

● JANUARY 2024

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Understanding electric demand

**How co-ops prepare for
extreme weather**

New Year's resolution recipes

Board approves rate restructure ▶ See Page 4

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Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase **Iowa Electric Cooperative Living** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

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Email Address
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Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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ON THE COVER

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

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO STATE LEGISLATORS: IF IT ISN'T BROKEN...

BY KEVIN CONDON



As a new year begins, so will the 2024 legislative session of the Iowa General Assembly. And as always, Iowa's electric cooperatives will have a strong presence at the Iowa Statehouse to ensure lawmakers and their constituents understand clearly how policy proposals will impact rural Iowans. For more than 80 years, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has advocated on behalf of our members so state legislators can make informed decisions.

Protecting electric cooperative members

This year, Iowa's electric co-ops are not proactively seeking significant changes to Iowa laws but are instead taking a "do no harm" message to Iowa policymakers. While there are tremendous challenges ahead in the energy industry, most of those debates occur on the national stage and will take place outside the halls of the Iowa Capitol.

Iowa lawmakers have gotten it right over the past several years as it pertains to setting the state's energy strategy. Iowa electric co-ops can provide reliable power to our member-consumers without unnecessary interference from the state government. In Iowa, we have established a positive balance between central regulatory compliance and local flexibility.

Avoiding unnecessary regulations

Iowa's electric cooperatives are prepared for various ideas to resurface from the last session, in addition to untangling new ideas that may be introduced in this session. Threats to Iowa's service territory laws are ongoing and real. Calls to "deregulate" Iowa's electric boundaries under the guise of "competition and choice" will result in higher electric bills for homes and farms, while "Big Data" tech companies laugh all the way to the bank.

We also expect to hear the phrase "integrated resource plans" (IRP) quite a bit this year. IRPs are simply a "wolf in sheep's clothing" effort from special interest groups to take decision-making authority away from your local utility and shutter reliable power generation assets well before their useful life is up.

While the threat of rolling blackouts is real in many regions of the country, now is not the time to irresponsibly close dispatchable power plants. The Iowa Legislature shouldn't require IRPs but instead could expand our energy strategy to incorporate even more of an "all the above" approach to include nuclear generation and energy storage technologies.

Focusing on safety threats

Unfortunately, we must also be concerned about threats to the safety of our electric infrastructure. Iowa electric co-ops follow the National Electric Safety Code (NESC) guidance

on overhead line clearances to accommodate large agricultural and industrial equipment. There appears to be efforts to remove liability from a person who negligently damages electric infrastructure if contact is made, and they can prove the line was outside the NESC guidelines.

Safety is paramount at your co-op, and we are concerned about changing the law in a way that would almost encourage an equipment operator to hit a power line rather than simply call the co-op to move it.

We look forward to having respectful and productive discussions with state legislators again this year. We wish Iowa lawmakers a happy and successful new year and hope that they'll remember the old saying when it comes to energy policy: *If it isn't broken, don't fix it.*

Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN ALL-CLAD IMMERSION BLENDER!

Make quick work of countless food-prep tasks with All-Clad's high-performance immersion blender, which offers superior versatility and unsurpassed efficiency. Its powerful motor blends foods in seconds, from thick milkshakes and homemade mayonnaise to baby food and delicate sauces.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Jan. 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 Ring spotlight security camera from the November issue was Tina Nelson, a Consumers Energy member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY JAN. 31!

UPCOMING EVENTS

JAN. 18	Board meeting
FEB. 15	Board meeting
FEB. 20	District 2 Member Information Meeting, Mount Pleasant
FEB. 22	District 1 Member Information Meeting, Fairfield
FEB. 27	District 3 Member Information Meeting, West Point
FEB. 29	Youth Tour application deadline
MAR. 6	Youth Tour interviews
MAR. 15	Scholarship application deadlines
MAR. 21	Board meeting
MAR. 31	Photo contest deadline

You can access your account information 24/7, year-round on our website or through 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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BOARD VOTES TO RESTRUCTURE RATES

BY MARVIN LARSON AND KEVIN WHEELER



The Access Energy Cooperative board of directors voted to change the rate structure for the single-phase rate class that includes residential accounts and the small commercial rate class. This change was made to better align member bills with the cooperative's power costs. Effective April 1, 2024, single-phase and small commercial accounts will be billed a demand charge. Large commercial and large power rate classes are already billed a demand charge.

