

● APRIL 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Planning for growing
energy demand

Updating an older home for
efficiency and comfort

Breakfast and
brunch recipes

Win a \$100 spring spruce up gift card ▶ See Page 3

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Prayer in a pocket

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Heather Korver, 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!

DON'T BE AN APRIL FOOL: WORK SAFELY THIS SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



As the weather warms up, we're spending more time outdoors and tackling projects around the house that require power tools and other equipment.

Before you head outside, please take a moment to review these safety tips.

Don't dig yourself into trouble

April is National Safe Digging Month for a reason! Many of us will be working on landscaping and home improvement projects this spring that involve some digging. Remember to contact Iowa One Call at least two business days before you dig to any depth so underground utilities can be properly located and marked. It's the law, and it could save your life or prevent serious damage. Call or click before you dig – call 811 or visit www.IowaOneCall.com to process your request.

Avoid ladder pitfalls

Planning to use a ladder this spring? Always choose a non-conductive ladder made of wood or fiberglass for utmost safety. Pick a safe route to carry the ladder to the work area and then carry it horizontally rather than upright. Be aware of electrical lines and tree branches in the area where you are working. When using an extension ladder, tie off the top of the ladder whenever possible. Use the 1:4 lean ratio to ensure a stable working platform.

Plant seeds of safety

As you head into the fields to plant, always keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform anyone working with you about them. Plan your route

between fields and on public roads so you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make certain that contact is not made with a line.

If equipment makes contact with a power line, assume the line is energized and deadly. The operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, they will become a channel for electricity. Instead, the operator should stay on the equipment, keep others away and contact the local electric utility or 911 immediately to report

the incident so power lines can be deenergized safely before exiting.

Take shelter from the storm

Storm season has returned, and there is no safe place from lightning when you're outside. Be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms as lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately because it indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. Safe shelters include inside a building or in an enclosed metal-topped vehicle. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder is heard.

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A SPRING SPRUCE UP GIFT CARD!

Just in time for spring home improvement or landscaping projects, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to a local nursery, garden center or home improvement center. Use it for flowers, mulch, plants, tools or whatever you need to jump-start refreshing your home this spring!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than April 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 ecobee smart thermostat from the February issue was **Kenneth Wilder**, a **Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY APRIL 30!

APRIL IS SAFE DIGGING MONTH

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative is reminding all member-owners to call Iowa One Call by dialing 811 before you dig. Whether your project is building a deck, planting a tree, trenching in fields or landscaping, it's important to call before you dig.

Although light gardening typically doesn't call for deep digging, other seemingly simple tasks like planting shrubs or installing a new mailbox post can damage utility lines. A severed line can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm the person digging, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.



RVEC SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR TWO BOARD OF DIRECTORS POSITIONS

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is a member-owned cooperative governed by an elected board of directors. As an RVEC member, one of the most important ways you can participate in your cooperative is to vote in board elections - or to serve on the board yourself.

Two seats on the RVEC board of directors are up for election in 2026.

DISTRICT 4

Arcadia, Maple River, Kniest, Sheridan, Jasper, Cedar, Calhoun townships

DISTRICT 7

Galva, Eureka, Eden, Delaware, Douglas, Williams townships

These positions serve three-year terms and play a key role in shaping your cooperative's policies, financial decisions and long-term direction.

Board member qualifications

To be eligible to run for RVEC's board of directors, candidates must:

- Be an RVEC member receiving electric service in the district they live in and wish to represent.
- Be able to attend monthly board meetings, typically held on the third Wednesday of each month.
- Be willing to participate in periodic training sessions and informational meetings throughout the year.

Directors are reimbursed for their time with per diem and mileage payments.

Because the board helps set cooperative policies, review financials and guide RVEC's long-term planning, directors must commit the time required to these responsibilities.

Why serve?

Serving on the RVEC board is a meaningful opportunity to:

- Represent your friends and neighbors.
- Help guide the future of the cooperative.
- Support reliable, affordable electric service for all members.
- Gain valuable leadership and governance experience.

Interested in running?

Members who live within the open districts and want to learn more about serving on the board are encouraged to contact Jill Hannasch by calling 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211 or emailing jillh@rvec.coop.



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PLANNING FOR GROWING ENERGY DEMAND WHILE PROTECTING MEMBERS

BY KEATON HILDRETH



Across the country, electricity demand is rising as new industries and technologies grow. Large energy consumers like data

centers and advanced manufacturing plants need substantial power, which has raised concerns about how these increasing demands could affect electricity prices for households.

Recently, national leaders and major technology companies launched the Ratepayer Protection Pledge, which encourages large new energy users to pay for the costs of generation and infrastructure they require. The aim is to prevent these costs from being passed on to residential and small business customers.

