



● FEBRUARY 2024

Iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



Energy and economic
insights and trends

Rate increase expected in 2024

Soup and stew recipes

Win a Café™ Express Finish toaster ▶ See Page 3

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Libby Teunissen, a Lyon 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 STATEWIDE BOARD PRESIDENT IS NO STRANGER TO THE CO-OP BOARD ROOM

BY KENNY VANDENBERG



We've all heard the saying that when one door closes, another door opens. It certainly applies to my life as the door to cooperative service opened for me when I retired a while back. Thirteen years ago, I was asked to consider serving on the Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative board in Albia. As a lifelong resident of Monroe County, I thought it would be a great opportunity to serve my community and learn more about my local electric cooperative.

After serving on the local co-op board for several years, I had an opportunity to put my name on the ballot for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) board. I was eager to join the statewide board and expand my industry knowledge and working relationships with others, including our state and federal legislators. Formed in 1942, IAEC is the statewide trade association for Iowa's electric cooperatives, and it provides several services to its member co-ops, including legislative representation, regulatory oversight, training and education services, safety programs, communications support, and advocacy.

Productive and proactive leadership

Serving on the IAEC board for more than five years, I was honored to take the helm as board president in December. I truly enjoy the camaraderie of working with my fellow statewide directors and the statewide staff. We are productive and proactive in dealing with the issues at hand. In the first half of 2024, the IAEC board will be focused on hiring our next executive vice president/general manager, as Chuck Soderberg plans to retire in July. Identifying the right executive to lead us into the future is one of the statewide board's most important tasks.

This is an unprecedented time of change for the electric industry, and experienced leadership is crucial to successfully navigate the challenges ahead. I look forward to meeting with the directors and managers of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout the year to learn more about how the statewide association can support them in their mission to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity for their local member-owners.

Strengthening lines of collaboration

Additionally, I have been serving on the board of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives for four years. I'd like to explore more ways for these two statewide cooperative associations to collaborate for the benefit of their members while promoting the cooperative business model.

If you had asked me several years ago what I'd be doing after retirement, I couldn't have imagined that I would be serving in this capacity. But these leadership opportunities all started because I was willing to say yes to a local call to serve. I'm thankful for the family and friends who encouraged me along the way.

Here's my advice for my fellow cooperative member-owners throughout Iowa: Don't be afraid to answer the call to serve your local cooperative. Look for an open door in your local community and walk through it! Your next adventure awaits.

Kenny Vandenberg is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a director at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A CAFÉ™ EXPRESS FINISH TOASTER!

For busy mornings, this innovative two-slot toaster has an Express Finish mode. Just push a button and the extra heating elements kick in, toasting bread to your preferred doneness in just 60 seconds. It also has three other preset functions – bagel, reheat and frozen – plus eight browning levels for customized control. Distinguished by sleek designer finishes, this Café appliance from GE features a beautiful cast aluminum housing with brushed copper accents.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 29. 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 HappyLight® Duo Light Therapy and Task Floor Lamp from the December issue was Eugene Sieren, a T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 29!

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A POWER OUTAGE

If you have a power outage, first check your fuses or circuit breakers to rule out problems with electricity inside your home. Replace fuses or reset breakers if needed. **Note:** It is the member's responsibility to repair any wires or equipment located between the meter pole and your buildings and/or equipment.



RATE INCREASE EXPECTED IN 2024

BY JIM GOSSETT



Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative's (RVEC) commitment to our member-owners is to provide reliable, affordable and responsible power while meeting our financial obligations. We ensure financial stability by performing cost-of-service studies, annual budgets and 10-year financial forecasts.

Taking all factors into consideration, our models indicate that a rate increase will be necessary in 2024. At the time of this article, the board is considering options on when and how to pass along the co-op's first rate increase since 2016.

RVEC's monthly access fee, or "facility charge" as it appears on your monthly power bill, helps the co-op recover fixed costs. These are the non-energy costs related to the operation of the cooperative in a way that ensures fiscal responsibility. The co-op has absorbed inflationary prices for as long as possible; however, we are unable to

sustain the rates as they are with the current conditions.

