely from your smartphone if you forget before you leave home.

SMASH BURGERS

- **1 cup and 3 tablespoons ketchup, divided**
- **2 tablespoons mayonnaise**
- **2 tablespoons dill relish**
- **1 tablespoon mustard**
- **1 tablespoon green onion, diced**
- **1½ teaspoons pepper, divided**
- **1¼ teaspoons salt, divided**
- **3 pounds ground beef**
- **3 tablespoons white onion, grated**
- **3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- **oil**
- **16 slices cheese**
- **8 buns**
- **toppings: onion, lettuce, tomato**

In a small bowl, stir together 1 cup ketchup, mayonnaise, dill relish, mustard, green onion, ½ teaspoon pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt. Set smash sauce aside. Combine ground beef, grated onion, Worcestershire sauce, 3 tablespoons ketchup, 1 teaspoon pepper and 1 teaspoon salt. Divide mixture into 16 balls. Brush skillet or griddle with oil. Place ground beef balls in skillet and smash with a piece of parchment paper to create burgers. Cook 2 minutes on high. Flip and top with one slice of cheese. Cook another 2 minutes, or until done and cheese is melted. Brush additional mayonnaise inside bun halves and toast for 2-3 minutes. Assemble burgers in order: bottom bun, generous amount of smash sauce, two burger patties, onion, lettuce leaf, tomato slice, more smash sauce and top bun. Burgers can also be grilled and onions for topping can be sautéed. *Yield: 8 sandwiches*

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BARBECUED BURGERS (SLOPPY JOES)

- **10 pounds ground beef**
- **3 cups onion, finely chopped**
- **9 teaspoons salt, optional**
- **¾ teaspoon pepper**
- **3 cups tomato juice**
- **3 cups ketchup**
- **1 cup brown sugar**
- **¼ cup prepared mustard**
- **¼ cup vinegar**
- **1½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- **¾ cup rolled oats, to thicken**

Brown ground beef, then add remaining ingredients and simmer for 30 minutes. Or, to make ahead, mix and cook all ingredients except ground beef. Divide sauce into 10 small freezer bags and freeze. When needed, brown ground beef. Then, add one portion of sauce per one pound of ground beef and simmer for 30 minutes. The sauce is also great for tacos, taco bowls and similar meals. *Entire recipe serves 30*

Sonya Colvin • Ames
Consumers Energy

BBQ SHREDDED BEEF

- **2 pounds beef**
- **1½ cups BBQ sauce, warmed**
- **½ cup brown sugar**
- **1 tablespoon dried onion**

Cook beef and shred. Mix all ingredients together and serve. *Serves 6*

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BACON-WRAPPED HAMBURGERS

- ½ cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese, grated
- ½ small onion, chopped
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 6 slices bacon

In a bowl, combine all ingredients except bacon. Mix well, then shape into patties. Wrap each with a piece of bacon and secure with toothpicks. Grill patties until done. *Serves 6*

Tom DeVries • Maurice
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

GOOD OL' BURGER

- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup dry red wine or beef broth
- 1 tablespoon chili sauce
- ¼ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound ground beef
- buns

In a large bowl, combine egg, wine or broth, chili sauce, seasoning and pepper. Add beef and mix lightly but thoroughly. Shape into four ½-inch thick patties. Cover and grill burgers over medium heat 5-7 minutes on each side, or until 160 degrees F. Grill buns cut side down over medium heat 30-60 seconds, or until toasted. Serve burgers on buns with toppings of your choice. *Yield: 4 servings*

Joel Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

STUFFED BURGERS

- 2 pounds hamburger
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup rice
- 1 cup ketchup
- 1 cup zesty Italian dressing
- 1 cup Miracle Whip
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- mozzarella cheese
- button mushrooms, sliced

Mix hamburger, eggs and rice well. Form into large, thin patties and place in an air-tight container. Whisk together ketchup, dressing, Miracle Whip and Worcestershire sauce. Add mixture to container with patties and marinate overnight. Take one patty and top with 1 tablespoon mozzarella and mushroom slices. Top with another patty and thoroughly seal edges together. Brown each side of patties, then place in slow cooker. Cover with marinade sauce and simmer on low for 3-4 hours. The burgers can also be grilled if you prefer.

