

● DECEMBER 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Defined electric service areas protect rural Iowans

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### ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Allen Hollopeter, a T.I.P. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# DEFINED ELECTRIC SERVICE AREAS PROTECT RURAL IOWANS

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we are constantly monitoring issues that could impact the people and rural communities served by Iowa's electric cooperatives. Our state's 2025 Legislative Session will begin on Jan. 13, and IAEC will prioritize efforts to ensure Iowa's law regarding defined service areas is not undermined. I'd like to explain why this law has been so crucial to our mission to serve co-op member-consumers.

## What are defined service areas?

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve you. This regulatory protection is called defined electric service territory, and the State of Iowa wrote Senate File 1258 into law almost 50 years ago to efficiently ensure that every square foot of our state has an electric utility obligated to provide service upon request.

## Why do Iowa's electric cooperatives support defined service areas?

Electric co-ops are committed to safeguarding defined service areas because they protect rural Iowans by supporting affordable electric rates, fostering a resilient electric grid and encouraging economic development.

Defined service areas provide a high degree of certainty to Iowa's electric cooperatives, which allows us to confidently make long-term investments in power generation to maintain affordable rates, finance major grid upgrades to ensure resiliency and utilize new technologies to enhance service. Electric co-ops can also be proactive in maintenance and vegetation management to

improve reliability for the homes, farms and businesses we serve every day. Additionally, defined service areas allow electric co-ops to robustly support economic development efforts in the communities we serve, which retain and create local jobs and provide needed services and tax revenue.

Any efforts to remove or weaken Iowa's defined service areas could result in higher electric bills and decreased reliability for Iowans. This issue is non-negotiable for Iowa's not-for-profit electric cooperatives, which are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities by providing electricity that is safe, reliable and affordable.

Since the 1990s, several states have deregulated their electric utilities, but the hopes that competition would result in lower rates and improved

reliability have not materialized. In fact, according to a 2023 *New York Times* investigation, "Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced." The report goes on to conclude that "On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity..." This outcome is unacceptable for the Iowans we serve.

We invite you to learn more about this issue at [www.ProtectRuralIowa.com](http://www.ProtectRuralIowa.com) where you will also find links to research and studies on deregulation. Your locally owned electric cooperatives are working hard to safeguard defined service area protections that have benefited Iowans since 1976.

Leslie Kaufman is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Scan the QR code to learn more about why defined electric service territories are important to rural Iowans.



## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SMART MUG!

Discover a smarter way to drink coffee! Experience the comfort of consistently hot coffee (or tea) at your chosen temperature. The Ember Mug 2 offers up to 80 minutes of heat (120 to 145 degrees F) or all-day warmth on its charging coaster. Ideal for keeping drinks at the perfect temperature, the mug wakes up when hot liquid is poured and goes to sleep based on motion detection. Features like auto sleep and memory ensure your drink is always at the right temperature.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Dec. 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the \$100 gift card to a local business from the October issue was **Daryl Geiken**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

DEC. 15	Deadline for member account information updates to be eligible for the \$50 bill credit drawing
DEC. 18	Member Advisory Committee meeting
DEC. 19	Board meeting
DEC. 24-25	Office closed for Christmas
JAN. 1	Office closed for New Year's Day

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



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

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLIDAY SEASON

BY KEVIN WHEELER



As I write my column for this month, it feels like only yesterday we were discussing the holidays of 2023.

What a joyous time and a moment for reflection. The holidays bring joy, but they also highlight the absence of loved ones who are no longer with us. Still, no one can take away the precious memories we carry.

My own childhood holiday memories take me back to playing with those big yellow metal Tonka trucks and graders, where I imagined hauling and moving tons of dirt and rock. I wore out the knees of my jeans, and my mom would patch or stitch them up so I could keep playing outside no matter how hot or cold. And like a boy in "A Christmas Story," I had to have a BB gun.

There wasn't a milk jug safe from being riddled with holes, and I could never fill them with water fast enough to start again.