The increase will likely involve the facility charge and the energy charge. While RVEC is much closer to recovering fixed costs through the monthly facility charge, the energy charge will likely need to be adjusted to collect the necessary revenue.

Don't forget – because of our not-for-profit business model, any excess revenue over expenses is regularly returned to member-owners in the form of patronage, not to outside shareholders. This is one of the best benefits of belonging to an electric cooperative. Your elected board of directors set the rates, sharing in the costs – and the benefits – of ownership.

We will continue to be transparent about our need to adjust rates. An official rate notice will go out closer to the adjustment time, and you will receive additional communication on this topic over the next weeks and months. As always, please contact me with your questions and comments.

Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOELL EARNS CLIP CERTIFICATE

Brady Boell, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) director of safety and member service, recently earned an Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program (CLIP) certificate.

During the IAEC's Annual Meeting in December, the first 15 graduates of the new program for emerging leaders were recognized. CLIP participants committed to a yearlong calendar of in-person, virtual and on-demand training sessions where they gained leadership skills and learned about various co-op roles.

"Brady has a great amount of responsibility at RVEC, and the program enables him to further his knowledge of various co-op roles and obligations," says RVEC CEO Jim Gossett. "Thanks to Brady for taking on the Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program!"

Congratulations, Brady!





SUPPORT FOR DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program, sponsored by Our Community Health Foundation and Partnerships 4 Families, has been enrolling local children up to five years old in the monthly book gifting program since November 2022. In its first year, 528 children in Carroll County have enrolled and are being mailed a book a month with their name on it.

The initial funds for the program were provided by Partnerships 4 Families, the Early Childhood Iowa Area that serves a four-county area that includes Carroll County. Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is proud to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program with a \$2,500 donation. Our funds were matched by CoBank and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, creating a total donation of \$7,500.

Local affiliates for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library enroll children and pay \$2.20 for a book to be delivered to a child each month. The cost is kept extremely low by partnering with The Dollywood Foundation.

Research shows that having even 20 books at home fosters a love of learning and sets children up for success when they start school. Local children are already enjoying the

excitement of going to the mailbox and receiving an age-appropriate book each month that will assist in developing early literacy skills.

If you or your group want more information about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Audubon, Carroll, Greene or Guthrie counties, contact Cindy Duhrkopf or Maureen Beck at p4fchildren@gmail.com.

About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the world's preeminent early childhood book gifting program. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation has gifted well over 150 million free books in Australia, Canada, The Republic of Ireland, the U.K. and the U.S. The Imagination Library mails more than 2 million high-quality, age-appropriate books each month to registered children from birth to age five. Dolly envisioned creating a lifelong love of reading, inspiring them to dream. The program's impact has been widely researched, and results suggest positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics. Penguin Random House is the exclusive publisher of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

HANNASCH EARNS CCC CERTIFICATE

Jill Hannasch, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) director of communications, recently earned her Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) designation from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The CCC program is a cohort-based blended learning program of online and in-person instruction. In addition to receiving over 110 hours of instruction, CCC cohorts build strong, long-lasting relationships they will carry with them throughout their careers.

The CCC program was created to strengthen and enrich the professional skills and abilities of electric co-op communicators, with the vision to help them successfully fill their crucial roles for the betterment and prosperity of electric cooperatives. This is done through establishing professional development goals, identifying a body of knowledge and skills necessary to practice electric co-op communication, and recognizing those individuals who have demonstrated a professional level of excellence.

"The CCC program strengthens and enhances Jill's ability to serve both internal and external audiences with clear, concise messages," says Jim Gossett, RVEC CEO. "Today, RVEC needs the ability to communicate verbally, in writing and on social media channels. We appreciate Jill's efforts to obtain the CCC designation and all she does for RVEC and member-owners."

Congratulations, Jill!



For more information, visit www.imaginationlibrary.com.

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME: WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS WILL DO AND SEE ON YOUTH TOUR:

- Albert Einstein Memorial
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Ford's Theater
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Mount Vernon
- The National Mall
- U.S. Capitol tour
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- Washington National Cathedral
- White House
- World War II Memorial

Enter the essay contest by March 25



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THESE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE SPONSORING THE 2024 YOUTH TOUR

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trips this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

Access Energy Cooperative
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Butler County REC
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Assoc.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Consumers Energy
East-Central Iowa REC
Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative



ONE IOWA YOUTH TOUR STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A \$1,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP!

