

NOVEMBER 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Electric vehicle
charging analysis

Gift ideas for energy savings

Slow cooker recipes

Win a \$50 bill credit for updating your account information ▶ See Page 7

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Knowing is half the battle

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Ryan Van Dyke, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES POWER IOWA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

BY CHUCK SODERBERG



You depend on your local electric cooperative to power your life every day, but did you know that your co-op also powers economic growth in your region?

Earlier this year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives commissioned an economic impact study through the esteemed Goss & Associates of Omaha. This study confirmed what we've long known about our association members: Iowa's locally owned electric co-ops contribute greatly to the state's economy.

For the five years ending in 2021, the study found that Iowa electric co-ops generated a total impact on the state of \$4.8 billion, produced \$688 million in wages and salaries, directly supported 1,961 jobs, generated self-employment income of \$79.5 million and paid \$144.7 million in state and local taxes.

Powering people and communities

Powering lives and empowering communities are at the core of our cooperative mission. This economic analysis is helpful as we talk with legislators, policymakers and other decision-makers about how electric cooperatives invest in rural Iowa. For more than 80 years, electric co-ops have maintained reliable and affordable electric service, provided stable career opportunities and paid taxes, which have vast ripple effects throughout the regions we serve.

Not only have electric co-ops' economic impacts been historically significant, but the study also concludes that co-ops have assisted local and state organizations in retaining, attracting and expanding businesses in the state. Separate from their spending impacts, electric cooperatives invest in efforts to attract and retain jobs and investment within their communities.

In addition to their daily duty of providing safe, reliable and affordable power,

the study found that Iowa electric cooperatives had an impact of \$14.7 billion in economic development projects between 2018 and 2022, supporting 7,366 jobs (retained, attracted or expanded) during that same time period.

An important connector

Your electric cooperative has undoubtedly supported many economic development initiatives over the decades by serving as an intermediary for U.S. Department of Agriculture revolving loan funds, among other programs and projects. For example, several Iowa electric co-ops have been instrumental in developing industrial speculative buildings to accommodate local business expansion or to attract new businesses and jobs to the community. Iowa's electric cooperatives also give generously to local charitable causes and support youth education initiatives.

You should be proud of your local electric co-op's contributions to Iowa's economy. As a member-owned and locally governed entity, your electric co-op is more than a service provider; it's a major economic engine of progress for your community.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Access a PDF of our 2023 economic impact study at www.iowarec.org.

Economic Impact: By the Numbers

For the five years ending in 2021, Iowa electric cooperative investments and operations generated the following impacts on the state of Iowa.

\$14.7
BILLION

Impact in economic development projects.

\$4.8
BILLION

Overall economic activity.

\$688.1
MILLION

In wages and salaries.

\$79.5
MILLION

Self-employment income.

\$144.7
MILLION

In state and local tax collections.

1,961
JOBS

Supported each year.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A RING SPOTLIGHT SECURITY CAMERA!

Shine a light on your home security with a Ring spotlight security camera – a versatile outdoor dynamo fit for any property.

See vivid detail with HD video in almost any weather. Deter threats with built-in spotlights. And get real-time alerts when there's motion in your yard.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Nov. 30. 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 wireless weather station from the September issue was Nathan Stauffer, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!

UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------|
| NOV. 9 | Board Meeting |
| NOV. 23-24 | Office closed for Thanksgiving |
| NOV. 28 | Member Advisory Committee meeting |
| DEC. 15 | \$50 drawing for member account updates |
| DEC. 21 | Board Meeting |
| DEC. 25-26 | Office closed for Christmas |
| JAN. 1 | Office closed for New Year's Day |

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.



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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UNDERSTANDING EV CHARGING

BY KEVIN WHEELER



Last month, I shared information about the three levels of chargers available for electric vehicles (EVs). Our focus this month is on Level 2 chargers.

A Level 2 home charger is the one that will be available for your residential or small commercial needs.

Access Energy Cooperative has two Level 2 chargers connected in our warehouse, along with a commercially available one in our main parking lot. One of the Level 2 chargers in the warehouse is a ChargePoint 40 amp and the second is a Ford F-150 Lightning 80 amp. A ChargePoint 24 amp has also been used in a residential setting. All chargers have been installed by qualified electricians.

Installing a charger

When evaluating charging needs at your home, you need to contact your electrician and Access Energy Cooperative. This helps you ensure that the electrical facilities in place can manage operating the charging station in addition to all your other household electrical needs.

Driving range

The Lightning states a range of 330 miles per 100% charge. In our time using the vehicle, we have found the actual range to be in the 200-mile

range during cold weather and around 250 miles in warm weather.