The toys were fun, but what stands out most are the times spent at Grandma Rooney's house, where homemade egg noodles and deviled eggs were a staple. Grandma only made those noodles twice a year – for Thanksgiving and Christmas – and no plate was ever big enough. Even now, 25 years after she has been gone,

no one can make them quite like Grandma. It feels like just yesterday we were enjoying them.

But as time passes, family dynamics change, and we create new memories. My parents and siblings are a few hours away now, and although we don't see them as often as we'd like, they are just a video call away. This year will be the first holiday season where it's just my wife and me waking up in the house on Christmas morning, as our son begins his own holiday traditions with his wife. We are excited for him as he starts making memories as a newly married couple. Now, it's our turn to enjoy this new chapter, growing together as a couple. Everyone tells me the best part of getting older is grandkids, and I can't wait to spoil them one day and then send them home to Mom and Dad – because that's what grandparents do, right?

It's a reminder of how life, like business, is always changing.

**I wish you and your family the happiest and most joyous holiday season. Take time to make memories because those treasured moments can never be taken from you. Happy Holidays!**

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

## FORD LIGHTNING EV

The following is the data for the cooperative's Ford Lightning electric pickup for October:

- 2,044 miles driven
- 5,053 total hours charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 1,101 total kWh for charging
- \$137.63 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 32.67 gallons of gas equivalent
- \$114.35 total cost of gas equivalent at \$3.50 per gallon

# KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE AND YOUR HOLIDAY MERRY WITH THESE FIRE SAFETY TIPS

BY KURT LOWENBERG



The holidays are filled with warmth and festivity, but the increase in cooking, decorations and cozy fires can also heighten fire risks. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), cooking, candles and holiday decorations are significant contributors to seasonal fires. From practicing cooking safely in the kitchen to choosing fire-resistant decorations and maintaining careful candle and fireplace use, these safety tips will help you enjoy the holiday spirit with peace of mind.

Follow these tips throughout your home to ensure your holiday remains merry, bright and, most importantly, safe.

*Kurt Lowenberg is the safety director/assistant operations manager for Access Energy Cooperative.*

## Holiday lighting safety

Decorative lights add cheer to the season, but safety is critical.

- **Purchase lights from reputable retailers** and ensure they are approved by recognized testing labs like UL or CSA.
- **Only use lights designed for outdoor use** when hanging outside.
- **Use circuits equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)** for outdoor lights.
- **Avoid water and snow** when using extension cords and outdoor lights.
- **Stay at least 10 feet away from power lines** while hanging lights.
- **Check for broken sockets and frayed wires** before use.
- **Avoid plugging too many devices** into a single outlet.
- **Turn off indoor and outdoor decorations** when going to bed or leaving the house.

## Candle safety

- **Only burn candles where you can keep an eye on them.**
- **Extinguish candles before going to bed**, leaving the room or leaving the house.
- **Use heat-resistant surfaces for candles**, placing them out of reach of children and pets.
- **Keep candles away from flammable items** like trees, decorations, curtains and furniture.
- **Opt for battery-operated candles** near flammable objects.



## Cooking safely in the kitchen

The kitchen is often the heart of holiday celebrations, but it can also be a hot spot for fires. Cooking equipment is the leading cause of home fires, accounting for nearly 20% of holiday-related incidents.

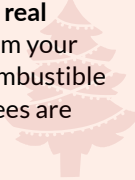
- **Never leave burners or the oven unattended.** Keep a fire extinguisher nearby for emergencies.
- **Ensure children stay away from the kitchen**, where hot appliances and sharp utensils can pose risks.
- **Install smoke detectors** at least 10 feet away from cooking appliances and test them monthly to ensure they work.



## Christmas tree fire prevention

A beautiful Christmas tree adds to the festive spirit, but it's essential to ensure it's safe.

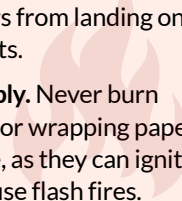
- **Keep the tree away from heat sources** such as fireplaces, space heaters and vents.
- **Check the water level daily** to prevent the tree from drying out.
- **If using an artificial tree**, ensure it is labeled as fire-resistant.
- **When discarding a real tree**, place it far from your home and other combustible objects, as dried trees are highly flammable.



