

● APRIL 2024

# iowa

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING**

**Ways to manage  
your energy costs**

**Money-saving gardening tips**

**Egg-ceptional recipes**

**Win a \$100 gift card to a local garden center ▶ See Page 3**

# COST CONSIDERATIONS FOR A RATE INCREASE

BY BRADY BOELL



The electric industry is facing the challenge of rising costs due to inflation, which affects everything we buy. Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

(RVEC) has not increased its rates since Dec. 1, 2016, but over recent years, the prices of supplies, materials and equipment have increased significantly.

As a cooperative, we are committed to being financially responsible and providing reliable and safe service to our member-owners. To do this, we use cost-of-service studies, annual budgets and 10-year financial forecasts to guide our decisions. Based on these analyses, a rate increase was necessary.

RVEC buys most of the materials we need from the cooperative network,

which helps us get fair prices and reliable materials. We want to serve our member-owners better by investing in innovative technology that can make our work more efficient and dependable, helping member-owners save energy, and using alternative energy sources when they are more cost-effective.

### Tips for managing your energy costs

As a cooperative member-owner, you can reduce energy use and save money. Here are some ways to save:

- ✓ **Be energy efficient.** Turn off lights and appliances when not in use, adjust your thermostat and seal air leaks. We offer free energy assessments to help identify places to save.
- ✓ **Track your usage online.** Use our free mobile app or web-based system (SmartHub) to see how much energy you use and compare it with previous periods.

### ✓ Get energy efficiency rebates.

We have rebates for installing certain energy-efficient appliances, equipment or insulation. Visit [www.rvec.coop](http://www.rvec.coop) or call us at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211 for more information.

### ✓ Join our load management program.

If you have an electric water heater, we can remotely control it during peak demand times to reduce the electricity cost for the cooperative. You will not notice any difference in your hot water supply.

Our goal is to keep your costs low while ensuring high-quality service. You are an important part of RVEC, and we appreciate your support. We strive to deliver safe, reliable and affordable power to you every day.

*Brady Boell is the director of safety and member services for Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.*



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## ALTERNATE ENERGY PURCHASE PROGRAM

All member-owners of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) may contribute money toward a fund that will assist in the purchase of alternative or “green” energy in Iowa. Member-owners can participate in the Alternate Energy Program by writing in the amount of their contribution on their electric bill. Member-owners may contribute increments of one dollar (\$1) and can enter or leave the contribution program at any time.

Those who contribute are not guaranteed that electricity generated with renewable resources will be delivered to their individual meters.

The contributions are given to assist in the development of alternate energy in Iowa and will be spent to deliver renewable energy into the Corn Belt Power Cooperative system from which our cooperative receives power.







## CERTIFICATION NEEDED TO TRIM TREES NEAR POWER LINES

Can anyone trim trees near power lines? The answer is no. Specialized tree trimmers, certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in utility clearance, are the only persons legally allowed to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

OSHA requires this certification because electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to tree workers. According to the Tree Care Industry Association, electricity is the leading cause of death in the tree care industry, causing about 15% of all industry fatalities. Tree care industry workers do not have to directly contact a power line to be electrocuted; about half of all electrocution fatalities are the result of indirect contact.

Qualified line-clearance trimmers must be specially trained in how to work in proximity to energized lines

safely. They must understand how an electrical grid functions, the effects of tree growth patterns and tree damage and how to implement directional pruning, as required by the American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations' safety standards.

According to OSHA, the duties of line-clearance-certified tree trimmers typically include the following:

- Undergoing annual evaluations by licensed professionals to ensure continuous adherence to industry best practices.
- Requesting job briefings from employers and other crew members before starting a job or when environmental conditions change.
- Properly wearing approved personal protective equipment, including fall protection equipment, when needed.

- Complying with material handling and mechanical equipment requirements.
- Working with a second line-clearance tree trimmer within voice range.
- Determining the voltages of lines before work begins or assuming that the line is operating at the highest possible voltage if it is not possible to determine voltage.
- Ensuring body parts and any ladders, platforms or aerial devices being used remain outside the minimum approach distance from any energized equipment.
- Using only insulated tools and equipment to remove branches and limbs that are in contact with, or are within the minimum approach distance of, energized lines or equipment.
- Determining if weather conditions are no longer safe to work in, such as the presence of high winds, ice, thunder or lightning that would make the work hazardous.
- Beginning work on storm restoration efforts in the aftermath of a storm if they have been trained in the special hazards involved with this type of work.