Planning ahead for large energy users

For electric cooperatives, this idea is not new. In fact, the power providers that serve Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) — Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric) and Corn Belt Power Cooperative — have been planning for increased demand for several years.

Basin Electric has created a Large Load Program that ensures large facilities, such as data centers or manufacturing plants, cover the costs of the power and infrastructure they use. This policy helps keep electricity affordable for existing cooperative members while supporting responsible economic growth when it makes sense for the region.

Managing growth responsibly

As new industries continue to grow, electricity demand across the country is expected to increase at levels not seen in decades. While these developments can create economic opportunities, they must

Powering Growth Responsibly

Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Large Load Commercial Program Keeps Rates Stable and Communities Strong





MINIMIZES RATE IMPACTS

Insulates existing members from paying for the cost and risks of serving new, non-traditional large loads such as data centers.

SHARED OPPORTUNITY

Strengthens local economies and all members share in member growth, cost savings, and returns.

COOPERATIVE STRENGTH

SAFEGUARDS FINANCIAL STRENGTH

Reduces risk of stranded assets, protects Basin Electric's credit rating, and supports responsible capital investment.

ENABLES FLEXIBILITY

Creates a clear process that supports system growth while prioritizing member interests.



By working together to manage growth responsibly, Basin Electric ensures reliable, affordable power for all members today and for generations to come.

be managed carefully to ensure current members are not unfairly affected.

Electric cooperatives also help sustain Iowa's designated electric service territories. These areas ensure dependable service, prevent redundant infrastructure and promote fairness for rural customers.

Looking ahead

RVEC will continue working closely with our G&T partners to plan for the future of energy in a way that prioritizes the interests of our

members. Programs like Basin Electric's Large Load Program demonstrate that cooperatives are already taking proactive steps to manage new demand while protecting affordability.

At RVEC, our main goal remains the same as always — providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our member-owners. We are dedicated to managing growth responsibly while protecting the members we serve.

Keaton Hildreth is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



CO-OPS PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER BY TAPPING TOOLS AND SHARED RESOURCES

BY CATHY CASH

The epic Gulf Coast Blizzard of 2025 smothered New Orleans and surrounding communities in 10 inches of snow, but that's just one of many recent weird weather phenomena.

"Tornado alley" is widening from the Great Plains into the Deep South. Wildfires are no longer just a western worry but now are spreading smoke and destruction into the Midwest and Southeast.

As storm season comes, you might wonder what your electric co-op is doing to keep the lights on with Mother Nature's shifting paradigm. The short answer is: plenty.

"Electric co-ops are experiencing more extreme weather events all across the country and are busy preparing, planning and forecasting differently than they have in the past," said Jennah Denney, senior program manager of technology integration at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"Even co-ops who've yet to see unprecedented events, like the winter storms that hit Louisiana and Texas or the hurricanes ravaging parts of the Tennessee Valley, are definitely trying

to limit how much of their system goes down and to restore power as fast as they can using automation, technologies and outage data."

Technology offers earlier warnings

New sensors and weather-risk tools are giving co-ops early warning and situational awareness of threats like wildfires. Co-ops also use historical outage data to develop intelligent weather models that forecast potential crisis spots in their service territory.

"Co-ops are winterizing equipment in places like Arkansas and Louisiana that may not have had to winterize equipment before," said Denney.

Automated sensors, communications systems and data analytics allow co-ops to monitor their generation, power lines and other vital equipment in real-time.

Drones are being equipped with AI-trained cameras to scan electric distribution system equipment and highlight potential weak spots if severe weather rolls in. Co-ops are also updating their maintenance and vegetation management plans using drone cameras or satellite imagery.

Strengthening systems before the storm

Co-ops continue to replace aging wooden poles with steel and underground lines where it's cost-effective and environmentally sound to combat destruction from wind, floods and wildfires.

Then there's co-ops' real superpower: mutual aid.

Mutual aid: the co-op advantage

In the wake of the worst disasters, co-op crews volunteer to rise at any hour on any day to travel hundreds of miles to help rebuild another co-op's power lines and restore electricity to members, often in treacherous conditions.

"Mutual aid, grounded in the foundational principle of cooperation among co-ops, is one of the best stories we have in co-op land," said Denney. "As a co-op and a co-op member, you get help from faraway places during these crisis events."

Co-ops work hard to get mutual aid agreements and their logistics – from meals to laundry and lodging for the arriving crews – in place in advance of storm seasons.

The mission could take weeks and thousands of co-op lineworkers, like when horrific Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida, then roared up into the Carolinas' rural mountain communities in September 2024.

And there's no limit to the help a co-op can receive. Co-ops southwest of Houston welcomed mutual aid crews from outside Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, just three years after

volunteer lineworkers answered the call when deadly Winter Storm Yuri shocked the state.