## Fireplace safety tips

A cozy fireplace is a holiday favorite, but it requires careful handling.

- **Decorate wisely.** Avoid hanging flammable decorations like stockings and greenery directly on the mantel.
- **Perform annual maintenance.** Have your chimney and fireplace checked and cleaned at least once a year.
- **Use a screen.** Install a screen to prevent embers from landing on floors or carpets.
- **Burn responsibly.** Never burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace, as they can ignite rapidly and cause flash fires.



**Have a joyful and safe holiday season with your loved ones.**

## 2025 PHOTO CONTEST

We are accepting photos for the 2026 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Color and horizontal photos work best for calendar entries. Submissions can be sent to [mktg@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com) before March 31, 2025.

Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos. Winners will be awarded \$75, plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative. Visit [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) for complete rules.

**WIN UP TO \$100!**



## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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

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

### Applications can be found:

- On our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). Complete the application online; or download it and fax, mail or bring it to our office. Instructions are on the form for submitting.
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative office in Mount Pleasant at 866-242-4232.
- At all high school guidance counselor offices in southeast Iowa.



**Applications are due in our office March 15, 2025. Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.**

## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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

### 2025 timelines

- March 15 – Application deadline
- April 30 – Awards will be announced by this date
- Award recipients have until March 31, 2026, to apply for initial scholarship payment

### Eligibility requirements

- Must be a high school graduate
- Must maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or above

- Must reside in southeast Iowa in the general Access Energy Cooperative service area (not limited to Access Energy Cooperative territorial boundaries)

### APPLICATION PROCESS

#### Find an application:

- By visiting our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative office in Mount Pleasant at 866-242-4232.
- At all high school guidance counselor offices in southeast Iowa.

Complete details can be found at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

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

Access Energy Cooperative will send up to two students on an all-expense-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2025!

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

Two students will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the Youth Tour from June 15-21, 2025. Participants will learn more about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums and historical landmarks. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

## Application details

**We are accepting Youth Tour applications through Feb. 28, 2025.**

Students must attend a school in southeast Iowa in one of the 10 counties served by Access Energy Cooperative. Applications can be found on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) and at all high school guidance counselor offices in southeast Iowa. Personal interviews to choose our student representatives will be held at our office on March 6. You must be able to participate in an interview on that date to apply.

## SUPPORTING AREA FOOD BANKS

Access Energy Cooperative is proud to live up to the cooperative principle of commitment to community. Our employees have been actively helping local community projects in our service area. Shelby Ruby, Kassie Collier and Kevin Wheeler helped at the Fellowship Cup in Mount Pleasant. Collier and her husband DJ along with Aimee Sanderson helped deliver holiday meals to veterans. Kaley White, Kim Davis and Sanderson worked at the Lord's Cupboard in Fairfield.

Employees are also hosting a holiday food pantry drive to collect nonperishable items to donate to our local food pantries. The donations will be delivered this month to help families in our communities. Merry Christmas, and happy giving!



Apply now for  
a FREE trip to  
Washington, D.C.  
June 15-21!

Application Deadline  
Feb. 28  
Interviews on  
March 6



Sophomore or  
Junior Students  
Apply Now!



Find applications  
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P.O. Box 440  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641  
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For more information call 866-242-4232



# Holiday

PARTY  
RECIPES



## WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE

- 3 cups half and half, divided
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup white chocolate chips
- 1 3-inch cinnamon stick
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- whipped cream, for garnish
- cinnamon, for garnish

Combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup half and half, white chocolate chips, cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Stir over low heat until chips are melted. Discard cinnamon, add remaining half and half and stir until hot. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour into three or four mugs and garnish each with whipped cream and cinnamon.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## EASY PARTY CHEESECAKE

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 can Eagle brand milk (sweetened condensed milk)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 9-inch graham cracker crust