With the assistance of outside consultation and cost-of-service studies, the cooperative board and management team has been exploring and researching this decision for two years. The board never likes to increase rates, but has concluded that implementing a rate restructure to include a demand component is the right decision for the cooperative and members.

A demand component can be beneficial for everyone. When members reduce demand on the cooperative system, it is a win-win situation for the cooperative and for members. By understanding how demand works and how it is billed, members can take control of their energy bills.

By controlling and reducing the peak demands on the cooperative system, the cooperative can better maintain power costs, which account for 67% of

the cooperative's expenses. This means if the cooperative has better control over power costs, the cooperative has better control over member rates.

How demand charge works

All member bills currently show a base charge, energy charge and demand charge. For single-phase and small commercial accounts, the demand charge is \$0. Beginning April 1, a charge will be applied for demand for single-phase and small commercial accounts, and the energy charge will be reduced. The cooperative records member demands every 15 minutes, and the charge will apply to the highest 15-minute interval for the member's billing cycle.

Opportunities to learn more

The cooperative has been educating members on what demand is and how to control it, and we will continue this effort. For more details on demand, please read the Staff Perspective article on the next page.

We will continue to provide information on energy demand in this magazine and at www.accessenergycoop.com. Members are free to call our office with any questions at 866-242-4232. We will also hold an informational meeting in each of the three cooperative districts to help explain demand and allow members to ask questions. All members are invited to attend and encouraged to ask questions.

Marvin Larson is the president of the Access Energy Cooperative board of directors and Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/CEO of Access Energy Cooperative.

TRACK ENERGY USE WITH SMARTHUB



Did you know you can see your energy usage on your phone, desktop or other mobile device? Through the SmartHub app, you can monitor and download your daily energy consumption 24/7 and see how it is trending over time. SmartHub can even alert you when a set usage level is exceeded.

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for more information.

UNDERSTANDING DEMAND

BY TYLER THEIN, P.E.



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 may require some additional explanation.

What is demand?

Electric demand is the rate at which electricity is used at a given time and is measured in kilowatts (kW). Beginning April 1, 2024, single-phase and small commercial accounts will be charged for demand, and the energy charge will be reduced. Large commercial and large power accounts are already charged for demand.

The “Demand Charge” listed on your bill represents the 15-minute interval when you used the highest amount of electricity during that billing period. There is also the



EXAMPLE OF HOW DEMAND WORKS

Appliance	Demand
Average washing machine	0.7 kW
Average dishwasher	1.8 kW
Washing machine + dishwasher when used together	2.5 kW

date and time printed next to the demand indicating when you set that demand.

To put this into context, think about how 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.

Example of demand scenario

When your washing machine runs for an hour, it uses 0.7 kW – which is your demand on our system for power. When your dishwasher runs for an hour, it uses 1.8 kW. If you run both at the same time, your demand would be 2.5 kW. Your demand becomes the

total of the two because you need that much power at the same time.

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

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

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

MEMBER INFORMATION MEETINGS

Access Energy Cooperative will be holding three member information meetings, one in each of the three districts. The primary purpose of these meetings is to share information about the upcoming rate increase

and restructure that will be effective April 1, 2024. All members are invited to attend the meeting in your respective district. All meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m.

District 1	District 2	District 3
Feb. 22, 6:30 p.m.	Feb. 20, 6:30 p.m.	Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m.
Cambridge Building Jefferson County Fairgrounds 2606 West Burlington Street Fairfield, Iowa	Access Energy Cooperative 1800 West Washington Street Mount Pleasant, Iowa	The Hitching Post 2165 County Rd 103 West Point, Iowa

FORD LIGHTNING EV

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

- 1,569 miles driven.
- Total charge time of 143 hours and 32 minutes with a Level 2 charger.
- Total 913 kWh for charging.
- \$114.11 in total electricity costs at \$0.125 per kWh.
- Converted to gallons of gas, this compares to 48.12 gallons of fuel.

PROPERTY TAXES PAID

Property taxes are used to help fund important things such as education and city and county government. Even though Access Energy Cooperative is a not-for-profit organization, your cooperative pays property taxes for the poles, wires and transformers on our lines, plus another tax bill for the office and warehouse. Your cooperative pays taxes in all 10 counties we serve.

The following is a breakdown of the property taxes paid in 2023.