Please contact your power provider if you have any questions about line-clearance tree trimmers or tree trimming near power lines.

For information on electrical safety, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

## 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 a deck addition, 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.



## TORNADO SAFETY TIPS

### Practice and prepare

Know where you'll meet your family during the tornado (and after). Practice a tornado drill annually. Keep a weather radio in your storm shelter, along with safety supplies.

### Know the signs

- Look for swirling clouds.
- Watch for quick wind shifts or stark calm after heavy rain.
- Listen for a loud roar or rumble that doesn't fade.

### Seek shelter

Go to your basement, a small interior room or under stairs on the lowest floor of the house. If you live in a mobile home, get out and look for a stable building. If outside, find low ground – away from trees and cars – and lie face down with your arms protecting your head.

### After the storm

Stay away from downed power lines and avoid flooded areas – power lines could be submerged and still be live with electricity. Don't enter seriously damaged buildings and avoid using matches and lighters in case of gas leaks.

## PLAY IT SAFE AROUND POWER LINES

Digging holes, climbing trees, flying kites – outdoor play often creates beautiful childhood memories. Before hitting the great outdoors, discuss electrical safety with your children.

### Flying fun

While flying kites, model airplanes, remote-controlled flying toys and drones, stay in large, open areas (such as parks or fields), far away from power lines. If an item gets caught in a power line, teach children never to try and retrieve it. Instead, an adult should call their electric utility for help.

### General outdoor safety tips

Other important safety guidelines for kids and adults alike include:

- Never throw objects at power lines.
- Stay far away from downed, damaged or low-hanging power lines. An adult should call 911 to report a downed or damaged line.
- Be cautious after a severe storm that caused a power outage. Downed power lines could be hidden under water, snow or storm debris. Wait to go outside until power has been restored.

- Do not climb, sit or play on pad mount transformers (green boxes).
- Do not climb trees that have overhead power lines near or running through them.

### Poolside

When spending time by the pool in warm weather, look overhead when using pool skimmers or other long objects to be sure you are not getting close to an overhead power line. If you are swimming and feel a prickly or tingling sensation, do not stay in the pool. There could be a stray electric current from a downed power line or a damaged electrical device. Also, never play in a flooded street or ditch; a downed power line could be hidden by the water and fallen debris.

### Prevention is key

Electric shock and injuries are often preventable. Empower your family with electrical safety knowledge to avoid preventable electric injuries.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

## AUTOMATICALLY PAY YOUR BILL



With your permission, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is able to withdraw your electric payment automatically from your bank account. Our bank will accept pre-authorized payments from any bank.

Payments are withdrawn from your bank account on the 20th of each month. At this time, there is no charge for this service; however, if our bank begins charging us, we will begin charging you a fee. If there are insufficient funds in your bank to cover your pre-authorized payment, an insufficient funds processing charge of \$30, plus bank charges, will be applied.

Please contact RVEC if you would like your payments automatically withdrawn from your bank account.

# LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY IS APRIL 8

Thank you for helping to power our communities.

**#ThankALineworker**



## SEEKING MEMBER INPUT

**Survey to take place in April**

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is a member-owned cooperative with the purpose of providing you with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. As a member-owned entity, we rely on your feedback to ensure we meet your needs and provide the best service possible. This is why surveys are important.

Surveys provide RVEC with valuable insights into how our members feel about the services we provide. By surveying members, we can identify areas where we excel and areas where improvements are needed. This feedback can be used to make important decisions about allocating resources and improving operations.

In April, many of you will be randomly selected to participate in a satisfaction survey. The anonymous survey will help us better serve you. If you are selected, please take the time to share your honest feedback. By understanding your needs, we can provide stronger service and ensure the long-term success of RVEC. If you have questions regarding this survey, please contact our office at 800-253-6211 or 712-659-3649.







IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING


The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives.

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Visit our website at [www.rvec.coop](http://www.rvec.coop)

# SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A photograph of two utility workers in yellow safety gear and white hard hats standing in a bucket truck. The bucket truck is white and has the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives logo on its side. They are positioned on a utility site with power lines and a clear sky in the background. The truck is parked on a paved area with orange traffic cones visible in the foreground.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**. This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  
The power of human connections™