Mary Roberts • Victor
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

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

CROWD CRUSHER BEEF BURGERS

- 10 pounds ground beef
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup ketchup
- ½ cup mustard
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup dried onions, chopped
- 1 cup sweet pickle juice

Brown ground beef with salt and pepper. Once cooked thoroughly, add the remaining ingredients. Keep tasting until desired flavor is obtained. Serve immediately or place in slow cooker to keep warm. *Yield: 20 4-ounce sandwiches*

Walter Mason • Hampton
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

MOCK FILET MIGNON

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon dry onion flakes, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 small can mushroom bits and pieces
- bacon slices

Combine all ingredients except bacon and form into thick patties. Wrap each with a slice of bacon and secure with toothpicks. Broil or barbecue on a grill to desired doneness. *Serves 6*

Deb Peterson • Albia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

WANTED:

CHICKEN DINNER RECIPES

THE REWARD:

$25 BILL CREDIT FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31
Winner, winner chicken dinner! Grilled, fried, breaded or in a casserole, we're looking for your favorite chicken recipes. Selected submission will appear in our September issue, just in time for Family Meals Month. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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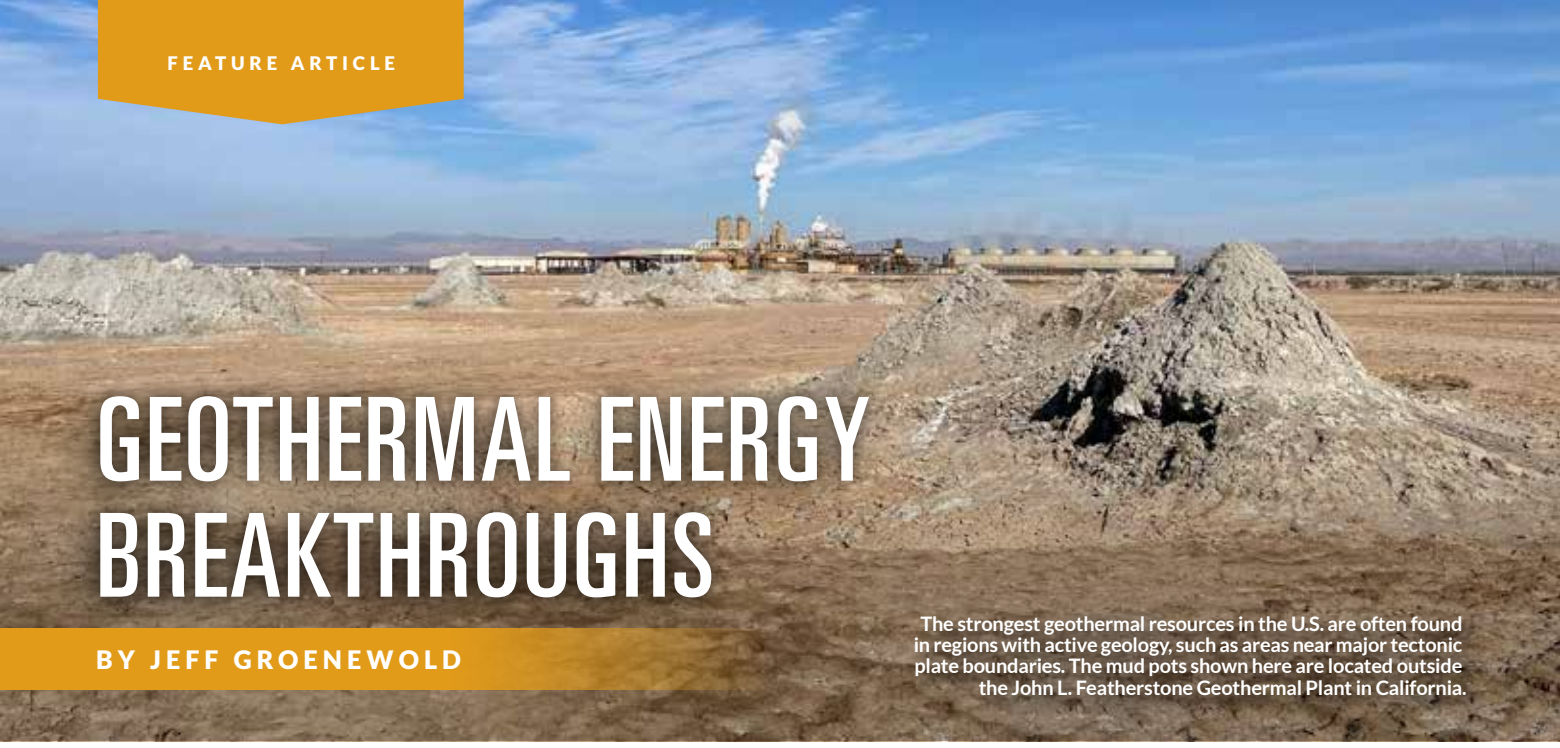


