Access Energy Cooperative℠
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OCTOBER 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

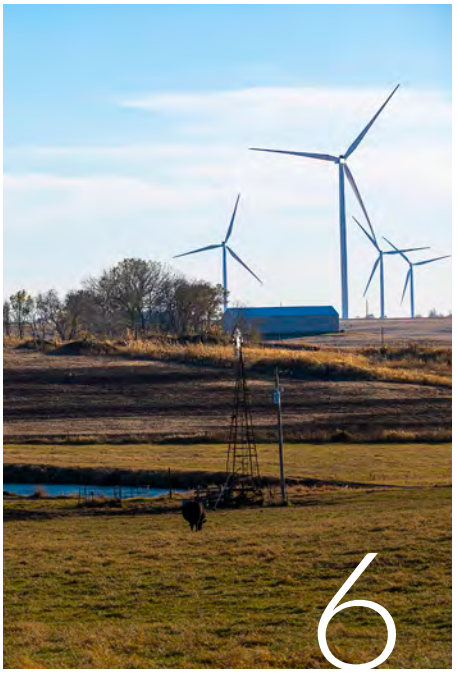
6 reasons electric co-ops are great places to work

How power generation types impact reliability

Perfect pork recipes

Do we owe you money? ▶ See Page 5

CONTENTS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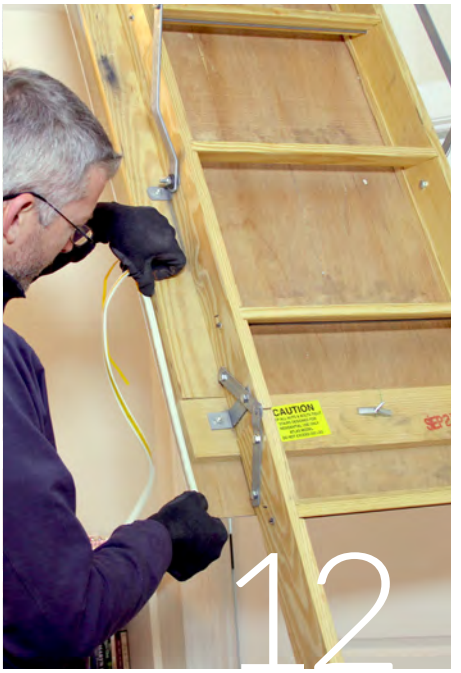
8



12

VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 10

3
STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE
Co-ops shape local economies

3
EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST
Win a $100 gift card for a local business

14
ENERGY MATTERS
Iowa home energy assistance program

15
SAEFTY MATTERS
5 ways to stay "Cyber Safe"

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ON THE COVER Special thanks to Abigail Westbrook, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

FOSTERING IOWA'S GROWTH: HOW COOPERATIVES ARE SHAPING LOCAL ECONOMIES

BY CHUCK SODERBERG, DAVE HOLM AND MURRAY WILLIAMS

In the heart of the Midwest, Iowa is known for its sprawling fields, tight-knit communities and a spirit of collaboration that has long been a hallmark of its success. While often associated with agriculture and its iconic cornfields, the state boasts a different kind of growth story – one driven by cooperatives. Co-ops are more than businesses; they are pillars of empowerment, resilience and sustainable development that are shaping Iowa's local economies.

Many Iowans associate cooperatives with agriculture; however, co-ops also include rural electric service, credit unions, rural telephone, farm credit, petroleum and more. Co-ops are not-for-profit organizations that are owned and democratically controlled by their members. In fact, nearly one out of every two Iowans is a member of a cooperative.

Commitment to rural communities

As part of National Co-op Month, Gov. Kim Reynolds has declared October as Co-op Month in Iowa. During this month, cooperatives of all types and from all industries reaffirm their member-owned mission and commitment to the communities they serve.

In a state where rural communities hold a special significance, cooperatives play a pivotal role in keeping these areas vibrant and alive. Rural cooperatives extend essential services such as energy, financial services, connectivity and healthcare to regions that might otherwise be overlooked.

Collectively, Iowa cooperatives pay more than $75 million in property taxes to Iowa communities each year. Property taxes paid, especially in rural counties, have a big impact on county budgets and help support critical infrastructure. By pooling resources and sharing expertise, these cooperatives provide a safety net, effectively turning adversity into opportunity.

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives remain committed to powering lives and strengthening their communities. Locally elected co-op directors make informed decisions on behalf of their fellow members and neighbors to ensure reliable, affordable service for years to come. The average household served by an electric cooperative pays about $5.25 a day for power, which is an incredible value in a world increasingly reliant on electricity and connectivity. Locally owned and governed electric co-ops also embrace an "all-of-the-above" generation strategy as they face potential reliability challenges due to federal mandates.

A better future for everyone

The cooperative movement in Iowa is a testament to the power of community-driven endeavors. It embodies the spirit of collaboration, the commitment to sustainability and the pursuit of shared prosperity. As co-ops continue to shape local economies and empower communities, they remind us that growth is about fostering a better future for everyone. It's a future that Iowa's cooperatives are helping to build, one collective effort at a time.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president/general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives; Dave Holm is the executive director of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives; and Murray Williams is the president and CEO of the Iowa Credit Union League.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A $100 GIFT CARD!

ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

To celebrate National Cooperative Month, we're giving away a $100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. It will be good for a restaurant, hardware store, gift shop, grocery store, beauty salon or other local business that's vital to your community.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 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 Amazon Fire 32-inch Smart TV from the August issue was Eugene VanMeeteren, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

DOING OUR RESEARCH ON ELECTRIC VEHICLES

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Access Energy Cooperative has been using an all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning pickup for research on electric vehicles (EVs). This investment will help us be better prepared to answer our members' questions about EVs. In the coming months, we will share information about the pickup, charging details and overall effects of the vehicle.

Understanding charging levels

If you are considering an EV, one of the first questions you need to ask is, "How and where am I going to charge the vehicle?" This seems like a very simple question, but it is not. EV charging stations are categorized into different levels based on the charging power they provide, and the time required to charge the vehicle. The commonly recognized levels are Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3.

Level 1 charging

This is the most basic and widely available charging option for EVs. It uses a standard 120-volt AC household outlet, typically found in residential settings. Level 1 chargers provide a charging power of around 1-2 kilowatts (kW). They are known for convenience and simplicity, as they require no additional installation. However, due to their lower charging power, Level 1 chargers are relatively slow, taking several hours to a few days to fully charge an EV, depending on battery capacity.

Level 2 charging

This offers a faster and more efficient charging option. It requires a 240-volt AC power source, similar to the type used for larger appliances like clothes dryers. Level 2 chargers typically provide a charging power range of 3.3-22 kW, depending on the charging station and vehicle capabilities. They can be installed at homes, workplaces, public parking lots and commercial locations. This type of charger will need to be installed by a licensed electrician. Level 2 charging significantly reduces charging time compared to Level 1, allowing vehicles to fully charge in a matter of a few hours in some cases.

Level 3 charging (also known as DC fast charging)

This represents the highest charging power and the quickest charging option for EVs. DC fast charging stations use direct current (DC) instead of alternating current (AC) to charge the vehicle's battery. They provide charging power ranging from 50-350 kW, depending on the specific charging station. Level 3 chargers are commonly found along highways, major travel routes and high traffic areas. They enable rapid charging, allowing EVs to achieve an 80% charge in typically 20-60 minutes, depending on the vehicle's battery capacity and charging speed compatibility.

It is worth noting that different EVs have varying charging capabilities and may not be compatible with all charging stations. Therefore, it's necessary for EV owners to verify their vehicle's charging specifications and ensure compatibility with the charging station before use.

In the next issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*, I'll share an article focused on Level 2 charging at your home or business.

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

BY THE NUMBERS

The following are some actual metrics based on our use of a Ford Lightning Pickup:

- Based on $0.12 per kwh.
- Actual driving range is about 250 miles on a full charge; pickup promotional information states 335-mile range.
- Charging time on Level 2 40-amp charger for full charge from 30% (80-mile range) to 100% (335-mile range) is 12-15 hours, depending on weather factors.
- Range changes based on driving conditions and weather factors.
- If you compare kwh to mpg, the lightning pickup is averaging 55-60 mpg based on $3.50/gallon gas.
- Having an empty 16-foot car trailer attached cuts range by 50%.
- Charging station cost and installation not included in above data.

UPCOMING EVENTS

You can access your account information 24/7, year-round on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com or by using our SmartHub app for mobile devices. You can also call our office to report service interruptions and request account information at 866-242-4232.

OCT. 19	Board Meeting
NOV. 9	Board Meeting
NOV. 23-24	Office closed for Thanksgiving
NOV. 28	Member Advisory Committee meeting

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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DO YOU KNOW ANY OF THESE PEOPLE?

We are searching for the following members whose previous years' dividend checks were not cashed. If you know the contact information of any of these people, please contact our accounting department at finance@accessenergycoop.com or by calling 866-242-4232.