Charging capacity

Level 2 chargers typically run from 3-18 kilowatts (kW) or 12.5-75 amps on a 240-volt circuit. A typical scenario for charging the Lightning each day has been using a 6-kW charging station (the 40-amp charging station) starting with a battery range of about 30% and a driving range of 77-92 miles left. When it starts charging at this level, it takes around 17 hours to regain a full charge to 100% capacity for a range of 330 miles.

Plugging the Lightning into the Level 2 80-amp charging station shortens the charging time. Using the same scenario of starting at 30% capacity, charging to 100% capacity can be completed in 8 hours, according to information provided by Ford.

Weather affects

Weather does affect charging. Cold weather results in the charging process taking longer. The Lightning has an internal screen that displays a statement during cold weather reminding you to plug the vehicle in and keep the battery charged.

In next month's issue, I will discuss charging costs for Level 2 and Level 3 chargers.

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

BY THE NUMBERS

The following is the data for the cooperative's Ford Lightning pickup for last month.

- 1,130 miles driven.
- Total charge time of 81 hours with a Level 2 charger plus 56 minutes using a Level 3 charger.
- \$71 in total electricity costs at \$0.12 per kwh. This compares to 20.2 gallons of fuel at \$3.50 per gallon.
- Average of 56 miles per gallon.



80-amp charger



40-amp charger

UNDERSTANDING DEMAND

BY TYLER THEIN



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

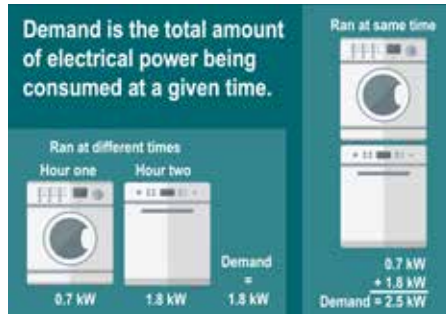
it. Generally, utilities charge a basic fee for service, which is called the “Base Charge” for Access Energy Cooperative members. The “Energy Charge” on your bill is the charge for how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) or the amount of electricity you used for the month. Understanding the “Demand Charge” of an energy bill is more complicated and requires more education to understand.

What is demand?

Electric demand is the rate at which electricity is used at a given time and is measured in kilowatts (kW). Even though there are currently no fees associated with it for residential accounts, all members can see their monthly demand as a line item on the monthly electric bill called “Demand Charge.” We provide this information so you can see what your demand is.

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

To put this into context, your dishwasher and washing machine both use electricity. The amount of electricity they use is the same regardless of when you use them. If you use them at the same time, you demand



more electricity at that time. If you use them at different times, your demand is lower.

How setting a demand works

Your washing machine runs for an hour and uses 0.7 kWh and then your dishwasher runs for an hour and uses 1.8 kWh, so you used 2.5 kWh of electricity. Your demand over those two hours is 1.8 kW, it’s the most you used in a 15-minute interval. If you ran them both during the same hour your demand would be 2.5 kW.

There are times of day when energy is at peak demand. This is typically during the evening when families return home from work or school to make dinner and do chores. Using electricity during this time costs more to both our cooperative and members because it requires the system to provide more electricity in less time. The best way to reduce demand is by spreading your electric usage throughout the day and night.

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

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

HELP OTHERS BY CONTRIBUTING TO RECare

RECare is a program where members help other members in need. You may make a one-time contribution to the RECare program, or you may enclose an amount each month with your monthly electric bill. Just one dollar a month will help others.



The amount collected for contributions July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, was \$6,646.05. Access Energy Cooperative thanks those who have given to help other members. This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines.

You can use SmartHub to enroll in RECare!

To have a monthly amount deducted from your electric bill:

1. Log in to your SmartHub account. Go to the Bill & Pay dropdown on the left. Select RECare, and follow instructions; or
2. Send the form below to:

RECare
c/o Access Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 440
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641



RECare Consumer Authorization Form

I would like to make a (check one):

- One-time contribution of \$ _____
- Monthly contribution of \$ _____
(That will be added to my bill)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

Account # (if known) _____

MONITOR ENERGY USE WITH SMARTHUB



Did you know that you can view your energy use from your desktop or mobile device? Through detailed graphs on our SmartHub app, you can monitor your daily consumption 24/7 and see how it is trending over time. You can even download data into a spreadsheet file. Download the app for free from the Apple App Store or Google Play Marketplace.

POWER WITH A PURPOSE

BY JOE WILKINSON



A cooperative is unique from other business types. The biggest distinguishing factor is that we are owned by those we serve. The people

who ultimately receive the electricity we generate, the members at the end of the line, own their cooperatives.