Mix cream cheese and milk until smooth. Add lemon juice and vanilla. Mix, then pour into the graham cracker crust. Refrigerate 2 hours or overnight. *Serves 8*

Kary Blunk • Russell  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## BAKED PARMESAN CRISPS

- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- optional toppings: garlic powder, paprika

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put heaping teaspoons of Parmesan cheese on paper, spreading them to make neat circles about 2 inches in diameter. Sprinkle with optional toppings to taste. Bake at 400 degrees F for 5 minutes. Remove and let cool. The cheese makes a lacey disc, almost like a snowflake. Best served the day you make them. *Serves 12*

Patsy Vander Schaaf • Sheldon  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## CARAMEL MACCHIATO

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup instant coffee
- hot water
- 5 ounces caramel sauce
- 3 ounces vanilla syrup
- $6\frac{1}{4}$  cups milk
- whipped topping
- caramel drizzle

Dissolve coffee in a little bit of hot water. Meanwhile, froth caramel sauce, vanilla syrup and milk in a saucepan. Heat to 150 degrees F. Combine coffee with frothed ingredients. Serve with whipped topping and caramel drizzle. *Serves 6-8*

Clark DeSmet • Alvord  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative



## HOLIDAY SPREAD

- 1 package raw cranberries, chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1-2 jalapeños, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 package cream cheese crackers or chips

Combine cranberries, cilantro, onions, jalapenos, sugar, cumin and lemon juice. Refrigerate overnight or at least 4 hours. Spread cream cheese on a tray or plate and cover with cranberry mixture. Serve with crackers or chips.

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## SPINACH TORTILLA ROLL-UPS

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 large spinach burrito tortillas
- ¾ cup raisins
- 3 tablespoons chives or green onions, chopped
- 12 ounces deli turkey slices
- 8 ounces Havarti cheese
- romaine lettuce, ribs removed

Spread cream cheese on tortillas. Layer remaining ingredients in the order listed, avoiding spreading layers all the way to the top as they will slide when you roll them. Roll tightly from bottom to top. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or several hours. Cut into 1-inch slices and serve on plate or platter. These can also be made with deli ham and Swiss cheese. Serves 10-12

Sandra Lacey • Danbury  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## SALMON LOG

- 1 16-ounce can salmon
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated
- 1 teaspoon horseradish
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon liquid smoke
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 3 tablespoons parsley, snipped
- crackers

Drain and flake salmon. Combine salmon with cream cheese, lemon juice, onion, horseradish, salt and liquid smoke. Mix well and chill for several hours. Combine pecans and parsley, set aside. Shape salmon mixture into log and roll into parsley pecan mixture. Chill well. Serve with crackers. Serves 6-8

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CRAB-IN-A-ROUND

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 5-ounce jar Old English cheese spread
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 6-ounce can crab meat, drained
- 1 package English muffins
- canned mushrooms, chopped
- parsley flakes

Combine softened butter and cheese spread, mix well. Add seasoned salt, garlic powder and mayonnaise. Add crab meat and mix well. Split English muffins into halves, add crab mixture and top with chopped mushrooms and garnish with parsley flakes. Bake at 400 degrees F for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown and bubbly. Cut into four pie-shaped pieces and serve with a toothpick in each wedge for a quick appetizer. Serves 24

Karen Segriff • Brooklyn  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

## RECIPES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

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

Deadline is Dec. 31

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



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

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

# POWERING LIVES EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

*Editor's Note: This article is Part 1 of a two-part series showcasing the impact of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout all the state's 99 counties.*

Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to be member-owned, serving our communities with a steadfast commitment to safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable power for over 85 years.

Covering more than two-thirds of Iowa's land area, our cooperatives maintain close to 62,000 miles of power lines – enough to circle the globe two and a half times! We deliver power to nearly 240,000 households, farms and businesses, reaching approximately 650,000 Iowans across every county.

Primarily serving rural areas, we are mission-driven to enhance the quality of life for our member-owners and are guided by seven core principles that define all cooperatives.