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Adam, Cindy E	Hedrick IA
Alexander, Betty J	Burlington IA
Allender, Garry	Tiffin IA
Allison, Tammy/Roger	Burlington IA
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Anderson, Patricia S	Salem IA
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Anderson, William E (Estate)	Brighton IA
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Avery, Shirley	Ft Madison IA
Baccam, Toan	Mt Pleasant IA
Baker, V Lorean	Ft Madison IA
Barton, Clara	Mt Pleasant IA
Batey, Theresa	DeWitt IA
Beall, Sherri/Woolridge, David	Ft Madison IA
Beary, Randy/Tina	Mt Pleasant IA
Berry, Jack L (Estate)	Hamden CT
Biggs, Bryan J	Fairfield IA
Bittner, Tracie E	Mt Pleasant IA
BJ's Four Corners	Morrison IL
Blowers, Brian/Mary	North Liberty IA
Boeding, Mark E/Beverly	Wellington CO
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Boyer, John/Judy	Farmington IA
Boyer's Machine Works	Ankeny IA
Bradfield, Dena	Fairfield IA
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Brown, Kevin V/Margie S	Newton MO
Bugg, Patricia L/Henry D (Estates)	S. Jacksonville IL
Carr, Linda	Batavia IA
Carson, Raymond/June	Wever IA
Casteel, Dennis L/Hachey, Carol C	Birmingham IA
Chance, Jason/Deb	Ottumwa IA
Chorpening, Dave	Wayland IA
Citicasters Co Inc	Burlington IA
Clear Channel Communications	Burlington IA
Cole, Rickie D (Estate)	Fairfield IA
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Coleman, Rex B	Danville IA
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Conrad, Constance	Ft Madison IA
Contreras, David/Dorene	Oconomowoc WI
Cox, Franchelle M	West Point IA
Crossroad Well	Burlington IA
Crouse, Bryan	West Point IA
Curtis, Daniel L	Ankeny IA
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Dalarna Farms	New London IA
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Davis, Donald A	Santa Barbara CA
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Dillman, David E	Batavia IA
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Experian	Long Island City NY
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Kelley, Britton (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
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Kevin Inc	Clinton IA
Key Outdoor Inc	Grand Rapids MI
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Kissell, Felicia/Richard	Waupun WI
Knox, Lori A	Fairfied
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Kruse, Tammy	Cedar Rapids IA
Kurrle, Wanda Y	Davenport IA
Lake, Charles W JR/Paula	Stockport IA
Lambert, Darrell	Mt Pleasant IA
Lampe, Kim/Douglas, Tracy	Thayer MO
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Ledger, Mark	Washington IA
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Lind, Alfred/Fannie	Agency IA
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Lustgraff, Phillip D/Kathy Furman	New London IA
Maharishi Spiritual Univ	Fairfield IA
Marlin, William C	Mt Pleasant IA
Marsh, Byron/Nichole	Renton WA
Martin, Gary/Vicki	Burlington IA
Martindale, James E/Nancy K	Donnellson IA
McAtee, Ann	Ames IA
McBride, Chester	Des Moines IA
McComb, John H	Fox Lake IL
McConnell, Lawrence W	Burlington IA
McCurren, Debra K	Washington DC
Meardon, Kathleen W	Ft Madison IA
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Menke, Tom L	West Point IA
Meyer, Ryan	Mt Pleasant IA
Michael, Pamela	Keosauqua IA
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Miller, Scott/Dianna	Mt Pleasant IA
Moeller, Ray/Kathy (Estates)	Cotopaxi CO
Moore, Mrs. J Brown (Helen)	Mt Union IA
Morris, Allen (Estate)	Batavia IA
Morrison, Joyce	Ft Madison IA
Mt Pleasant Warehouse	Burlington IA
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Nella Limited	New London IA
New London Dairy LLC	New London IA
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Newton, Dale/Linda	Borger TX
Noel, Angie	New London IA
Olomon, Max L (Estate)	West Point IA
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Osborn, Mike H (Estate)	Burlington IA
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Peters, Thomas K/Debra	Ft Madison IA
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Piper, Charles	Wever IA
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Polton, Edward M (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
Porter, Ricky L/Rebecca	Chestnut Ridge MO
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Prechtel, John H	Fairfield IA
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Smith, Matthew J/Christina	Mt Pleasant IA
Smith, Richard H (Estate)	Stockport IA
Smith, Robert D/Nancy	Coon Rapids IA
Sp Grove Mobile Homes	Burlington IA

Continued on Page 15

RELIABLE ELECTRICITY AT RISK: POWER GENERATION TYPE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

BY MARK VIGUET

NEW MADRID POWER PLANT

Decisions made by policymakers in Washington, D.C., now will determine if reliable electricity remains a key advantage for America, or rolling blackouts become a way of life. Currently, the policies requiring a speedy transition from reliable fossil fuel generation to weather-dependent renewable sources risk taking our nation down an energy path that prioritizes fast change over keeping the lights on.

Understanding different types of generation and how each can ensure a reliable power supply for rural America can be helpful in understanding energy policies. Here is a closer look at how your electricity is produced.

Baseload generation – a backbone of reliability

Baseload generation refers to power plants that provide a steady and constant production of electricity to meet the minimum level of demand. Simply put, baseload generation is the backbone of the electricity supply. Baseload power plants, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear, operate continuously and provide a constant amount of electricity to the grid. They are dependable workhorses that generate power consistently, day and night, regardless of the fluctuations in electricity demand.

Intermediate generation dovetails with demand

Intermediate generation refers to power plants that can be ramped up or down relatively quickly to meet changes in electricity demand that go beyond the baseload. These power plants function as a bridge between constant baseload power and fluctuating demand. Natural gas power plants are often used for intermediate generation because they can start up and shut down quickly. They provide more electricity during periods of higher energy use.