And that holds true throughout our three-tiered system: Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. is owned by its six transmission cooperative member-owners, who in turn are owned by their member distribution cooperatives, including Access Energy Cooperative. Those distribution cooperatives are owned by their members at the end of the line. At each tier, their boards of directors are democratically elected. It's a very pure form of ownership.

Q: Can you cite an example where Associated's cooperative business model really benefits its members?

The Associated board has invested in a balanced mix of power generation sources for decades. This includes hydropower, coal power plants, natural gas and wind power. Our board made the decision not to put all the eggs in one basket but use a mix of resources that have different operating characteristics.

Another key board decision has been to remain independent of regional transmission organizations, or RTOs, that manage the electric grid for member utilities in a geographic area. By staying independent, we can buy, sell and transmit power with multiple RTOs, which been advantageous both for reliability and for the economic benefit of the system.

That independence really paid off during Winter Storms Uri in 2021 and Elliott in 2022. We set all-time system peaks in both of those weather events. Repeatedly, while many around us resorted to rolling blackouts, Associated kept the lights on – and

that's what members expect. Our reliability track record stems from our balanced generation portfolio and our independence to manage our generating assets to maximize reliability for members.

Q: How does the future look for rural energy reliability?

Associated and its member-owners like Northeast Power (which provides transmission services) and Access Energy Cooperative are well-positioned for the future. A recent forecast by the government agency responsible for the country's electric grid reliability showed about two-thirds of the nation with an elevated or even high risk for reliability problems. But if you look at the map that visualizes that forecast, the middle of the country where Associated serves is clear. That doesn't mean we can never experience reliability problems. But it does mean the cooperative business model and member-ownership works well for the people we serve.

Q: What is Associated doing to make sure power generation keeps pace with member needs?

We study our member loads and analyze trends, which show significant load growth on the Associated system. That's a good thing because it means our regional economy is picking up, with businesses expanding and new homes being built. It also means we need to make sure our power supply keeps pace. Associated develops an integrated resource plan every year that looks to the future, what our member load

requirements will be and the generation technologies that can serve them. The technologies need to be proven and dispatchable, not intermittent, so that we can count on them. Also in our plan is the potential for new future renewable generation, but only when the timing, technology and costs make sense for the member system.

Q: We've heard some say Associated is against renewable (intermittent) power supply for the future. Is that true?

No, that is absolutely false. We began taking power from our first wind farm in 2007. Since then, we've added power from seven more wind farms in three states, the most recent in 2020. Wind accounts for nameplate capacity of 1,240 megawatts in our generation mix; however, its intermittent operating characteristics means it cannot be counted on all the time. We are good at forecasting when the wind will blow and when it will not.

It's the same with solar. As a winter peaking system, we know that we generally cannot count on solar to generate power when we need it most. That's why we invested in wind over solar – wind fits our system profile better. We evaluate renewable technologies as we plan for the future, but the costs, technology and timing need to be beneficial for our member systems.

Joe Wilkinson is the chief member relations officer for Associated Electric Cooperative.

ANNOUNCEMENT

MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY

In December, Associated Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. will be performing a satisfaction survey of our members and the rest of the cooperatives on their system.

As a member of Access Energy Cooperative, you may be randomly selected to participate in this survey, which will be

conducted through email. We appreciate your participation if you choose to take part in the survey.

If you ever have questions about communications that appear to be coming from Access Energy Cooperative, please contact us at 1-866-242-4232 or send an email to contactus@accessenergycoop.com.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Access Energy Cooperative is a proud supporter of the local Habitat for Humanity program. Member Services Representative Alan Raymer delivered an electric water heater for the latest project in Winfield.

Pictured below are Lisa Diener from Habitat for Humanity and Alan Raymer, member services representative from Access Energy Cooperative.

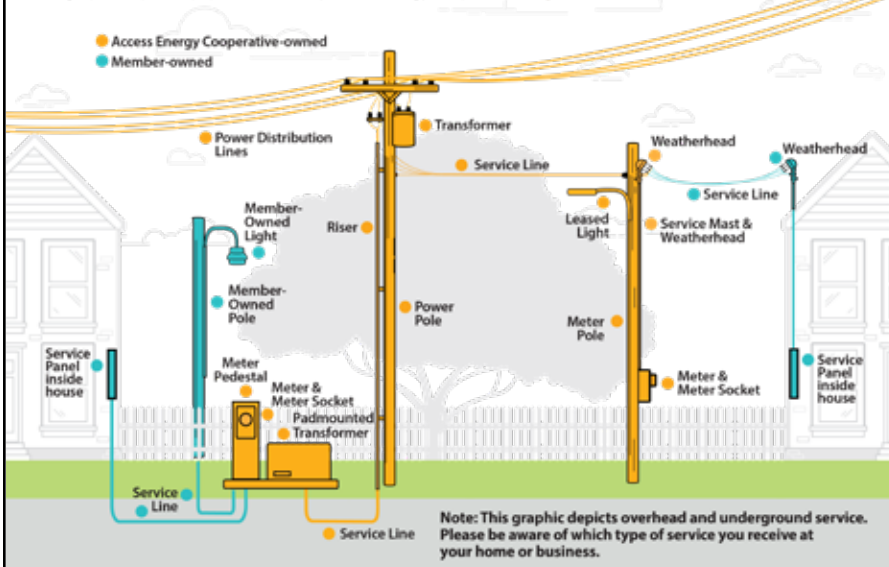


WHO OWNS WHAT ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT?