COUNTY	AMOUNT
Davis	\$235
Des Moines	\$7,688
Henry	\$273,390
Jefferson	\$59,886
Keokuk	\$28
Lee	\$41,497
Louisa	\$26
Van Buren	\$28,338
Wapello	\$7,792
Washington	\$5,332
TOTAL	\$424,212

CALL FOR DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

Your board of directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative.

Four seats are up for election in 2024, one in each of Districts 1 and 3, and two in District 2. Three board members are to be elected to a term of three years and one will be elected to a term of two years (one of the District 2 positions).

Terms that will expire with the 2024 annual meeting to be held Tuesday, Aug. 6, include:

- District 1, Marvin Larson
- District 2, Larry White and Jerry Barker
- District 3, Robert Chesnut III

This month, the board of directors will be appointing a nominating committee who will select candidates to run for the expiring terms. Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the nominating committee. The list will be posted on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com and in this magazine or you can call our office at 866-242-4232.

Qualifications to serve

To serve on the Access Energy Cooperative board of directors, you must meet all the qualifications as specified in the cooperative Bylaws, Section 3 as summarized below.

No member shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who:

1. Is not a bona fide resident of premises served by the Cooperative

2. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members
3. Within five (5) years preceding a director candidate nomination was an employee of the Cooperative
4. Is a close relative of a director or employee of the Cooperative, with close relative being defined as: spouse, cohabitant, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and natural, step and adopted children
5. Within fifteen (15) years preceding a director candidate nomination been convicted of a felony whether by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, plea of guilt or plea of nolo contendere
6. Becomes the full-time employee or agent of another director or employee
7. Becomes the full-time employer or principal of another director
8. Is the incumbent of or candidate for an elective public office other than on a school board, board of supervisors, township trustee, township clerk or member of the State legislature

When a membership is held jointly, either one, but not both, may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless both shall meet the qualifications herein above set forth.



Access Energy Cooperative was a proud supporter of the 2023 Mount Pleasant Lighted Christmas Parade.



ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE YOUTH PROGRAMS

Access Energy Cooperative is proud to offer the following programs for area youth.

Senior Scholarships

There are \$9,000 in scholarships available to high school seniors!

This includes six \$1,500 awards, two in each of the cooperative's three districts. Applicants must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative.

Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.

The first \$500 portion of the scholarship will be awarded at the completion of the recipients' first semester of post-secondary education, with proof of enrollment for the second semester. The remaining \$1,000 will be awarded after completion of the third

semester, with proof of enrollment of the fourth semester.

Lineworker Scholarship

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

Awards will be announced by April 30 and recipients have until March 31, 2025, to apply for the initial scholarship payment.

Applicants must be a high school graduate, maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or above, and must reside in southeast Iowa in the general Access Energy Cooperative service area (not limited to Access Energy Cooperative territorial boundaries).

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DETAILS

All scholarship applications can be found:

- At qualifying high school guidance counselor offices.
- By visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, downloading the application and faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office. The form can also be submitted online.
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mount Pleasant at 866-242-4232.

Applications are due in our office March 15. More details can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com.



SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS – WIN A FREE YOUTH TOUR TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

At Access Energy Cooperative, one way we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders is by participating in the national electric cooperative Youth Tour program. We've been sending deserving students on the trip for more than 65 years.

We're looking for high school sophomores or juniors with a passion for government and public service to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital in June.

Two students will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2024 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., from June 15-21 along with 40 other student leaders from Iowa. Participants will learn more about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. On the trip, students will take in the sights as they visit monuments, museums and historical landmarks.

This program is a great resume builder for student leaders and a wonderful opportunity to kickstart one's passion for government affairs or advocacy. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

Youth Tour application details

We are accepting Youth Tour applications through Feb. 29. Students must attend a school in southeast Iowa in one of the 10 counties Access Energy Cooperative serves.

Applications can be found at your guidance counselor's office or on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com. Personal interviews to choose our two student representatives will be held at our office March 6. You must be able to participate in an interview on that date to apply.