GEOTHERMAL ENERGY BREAKTHROUGHS

BY JEFF GROENEWOLD

The strongest geothermal resources in the U.S. are often found in regions with active geology, such as areas near major tectonic plate boundaries. The mud pots shown here are located outside the John L. Featherstone Geothermal Plant in California.

Electric cooperatives focus on delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity to the communities they serve – and they do that by utilizing a variety of energy generation resources, ranging from natural gas, coal, hydropower, nuclear, solar and wind. One energy source that is often overlooked is geothermal energy. Geothermal power has been used for many years and continues to improve as new technologies are developed.

Geothermal energy is a renewable source of power that comes from heat inside the Earth. Geothermal resources are natural or man-made pockets of hot water found at varying temperatures and depths below the ground. Wells, which can be just a few feet deep to several miles deep, are used to bring extremely hot water and steam to the surface for a variety of applications, such as heating and cooling, direct use in industrial processes and electricity generation.

The strongest geothermal resources in the U.S. are often found in regions with active geology, such as areas near major tectonic plate boundaries. These resources are not limited to one location but are spread across several western states. One well-known example is The Geysers in Northern California, the largest geothermal power complex in the country. Facilities like this use injected water to create steam from underground heat, which spins turbines to generate reliable electricity for the power grid.

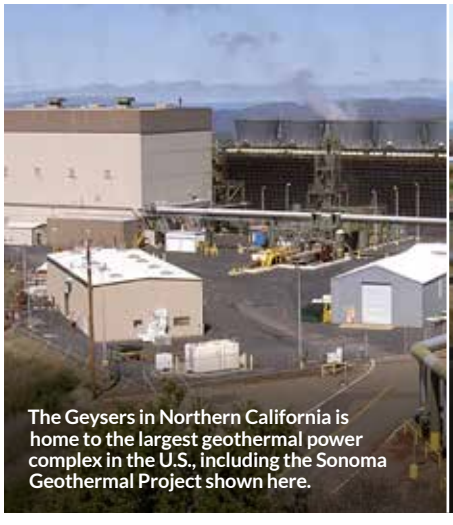
In 2023, geothermal generation accounted for approximately 17 billion kilowatt-hours, the equivalent of a year's worth of consumption for the city of Indianapolis.

The U.S. has about 3.9 gigawatts of geothermal power capacity. Most of this power is produced in California and Nevada, which together generate the majority of U.S. geothermal electricity. Smaller amounts of geothermal power are also produced in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, New Mexico, Oregon and Utah.

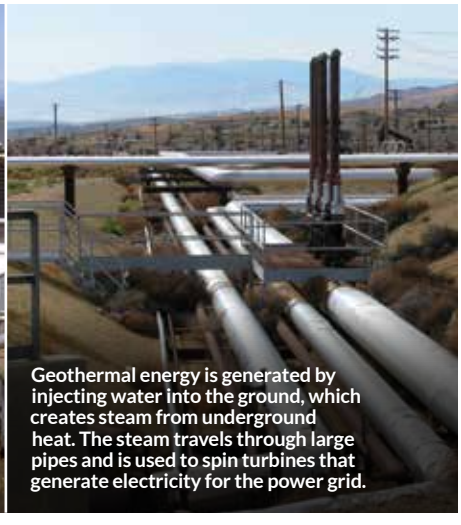
Technology advances and new projects

New ways of exploring geothermal energy, such as enhanced geothermal systems (EGS) and superhot rock technology, are helping developers access heat sources that were not possible to use before. These new methods are making geothermal energy available in more places across the country.

In early 2025, investment in geothermal energy grew quickly, reaching $1.7 billion. One example of this growth is Fervo Energy's Cape Station project in Utah. The project plans to produce 100 megawatts of power by the end of 2026 and increase to 500 megawatts by 2028. It already has approval to expand to up to 2 gigawatts. The project aims to produce electricity at a cost of $79 per megawatt hour, even without government subsidies.