Iowa's electric co-ops serve **80%** of Iowa's land mass and maintain enough power lines to wrap around the equator **2.5X** (That's around 62,000 miles!)



Owned and governed by the members we serve, not-for-profit electric cooperatives power the lives of

**650,000 IOWANS** throughout all 99 counties.



Electric cooperatives directly support almost

# 2,000 JOBS IN IOWA



### Empowering communities

For over eight decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have made significant contributions to the local communities we serve by creating stable jobs, paying taxes, returning surplus funds to members and investing in student programs.

Iowa's electric cooperatives directly support nearly 2,000 full-time jobs, providing Iowans with steady careers, competitive wages and benefits in a dynamic industry. Many co-op employees are rooted in small-town communities where they actively participate in local events and initiatives.

Collectively, Iowa's electric cooperatives contribute almost \$29 million annually in local and state taxes. These funds support essential services, including emergency

response, road maintenance, healthcare and public schools.

Being member-owned means electric co-ops build equity for members based on individual electric use, and surplus funds are returned to them over time.

The surplus capital is returned to members over time when local boards determine it is financially feasible. To date, Iowans have received more than \$300 million in retired capital credits from their electric cooperatives.

We are also deeply invested in Iowa's future, supporting various educational and leadership development programs for students. Over the past 65 years, Iowa's cooperatives have sent more than 2,500 high school students to Washington, D.C., for the annual Youth Tour, where students gain insights into citizenship and the cooperative business model. Co-ops further support students with college scholarships and internships.

### Economic engines of progress

Electric cooperatives do more than just provide power; we also invest heavily in economic development efforts throughout rural Iowa.

From 2018 to 2022, Iowa's electric cooperatives invested \$4.7 billion in economic development projects, supporting more than 7,300 jobs, both retained and created, across the state.

In that period, our cooperatives generated \$688 million in wages and salaries and produced \$232 million in self-employment income.

Iowa's cooperatives have a long history of partnership with the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development and USDA's Rural Utilities Service, proudly serving as intermediaries for revolving loan funds and other programs. Several Iowa co-ops have also developed industrial speculative buildings to foster local business growth and attract new enterprises to rural communities.

Electric cooperatives are equally proud to work with the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) to bolster rural economic development. Established nearly 40 years ago, IADG provides crucial support for business and community projects on behalf of more than 150 Iowa

electric and telecommunications utilities. IADG has facilitated over 2,550 projects, creating or retaining at least 62,000 jobs statewide.

Investing in economic development is one of the key ways Iowa's electric cooperatives proudly contribute to the vitality of our communities.

Learn more at [www.iowarec.org/who-we-are/economic-progress](http://www.iowarec.org/who-we-are/economic-progress).

Part 2 of this feature will appear in the January 2025 issue of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living and focus on the impact of electric cooperatives in providing reliable and affordable power.



For the five years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive impact of

# \$4.7 BILLION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

These investments supported more than

# 7,300 JOBS



(retained, attracted or expanded) DURING THAT SAME TIME PERIOD.

# NEW GENERATION PROJECTS TO SUPPORT RELIABILITY

BY MARK VIGUET

For Access Energy Cooperative members, new natural gas generating units are underway by our power supplier, Associated Electric Cooperative (Associated), and are designed to ensure reliable electric service when electricity demand spikes and our members need it most.

## Record-setting member energy demand underscores need for additional generation

Building new power generation is not a decision made lightly. Extensive analysis shows Associated needs additional generation capacity to serve members reliably during peak weather conditions, such as winter storms or extreme summer heat. The need for additional generation has been underscored as the Associated system set a new summer peak demand record and its highest three winter peaks from 2021-2024.

“The data and upward trend are very clear. Energy use during severe weather is growing and more power is needed when demand peaks,” says Sean Wright, Associated vice president, construction of new generation projects. “To make sure we have power in the future when it will be needed and avoid power disruptions, new generation facilities must be built now. These generating units can take up to six years from start to finish and we’ve been working on them for three years now.”