During the 2024 Youth Tour this June, a student from each state that participates in Youth Tour will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The Iowa YLC representative will be selected during the Youth Tour trip and will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship.

These young leaders will meet virtually throughout 2024 and into early 2025 and participate in leadership training, practice their public speaking skills, attend co-op forums and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

The YLC experience will culminate at the 2025 NRECA Annual Meeting, held in Atlanta, Georgia. Here, the group will spend a few days reflecting on the experiences they've had throughout the year, attend informational and entertaining conference sessions alongside electric cooperative leaders from throughout the country, and solidify lifelong friendships and connections!

To enter, you will be required to submit an official entry form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement:

Tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in your community.

Entry forms are available at www.iowayouthtour.com. You can submit your essay at this website or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by March 25.

Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 15-21 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the 10th year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living 2024 Youth Tour Contest*!

Of course, students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. However,

students can increase their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op.

More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

Our 2024 Youth Tour Essay Contest is open to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior whose family is served by an Iowa electric cooperative AND to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior who attended all three virtual sessions of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy in October 2023. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine will award one all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. Students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. The winner of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living Youth Tour Contest* will be announced on April 4, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives will have chosen their 2024 Youth Tour participants.

Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Franklin REC
Grundy County REC
Guthrie County REC
Harrison County REC

Heartland Power Cooperative
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lyon REC
Midland Power Cooperative
MiEnergy Cooperative

Nishnabotna Valley REC
North West REC
Pella Cooperative Electric Association
Prairie Energy Cooperative
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
Southwest Iowa REC
T.I.P REC
United Electric Cooperative
Western Iowa Power Cooperative



BACON POTATO CHOWDER

- 8 slices bacon (½ pound)
- ½-1 cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups potatoes, chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1½ cups milk
- cheddar cheese, optional

Cut bacon into ½-inch pieces. In a 3-quart saucepan, cook bacon over medium heat until browned. Add onion and continue cooking, 2-3 minutes until tender, drain. Add potatoes, water, salt and pepper. Continue cooking 15-20 minutes until potatoes are tender.

Reduce heat to low, stir in soup, sour cream and milk. Continue cooking, 3-5 minutes, stirring occasionally until heated through. Season to taste and top with cheese, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

**Peg Visser • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

CREAMY SQUASH SOUP

- 7 pounds butternut or other winter squash variety
- 2 large, sweet onions, chopped
- olive oil
- water
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary
- ½ teaspoon sage
- 1 tablespoon salt, or to taste
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional

Bake butternut squash whole at 350 degrees F for approximately 1 hour, until soft when poked with a large fork at the stem end. Remove from oven and let cool. Cut open and remove seeds. Winter squash, if used, will need to be cut in half before baking cut-side down until tender.

Sauté onions in enough oil to keep from sticking. Sauté on high at first to get hot, then on low until onions are clear. Stir more frequently after onions are clear. Sauté until brown and caramelized (do not burn). Blend 1½ cups squash with ⅓ of the onions with just enough water to be smooth and mostly pourable. Repeat two more times. Stir all batches together in slow cooker or heavy-bottomed soup pot. Add rosemary, sage, salt and cayenne pepper, if desired. Simmer for ½ hour or until seasoning flavor comes out. Serve piping hot. Leftovers can be frozen. *Serves 6*

**Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**



Looking for a new recipe? Search our free archive of tried-and-true recipes from rural Iowa kitchens! Search by keyword, category or main ingredient: ieclmagazine.com/recipes

TATOR TOT SOUP

- 1 32-ounce bag tater tots
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound ham, chopped or cooked bacon
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 5-7 hours. Add more milk during cooking if a thinner consistency is desired. *Serves 6-8*

Stacy Venteicher • Glidden
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

CREAMY CHICKEN TACO SOUP

- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added black beans
- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added whole kernel corn
- 1 10-ounce can mild diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3-4 chicken breasts, cooked and diced
- 1 ounce taco seasoning
- 1 tablespoon dry minced onion
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- corn chips, optional
- cheddar cheese, optional

Drain and rinse beans, drain corn. Add the first seven ingredients to a slow cooker. Cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in cream cheese, and top with corn chips and cheddar cheese, if desired.