Applications are due in our office Feb. 29.
Interviews will be March 6.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION RECIPES



BLACK BEAN COOKIE DOUGH ENERGY BITES

- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 4 medjool dates, pitted
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons creamy almond butter
- 3 tablespoons coconut flour
- ⅓ cup cocoa
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Blend all ingredients except chocolate chips in blender. Stir in chocolate and shape into balls. Chill or freeze. *Serves 20*

Laura DeSmit • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HEALTHY OATMEAL BALLS

- 4 cups old-fashioned oatmeal
- 2 cups peanut butter
- 1 cup honey

In large mixing bowl, add oatmeal and set aside. Microwave honey and peanut butter for 1-2 minutes. Mix until combined. Pour honey mixture over the oatmeal. Form small balls and place on wax paper. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Freezer friendly to pull out for a healthy snack! *Yields 48 small balls*

Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SUGAR-FREE GRANOLA

- ⅓ cup honey
- 1½ cups Sucanat
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 10 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup dry milk
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- optional toppings: coconut, nuts, raisins

Mix honey, Sucanat and oil in saucepan. Heat until Sucanat is dissolved (oil will separate). Mix all other ingredients in a large cake pan. Pour honey mixture over dry ingredients and stir well. Bake at 375 degrees F for 10-15 minutes. Once cooled, add coconut, nuts and/or raisins, if desired. Store in airtight container. Good as cereal with milk or plain for snacking. *Yields 16-20 cups*

Trina Nester • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HEALTHY DRINK

- 1 large banana
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 10 ice cubes

Cut banana into chunks. Mix all ingredients in a blender and blend well. Serve in a glass. *Serves 2*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BACON-PEA-SWISS SCRAMBLE

- 3 slices bacon
- 5 eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons chicken broth
- chili powder, to taste
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed and drained
- ½ cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 tablespoons Swiss cheese, shredded
- 4 teaspoons parsley

Cook bacon in a skillet, then cut into pieces. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, broth and chili powder. Stir in bacon, peas and tomatoes. Pour mixture into skillet and cook on medium-low heat, stirring until done. Fold in cheese and parsley.

Cook 30 seconds more, then serve immediately. *Serves 2*

**Beth Townsend • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy**

CALIFORNIA POWER BOWL

- ½ red bell pepper, sliced
- ½ red onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 dash black pepper
- 1 cup spinach or spring mix
- 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup cooked brown rice
- ¼ cup corn
- ¼ avocado, diced
- 1 tablespoon raw sunflower seeds
- 1 can tuna, optional

Sauté bell pepper and onion in avocado oil. Season with salt and pepper. Put spinach in a serving bowl and top with lemon juice. Mix in rice and corn. Top with warm peppers and onion. Add avocado, sunflower seeds and tuna, if desired. *Serves 1*

**Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

TERIYAKI CHICKEN & VEGETABLES

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup Bragg's liquid aminos
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 cups cabbage, sliced
- rice, optional

Mix first three ingredients together. Cut chicken into chunks and place in a slow cooker. Add vegetables on top. Pour marinade mixture over all ingredients. Cook on high for 2-3 hours, allowing steam to release naturally. Can be served over rice. *Serves 6-8*

**Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

CITRUS-PECAN QUINOA SALAD

- 1½ cups water
- ¾ cup quinoa, rinsed if not prewashed
- 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 2 cups romaine or greens of choice, chopped
- 1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans or chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 15-ounce cans mandarin orange slices, drained
- 3 mini-cucumbers, washed and sliced
- 1 cup pecan pieces, toasted

In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add quinoa and reduce heat. Cover and simmer 12-15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with fork and set aside to cool. Quinoa can be made a day ahead and refrigerated. In a small bowl, finely grate zest from a lemon, then cut and squeeze juice into the zest (can substitute with an orange). Whisk in oil, salt and pepper. In a large bowl, combine greens, beans, oranges, cucumbers and quinoa. Just before serving, add nuts and lemon dressing, toss to coat. *Serves 4-6*

**Karla R. Pals • Belmond
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

WANTED:

SPRINGTIME SALADS

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Jan. 31

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,
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ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE PREPARING FOR EXTREME WEATHER

BY SCOTT FLOOD

From the earliest days of electricity, weather has presented the biggest challenges to reliability and safety. Severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, derechos, heat waves, heavy snowfalls, flooding and ice events have long

put power lines and co-op crews to the test, including those in Iowa.

If you think storm events seem to be more frequent and more intense these days, you're not wrong. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which

tracks weather and climate disasters causing more than \$1 billion in damage, reported an annual average of 18 such events between 2018 and 2022. That compares to an average of just 8.1 major disasters per year from 1980 to 2017.