In 2022, Associated’s member-led board of directors authorized the cooperative to add up to 900 megawatts (MW) of new natural gas generation to best serve member needs for reliable power. Associated is constructing two energy centers – one in Oklahoma and one in Missouri – that will each provide 420-445 MW of power when the system needs it most.

“These types of units can start quickly and be up to full generating capacity in minutes, which is exactly

what is needed during energy demand spikes,” Wright says. “Natural gas is much cleaner-burning than other fossil fuels while still being available on-demand.”

The Ripley Energy Center is being built on 160 acres near Stillwater, Oklahoma, and started initial construction activities in October 2024. About 20 acres will be allocated for the energy center’s footprint, with the rest kept in hay production. The strategic location near gas supply pipelines, water supply and transmission lines allows for the new facility to be built at a lower cost to members. The Ripley Energy Center will be the most advanced natural gas generation facility in Oklahoma and is projected to start generating power in 2026.

A similar project is planned for an 82-acre parcel near Turney, Missouri. Construction of the Turney Energy Center, which features the same type of generator as Ripley, is anticipated to begin in 2025 with the unit generating power in 2027. When complete, both projects will deliver power into the Associated member-owned transmission system, ultimately serving more than 2.1 million people in rural areas.

## Community engagement is a priority in generation development

An important part of the new generation development process is working with the local community around the site locations to make sure they understand why it is needed, what is being built, and the safeguards being put in place for the local environment. Project information developed and distributed describes the need for the project and the technical and environmental aspects of the peaking energy centers.

“Meetings with our community leaders and other stakeholders are conducted early and often. We work closely with them to better understand the local area and sensitivities. We are member-owned and member-led. We don’t forget that as we work to build these projects that are so important to keep power supply reliable,” Wright says.

*Mark Viguet is the managing director-corporate communications at Associated Electric Cooperative.*



Scan the QR code to learn more about the projects.



Reliable power is essential to quality of life.



Public informational meetings were held to discuss the generation projects.

# SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE IN THE KITCHEN

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

The holiday season brings opportunities to enjoy meals with friends and family, leading to spending more time in the kitchen. Whether hosting a few or a crowd, consider making new energy efficiency traditions this year with these tips to manage your energy use.

## Consider using smaller appliances vs. the oven

Let's start with cooking your meal. Your electric oven is typically the highest-wattage appliance in the kitchen. Yet, people usually don't turn their ovens on for long periods. Assuming an average oven wattage of 3,000 and an average cost of \$.16 per kilowatt-hour, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, it costs \$.48 an hour. Let's say you use your oven for four hours to make a special meal. That's less than \$2 of electricity. While that may not seem like a big deal now, operating your oven for four hours daily is \$700 a year.

Using smaller appliances instead of your oven can help you save. A slow cooker uses between 100 and 450 watts, which is significantly less than an electric oven at 2,000 to 5,000 watts. That means you can use a slow cooker for longer and still use less energy.

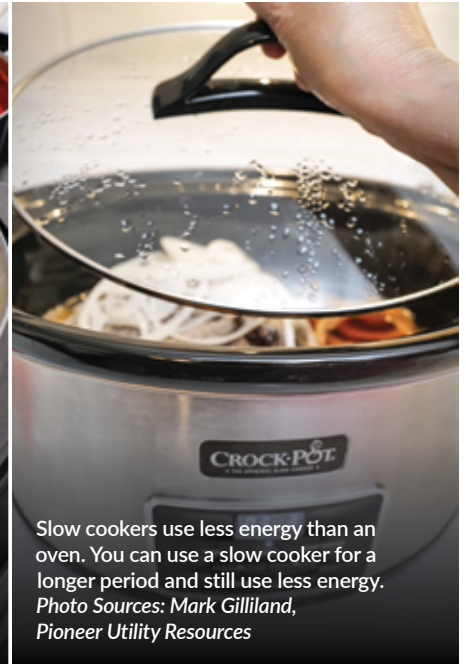
Opt for your microwave or toaster oven to reheat or cook smaller items. The microwave uses significantly less energy than the oven. A toaster oven uses about half the energy of a conventional oven, according to ENERGY STAR®.