"That's a great story of cooperation among cooperatives," said Denney, who last winter witnessed co-op bucket trucks from Indiana coming to New Orleans' aid. "As co-ops experience more of these extreme weather events, the history and tradition of co-ops helping co-ops is going to be even more important."

In and of itself, a co-op is an exceptional tool for surviving unexpected catastrophes.

"The co-op model lends itself to making sure that one area served by a rural electric co-op has the resources of our shared network," she said. "Willing to lend that helping hand is important as we all are navigating new weather patterns and weather events."

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

▶
New sensors and weather-risk tools are giving co-ops early warning and situational awareness of threats like wildfires.



▶
Drones are being equipped with cameras trained by artificial intelligence to scan electric distribution system equipment and spotlight potential weak spots if severe weather rolls in.



◀
As storm season nears, your electric cooperative is planning ahead and working hard to keep the lights on in the face of Mother Nature's shifting paradigm.

IOWA CO-OPS RESPOND TO SEVERE WEATHER AT HOME AND AWAY

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Iowa's electric cooperatives are no strangers to extreme weather. From derechos and ice storms to tornadoes and flooding, co-ops across the state regularly prepare for and respond to major disruptions that can damage miles of power lines and hundreds of poles.

The August 2020 derecho remains one of the most destructive weather events in Iowa's history, toppling poles, snapping trees and leaving widespread outages across the state.

More recently, severe weather again tested Iowa's rural electric

systems. In May 2024, a powerful tornado struck the Greenfield area, damaging homes, farms and electric infrastructure. Less than a year later, winter storms in early 2025 brought heavy ice, snow and strong winds that damaged power infrastructure in parts of northwest Iowa.

In each situation, electric cooperatives mobilized quickly, repairing infrastructure and restoring power to rural homes, farms and businesses with mutual aid assistance.

Cooperatives across the state coordinate storm response and

share resources through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, which helps organize mutual aid and support during large-scale outages. Iowa lineworkers also regularly travel to other states to help fellow cooperatives recover after major weather events.

For Iowa's rural communities, that spirit of cooperation ensures that when severe weather strikes, help is never far away.

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

Let's do Brunch



FAVORITE COFFEE CAKE

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon (scant)
- 1 package instant butterscotch pudding
- 1 cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salad oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 package instant vanilla pudding
- powdered sugar frosting

Combine brown sugar, pecans and cinnamon together and set aside. Mix butterscotch pudding, water, oil, vanilla and eggs. In a separate bowl, mix flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and vanilla pudding. Beat the first mixture together with the dry ingredients for 2 minutes, no longer. Pour half of this mixture into a 9x13-inch pan. Top with half of the brown sugar and pecan mixture. Pour in remaining batter and sprinkle with remaining brown sugar and pecan mix. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40-45 minutes. When done, drizzle with powdered sugar frosting. Serves 15-21, depending on slice size

Donna Faga • Adair
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

LOW-CARB EGG CASSEROLE

- 1 12-ounce bag frozen riced cauliflower
- 1 12-ounce bag frozen mushrooms
- 1 10- or 12-ounce bag frozen chopped onions
- 1 pound lean ground turkey
- 1 pound lean turkey sausage
- 18 eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried vegetable or dried onion soup mix

The night before, place frozen vegetables in the refrigerator to thaw. Place mushrooms and onions in a strainer to thaw and drain. The next morning, cook ground turkey and turkey sausage, drain. Add thawed vegetables and meat to a greased 9x13-inch casserole dish. Distribute evenly to cover the entire casserole dish. In a medium-sized bowl, beat eggs with an electric mixer. Add salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, Parmesan cheese and dried soup mix. Pour over vegetables and meat. If desired, add more Parmesan cheese. Bake at 375 degrees F for about an hour. The casserole should be set firm enough to cut, but not over-browned. Place dish on a trivet or cooling rack. Cut into squares and serve immediately. Yield: 10-12 servings.

Richard R. Buller • Burlington
Access Energy Cooperative

◀ BLUEBERRY COFFEECAKE

- ½ cup coconut
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 package blueberry muffin mix
- 1 8-ounce can crushed pineapple, with juice
- 1 egg

Mix coconut, brown sugar, butter and flour. Set aside. Rinse blueberries with cold water, drain and pat dry. Mix muffin mix, pineapple and egg until moistened. Fold blueberries into batter, then spread batter into a 9-inch square pan. Sprinkle coconut topping over batter. Bake at 350 degrees F for 25-30 minutes. Can double the recipe and bake in a 9x13-inch pan.