If electrical equipment is damaged due to natural causes, it may be confusing to understand who is responsible for repairing damages. The graphic below shows what

equipment is owned by Access Energy Cooperative and what is owned by the member. If you have any questions, call us at 1-866-242-4232.

This graphic depicts equipment owned by Access Energy Cooperative (in gold) and the member (in blue).



UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

**FOR A CHANCE TO WIN
A \$50 BILL CREDIT**

Drawing Dec. 15



Account # _____

Name _____

Email _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Home Phone # _____

Cell Phone # _____

If you have an email account with Google or Yahoo and you have not used your account for 12 months, it may no longer be active. Please update your email address.

- **Return with your bill**
- **Mail it to:**
Access Energy Cooperative
Info Update
P.O. BOX 440
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641
- **Email it to:**
contactus@accessenergycoop.com
- **Use the SmarHub app:**
Click on *Contact Us* to request to update your personal information
- **Call our office:**
1-866-242-4232

**For more information, visit our website
www.accessenergycoop.com**



SPECTACULAR
SLOW COOKER
RECIPES

SLOW COOKER MAID-RITES

- 3 pounds hamburger
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 can chicken gumbo soup
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 teaspoons dry mustard

Cook meat and drain. Dissolve bouillon in hot water. Add remaining ingredients and place in slow cooker for 4 hours.

**Karen Caldwell • Albia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative**

PEACHY KEEN SWEET POTATOES

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1 cup peach pie filling
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Put all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on low for 5-7 hours.

**Marlene Burns • Swisher
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

SLOW COOKER PORK CUTLETS

- 1 can beef stock
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 package brown gravy mix
- 1 package onion soup mix
- 2 pounds pork cutlets
- ½ pound mushrooms
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- mashed potatoes

Pour beef stock, cream of mushroom soup, gravy mix and onion soup mix in slow cooker and stir together. Season cutlets with salt and pepper. Add to slow cooker and top with mushrooms. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Serve over mashed potatoes. *Serves 4-6*

**Tiana Stroman • Merrill
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

SLOW COOKER APPLE CRISP

- 2 cans apple pie filling
- 1 package butter pecan cake mix
- ½ stick butter, sliced

In the order listed, layer ingredients in slow cooker. Don't stir. Cook on high for 2 hours.

**Cindy Pottebaum • Alton
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

CREAM CHEESE CHICKEN

- ½ cup butter
- 1 7-ounce envelope Italian dressing mix
- 2 pounds boneless chicken breasts
- 1 10.75-ounce can cream of chicken soup
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
mashed potatoes, rice or noodles

Melt butter in bottom of slow cooker on high. Stir in Italian dressing mix until well mixed. Cut chicken into 1-inch strips. Place chicken in slow cooker and stir to coat with butter and dressing mix. Cook covered on high for 2 hours.

Remove chicken and set aside. Add soup and cream cheese to liquid in slow cooker. Stir to melt until smooth and creamy. Add chicken back to slow cooker and turn to low until ready to serve.

Serve over mashed potatoes, rice or hot buttered noodles. Can be frozen for a great make-ahead meal. *Serves 6*

Regina V. Lloyd • Linden

Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

SLOW COOKER PIZZA-LASAGNA

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 98-ounce package mini lasagna noodles
- 1 package pepperoni
- 1 28-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- ¾ cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 10 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, grated

Cook beef and onion until meat is browned, drain. Cook noodles until almost tender (you can substitute with rotini). Combine all ingredients except Mozzarella cheese in layers in slow cooker. Sprinkle Mozzarella cheese over top. Bake on low for 5-7 hours, or on high for 2 hours.