Peaking generation serves sudden surges

Peaking generation refers to power plants designed to meet the highest levels of electricity demand, typically during short periods of time. These power plants are called upon when there is a sudden surge in electricity use, such as during hot summer days when air conditioners are running at full capacity or freezing winter days when electric heating ramps up. Like intermediate generation, peaking power plants, often powered by natural gas or sometimes fuel oil, start up and shut down very quickly. However, peaking plants cost more to operate, so they provide the extra electricity needed during peak use periods to ensure a reliable supply.

Renewable generation provides electricity when the sun shines or wind blows

Renewable power generation, such as solar and wind power, has an intermittent nature. This means the amount of electricity they produce can vary depending on factors such as weather conditions.

Solar power relies on sunlight to generate electricity. It works best when the sun is shining directly on solar panels. On cloudy days, the amount of sunlight decreases, resulting in lower electricity production and no production takes place overnight. This is why solar power is considered intermittent – because it is not consistently available during the day, at night or in all weather conditions.

Wind power relies on wind blowing to spin the turbine blades and generate electricity. However, the wind does not always blow at a consistent speed. Sometimes it is strong, and other times it is weak or not present at all. Therefore, the amount of electricity generated by wind turbines can vary depending on the wind conditions. This makes wind power intermittent as well.

CHOUTEAU POWER PLANT


WHITE CLOUD WIND FARM

In contrast, baseload power generation, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear power, are more consistent and reliable in their electricity production. They can provide a steady and constant supply of electricity because they are not as dependent on weather conditions.

Hydropower generation is a way of producing electricity using the power of moving water, such as rivers, dams or waterfalls. It is a renewable energy source because water is continuously replenished by the water cycle.


HOLDEN POWER PLANT

Battery storage

Advancements in energy storage technologies, like batteries, are being developed to store excess renewable energy when it is produced and release it later when there is high demand or when renewable sources are not producing electricity. However, the duration of stored power needed for a large electric system, at an affordable price, is not a reality now or near-term with current technologies.

A balance of energy supply sources delivers reliable power to members

To overcome the inconsistent production of renewable power generation, Associated Electric Cooperative and its member-owners incorporate a balance of different energy sources. By using traditional sources as the foundation, wind when it is producing electricity and hydropower, it creates a more reliable and balanced electricity supply.

Mark Viguet is the senior manager, corporate communications for Associated Electric Cooperative.

ASSOCIATED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE: A BALANCED GENERATION PROFILE

Baseload generation

New Madrid Power Plant, New Madrid, MO – 1,200 MW

Thomas Hill Energy Center, Clifton Hill, MO – 1,153 MW

Intermediate generation

Chouteau Power Plant, Pryor, OK – 1,062 MW

Dell Power Plant, Dell, AR – 622 MW

St. Francis Power Plant, Glennonville, MO – 501 MW

Peaking generation

Essex Power Plant, Essex, MO – 107 MW

Holden Power Plant, Holden, MO – 321 MW

Nodaway Power Plant, Maryville, MO – 182 MW

Unionville Power Plant, Unionville, MO – 44 MW

Alternative generation (contracted)

Wind – 1,240 MW

Hydropower – 478 MW

BILL CREDIT WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Access Energy Cooperative held two drawings for $50 bill credits on Sept. 18.

Congratulations to Miles Witherspoon, winner of the $50 bill credit drawing for being enrolled in paperless billing. Any member signed up for paperless billing by Sept. 15 was entered into the drawing.

Members can sign up for paperless billing any time. You must first have an active SmartHub account.

Reminder: Members who use a SmartHub account do not have to opt in for paperless billing or for automatic payments.

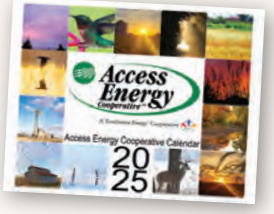
Congratulations to Mary Murphy, winner of the $50 bill credit drawing for submitting the annual meeting survey. We appreciate everyone turning in the surveys, which were included with your bill. Your feedback helps us evaluate your annual meeting going forward.

PHOTO CONTEST:

WIN UP TO $100!

We are now accepting photos for the 2025 Access Energy Cooperative calendar! Horizontal, color photos work best for calendar entries, and we are looking for all seasons of the year. Submissions can be sent to mktg@accessenergycoop.com before March 31, 2024.

Thirteen photos will be chosen and winners will be awarded $75, plus an additional $25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative. Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.



PERFECT PORK RECIPES

BBQ PORK CHOPS

- 1 can tomato soup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon instant minced onion
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 6 pork chops

Combine first seven ingredients into a sauce. Brown chops on both sides, pour off excess fat. Pour sauce over chops. Cover and simmer for about 1 hour. *Serves 6*

Jane Fetter • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

BREAKFAST SOUFFLÉ

- 1½ pounds pork sausage
- 9 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3 cups milk
- 1½ teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 slices bread, crumbled
- 1½ cups cheese, shredded

Brown sausage and drain. Mix eggs, milk, mustard and salt. Stir in sausage, bread and cheese. Pour into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate covered overnight. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 8*

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

COUNTRY-STYLE RIBS

- 2½ pounds country-style pork ribs
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup Karo white corn syrup
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

Brown ribs in microwave for 1½-2 minutes on each side, depending on the size of your microwave, to pull off some of the grease before baking. Place ribs in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients into a sauce and pour over ribs. Bake covered at 325 degrees F for 1½ hours. *Serves 4*

Audra O'Neill • Wall Lake
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

GROUND PORK CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 pound cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 5 cloves garlic
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- noodles or rice

Brown pork, then add cabbage. Add remaining ingredients and cook for 5 minutes. Serve over noodles or rice.