Angie Graeve • Reinbeck
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

HUNTER STEW

- 2 pounds venison
- 4 carrots
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 4 potatoes, chunked
- 2 cups stewed tomatoes
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup

Chop venison into 1-inch cubes. Cut carrots into 1-inch chunks. Mix all ingredients together in roaster pan. Cook at 250 degrees F for 4 hours.

Jeff Gropper • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

HEARTY HAM SOUP

- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups raw potatoes, diced
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 1 10-ounce package frozen peas, thawed
- 1¼ cups cooked ham, diced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon celery salt
- blue cheese wedge, optional

In a heavy, 2-quart saucepan, melt butter. Add onion, potatoes and water. Cover and bring to steam. Lower heat to simmer, then cook about 15 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Stir in flour, then slowly add milk. Cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Stir in peas, ham, salt, marjoram, pepper and celery salt. Let simmer until peas are cooked, about 5 minutes. Serve hot and add a wedge of blue cheese crumbled over soup, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcia Rich • Lockridge
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

TURKEY DISHES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 29

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

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INDUSTRY LEADERS SHARE ENERGY INSIGHTS AND TRENDS

In December, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) held its 2023 Annual Meeting at the Sheraton West Des Moines Conference Center with more than 350 registered attendees. At the event, which carried the theme “Powerful Connections,” board directors and employees from Iowa’s locally owned electric co-ops received informative updates from the statewide board and staff, in addition to learning about industry trends and best practices from invited speakers.

Leaders share insights and perspectives on future trends

The IAEC Annual Meeting also provided the opportunity for attendees to learn more about the electric industry and future trends that may impact rural Iowa’s economy and quality of life.

IAEC presented several educational sessions, including hearing from the following industry leaders:

- Author, podcaster and film producer **Robert Bryce** discussed the physical and barriers to a rapid transition from carbon-based energy sources. He provided a realistic forecast about how our electric grid will change in the coming decades.
- **Kavi Chalwa** and **Jeff Kappen** from Bâton Global discussed disorder in geopolitics and how it will influence economic growth on various scales. They provided insights on how Iowa’s electric cooperatives can best navigate these challenges for organizational success.
- **Mark Tiemeier** of the Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO) informed attendees about how changes in the electric generation mix and resources challenge grid operators. Tiemeier is responsible for leading MRO’s annual regional risk assessment.

Editor’s note: The information on the next page is a high-level overview of some points covered during each speaker’s presentation and are the perspectives and opinions of the speakers based on their knowledge and research. Their points address what they believe to be issues or concerns of interest for utilities, including electric cooperatives.

POWERFUL CONNECTIONS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

ROBERT BRYCE



Robert Bryce is a Texas-based author, journalist, film producer, and podcaster. The host of the Power Hungry Podcast, Bryce has been writing about energy, power, innovation and politics for more than 30 years. His articles have appeared in many publications, including the Wall Street Journal,

New York Times, Forbes, Time, Austin Chronicle and Sydney Morning Herald.

Key points

- There are significant land use conflicts when it comes to building more wind, solar and high-voltage transmission. In the past nine years, at least 603 wind and solar projects have been rejected in the U.S.
- Since 2000, the U.S. has reduced CO2 emissions the most of the world's six largest economies. Four countries – the U.S., U.K., Germany and Japan – have reduced emissions, while India and China have increased emissions. In fact, China has increased more than eight-fold over U.S. emissions.

- The U.S. Department of Energy says the nation needs a 57% increase in high-voltage transmission. Currently, there are 240,000 miles of high-voltage transmission in the U.S. From 2008 to 2021, 1,700 miles per year were built in the U.S. At this rate, it will take 80 years to meet the forecasted need for high-voltage transmission.
- Utility product cost inflation is at an all-time high, increasing by 33% since 2020. There is a one- to three-year wait for transformers. Foreign companies dominate the high-power transformer market.
- Since 2008, when then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger mandated renewable energy use, California's electric rates have grown 3.2 times faster than the rest of the U.S.
- China dominates the entire downstream electric vehicle battery supply chain.
- For the first time, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation cited “energy policy” as a threat to the reliability and resilience of the bulk power system.
- Energy security is national security.