Larae Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ITALIAN ROUND STEAK

- 2 pounds round steak
salt and pepper
- 3 cans Italian diced tomatoes
- 2 cans French-style green beans
onion, to taste, sliced

Cut steak into serving-sized pieces, season with salt and pepper. Place all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 7 hours. *Serves 4-5*

Gladys Willey • Yale

Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

APPLE STREUSEL DESSERT

- 6 cups apples, sliced
- 1¼ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¾ cup milk
- 5 tablespoons butter, divided
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1½ cups Bisquick baking mix, divided
- ½ cup brown sugar
ice cream or cream

Toss apples with spices. Place apples in greased slow cooker. In a bowl, combine milk, 2 tablespoons butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and ½ cup baking mix. Pour over apples. Combine 1 cup baking mix, brown sugar and 3 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle over apples. Cover and cook on low for 6-7 hours. Serve with ice cream or cream.

Sue Cook • Deep River
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

SHEET PAN MEALS

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Nov. 30

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48,
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

A woman with dark hair tied back is shown in profile, looking at a smart home control panel mounted on a light-colored wooden wall. The panel is a tablet displaying a user interface with various icons and a central 'BOOK 1' button with a lock icon. She is touching the screen with her right hand. The background is a plain wall, and the lighting is soft and indoor.

ENERGY-SAVING GADGETS & GIZMOS

BY PAUL WESSLUND

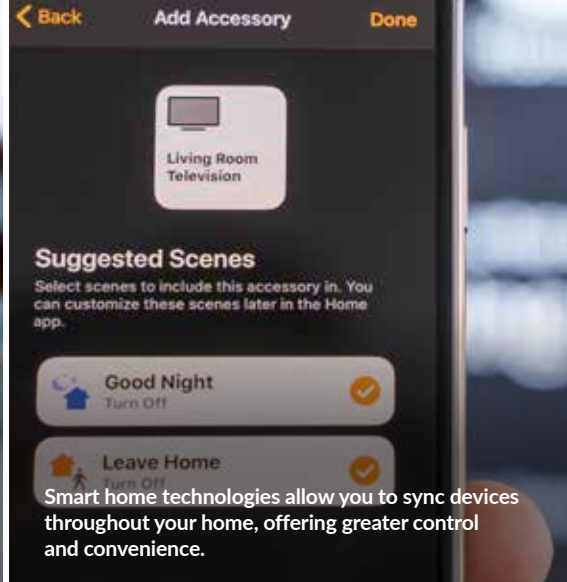
With the holidays approaching, shoppers will soon be eying an abundance of devices and gadgets to gift friends and loved ones – or to buy for themselves.

Many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including one often-overlooked perk: energy savings. With so many options available, choosing the best tech for your needs can be overwhelming.

The following four tips can help you determine the right smart home technologies for your home.



When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including energy savings.



Smart home technologies allow you to sync devices throughout your home, offering greater control and convenience.



Smart thermostats offer convenience and achievable energy savings.
Photo Source: Ecobee

1 ASK YOURSELF HOW SMART YOU WANT YOUR HOME TO BE.

Smart plugs, energy-use apps and home monitors are cool devices that can help you save energy. But it helps to understand how they work to make the most of them. Before you invest your time and money, ask yourself, how much technology do you want? What are your habits when setting up and using the latest development? If you like to tinker, an energy app on your phone could be fun and help you save money. But as electronics get smarter, even non-tech-savvy people find them easier to use.

2 GET THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK.

The most frequently recommended energy-saving device is a smart thermostat. And that makes sense because the thermostat controls your heating and cooling, which account for the most energy consumption in your home. Smart thermostats can program an energy schedule to adjust the heating or cooling when you're sleeping or out of the house during the day. Additional smart thermostat features include detecting movement in a room to adjust energy use, learning your daily habits, responding to voice commands and tracking the weather.

Renters might even be able to convince a landlord to pay for an energy-saving smart thermostat.

If you have a heat pump, contact your electric co-op before using a smart thermostat. Lowering the temperature too much when you're not home could result in switching to more expensive auxiliary heat to bring the house back to room temperature.

Other devices that can produce energy savings for minimal cost and effort include smart light bulbs, outlets and charging stations.

3 DETERMINE YOUR ENERGY-SAVING GOALS.

A home energy monitor is one way to save on electricity, and the range of choices means you'll need to ask how much you're willing to pay and if it's worthwhile. One study found that spending about \$1,800 on a full home, commercially installed energy monitor could save about 16% on electric bills and pay for itself in 10-15 years. Much less ambitious approaches involve downloading an app on your phone to keep track of your electricity use and even turning smart appliances on and off when you're away.

4 DO A SIMPLE ENERGY CHECKUP.

Take a walk through your home with the intention of identifying everything that uses electricity. You'll likely notice a lot of functions that could be managed with smart devices. If your phone sits plugged in long after it's charged, smart power strips and smart outlets can stop the electricity use when the battery is at 100%. Smart

light bulbs can be controlled with an app on your phone, saving energy and giving your home that lived-in look when you're away. Ceiling fans can now adjust themselves for the best air flow, depending on the temperature. Motion detectors can turn indoor lights on and off when you enter or leave a room; even solar-powered outdoor lights can detect when you're approaching and light the way.