The Geysers in Northern California is home to the largest geothermal power complex in the U.S., including the Sonoma Geothermal Project shown here.



Geothermal energy is generated by injecting water into the ground, which creates steam from underground heat. The steam travels through large pipes and is used to spin turbines that generate electricity for the power grid.

Geothermal has a high capacity factor, near 90%, making it a strong source of around-the-clock power. Electric co-ops in the western U.S. can benefit from existing geothermal plants, while new technologies like EGS and hybrid designs are helping expand geothermal energy across the country. Continued federal support for tax credits, permitting and research lowers the cost and risk of new projects.

Growing investment and project development

Federal policy has helped drive recent growth in geothermal energy. The Geothermal Tax Parity Act (HR 6873), introduced in late 2025, aims to put geothermal projects on equal footing with oil and gas by extending important tax benefits, including exploration credits. Other proposed bills before the House Natural Resources Committee focus on improving permitting, reducing exploration risk, clarifying land use and supporting lease sales.

Together, these efforts help create a stronger path for geothermal energy development in the U.S.

Jeff Groenewold writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

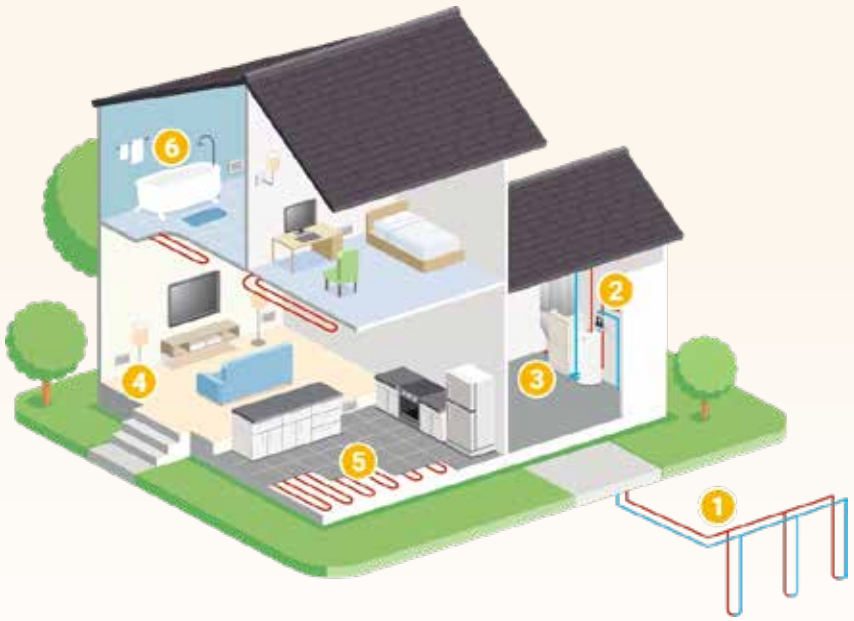
HOW GEOTHERMAL TECHNOLOGY WORKS IN HOMES

Beneath our feet, the Earth maintains a steady temperature year-round and geothermal systems use that stability to heat and cool homes efficiently. Also known as ground source heat pumps, these systems rely on a network of underground pipes, or "loops," that circulate a water-based solution to transfer heat between your home and the ground.

In the winter, the system pulls heat from the Earth and brings it indoors. In the summer, the process reverses: excess heat from your home is transferred into the cooler ground. Because the Earth's temperature remains relatively constant compared to outdoor air, geothermal systems operate far more efficiently than traditional heating and cooling systems.

Though the technology may sound cutting-edge, it's been used by electric cooperatives for decades.

One of the biggest advantages is efficiency. Geothermal systems can be up to 400% efficient and typically reduce heating and cooling costs by 40% to 70%, saving homeowners around $1,400 annually compared to older HVAC systems. While installation costs are higher – mainly due to the need for underground loop installation – many systems pay for themselves within five to seven years. Federal and state tax credits can also significantly offset upfront costs.



1 **Ground loop.** The Earth absorbs and stores almost 50% of the sun's solar energy. Because of this, the temperature 4 to 6 feet below ground is consistently between 45-70 degrees F. A geothermal system transfers heat from one place to another using a ground loop field buried in the yard. The loop field circulates a water-based solution through a series of pipes.

2 **Flow center.** The flow center resides on your unit or a wall near the geothermal system. It pumps the water-based solution in the ground loop to the house or building unit to disperse heating or cooling.