**Carole Ristau • Eagle Grove
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

BISCUITS AND GRAVY BAKE

- 2 16.3-ounce cans refrigerated biscuits
- 2 pounds ground sausage
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2½ cups milk
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- pinch cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon fresh chives, chopped, optional

Cut biscuits into quarters and add half to a 9x13-inch pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 375 degrees F for 12-15 minutes, until golden. Meanwhile, cook sausage in a large skillet over medium heat, breaking up meat with a wooden spoon. Cook for about 6 minutes, until sausage is no longer pink. Add flour and cook for 1 minute more. Pour in milk and whisk to combine. Season with salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper. Bring gravy to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about three minutes, until thickened. Remove from heat and pour gravy over par-baked biscuits. Top with remaining biscuits. Brush biscuits with melted butter and season with black pepper. Bake 20 minutes, until golden and cooked through. Garnish with chives before serving. *Yield: 8 servings*

**Virginia Arens • Brooklyn
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

GERMAN POTATO PANCAKES

- 5 cups raw potatoes, grated (2 pounds)
- 6 tablespoons flour
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅔ cup cooking oil
- applesauce, optional
- sausage, optional

Combine potatoes, flour, onion, eggs and salt. Put oil in a 10-inch skillet and heat. Pour potato mixture into hot oil, using about ¼ cup for each pancake. Cook until golden brown on each side. Serve with applesauce or sausage. *Yield: 6-8 pancakes*

**Ava Nester • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

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



SWEET POTATO HASH

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 4 slices thick-cut bacon
- 6 scallions
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ cup water
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1½ teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder

Peel sweet potatoes and cut into ¾-inch pieces. Set aside. Cook bacon until crisp. While bacon is cooking, slice scallions, keeping the white and light green parts separate from the dark green parts. Once bacon is cooked crisp, put it on a paper towel-lined plate and reserve drippings in the skillet. Add sweet potatoes, peppers and light parts of the scallions to the skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally until beginning to soften. Add water, salt, paprika, cumin and garlic powder. Cover and cook about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally until potatoes are mostly tender. Uncover and turn heat up to medium high. Cook stirring occasionally until potatoes are tender, slightly browned and all the liquid is evaporated. Stir in bacon and green scallions. *Serves 6-8*

**Michelle Heath • Parkersburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

WANTED:

COOL & CRISP SUMMER RECIPES

THE REWARD:

**\$25 BILL CREDIT FOR
EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

Deadline is April 30

We're looking for your favorite **summer recipes** that require little to no cooking. Think cool and crisp salads, sandwiches, wraps, grain bowls or veggie and fruit dishes! Selected submissions will appear in our August issue, providing refreshing recipes for hot, humid days. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

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MAKING AN OLD HOUSE WORK FOR TODAY

BY NATE BIRT

You love your older rural house and want to honor its history while upgrading it for modern living.

Whether you own a century-old farmhouse or a midcentury ranch, experts say a thoughtful approach can help you modernize your home while preserving its character.

Keep your house's bones intact to honor its history

As you evaluate renovation options, start by appreciating what you're working with. View your house's strengths and limitations as both an echo of the past and a guide for its next chapter.

"Old buildings are usually constructed very well. They were built at a time when people understood that the quality of their work was a reflection of their character," said Melinda McKnight, CEO of Energy Conservation Services. She and her husband Bill consult on building science and energy efficiency with homeowners whose properties date back to the 1600s.

Still, older homes come with "some inherent limitations," Melinda said. Modern preferences, such as open concepts and cathedral ceilings, may not always be a good fit.

"A lot of times, unless those features are done with the guidance of a building scientist, those kinds of decisions can actually cause damage if they're not done properly," she said.

The same goes for tossing out old windows or woodworking without realizing they might be restored and retrofitted to improve energy efficiency.

Restoring old windows is often key to preservation. It's also important to protect fireplace mantels, surrounds and banister handrails, which are architecturally significant features.

Other irreplaceable hardware worth preserving includes old doorknobs, hinges and locks.

Interior treatments can enhance energy efficiency

Home improvement shows often highlight color palettes and visual

upgrades. Experts say the biggest payoff usually comes from improvements you don't see.

"Achieving improved comfort and efficiency in buildings requires air sealing and insulating the bottom and top of the building envelope, the area you pay to heat and cool," Melinda said.

Start with the attic and basement or crawlspace rather than walls and windows.

"Our goal is always to address the bottom and the top of the building envelope," she said. "That's usually the low-hanging fruit."

The reason is simple physics. Warm air rises and escapes through the top while cold air enters through gaps along the bottom.

"Only 30% of net heat gain and loss goes out the side of your house," said Gus Adams, co-owner of a renovation and historic preservation company. "Heat rises and cool air goes down. So the two most important

things are insulating the attic and crawlspace or basement.”

Next, identify and seal places where air leaks occur. Rim joists, where the wooden frame meets floor joists, are a common example.