With just a little planning, you can make sure this gift-giving season is merry, bright – and smart.

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.



Smart lights allow you to manage home lighting from anywhere, anytime.

MINI-SPLIT SYSTEMS ARE GAINING TRACTION

BY LESLIE TATE

A ductless air conditioner, also referred to as a mini-split system or air source heat pump, offers a variety of options for heating and cooling, particularly for older homes and buildings. Several years ago, mini-split models were thought to be inefficient for colder climates, but these systems have made great strides, making them a more viable option for most U.S. regions.

Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the most attractive feature is the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home.

System benefits

An indoor air-handling unit (evaporator) and an outdoor compressor/condenser make up the two major components of a mini-split system. In many ways, mini-split air conditioners operate like conventional air conditioning systems. In cooling mode, the system transfers heat from inside the home to the outside. With a central air system, cold air is blasted throughout all the ducts in the home from a single air handler, such as a large fan in an attic or basement. A mini-split can blow air from up to six independent air handlers and regulate temperatures for different rooms or areas inside the home.

Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or homes where a duct system may not be practical. When a duct system is too expensive to install, a mini-split system can efficiently heat and cool a space while keeping installation costs down.

Choices for comfort

A mini-split can also settle thermostat disagreements for those working or living together with different comfort preferences. For example, mini-split systems are frequently installed in classrooms to give teachers control over the temperature in their spaces.



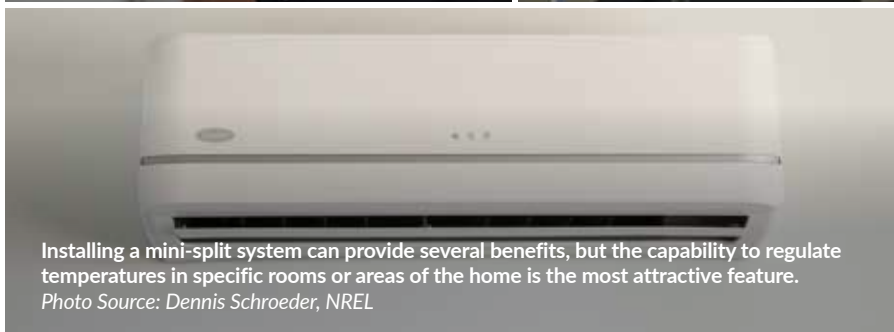
A qualified contractor can offer advice on the size of the system and the number of units you will need.

Photo Source: Phyxter Home Services



Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or homes where a duct system may not be practical.

Photo Source: Gary Cziko



Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home is the most attractive feature.

Photo Source: Dennis Schroeder, NREL

Technology creates advantages

Compared to conventional HVAC systems, mini-splits can significantly reduce energy consumption and have the potential to save up to 30% on cooling costs and 50% on heating costs. Additionally, inverter technology, which enables variable-speed operation, is frequently included with mini-split systems. This results in increased energy efficiency and a cheaper cost of operation as the system adjusts its output based on the actual heating or cooling demand.

In addition to greater control over heating and cooling, mini-splits can also be managed with a mobile app, smart thermostat or remote control. They provide better air quality, and homeowners can easily replace the filters themselves, saving money on the pricey duct cleanings needed for conventional air conditioners. Reheat dehumidification is a common feature of mini-split systems to maintain a steady room temperature while lowering humidity.

A few factors should be considered before installing a mini-split system. Determining the right size and quantity of units is a key first step. The location of the system is another important factor to consider.

A mini-split should be installed where it will help maximize air distribution throughout the home. A qualified contractor can offer advice on these factors. Additionally, your home should be properly sealed in order for the mini-split system to operate efficiently.

For many homeowners, a mini-split ductless heating and cooling system can be a fantastic alternative for heating and cooling. Contact your local electric cooperative if you have questions about mini-split systems.

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

HOW TO SELECT A NEW STOVETOP

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

When considering a new stovetop, it pays to consider the options that will make the most of your cooking experience. Fortunately, there are many great choices in the market today.

Most people who enjoy cooking have pretty strong opinions about their preferred fuel choice: gas or electric. Induction is a newer option for home stovetops, which is growing in popularity.

According to a study completed by the Electric Power Research Institute, 74% of the energy from an electric range is transferred to food, versus 40% on a gas range. Induction cooktops are the most efficient option at 90% energy transferred to food. Regardless of your stovetop choice, right-sizing pots and pans to the burner is important to avoid wasting energy.