3 **Indoor heat pump.** The loop field transfers heat to the home through an indoor geothermal heat pump kept indoors through forced air and radiant heating and cooling.

4 **Forced-air heating and cooling.** In a forced-air system, an air-handler disperses the ground's heat to air in a home or building through ductwork and vents. In the cooling mode, the process is simply reversed.

5 **Radiant heating (optional).** Known as the most comfortable type of heating, radiant heating uses a series of pipes under a home or building's floor to circulate warm water, which heats the entire space evenly.

6 **Hot water.** A hot water assist, known as a desuperheater, allows the system to capture excess heat to assist a water heater. This cuts hot water costs 25-40%. Geothermal systems can also provide 100% of the hot water needed for a home.

Beyond savings, geothermal systems offer durability and low maintenance, making them a long-term investment in both comfort and sustainability.

Unlike solar or wind, geothermal energy is available 24/7, using stored thermal energy from the Earth regardless of weather conditions.

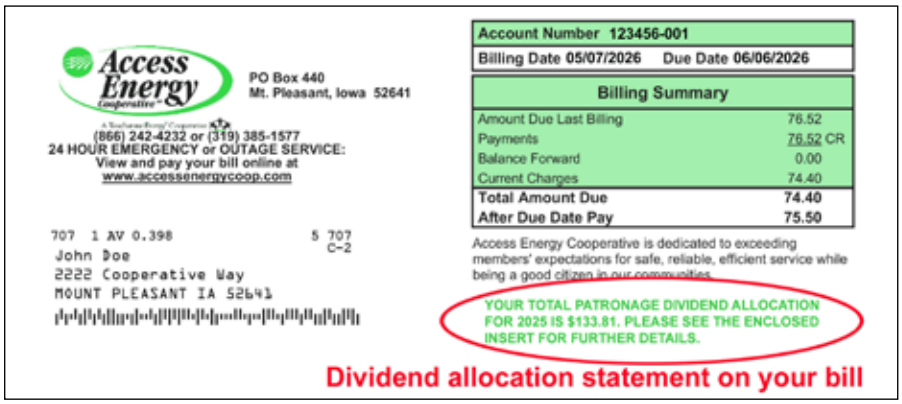
DIVIDEND ALLOCATIONS ARE PRINTED ON MAY BILLS

BY TAMMY SNAVELY

Receiving a dividend payment is one of the primary benefits of being a member of Access Energy Cooperative. Organized as a cooperative, we are owned and governed by our members, and do not exist to earn profits. Instead, any revenues above the cost of doing business during a given year are considered "margins."

Annually, these margins are allocated to each member's dividend account based on their usage for that year. Once the allocation is processed, there will be a statement on your May electric bill showing the amount of dividends being allocated to your dividend account for 2025. The image above shows where you can find it on your bill.

Access Energy Cooperative's board of directors will also review the cooperative's current financial condition. In May, they will determine if it is favorable to retire dividends from members' accounts, and if so, how much will be retired. Dividend checks are then prepared and will be handed out on Aug. 4 at the annual meeting of members. Any check not picked up at the meeting will be mailed.



Get your dividend payment early

Members have the option to choose to receive their dividend payments in the form of a bill credit, rather than a check. By signing up for bill credits, you will receive your dividend payment in July, rather than waiting for a check in August. If you wish to receive a bill credit instead of a check, contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to billling@accessenergycoop.com. Sign up before June 1 to be entered into a drawing to win a $25 bill credit.

Members with closed cooperative accounts

Members who have closed their account with the cooperative have the option to receive the amount in their dividend account as a discounted lump sum payment or choose to receive payments at the normal retirement cycle, which is currently 20 years. If you close your account and are interested in receiving a lump sum payment, please contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to billing@accessenergycoop.com.

Address updates and questions

If you have a change of address, please keep the cooperative informed of where your dividends can be sent. To update your address, submit questions, or receive further information about patronage dividends, contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to billing@accessenergycoop.com.

Tammy Snavely is the chief financial officer/assistant general manager for Access Energy Cooperative.