You should never turn on your oven and leave the door open to heat your home.

This can break your oven and be a safety hazard, especially with gas ovens that can cause carbon monoxide buildup.



Before cooking on your stovetop, clean the burners to ensure the appliance heats evenly, which can help you save energy. Match pots to appropriately sized burners to avoid wasting energy.



Slow cookers use less energy than an oven. You can use a slow cooker for a longer period and still use less energy. Photo Sources: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

## Use the stovetop wisely

When cooking on the stovetop, match the pot or pan size to the burner. Lids help your pots retain heat, which cooks food faster and wastes less heat. Keep your stovetop clean to ensure the appliance heats evenly.

If you want to upgrade your stovetop, consider switching to an induction cooktop. It uses an electromagnetic field below the surface to heat pots and pans directly. This provides more precise heat, faster cook times and higher efficiency. It can also improve the air quality in your home when compared to a gas cooktop.

## Find refrigerator and freezer savings

Next, let's look for refrigerator savings. The gaskets on your refrigerator doors should make a tight seal to keep in cold air. Make sure you clean and maintain them or replace them if necessary. Keep frost from building up in the freezer, which can decrease efficiency and

make your freezer work harder to maintain a balanced temperature.

Wait until food cools before putting leftovers in the fridge. Putting hot food in the refrigerator results in more energy used to cool it down. Aim for about 30 minutes of cool time. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, perishable food should be refrigerated within two hours after it is cooked.

Setting your refrigerator colder than needed wastes energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends 37 degrees F for the refrigerator and 0 degrees F for the freezer. Use an appliance thermometer to monitor the temperature.

Whatever you choose to cook or how you cook it, keep in mind these simple tips to make your kitchen more efficient and save energy this holiday season.

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

# SMART INSIGHTS ABOUT BUYING SMART APPLIANCES

BY SCOTT FLOOD

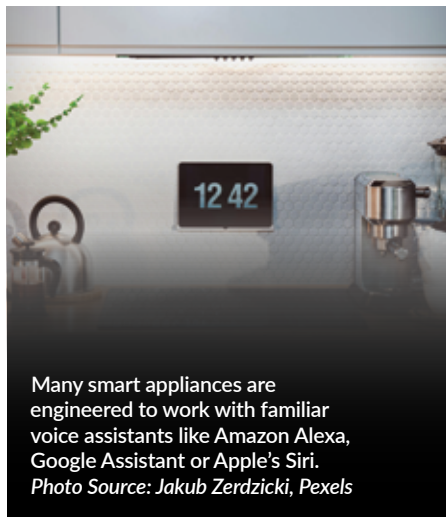
Santa isn't the only one who makes an appearance as the year nears its end. Retailers start trumpeting deep discounts on home appliances. That's great if you've considered replacing some of your home's appliances with one of today's "smart" models. Before deciding to buy a smart appliance, take some time to get smarter about what they offer – and what you really need.

## Start with an assessment

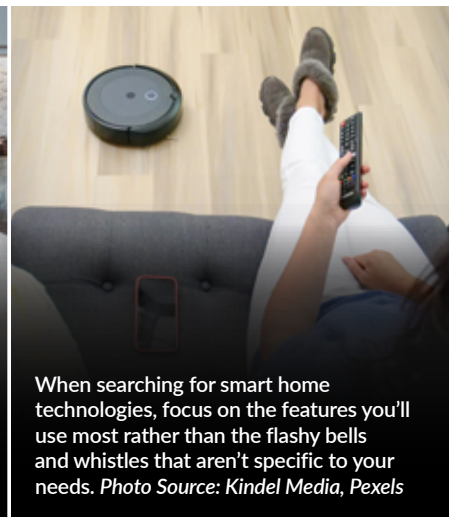
Begin with an honest look at how you live and consider the role your current appliances play in your daily routine. Would the capabilities of a smart appliance make your life easier? For example, if you frequently forget to start the laundry or your dishwasher, Wi-Fi-enabled appliances with remote start capabilities may save you time and trouble. But if you're thinking about stepping up to a smart appliance because it has a cool feature you might use once a year, ask yourself if it's worth the extra cost.