Evaluating electric cooktops

Electric cooktops are a tried-and-true option for many homes and are typically the most affordable option. Glass-top models offer a cleaner look than the traditional coil elements. They are easier to clean but tend to be a bit more expensive. The most common complaint about electric cooking is that the heating controls are not as fast or precise.

Pros and cons of gas stovetops

Many home chefs prefer gas stovetops because you can easily see the size of the flame, a visual clue that helps you control the cooking temperature. Temperature adjustments are also faster and more precise than on electric stovetops. However, there are some concerns with safety and indoor air quality associated with gas stoves because gas emissions can be harmful to your health. To help reduce indoor air pollution, always use your exhaust fan when using your gas stovetop. Ideally, your exhaust fan should be vented to the home's exterior.

Access is also a consideration. Natural gas is typically available in more populated areas, while rural customers may need a propane storage tank installed outside their homes to use a gas stove.

Exploring newer induction stovetop options

An induction stovetop can offer a higher-end cooking experience than a standard electric stovetop, and some people prefer it to cooking on gas.

Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste. Instead of heating the stove's surface, they heat the pans themselves, resulting in faster cooking times. They also allow for more precise temperature control, which can deliver better results.

Induction cooktops are typically more expensive than similar gas or electric models. They also require you to use specific cookware. Stainless steel and cast-iron cookware are both

compatible with induction cooktops. If you want to test your pots and pans to see if they are induction-compatible, do the magnet test. If a magnet sticks to the bottom of the pan, it will work on an induction stove.

If you are remodeling and have a gas range, consider running electrical to support an induction cooktop if you change your mind in the future. Setting up the power supply during a remodel can offer significant savings.

If you are considering making the switch, keep an eye on any incentives for your state or region. A rebate for replacing your gas stove with an electric one may be available under the Inflation Reduction Act.

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.



Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste.

IOWA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CONNECT WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

More than 25 representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives traveled to the nation's capital in September to advocate for their co-op members. While in Washington, D.C., the group attended high-level briefings on key issues impacting the electric industry and met with all six members of Iowa's Congressional Delegation to discuss priorities and concerns.

Advocates shared concerns that could impact electric cooperatives' ability to provide reliable and affordable power, including federal Environmental Protection Agency mandates that may force electric generation plants to shut down prematurely. Additionally, co-op representatives talked about continued supply chain challenges and how they impact day-to-day operations.

Co-op advocates also asked their senators and representatives to support permitting reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act to avoid costly delays in the permitting process. The group urged the Iowa Congressional Delegation to authorize an increase in funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant program as part of the Farm Bill reauthorization to support our rural Iowa communities.

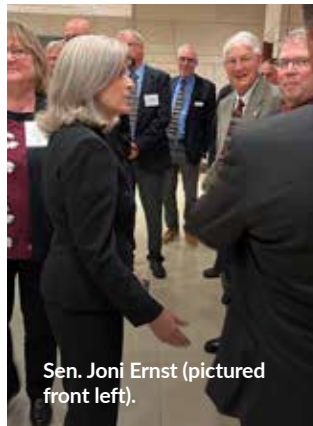
Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster funding was also a concern, as the electric co-op group asked the Iowa Delegation to support supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund to ensure that support is available should a natural disaster strike Iowa.

We appreciate the service of Iowa's elected officials and the tireless work of their staff who help look out for Iowans in the Halls of Congress.

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



Rep. Zach Nunn (pictured in the center).



Sen. Joni Ernst (pictured front left).



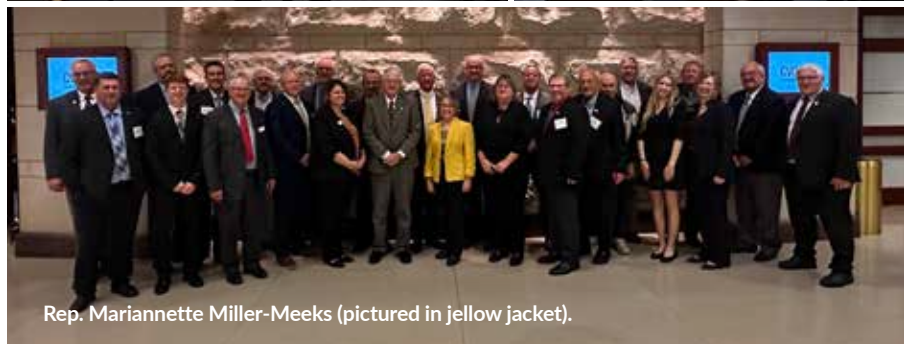
Rep. Ashley Hinson (pictured in red jacket).



Sen. Charles Grassley.



Rep. Randy Feenstra (pictured at the front of the room).



Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (pictured in yellow jacket).

KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When I was growing up, some of the most popular toys had their own cartoon shows. This included G.I. Joe, who also narrated public service announcements (PSA).

These PSAs addressed something dangerous kids did unintentionally – such as running out into traffic. After the kids learned the right way to do things, each message ended the same: “Now you know. And knowing is half the battle.”

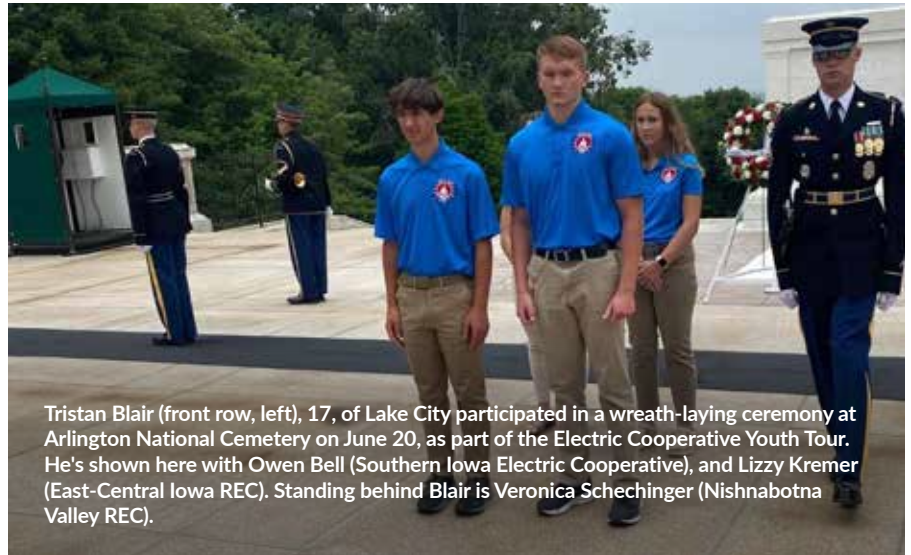
Fast forward to today. I’m concerned we’re letting young people wander down a dangerous road when we fail to teach them history, including the significance of Veterans Day each Nov. 11.

Its roots trace back to World War I. Fighting ceased when an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – Nov. 11, 1918. By 1919, the date became known as Armistice Day, although Congress renamed it Veterans Day in 1954. Veterans Day continues to honor American veterans of all wars for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

What are we teaching youth?

What’s the state of affairs as we approach Veterans Day in 2023? A recent Morning Consult poll found that only 16% of Gen Z (people born between 1997-2012) are proud to live in the U.S. Every U.S. military branch is struggling to meet its recruiting goals. Volunteering, in general, is also suffering.

A report released in January 2023 by AmeriCorps and the U.S. Census Bureau shows that less than one-quarter of Americans age 16 and older volunteered from September 2020 to September 2021. That’s down from 30% in 2019. Annual hours donated by volunteers has plunged during the



Tristan Blair (front row, left), 17, of Lake City participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery on June 20, as part of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. He's shown here with Owen Bell (Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative), and Lizzy Kremer (East-Central Iowa REC). Standing behind Blair is Veronica Schechinger (Nishnabotna Valley REC).

past two decades, sinking from 52 hours in 2002 to 25 hours today.

I think these disturbing trends are connected to “knowing is half the battle.” What are we teaching young people about the importance of volunteering and serving others? Do we invite our kids and grandkids to place flowers and American flags by the graves of veterans? Do we encourage students to learn about the sacrifices our armed forces have made to protect our freedom?

Youth Tour offers new perspectives

I’m grateful the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sponsored by many of Iowa’s electric cooperatives, offers students the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. This trip is dedicated to learning about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, while giving students a greater understanding of their role as American citizens.

This year’s Youth Tour participant from my rural electric co-op (Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association) was Tristan Blair (17) of Lake City. At Arlington National Cemetery, Blair escorted fellow students who laid the wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“I felt instant sympathy for anyone who lost a loved one in combat,” says Blair, whose thoughts also turned to his family members who’ve served.

These family members include Dennis Moulds (great-grandpa), Bill Marine (grandpa), Steve and Sheri Nockles (grandpa and grandma), Adam Nockles (uncle), Cara (Blair) Hove, and Kolby Blair (cousin). Some served in the Army, while others joined the Air Force. They included a tank mechanic in South Korea, a signal corps communication specialist and more.

“Thank you so much for asking me to get this information,” Blair told me. “I had no idea about some of that stuff.”

Knowing is half the battle. Once you plant the seeds of knowledge, good things follow.

“Thank you to all the veterans and current soldiers,” Blair added. “I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this without the sacrifices you made for my generation and the whole country.”

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



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for members of
Iowa's electric
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