2026 ANNUAL MEETING — KIDS CAN WIN A FREE BIKE

There will be fun for the entire family at this year's Annual Meeting of Members. Back again, we will be giving away two kids' bikes at the meeting. Attendees can vote for directors, enjoy a free dinner with homemade ice cream, see live safety demonstrations, listen to the business meeting, get a free registration gift and register for door prizes. We'll also have the drive a tractor event, inflatables, pony rides and snow cones. Save the date for Aug. 4! The event starts at 5 p.m. at the Old Threshers grounds.

Save the date for Aug. 4!

WELCOME, JEREMY HOBBS

Please help us welcome our newest member of the Access Energy Cooperative team. Jeremy Hobbs has been hired as the storekeeper for the cooperative. We are excited for him to work with our crews as they prepare for their daily work for cooperative employees and members.

DIVIDEND BILL CREDIT DRAWING JUNE 1

Access Energy Cooperative members have the option to choose to receive their dividend payments in the form of a bill credit, rather than a check. If you wish to set your account up to receive bill credits instead of checks, please contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to billing@accessenergycoop.com.

Each member who has signed up to receive dividend payments as bill credits, in lieu of checks, will be entered into a drawing to win a $25 bill credit. If you are already signed up, you do not need to sign up again.

Drawing will be held June 1.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN SAFETY EDUCATION

Safety is the number one priority at Access Energy Cooperative, whether it involves employees, members or the public. Part of this commitment includes providing safety education for people of all ages. Our safety team annually conducts electrical safety presentations for third and fourth grade students across southeast Iowa. They interact with the students to help them learn to respect electricity.

CO-OP VOLUNTEERS AT LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES

Access Energy Cooperative employees have been taking turns volunteering at local food pantries by distributing food, stocking shelves and whatever else is needed. Our employees live, work and play in the communities we serve, and they are proud to be involved in activities and serving others when they can.

HOME SAFE HOME: SPRING INTO ELECTRICAL SAFETY

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Spring is a season of fresh starts. As the weather warms across Iowa, "For Sale" signs pop up, moving trucks roll through neighborhoods and many families begin a new chapter in a new home. It's also a time when home projects and outdoor activities ramp up – making it the perfect moment to think about safety.

That timing lines up with two important reminders: May is National Electrical Safety Month and June is National Homeownership Month. Together, they offer a simple but powerful message for Iowa's electric cooperative member-consumers: whether you're settling into a new house or simply refreshing your current one, taking a few minutes to check your home's electrical safety can protect your family, your property and your peace of mind.

Get to know your electrical panel

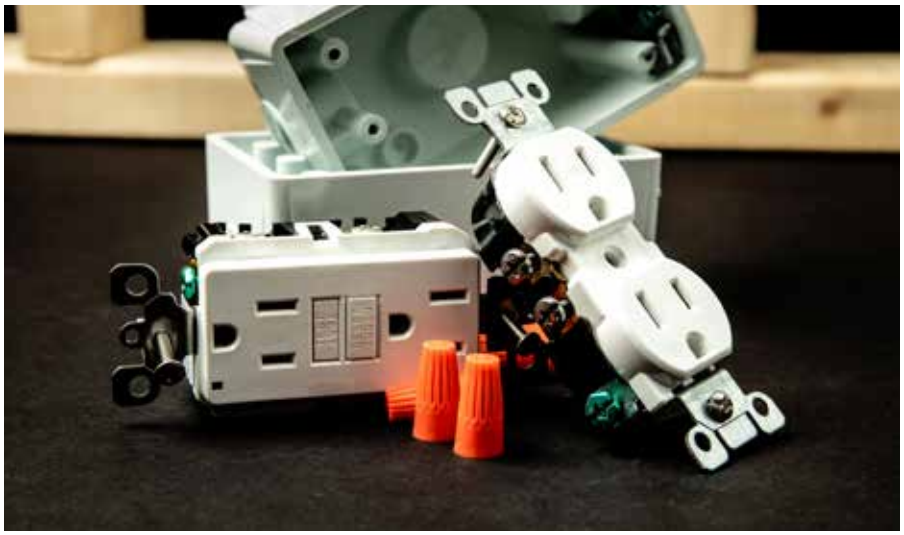
Knowing your breaker box means understanding its parts, like the main breaker for the whole house, individual switches for circuit breakers and their functions.

- Familiarize yourself with your electrical panel and label each breaker and panel by appliance or room.
- Test how to reset a tripped breaker.
- Find the main shut-off switch in case of an emergency.

Avoid electrical hazards

Identifying potential hazards can ensure your family's safety, prevent fires and reduce costly repairs.