“Wherever wood meets wood, that’s an air leak,” Melinda said. “Outdoor air entering conditioned space can create condensation and mold. And anywhere there’s an air leak, it’s an opportunity for a rodent to enter.”

For air sealing, use professional-grade foam, a metal applicator gun and an acetone-based cleaner rather than disposable straw kits that can clog.

Other energy-efficiency upgrades for rural homes include:

- **Installing a mini-split:** These systems heat and cool individual rooms in homes without room for ductwork. They work best in houses that are properly air sealed and insulated.
- **Caulking air gaps:** Fill gaps with caulk or one-part foam. Common leakage points include outlet boxes, window trim and plumbing penetrations on exterior walls.

Exterior investments should divert water, improve comfort

When preserving your home’s structure and history, managing water is essential.

A common issue is downspouts that don’t extend far enough away from the home. Ideally they should discharge water at least 8 feet from the house.

Roof problems also deserve careful attention. A leak doesn’t always mean the entire roof must be replaced. Sometimes replacing flashing, the metal pieces that prevent water entry, solves the problem.

“If there are roof lines that come together creating valleys, you want flashing there,” Melinda said. “You also want step flashing along chimneys and stack pipes.”

Also examine cantilevers, which are floor sections that extend beyond the foundation.



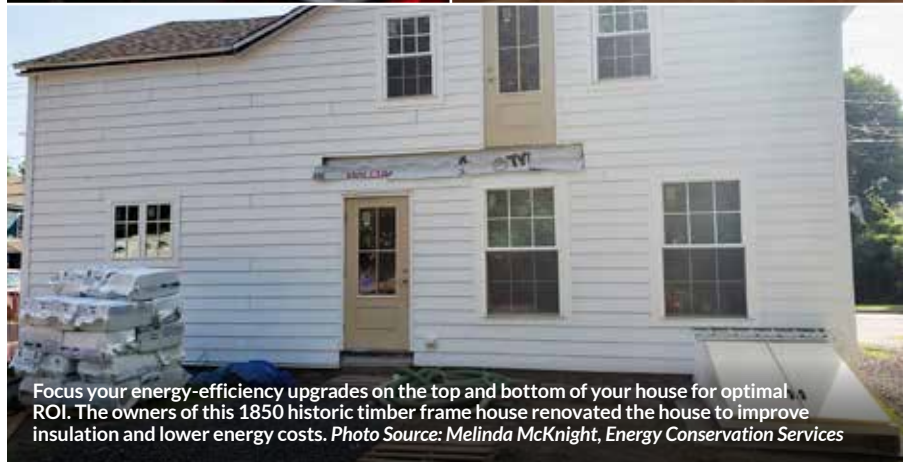
A blower door test can measure the airtightness of a home and identify hidden air leaks.



A 1889 rural farm house before renovations. The house was lifted to stabilize the existing structure, installing modern infrastructure and creating a daylight basement.



Achieving improved comfort and efficiency in buildings requires air sealing and insulating. Begin with the attic and basement or crawlspace.



Focus your energy-efficiency upgrades on the top and bottom of your house for optimal ROI. The owners of this 1850 historic timber frame house renovated the house to improve insulation and lower energy costs. Photo Source: Melinda McKnight, Energy Conservation Services

“If you put a three-season room on the first floor but don’t take care of the underside properly, that’s an air leak,” Melinda said. “It can lead to discomfort and higher utility bills.”

Raised ranch homes built in the 1970s often include cantilevers along the front of the house that can create cold floors.

Do your DIY and know your limits

Many upgrades are manageable for handy homeowners, but it’s important to understand your limits.

Air sealing gaps, cracks and penetrations is often more important than adding insulation. Focus on gaps around plumbing and electrical penetrations.

If you remove trim, scrollwork, windows or other historic

features, store them rather than discarding them so they can be restored later, if desired.

For major upgrades, including full electrical rewiring or major plumbing work, hire a licensed and insured professional. Exterior painting projects should also be handled by specialists experienced with older homes and historic materials.

“As a steward of a historic home, treat it kind of like it’s an archaeological site,” added Katie Adams, co-owner of a renovation and historic preservation company. “It’s really important to leave the original fabric of the home because you are caring for it now.”

Nate Birt is special contributor to Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT IMPACT YOUR ENERGY BILL

Temperature swings can lead to unpredictable energy use as we transition from winter to spring. While heating systems may still be used on chilly days, longer daylight hours and milder weather provide great energy-saving opportunities. By understanding the factors influencing electricity costs, you can make informed decisions to improve efficiency and manage your energy expenses.



What affects electricity prices?