Next, think about any smart devices you already use in your home. Make sure they're compatible with the smart appliance's operating system so you can get all the benefits you expect. For example, many of these appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Incompatible systems might limit your ability to use the features that are most important to you.

Is your home's infrastructure ready to handle the demands of a smart appliance? Depending upon the model you choose, it might require anything from a basic internet connection to a home Wi-Fi network to provide the operation you expect. Some smart appliances may require Bluetooth, Zigbee, Z-Wave or other systems for connectivity. Having access to the right technology



Many smart appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Photo Source: Jakub Zerdzicki, Pexels



When searching for smart home technologies, focus on the features you'll use most rather than the flashy bells and whistles that aren't specific to your needs. Photo Source: Kindel Media, Pexels

ensures your system will function correctly and be able to handle updates as they become available.

## Consider energy efficiency and other factors

It's always important to consider energy efficiency when purchasing a new appliance. Most smart appliances are designed to reduce energy consumption, with operating modes that deliver the performance you want while making more efficient use of energy. Smart appliances that are ENERGY STAR®-certified meet or exceed federal energy efficiency standards and some may use only half as much energy as standard appliances.

Repairs to smart appliances can be expensive, so consider the warranty. Generous manufacturer warranties demonstrate the company's confidence in the quality of its products.

For most homeowners, the biggest downside to smart appliances is that they carry a higher price tag than their not-so-smart counterparts. However, price is just one factor in the cost of any appliance. When you

also consider the long-term value smart appliances deliver – whether in energy savings, helpful conveniences or improved reliability – most will save you money over their service life. In addition, smart appliances may be eligible for rebates and tax incentives, so ask your retailer what's available.

What's ahead for smart appliances in the foreseeable future? The marketplace is starting to see the integration of basic artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities that can make smart appliances provide better service, greater reliability and lower energy needs. As these AI-fueled systems become more common, your refrigerator might know your habits so well that it can generate a shopping list for you. Your dishwasher could adjust its operating cycle to better clean your family's uniquely dirty dishes.

There was a time when appliances changed little from decade to decade. Today, products advance more quickly than ever before, and we can expect to see more big changes ahead.

*Scott Flood writes on energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# HOLIDAY FUN WORD SEARCH

Can you find all the words associated with holiday fun in the puzzle below? Use the word bank to check your work.



## WORD BANK

Jingle bells      Santa Claus      Snowman  
Candy cane      Mittens      Hot Chocolate



N	H	C	H	P	B	D	H	S	V	G	Z	H	T	M
A	C	C	F	Z	Z	A	T	F	N	V	D	Q	Z	Y
M	H	L	V	Y	M	J	N	P	D	E	T	V	F	S
W	P	W	H	F	W	I	H	K	S	C	T	G	B	K
O	Z	K	D	Z	L	N	O	K	K	H	Q	T	C	F
N	F	I	O	U	R	G	T	F	C	L	P	E	I	L
S	S	V	S	U	A	L	C	A	T	N	A	S	C	M
Z	C	V	P	C	E	E	H	R	P	W	U	A	Z	Z
F	C	F	J	C	H	B	O	G	C	Y	N	G	V	E
G	M	V	X	D	L	E	C	V	N	D	T	S	F	W
Y	A	X	V	N	U	L	O	H	Y	V	C	L	U	A
H	G	V	L	L	X	L	L	C	M	J	M	C	I	U
P	J	Y	F	E	R	S	A	Q	E	Y	G	H	C	A
D	W	O	R	D	T	N	T	Y	H	X	Q	L	E	S
U	W	H	R	U	E	V	E	B	Y	B	F	L	W	R



HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
FROM THE ENERGY  
EXPLORERS!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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The magazine  
for members of  
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December 2024

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