- Have only one heat-producing appliance, such as a coffee maker, microwave or space heater, plugged into an outlet at a time.



- Major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves) should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Extensions cords and outlet strips should not be used.
- Inspect cords for signs of fraying or damage and replace or repair them immediately.
- Only use extension cords temporarily. Don't run cords under rugs, carpets, doorways or windows. Have a qualified electrician add more outlets if needed.
- Use surge protectors to safeguard devices such as computers, televisions and appliances from sudden power spikes.
- Always keep electrical devices away from water sources such as sinks, tubs and pools.
- Reduce risk of shock by using ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) around water sources such as kitchens, bathrooms, garages, basements and outdoors.
- Use outlet covers to prevent children (and pets) from inserting objects into unused outlets.
- Use light bulbs with the correct wattage – lamps and fixtures have a sticker to indicate the maximum wattage.
- Have a working smoke and carbon monoxide detector on every floor of your home and ensure there are units installed near your sleeping area.
- Keep outdoor ladders away from overhead power lines, including the electrical service into your home.

Call a professional if you notice these signs of an electrical problem

- Frequently blown fuses, tripped circuit breakers and unexplained power outages.
- A tingling feeling when touching an appliance.
- Discolored or warm outlets or switch plates.
- A burning or rubbery smell, or a buzzing or sizzling sound.
- Flickering or dimming lights.
- Sparks from an outlet.

As you enjoy Iowa's warm weather, always keep electrical safety on your home checklist. Pair these habits with energy-saving steps, and you'll reduce risk while lowering your utility bill. The little choices you make every day add up to a safer, more efficient household.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

SPRING INTO ENERGY SAVINGS

Spring is a season of renewal – and a great time to refresh your energy habits, too! As temperatures begin to warm and daily routines shift, a few small changes around your home can add up to meaningful energy savings.

Access Energy Cooperative is committed to helping our members use energy wisely while keeping homes comfortable year-round.

Maintain systems for peak efficiency

Spring is the perfect time to schedule maintenance for your heating and cooling system. Spring and fall checkups conducted by a licensed professional can help ensure your system is running efficiently, safely and reliably before peak seasons begin. A well-maintained unit uses less energy, lasts longer and helps prevent costly breakdowns when you need it most.

Make small changes that add up

If you're looking for a simple place to start saving, look no further than ceiling fans. Fans don't actually cool or heat the air, but they help you feel more comfortable by moving it. During warmer months, make sure your ceiling fan blades are set to rotate counterclockwise. This creates a downward breeze that makes you feel cooler, allowing you to raise your thermostat a few degrees without sacrificing comfort. In cooler months, reverse the direction of fan blades clockwise to help push warm air down from the ceiling, improving efficiency when your heating system is running.

Speaking of thermostats, adjusting the temperature just a few degrees can make a noticeable difference on your energy bill. As spring arrives, try setting your thermostat slightly higher when cooling or slightly lower when heating. Even a two- or three-degree adjustment can reduce energy use while still keeping your home comfortable – especially when combined with ceiling fans or open windows on mild, pleasant days.

Hot water use is another area where simple habits matter. Taking shorter showers can help reduce the amount of energy used to heat water, which makes up a significant portion of most energy bills. Cutting just a few minutes off each shower not only saves energy but also conserves water.

Access Energy Cooperative is here to help every season, every step of the way. We offer energy-saving programs and resources designed to help you lower energy use for your home or business and manage costs.

If you have questions or want to learn more about energy efficiency offerings and programs, visit www.accessenergycoop.com.

THE ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE PHOTO CONTEST IS BACK

Show off your creativity and share your best shots with us! Participate in our annual photo contest for a chance to showcase your talent and win up to $100. Whether it's capturing breathtaking landscapes, memorable moments or community spirit, we want to see your unique perspective of southeast Iowa.

We will choose 13 photos to appear in the annual Access Energy Cooperative 2028 calendar. Each winning artist will receive $75 plus an additional $25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.

CONTEST DETAILS

Complete details and rules can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com/photo or use the QR code.

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 March.

- 1,174 miles driven
- 7,945 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 421.8 total kWh for charging
- $52.70 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 61.70 gallons of gas equivalent
- $187.20 total cost of gas equivalent at $2.79 per gallon

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

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

The magazine for members of Iowa's electric cooperatives

May 2026

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com