- **Fuel costs** – Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) purchases electricity from Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. The cost of fuels, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuates with supply and demand, which affects electricity rates.
- **Extreme weather** – Cold snaps and heat waves increase energy demand, which can strain supply and raise costs.
- **Infrastructure and maintenance** – A monthly facility charge helps maintain power lines, substations and grid infrastructure, ensuring reliable service.

- **Energy policies and regulations** – Federal policies shape the energy industry. As regulations evolve and renewable energy expands, system upgrades and new technologies add costs that may impact consumers.

- **Shift energy use to off-peak hours** – Running appliances like dishwashers and washing machines during off-peak hours can help balance energy demand.
- **Seal air leaks** – Weatherproofing doors and windows keeps warm air during winter and cool air during summer, reducing strain on your HVAC system.

How you can reduce your energy use

While external factors influence electricity prices, you can take steps to boost efficiency and lower your bill:

- **Adjust the thermostat** – Keep it at the lowest comfortable setting in winter and the highest comfortable setting in summer.
- **Maintain your HVAC system** – Schedule annual maintenance and replace air filters regularly to keep your system running efficiently.

At RVEC, we are committed to providing our member-owners with reliable and affordable electricity. Visit www.rvec.coop for energy-saving programs, tools and expert tips to help you save!

CELEBRATING THE PEOPLE WHO POWER YOUR COOPERATIVE

April is Employee Appreciation Month, and at Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), it's the perfect time to recognize the people who serve our member-owners.

From the lineworkers who maintain and restore power in all kinds of weather to the employees who support operations, member services, finance, communications and safety, every member of the RVEC team plays an important role in keeping your cooperative running smoothly.

Our lineworkers are often the most visible, responding at all hours to

safely restore power and maintain the electric system. Behind the scenes, office and support staff assist members, manage billing, plan projects and ensure the cooperative continues operating efficiently.

Together, this team shares one goal: delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity to the members we serve. Just as importantly, RVEC employees are committed to the communities they call home. They volunteer, support local events and take pride in giving back to the towns and rural areas they help power.



During Employee Appreciation Month, we thank our entire RVEC team for their dedication, hard work and commitment to serving our members and communities.

STAY SAFE THIS SPRING: IMPORTANT OUTDOOR SAFETY REMINDERS

Spring is here, and that means ditch burning, field work, planting and more time spent outdoors. As activity picks up across our communities, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) encourages all members to keep electrical safety in mind with the following tips.

Burning ditches and brush

- Never burn under or near power lines or utility poles.
- Watch wind conditions to prevent flames or heat from damaging electrical equipment.
- If a fire damages a pole or line, contact RVEC immediately.

Digging, tilling and field work

Before digging, installing fence posts or starting any ground disturbance

project, call 811 to have underground utilities located. In Iowa, it's the law to call 811 before any digging project. Striking an underground electric line can cause serious injury and costly damage.

Large equipment and planting

Modern equipment is taller and wider than ever. To safely navigate large equipment:

- Always maintain at least 10 feet of clearance from overhead power lines.
- Be cautious when raising augers or fold-up equipment.
- If equipment contacts a power line, stay inside (if safe to do so) and call 911.

- If you are in immediate danger and must leave the equipment, jump as far away from the machinery as possible and bunny hop (both feet landing together) away.

- Never get back on machinery that touches a power line until the utility company disconnects the line.

Outdoor play

- Keep kites, drones and other flying objects away from power lines.
- Never attempt to retrieve items caught in lines – call RVEC for help.

If you see a downed line, stay far away and contact us immediately. A little extra awareness this spring can help keep everyone safe.

HELP US FIND THESE FORMER MEMBERS



Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, located at 28725 Highway 30, PO Box 486, Glidden, IA 51443 is holding unclaimed property resulting from patronage dividends, which are due to the persons listed below. The owner may claim this property by contacting us at the address listed above and or by phone at 712-659-3649 during regular office hours.