Karen Wingert • Panama
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK TACOS WITH PINEAPPLE SALSA

- **4-5 pounds boneless pork loin**
- **3 tablespoons brown sugar**
- **1 tablespoon salt**
- **1 tablespoon pepper**
- **1 teaspoon paprika**
- **1 teaspoon oregano**
- **½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- **1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits**
- **½ jalapeno pepper, chopped**
- **juice of half a lime**
- **½ red onion, chopped**
- **¼ cup cilantro**
- **2 cups rice, cooked**
- **tortillas**
- **sour cream**

Rub brown sugar, salt, pepper, paprika, oregano and red pepper flakes over pork loin. Bake covered at 250 degrees F for 4 hours. Shred meat. Combine pineapple, jalapeno, juice of half a lime, onion and cilantro to make a salsa. Serve pork, rice and salsa in tortillas with sour cream.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HAM ROLLS

- **2½ pounds ground ham**
- **2½ pounds ground pork**
- **1 pound ground beef**
- **2 cups cracker crumbs**
- **3 eggs**
- **2 cups milk**
- **2 teaspoons dry mustard**
- **2 cans tomato soup, undiluted**
- **2¼ cups brown sugar**
- **¾ cup cider vinegar**

Combine ham, pork, beef, cracker crumbs, eggs and milk. Mix and form into rolls or balls. Combine dry mustard, soup, brown sugar and cider vinegar into a sauce. Spoon sauce over ham rolls and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Rolls can be frozen either before or after baking. An alternative is to make into smaller rolls or balls and serve as an appetizer. *Serves 10-15*

Jo Growth • Plainfield
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

SLOW COOKER HAM SLIDERS

- **2 boneless hams, thinly sliced**
- **1 cup honey**
- **2 cups brown sugar**
- **cheese slices**
- **2 dozen slider buns**

Set crockpot on low, spray with nonstick spray. Add ham, honey and brown sugar. Cook for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Layer ham and cheese slices of your choice on slider buns. *Serves 10*

Nancy Hemann • Parkersburg
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK CARNITAS

- **1½ tablespoons salt, divided**
- **1 teaspoon black pepper**
- **2 pounds pork butt, cut into 4-inch cubes**
- **2 tablespoons cooking fat**
- **½ medium onion, roughly chopped**
- **1 cup water**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **½ teaspoon chili powder**
- **¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **¼ cup green onions, sliced into ½-inch pieces**
- **juice of half a lime**

Mix 1 tablespoon salt with pepper. Use mixture to season the pork butt evenly. Melt the cooking fat in a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the pork (be sure not to overcrowd) and brown all sides, 3-4 minutes per side. Remove pork from the pot and set aside. In the same pot, reduce heat to medium-low, add onion. Cook and stir for 4-5 minutes, until translucent. Add water, garlic, chili powder and cinnamon. Increase heat to medium-high, return the pork to the pot and bring to boil. Cover pot with a lid or tightly wrapped foil. Transfer to oven and bake at 350 degrees F for 2½ hours, turning the meat after each hour. Pork should be fork-tender when done. Transfer pork to a bowl and shred, discarding any excess fat. Incorporate cooking liquid from the pot, then add green onions and lime juice. Season with the remaining ½ tablespoon salt. *Serves 4-6*

Amy Rudolph • Renwick
Boone Valley Electric Cooperative

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6 REASONS ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE GREAT PLACES TO WORK

BY PAUL WESSLUND AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

The electricity in your home can seem like an impossible miracle to explain. But one way to understand it is to think about the variety of skills and types of jobs it takes to make power happen.

That kind of thinking can also be handy if you or someone you know is looking for a promising career.

Running electric utilities today takes just about every skill imaginable. Some jobs call for the physical ability to climb a utility pole and for others, the technical know-how to create intricate cybersecurity systems. Some require the interpersonal skills of talking with a co-op member about how they can lower their electric bill.

Other roles may require logistical knowledge to deliver essential equipment through a challenging supply chain.

An industry that depends on such a vast range of abilities offers job seekers a variety of career opportunities. Here are six reasons electric co-ops are a great place to work.

"I've worked for the cooperative for 20 years. In this time, I have witnessed electricity become increasingly important to our daily lives, from improving basic health and well-being to facilitating services like online banking to ordering groceries. Cooperatives are dedicated to their member-consumers. We are always working to improve the reliability of our distribution system and serve our members."