KAVI CHALWA



Kavi Chalwa has spent the majority of his career as a strategy advisor and consultant to private and public-sector organizations, supporting them with the development and execution of their global growth strategies. Prior to transitioning into an advisory role, Kavi was in the investment banking industry. His sector expertise includes energy. His

regional expertise is focused on high-growth markets, especially the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key points

Recommends businesses and energy providers pursue an aggressive “Iowa and Me” internationalization strategy by:

- Diversifying our trade relationships to target countries that align with Iowa's economic growth clusters and that have high levels of current and projected future alignment to U.S. policies on the Chinese Communist Party.
- Building relationships with third-country-based investors to attract investment into Iowa-based business, Iowa-based innovation and Iowa-based research.
- Flexing Iowa's muscle to protect and mitigate downside impacts of restrictive policies on Iowa businesses.
- Flexing Iowa's muscle to create favorable conditions for accelerating entry into new growth markets for Iowa businesses.
- Mobilizing the collective power of commodity and association groups to serve as a force multiplier for Iowa businesses.

MARK TIEMEIER



Mark Tiemeier, P.E., MBA, is a highly experienced electrical professional with focused expertise in the power systems and regulatory fields. He has extensive knowledge in modeling transmission components. The Midwest Reliability Organization is a non-profit organization dedicated to the reliability and security of the bulk power

system in the central region of North America, including parts of both the U.S. and Canada.

Key points

Extreme weather, consumer demand, and changes in technology and generation resources continue to present a rapidly increasing number of challenges to grid planners and operators. Physical and cybersecurity risks also continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace. The top risks to electric reliability are primarily being impacted by the following factors:

- Conventional, baseload generation (e.g., coal) is being retired and replaced with dispersed, variable generation (e.g., wind and solar), tightening reserve margins.
- Increasingly bold cybercriminals seek to exploit vulnerabilities in utilities' networks to disrupt normal operations of the grid.
- Extreme weather continues to cause generating resource outages, limiting energy supply at the same time as demand increases.
- Increasing amounts of generating resources that are physically distant from load is straining transmission capacity and limiting import capability.



STAY SAFE AND WARM IN SNOW AND ICE STORMS

Power outages due to snow and ice storms can be especially threatening because of extreme cold temperatures.

After a snow or ice storm, avoid going outside if possible. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice, making them difficult to identify. When outside, treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized. If you see a downed power line, stay away and immediately contact Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC). Remember that downed power lines do NOT have to be arcing, sparking or moving to be “live” – and deadly.

If your power is out because of a snow or ice storm, RVEC and Safe Electricity suggest these tips to help you stay safe and warm:

- Stay inside, and dress in warm, layered clothing.
- Close off unnecessary rooms.
- When using an alternative heat source, follow operating instructions, use fire safeguards, and be sure to properly ventilate. Always keep a multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher nearby and know how to use it.
- Stuff towels and rags underneath doors to keep heat in.
- Cover windows at night.
- Keep a close eye on the temperature in your home. Infants and people over the age of 65 are more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you can't keep your home warm.

FUEL YOUR KNOWLEDGE BEFORE POWERING UP A GENERATOR

Before you grab your generator to use it for backup power, there are essential lifesaving safety steps you should know. It is best to familiarize yourself with how to use a generator properly before needing one.

Before using a generator, be sure to do the following:

- ✓ **Check carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.** Protect yourself and those you love by making sure there are battery-operated CO testers in your home that are working properly and have fresh batteries.
- ✓ **Read the instructions.** Many people are tempted to skip this step, but incorrectly using a generator can cause CO poisoning, which is often deadly. These are instructions you should take the time to read.
- ✓ **Know how to use one properly.** Operate generators at least 20 feet from doors and windows and never use one in any type of enclosed structure, such as a garage, shed or tent. If your RV has a generator, be sure to operate it safely to avoid CO poisoning.
- ✓ **Keep it dry.** If it is wet outside, place the generator on a tarp. If it is raining or snowing, position it under a portable canopy (but not under a carport).