Adams, Verl V.	Commnet Cellular Inc.	Grubb, Lyle	Kruse, Tami	Myers, W.	Schramm, Albert W.
American Concrete North	Cooper-Mitchell Farms	GTE Telephone	Lang, Earl	Nelsen, Michael J.	Schroeder, V. L.
Anthofer, Robby J.	(Tim Smith)	Operations	Lappe, Jeff	Nichols, Royce D.	Schubert, Travis & Jodi
Anthofer, Rob or Deb W.	Corderman, Larry	Haberl, Billie J.	Lappe, Reynold J.	Notley, Mervin E. (Skip)	Simons, Justin
Aquila INC	Corey, Lou	Halbur, Doug J.	Larkins, Marjorie	Norwood, Bob or Violet	Smith, John W.
Arrowsmith, Rex	Corsaut, Charles F.	Hall, Terry	Larson, Craig	Novartis (Allen Brush)	Smith, Thomas Q.
Baas, Roger	Croghan, William JR.	Hammen, Carol	Laxson, Michelle or Tony	Nye, William P.	Sondgeroth, S.H.
Bailey, Kirby	Cuddy, Mark F.	Hammond, Cecil A.	Lewis, Lila M.	Olson, Beth G.	Sprint Cellular
Baker, Mrs. Helen	Daniels, Larry K.	Hare, John J.	Lockhart, Thomas L.	Olson, Mark	Spontanski, Jason
Baker, Wayne	Davis, Paul	Hatch, Kevin	Long, Kyle	Ort, Larry	Straight, Lewis J.
Barrett, Kristyn S.	Demaray, Jay	Heath, Duane F.	Ludwig, Lonnie	Petersen, Julie M. or D.	Thompson, Mark
Bauer, Mark	Dieckman, Rick L.	Hechtner, R.W.	Maack, Dean	Peterson, Tom	Thorpe, Dennis
Bellcock, Chris & Kyle	Hedberg, Henry A.	Heun, Nancy	Mahler, Leroy H.	Petschauer, Clifford	Tom & Schmit
Bell, Robert	Drees, Mary J.	Hofbauer, Matt (Tammy	Malloy, Pat	Pithan, Brad	Tyson Fresh Meats
Bennett, Jerry	Duff, Paul	Crawford)	Martin, Bruce	Post, John	Ulven, Alan
Blessington, Arnold	Edwards, Dale	Hofbauer, SW or Joe	Mason, David D.	Pryor, Cindy R. or Lowell	Uren & Schulte
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Boswell Const. Corp.	Esdohr, S.P. or Michael	Hyland/Litchfield,	(John McMullen)	Rasmussen, Jane	Van Eck, Eric
Brechwald, Jim	Ferdig, R.L.	Kathy/Misty	McBride, Earl	Reiling, Lyn S. or John	Van Meter, Sherri
Brenner, Julie	Flink, Terry	Iowa Telecom	McCollough, Stacie	Reinart, Ashley	Vaughn, Robert or Janna
Brincks, Matt	Fogleman, Steve	Jackson, Jason	McConnell, Dick	Reineke, Peggy	Venteicher, Randy
Brown, Miriam	Fort, Duane	Janus, Kevin	McCoy, Judy A.	Rice, Gary	Voss, Jack
Building & Trade Home	Fox, Jason S.	Jennett, Mary W.	Mehrhoff, Mark	Robertson, Rick	Wallace, Joleen
(Sac Resources Inc)	Franken, Dean	Jensen, Twila	Mettler, Gene E.	Rohlin Construction	Wayt, David
Burton, Sherri	Freier, Eugene	Johnson, Marjorie	Meyer, Harlan	Romey Electric Inc.	Willenborg, Chris
Carpenter, Loretta	Frohlich, Lynn or Tiffany	Johnson, Rita	Meyer, Herbert or	Ross, Michael	Wilson, John
Carruthers, Joseph	Funck, Neal	KCP & L/Aquila INC.	Charlotte	Ruden, Francis	Wolterman, James W.
or Leeann	Girardin, Mrs. Gladys E.	Kelley, Dwight J.	Meyer, Robert	Sanchez, Vanessa	Wood, Pat
Casperson, Gary	Graff, Peg	or Carolyn	Mickelson, Kenneth R.	Sanderman, Kenneth G.	Wooden, Michael
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CIBA-GEIGY Corp.	Greving, Pam	Koth, Marlin	Mitchell, Victori J.	Schleisman, Brian or Chris	Zahren, Terry
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Clausen, Joyce	Grimm, Thomas		Muilenburg, Rachel	Schrader, D.T. or Steve	

SPRING CLEANING TIPS TO MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY

Adopting simple yet effective energy-saving strategies during spring-cleaning routines can create an efficient living environment that may also lower utility bills and extend the life of heavily used appliances.



Protect equipment and maximize efficiency with a clean filter.

Check the filter in your HVAC system. Ensuring your system has a clean filter is a low-cost and easy way to protect your equipment and maximize efficiency. You should have your air conditioning serviced and professionally cleaned. Dirty refrigerant coils reduce efficiency. This also applies to heat pumps and ductless heat pumps.



Schedule checkups before the heat arrives.

Scheduling cleaning services for your air conditioning in the spring – before the heat of the summer – can ensure the work gets done before the rush and even save you money. Window AC units can get dirty, too. They can be cleaned with the proper tools, cleaning agents and know-how. Always unplug units before cleaning, and wait until it is completely dry before plugging it back in again.



Brighten your space.

Cleaning light fixtures and fixture covers can brighten your space by removing dust and grime collected during the winter. While you're at it, check your bulbs and

replace any incandescent or compact fluorescent with energy-saving LEDs. Although they tend to cost a little more, LEDs last longer and use less energy.