Jason Gibbs
Manager of Member Services
Clarke Electric Cooperative

"I appreciate the co-op philosophy that focuses on the seven cooperative principles, keeping members first and foremost in all decision-making. These principles guide us in everything we do, and it reflects on the success of the electric cooperative business model since 1938. I am part of a community working here and can reach out to any other electric cooperative in Iowa with any questions. 'Iowa Nice' shines brightly working in electric cooperatives."

Jeni Kolsrud
IT Manager
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative

1 **Stability.** You can count on homes and businesses needing electricity now and in the future. Energy careers offer excellent benefits and paths for career advancement. Employees typically stay in the industry for more than 15 years.

2 **Excitement.** While utility work is reliable, it's also at the cutting edge of innovation. Electrification is the centerpiece of the push for greener energy. The number of electric vehicles is doubling every year, which means new workforce skills are needed to figure out how to keep all those cars and trucks plugged in and charged up. Two of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are wind turbine technician and solar voltaic installer. More than $120 billion a year is being spent to modernize the U.S. electric grid to manage new patterns of electricity use.

"The past 10 years working at the cooperative have been the most enjoyable of my working career. The opportunities to increase my knowledge and skills are invaluable. The atmosphere is like a family. Networking with my peers at other cooperatives has proven to be extremely helpful. Supporting our member-owners instead of working for 'customers' has been refreshing, and the cooperative principles, including concern for our communities, make us stand out."

Sarah Newton
Director of Finance/
Administrative Services
Southwest Iowa REC

3 Variety. The skills needed in the utility industry range from an advanced college degree to trade school, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. And the variety of positions is staggering – accountants, social media managers, IT specialists, engineers and human resources professionals, to name a few. There are more unique positions as well, such as drone operators to inspect power lines, data analysts to coordinate the flow of electricity and power plant operators to oversee electricity generation.

"I am honored to be able to work for an electric cooperative that serves the community in which I live. I love that decisions are made locally by a board of member-directors and that we are able to provide our members with safe and reliable power at the lowest possible price."

Katie Stadheim, PHR, SRM-CP
HR Director
East-Central Iowa REC

4 It's local. Maintaining electric service needs to happen locally. That means that much of the work takes place near your hometown. Not only can a utility worker make a living and raise a family in the area they choose to live, if they decide to move to another part of the country, there will likely be energy career opportunities there as well.

5 Satisfaction. Any lineworker will tell you when they've just climbed down from a pole in the middle of the night during a rainstorm, there's no better feeling than knowing the power outage you've just restored brought light and heat back into the homes of hundreds of people. The same goes for the utility truck dispatcher back at headquarters or the media specialist getting the word out about the status of power restoration. Utility workers can know they're powering their neighbors and the nation.

"I enjoy the variety of each day. I have satisfaction in helping members daily and with long-term planning for our cooperative. Co-op employees are usually long-standing, which means I can have long-term relationships with my co-workers."

John Endelman
Operations Manager
Butler County REC

6 Not-for-profit business model The people behind the power at your electric co-op get to know even higher levels of job satisfaction. Electric co-ops offer a unique business model led by the members who use the electricity.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.

"One of the reasons I like working for a co-op is the opportunity to work with a dedicated team with a common goal of improving our members' lives. It is also rewarding to see the positive results from the improvements we have made to our distribution system over the years."

Pat Hyland
System Controller
East-Central Iowa REC

"The best part of working in the cooperative world is being a part of a great team. Every job at my co-op is specialized, and every employee is committed to serving our members to the best of their ability. It's extremely satisfying to be a part of a dedicated and talented group of people who positively impact our local communities."

Nate Hopwood
IT Manager
T.I.P. REC

HOW TO INSULATE YOUR ATTIC HATCH

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

You can eliminate drafts and reduce energy waste by properly sealing and insulating your attic hatch. Attic hatches are often overlooked, even if the rest of the attic is properly insulated. If your attic access is in an area you are not paying to heat or cool – such as your home's exterior or garage – there's no need to insulate it.

For attic access points inside the home, it's important to seal them properly with durability and functionality in mind. Attic hatches should be insulated close to the same R-value as the rest of the attic. R-value is the insulation's capacity to resist heat flow.

Standard attic hatches

A standard attic hatch is typically a covered rectangular hole cut into the ceiling. If your hatch is drywall, it is best to replace it completely because it is difficult to properly insulate and seal a drywall hatch. They often crumble and crack around the edges, leading to more air leaks.

Ready-made insulated hatches are available online or at home improvement stores, or you can insulate and seal your existing attic hatch. Either way, measure carefully to ensure you create an effective seal.

To improve your existing hatch, replace drywall attic hatches with ¾-inch plywood cut to fit. If you have loose-fill insulation in your attic (as opposed to fiberglass batts), install a dam or barrier that extends 2 inches above the level of insulation to prevent it from spilling into the house when you open the hatch. Use unfaced fiberglass-batt insulation or plywood to hold back the loose-fill insulation.