Proactive upgrades, vegetation management

While scientists and policymakers debate the causes of our wild weather, electric co-ops are diligently working to prepare for it. From coast to coast, cooperatives are taking steps to harden the vital infrastructure that delivers electricity to our members' homes, farms and other businesses. Co-ops have been upgrading equipment and our connections to the nation's electric power grid so we can better withstand disaster-level events. We're also taking steps to prevent damage from happening in the first place.

For example, you may have noticed our emphasis on tree trimming and other vegetation management strategies. Keeping trees and branches at a safe distance from power lines reduces the potential for weather-related outages. Like you, we're sometimes sad to see our favorite trees trimmed, but many of the outages we handle every year happen when trees tangle with power lines.

Because recent wildfires have spread to places where they've previously been rare, we also need to plan for the possibility of fires in our area. Keeping vegetation away from power lines and equipment helps us prevent wildfires and limit their spread.

Hardening our infrastructure will include a long list of other strategies. We're paying more attention to the condition of our system. If one of our power poles is damaged or otherwise weakened, strong winds might bring it down and leave a big area of our community in the dark. That's why we keep an eye on all our poles and install more durable replacements when necessary.

When our crews aren't fixing problems, they're working just as hard to prevent them from happening. Poles and wires are frequent targets for lightning, so we can protect the local power grid by installing devices that safely divert surges caused by lightning strikes.

Leveraging new technology

We also invest in sophisticated management systems – what some call the smart grid – capable of drawing our attention to potential issues before they grow into problems. Paired with innovative technology like reclosers, these systems are engineered to keep your power flowing even in the toughest weather conditions (or when



Vegetation management is a preventative process to keep trees and brush from coming into contact with power lines.



Extreme storms have long put power lines and Iowa's crews to the test.

a squirrel makes a poor choice). We're also taking steps to protect substations and other important outdoor equipment from severe weather events.

Outages, availability impact costs

Power outages are just one way extreme weather can affect your energy costs. Weather extremes in one part of the country can have significant effects on energy availability and costs elsewhere. As winter temperatures drop in many areas, the demand for heating drives market energy prices up, and not-for-profit electric co-ops may have to pass those higher costs along to members.

Reducing peak energy use

You and your neighbors can help us limit the impact of those higher costs

by shifting your energy use during peak times. For example, instead of running the dishwasher in the early evening when energy costs are highest, set it to run while everyone's asleep and rates are lower. The more members who help by reducing energy use at peak times, the less everyone will have to pay for energy.

Considering the impact of potential weather disasters and implementing steps to prevent damage is just one more example of your electric cooperative's dedication to making sure your power is always ready when you need it most.

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

TIPS TO STAY WARM AND SAVE ENERGY THIS WINTER

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell – the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

Understand how your home is heated

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

Adjust your thermostat

The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in



Air seal around plumbing penetrations with expanding foam to reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.



If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty.



Operating an additional heat source to warm a room or section of a home may increase your monthly electric bills.



The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. Adding a layer, slippers, a hat or a lap dog can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze.

Space heater considerations

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Block cold air

Air sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings. A common

air sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check.

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.

POWERING THE FUTURE OF IOWA'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

In today's world, sustainability and energy efficiency are paramount in the construction industry. The annual Momentum is Building Conference equips contractors and their teams with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in a rapidly changing construction landscape.

Iowa's electric cooperatives invite area building-trades professionals to the 2024 conference, scheduled for Feb. 8-9 at The Meadows Events and Conference Center in Altoona.

Iowa's electric cooperatives serve as a source of information and expertise for members to help save energy and lower their electric bills. Educating Iowa home builders and contractors about the latest energy-efficiency innovations is

another way to assist members in reaching their energy goals.

According to a 2021 National Association of Home Builders survey, "What Home Buyers Really Want, 2021 Edition," more buyers are willing to pay extra for a home if they understand it will lead to savings in annual utility costs. In fact, 57% are willing to pay \$5,000 or more (on top of the price of the home) to save \$1,000 a year on utilities.

For more than 30 years, the annual Momentum is Building Conference, sponsored and organized by the Iowa Cooperatives for Energy Efficiency, connects Iowa's construction industry with the local services and resources available from Iowa-based electric cooperatives, which serve nearly 650,000 Iowans across 99 counties.