Clean the oven and windows.

A clean oven heats more evenly and quickly, providing better results and lower energy use. A clean oven window allows you to see the food and how it's cooking without opening the oven door, which wastes energy. When cleaning windows, check the seals and sash locks to ensure they close tightly. Check for any areas that need caulking or sealing to reduce drafts.

Spring is the ideal time to declutter, deep clean and implement practices that tidy our homes and reduce energy consumption.

WANTED: RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100.

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

How to enter:

- 1 Snap a photo capturing rural Iowa (image must be high quality, at least 1MB large; if taken on a phone, send us the largest version – bigger is better!).
- 2 Send us the original, high-resolution image file in an email to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.
- 3 Include your **name**, **service address** and the **name of your electric cooperative** in the email body to ensure you qualify for our contest. A **phone number** is also appreciated in case we need to contact you.

All eligible entries are reviewed and considered for each edition of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. Keep an eye out for next month's winner!



A PRAYER IN YOUR POCKET

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Lining your pockets doesn't have the best connotation, but that's exactly what I did back in December. It happened at an unlikely place – a day-long class on artificial intelligence, hosted by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

When I lined my pockets, though, I did it in the most low-tech way possible, and there was nothing unethical about it. I sat down to lunch at the Sheraton West Des Moines, and the lady to my left pulled a little plastic sandwich bag from her purse. Inside were 2-inch by 2-inch mini quilts in an array of colors and block designs, each with a tiny cross tucked in between the layers of fabric and batting.

The kind lady was Pat VonAhnen from Marshalltown, who's been a Consumers Energy board director for 18 years. She started handing out the little quilts to everyone at our table.

What a delightful surprise! Then I noticed the words printed on the back. "This 'Pocket Prayer Quilt' was made especially for you to slip in your pocket. Throughout the day, when your fingers touch the cross inside the quilt, be mindful of God's love and grace for you. Keep it as a tangible symbol of God's peace."

"You just never know who needs one," Pat told me.

Pass it on

Pat mentioned her audiologist, who's one of the most cheerful, upbeat people she knows. One day, though, something seemed amiss. Pat passed along a pocket prayer quilt.

That little quilt ended up being a more important source of comfort than anyone realized. The audiologist was recovering from major surgery, and it was tough. Today, the audiologist gladly shares pocket prayer quilts (which Pat supplies) with anyone who needs one.



Consumers Energy Director Pat VonAhnen makes these pocket prayer quilts to share with others.

This remarkable story reminded me of one of the ladies at our lunch table of Elijah in the Bible, specifically First Kings, 19:12, "... after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper." "These pocket prayer quilts are like listening to a whisper, not a big hurrah," she noted.

Pat agreed, saying it's that gentle whisper that usually inspires her to ask people if they'd like a pocket prayer quilt. "I'll feel a little nudge that I should give one to the person I'm with. I listen to that small voice."

The pocket prayer quilt ministry started simply enough when Pat sewed eight pocket prayer quilts to share at a ladies' tea in the spring of 2025. The idea took root after her sister-in-law gave her a pocket prayer quilt for Christmas.

As Pat handed the little quilts out to the ladies during the tea, she heard a common refrain: "How did you know I needed this?"

Pat decided she could make 20 more, and that would be it. The more quilts she gave, however, the more she knew this must continue. "I wasn't looking for another project, but it picked me," said Pat, a longtime

community volunteer. "I'd think of 10 more people I could give them to, and then I'd think of 10 more."

Sharing the gift of hope

This pocket prayer ministry has taken on a life of its own. Pat's pastor shares the quilts. People sometimes donate money to help Pat buy more fabric and supplies. "This has been an unexpected opportunity to share," said Pat, who sews small and medium pocket prayer quilts for people of all ages, men and women, friends and strangers.

These little pocket prayer quilts seem even more extraordinary at Easter and spring. During this time of renewal and new life, we're reminded, sometimes by a tiny quilt in our pocket, that the greatest gift of this season is hope.

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



Scan the QR code for instructions on how to make a pocket prayer quilt.



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
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Iowa's electric
cooperatives

April 2026

Visit our website at www.rvec.coop

A group of approximately ten people, including men and women, are gathered in a workshop or training area. They are dressed in work attire, including hard hats and safety glasses. In the center, a man in a light blue shirt and white cap is speaking to the group. To the left, a woman in a light blue shirt is also engaged in the discussion. A piece of equipment with a sign that says "SAFETY TRAINING" is visible in the background. The floor is concrete, and there are yellow safety barriers and orange traffic cones in the background.

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**.

From the on-going training of our lineworkers to
classroom safety programs for our kids.

Our commitment to electrical safety has always been job one.
So, we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's
why safety runs through everything we do.



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