To insulate the hatch, use rigid foam insulation cut slightly smaller than the plywood attic hatch. Use screws and fender washers to secure the first layer of rigid foam to the hatch. Add layers of rigid foam by taping the edges together one at a time using foil tape. Always wear gloves when using foil tape to prevent cuts. Keep layering the rigid foam until you reach the desired R-value.

Save energy and eliminate drafts by insulating attic hatches inside your home.
Photo Source: Abby Berry, NRECA

Remember to seal any gaps between the drywall and trim, using caulk for smaller gaps and foam sealant for larger ones. Finish the job by applying adhesive weatherstripping around the hatch perimeter.

Ladder attic hatches

For attic hatches with dropdown ladders, follow the same instructions as standard attic hatches: install a dam, air seal and insulate. Be sure to account for the space of the folding ladder.

To insulate, build a box to sit in the attic around the hatch that is tall enough to accommodate the folded ladder. Top the box with rigid foam you can remove to get into the attic. Cut the first piece of foam to fit inside the box and the next layer to fit on top of the box. Keep layering until you reach the desired R-value.

To get a good air seal, you may need to remove the existing trim to seal the gap between the drywall and the hatch frame. Add weatherstripping to the hatch or the underside of the frame to form a tight seal when closed.

There are several commercially available options for insulating ladder hatches. Remember to check the product's R-value and measure carefully.

If purchasing the required materials to seal and insulate your attic hatch is outside your budget, consider weatherstripping the hatch perimeter. While it won't provide the same level of insulation, it's a simple, low-cost option for blocking air drafts.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.

If buying materials or ready-made kits is not in your budget, inexpensive weatherstripping provides a minimal level of protection.
Photo Source: EnergySmart Academy

This standard attic hatch has been insulated and weather stripped to reduce energy waste.
Photo Source: EnergySmart Academy

SMART BREAKER BOXES

BY JENNAH DENNEY

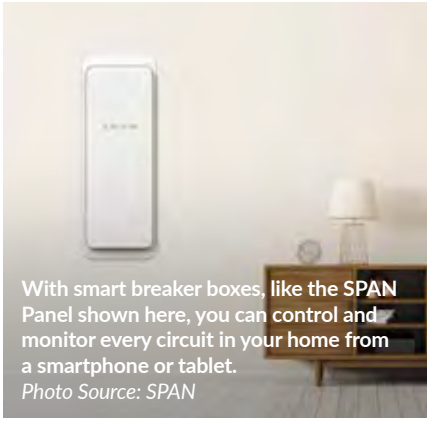
Every home has an electrical panel, otherwise known as a breaker box. The design hasn't changed much over the years, but through recent innovation, the smart technology-enabled electrical panel is becoming a worthwhile energy efficiency upgrade. Many consumers are upgrading to smart breaker boxes to make their home electrical systems safer and more reliable.

Smart breaker boxes can operate on their own or in conjunction with a standard electrical panel. It's recommended to hire a qualified electrician to install the smart panel, which can be done using a home's existing electrical wiring and infrastructure.

Integrated functionality and real-time updates

Many smart breaker boxes are designed to easily connect to other smart devices in your home. With the capacity to remotely monitor and adjust energy consumption, these devices provide several advantages that make them a worthwhile investment for anyone looking to consume less energy.

One advantage is convenience for homeowners to monitor and control how much energy they use. With smart circuit breakers, you can receive real-time data that allows you to pinpoint appliances or devices that consume excessive energy. This real-time tracking allows consumers to adjust their energy use where needed, which ultimately saves money on monthly energy bills, reduces energy waste and is good for the electric grid.



With smart breaker boxes, like the SPAN Panel shown here, you can control and monitor every circuit in your home from a smartphone or tablet.
Photo Source: SPAN

Load management at your fingertips

Smart breaker boxes are all about managing your electrical load. While the technology to track how much energy a home uses has been available for years, the ability to control how that energy is used is new. A smart breaker box can reveal how much power each circuit is using and turn each one on or off. Some smart breaker boxes allow you to establish schedules based on importance, such as refrigeration and heat to be on 24/7, but less important loads like Wi-Fi or the television to turn off during scheduled times or when no one is home.

Smart breaker boxes offer additional benefits for those with home solar systems. Smart breaker boxes help solar energy systems run more efficiently by determining how much energy is being used and how it can be stored. Through intelligent load management, they can provide longer battery backup life for those with energy storage. Additionally, integration with other smart home devices, like thermostats and virtual assistants, further enhances the connected-home ecosystem.

Safety enhancements

Safety in electrical devices is highly important to consumers, and smart breaker boxes provide enhanced safety features that consumers appreciate. Smart breaker boxes can identify abnormalities and other potential electrical problems, then quickly shut off power supply if a circuit shorts or becomes overloaded to help avoid electrical fires and other dangers. Many smart breaker boxes include surge protection to help protect against power spikes and other issues.

Applications for electric utilities

Smart breaker boxes aren't just for consumers – electric utilities are using them, too. For electric cooperatives, smart breaker boxes also offer a range of benefits. A primary advantage of these devices is that they allow for more efficient and reliable energy distribution. With the ability to remotely monitor energy use and detect faults within the system, electric cooperatives can quickly respond to issues and minimize outage times for consumers. This ultimately manages the grid more efficiently.