Feb. 8-9, 2024

The Momentum is Building Conference serves as a resource to provide the information area contractors need to design and improve homes that are energy efficient, healthy, comfortable and affordable.

CONFERENCE BENEFITS

Stay ahead of the curve

Get the latest insights on industry trends, green building best practices and innovative construction technologies. There are opportunities to earn valuable Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for electricians, plumbers, and HVAC professionals.

Network

Connect with fellow contractors, builders, energy-efficient product specialists and industry experts. Share experiences and foster valuable partnerships.

Be inspired

Our list of speakers promises to inspire and provide valuable insights that will recharge your next project.

Sustainability matters

Discover energy-efficient products and practices and chat with the experts who market and sell products and services that can save money, attract more clients and contribute to a greener future.

For more information about the conference or to register, visit www.momentumisbuilding.com or call your electric cooperative.



DESIGN A T-SHIRT FOR YOUTH TOUR AND YOU COULD WIN \$300

During the annual rural electric cooperative Youth Tour every June, Iowa participants wear matching T-shirts on each day of the trip. It's an excellent opportunity to showcase our great state while providing a unifying theme and look for the students.

This year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) is excited to announce a new contest for design submissions. Students across Iowa, grades 9-12, can create a unique design for the 2024 Youth Tour. If selected, the winner will receive \$300 in cash!

The idea for a statewide design contest came from Olivia Marti, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, who is Iowa's representative on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Leadership Council (YLC). As part of YLC, Marti and other young leaders meet virtually and participate in leadership training, polish their public speaking, attend co-op forums, and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

Connecting youth leaders and providing them with experiences and exposure to our nation's capital is a cornerstone of the Youth Tour program.

Q: What is the Youth Tour?
Iowa's electric cooperatives have been sending high school students to Washington, D.C., since 1958! On the weeklong tour in June, students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as American citizens. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their elected legislators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital. In Iowa, students apply for slots from their local electric cooperative. High school students passionate about government and public service are encouraged to apply. **Learn more at iowayouthtour.com.**

Q: When is the deadline for T-shirt designs?
T-shirt designs must be submitted by midnight, March 1. Designs

should be accompanied by an application found at iowayouthtour.com and uploaded to Dropbox.

Q: What kinds of concepts would work well for design?
Since this trip is focused on learning more about government and our nation's history, the T-shirt theme centers around the seven cooperative principles and leadership. You can learn more about the cooperative principles at iowayouthtour.com. Iowa must be referenced in the design. IAEC welcomes students to use their imagination to create an eye-catching and meaningful design.

Q: Does my electric cooperative need to be part of the Iowa Youth Tour for me to participate?
No. The T-shirt design contest is open to any high school student in Iowa.

Q: Who will judge the contest?
A small group of electric cooperative representatives will vote on the winning design. The winner will be announced March 8.



2024 IOWA YOUTH TOUR T-SHIRT CONTEST

\$300 CASH PRIZE!



ABOUT THE CONTEST

- Open to any high school student (grades 9-12) regardless of co-op membership status.
- The theme is the seven cooperative principles and leadership.
- Shirt will be worn on one day of Youth Tour.
- The state of Iowa must be referenced.

TIMELINE

- Contest begins: Jan. 1
- Submissions due: March 1
- Winner Announced: March 8



Scan this code to upload your T-shirt design.

SUBMISSIONS: Entries must be submitted to Dropbox for review.

www.iowayouthtour.com



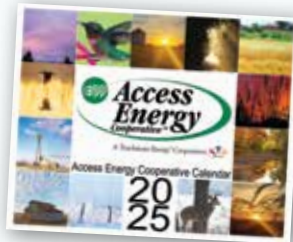
THANK YOU, MEMBER ADVISORY COMMITTEE!

Access Energy Cooperative held its fall member advisory committee meeting Nov. 28 at the cooperative office. The committee provides the board and staff with valuable feedback regarding programs and decisions important to the cooperative. The time these members dedicate to serving the cooperative is very much appreciated!

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.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

Access Energy Cooperative recently honored employees for their service at the annual employee appreciation dinner.

Congratulations to Tyler Thein for 5 years of service and Jay Prichard for 15 years of service. Your dedication to the members is greatly appreciated!



Tyler Thein



Jay Prichard

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.



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) _____



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

January 2024

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

WHERE WE HAVE MEMBERS WE ACTIVELY LIVE OUR COMMITMENT



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