Smart breaker boxes, like the hardware-agnostic Lumin Smart Panel shown here, turn standard panels into smart panels by providing comprehensive energy control and extending whole-home backup.
Photo Source: Lumin

There's no denying that smart home technologies have changed how we use our homes, and smart breaker boxes are no exception. Smart breaker boxes help both consumers and electric utilities in multiple ways. With advanced safety features, real-time energy tracking and control, and the ability to use energy more efficiently, these devices are a smart investment for anyone who wants to make their home's system more reliable, safer and cost effective.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

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DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The 2023-2024 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Family Investment Program (FIP), Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days. For FIP recipients, bring your current DHS Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. The start date is Oct. 1, 2023, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply. To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums	
Household Size	**Annual Gross Income**
1	$29,160
2	$39,440
3	$49,720
4	$60,000
5	$70,280
6	$80,560
7	$90,840
8	$101,120

Note: For households with more than eight members, add $10,280 for each additional member.

5 WAYS TO STAY "CYBER SAFE"

October marks the 20th annual Cybersecurity Awareness Month. This is the perfect time to improve cybersecurity practices. Here are five simple ways you can stay cyber safe, at home or at the office.

Use strong passwords

Did you know the most common password of 2023 is 123456? Using simple, predictable passwords like this is never a good idea. The strongest passwords meet the following criteria: 12-15 characters, including numbers, special characters, and both lower and uppercase letters.

If you struggle with remembering passwords, try using a passphrase instead like, "MyHorseIsBeautiful." There are also several free and pay-for-premium password managers

available. These managers can automatically fill in password fields and many can securely synchronize between your devices, so you always have your passwords at your fingertips. Don't keep passwords in a "notepad" on your devices.

Enable multifactor authentication across all accounts and devices

Multifactor authentication (MFA or 2FA) decreases the likelihood of a compromise by adding an additional form of authentication, such as sending a one-time code to a phone or email. So, if your password is hacked or stolen, the bad actor doesn't have enough to access your data. In most cases, regularly used devices can usually be marked "trusted," so you don't have to enter them every time.

Recognize phishing

You've likely received an email with urgent language and a myriad of typos and grammatical errors saying you need to update your payment information, make a payment immediately, or even "thank you for your purchase." Emails like this are typically phishing scams. Legitimate businesses will not email or text with a link to update your information. Always contact businesses directly and not through links sent in an email, no matter how convenient it may seem.

Stay protected while connected

Whatever the network device, the best defense against viruses and malware is to update to the latest security software, web browser and operating systems. Turn on automatic updates if possible and protect your devices with antivirus software. Be aware that some apps have their own independent update processes.

Secure your devices against cyber threats

Computers, smartphones, TVs, thermostats, doorbells, smart lightbulbs – the list of internet-connected devices is ever-growing! Along with securing your Wi-Fi router, log into and change the default passwords for these internet-connected devices so hackers can't use them against you.

Continued from Page 5

Spears, William/Samantha	Topeka KS
Stagers, Keith	Brighton IA
Stark, Thomas E	Fairfield IA
Steffen, Tabatha/Swyter, Brett	Farmington IA
Steve's Rome Tap	Winfield IA
Stoermer, Larry G (Estate)	Davenport IA
Swanson, Chester/Catherine	Fairfield IA
Sweeney, Peder/Kelly	Asheville NC
Tague, Kelvin/Chrissy	Branson MO
Telegroup	Fairfield IA
Templeton, Scott/Eleanor K	Donnellson IA
Thomas, Josephine	Fairfield IA
Thompson, Dan R/Susan M	Batavia IA
Thompson, Lee/Nancy	Burlington IA
Totemeier, Carol J (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
Treimer, Todd/Amy	Huntsville AL
Uber, Tonald	Kingston TN
Underwood, Virginia F (Estate)	Keosauqua IA
Unterkircher, Edith	Danville IA
VanNiewaal, Randy/Chi	Burlington IA
Vela, John R/Charlotte	Burlington IA
VerDught, Darcia L	Argyle IA
Waddle, Regina/Tyler	Mt Pleasant IA
Wade, Todd/Jennie	Danbury TX
Wagler, E Jean	Mt Pleasant IA
Walker, John C (Estate)	Fairfield IA
Walrod, Bob E/Leona	Savannah MO
Warner, Dawn N	Keosauqua IA
Watson, Linda	Stockport IA
Weber, David L	Clive IA
Welcher, Cassandra L/Claman, Ron	Cantril IA
Wenig, Rev N	Plano IA
Wenke, Beverly R	Argyle IA
Whaley Waste Systems	Des Moines IA
White, Betty J (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
Williams, Larry W/Maranna	Pershing IN
Winfrey, Jeff J	Gainesville MO
Winters, Joseph/Maximilian	Dekalb IL
Woodruff, Stephen W/Rita L	Milton IA
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