✓ **Use the proper transfer switch.** Make sure the transfer switch is endorsed by a reputable testing laboratory, such as UL, and that the installation meets all applicable electrical codes.

✓ **Keep utility workers and others safe.** Never plug a generator into a wall outlet. Never use a permanent generator without throwing the transfer switch. Doing either of these things can cause dangerous back feed into the power grid.

✓ **Ensure the proper cords are used.** Plug items directly into a generator and use heavy-duty extension cords that are in good working condition and are the correct gauge. The lower the gauge number and the thicker the cord, the more electricity it can safely carry; refer to the owner's manual for specifics. Do not plug one extension cord into another.

✓ **Let the generator cool down before refueling.** Also, store fuel safely.

✓ **Maintain and inspect.** Keep it well maintained and have it inspected regularly.

To learn more about safe generator use and electrical safety in general, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.



5 WAYS TO FIGHT THE WINTER CHILL AND SAVE ENERGY

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all the fun outdoor activities that go with it.

But there's one thing we can all agree on: high winter bills are never fun. Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.

Here are five tips to help increase your home's energy efficiency this winter:

1 Mind the thermostat. This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. When you're sleeping or away for an extended period, try setting it between 58 and 62 degrees; there's no need to heat your home when you're away or sleeping and less active.

2 Button up your home. The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24% to 40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weatherstripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save

energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.

3 Use window coverings wisely. Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out. If you feel cold air around windows, consider hanging curtains or drapes in a thicker material; heavier window coverings make a significant difference in blocking cold outdoor air.

4 Consider your approach to appliance use. When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of your home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. For example, only wash full loads if you're running the dishwasher or clothes washer. Look for electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone chargers or game consoles. Every little bit helps, so unplug to save energy!

5 Think outside the box. If you're still feeling chilly at home, think of other ways to warm up beyond dialing up the thermostat. Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can



even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

If you're taking steps to save energy but continue to see major increases in your bills, call RVEC at 712-659-3649. RVEC can help identify areas and other factors impacting your home energy use and recommend next steps for savings.

AUTOMATE YOUR MONTHLY PAYMENTS

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative offers automatic ACH, which allows your monthly bill to be conveniently deducted from your checking account. To set up automatic payments, simply fill out a form and send it with a copy of a voided check to our office.

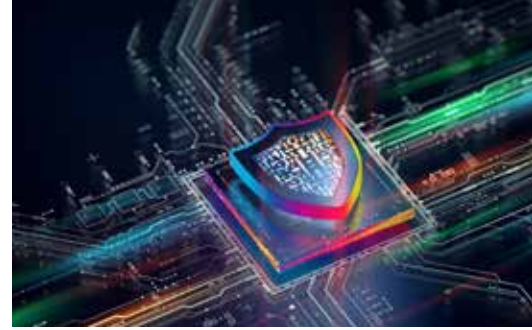
The payment is deducted from your bank account on the 20th of each month (or the next banking day) and applied to your electric bill. If there are insufficient funds in a member-owner's checking/savings account at the time of withdrawal, the member will be assessed a \$30 processing charge.

If you have any questions or never want to worry about your bill being paid on time, complete the form today!



Visit www.rvec.coop/forms or call our office at 712-659-3649 to obtain a form.

CYBERSECURITY BEGINS WITH PROACTIVE MEASURES



Electric cooperatives recognize the evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to the nation's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to our member-consumers, co-ops are taking proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, can disrupt power reliability. That's why electric co-ops continually assess vulnerabilities, monitor emerging threats and implement cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, co-ops ensure a more reliable power supply, reducing the risk of disruptions.

Electric co-ops implement multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for our local communities and the importance of reliability for our members.

Co-ops deploy advanced monitoring and protection systems that

continuously analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and alert security personnel to potential problems. Additionally, co-ops regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks, and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

A collaborative effort

Electric co-ops regularly engage with other co-ops, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay current on the latest threats.

We also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols.

In addition to internal measures, co-ops establish dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so members can easily identify

individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns. Co-op members are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through dishonest claims, messages sent as emails or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the co-op. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help keep our co-op community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Commitment to reliability and security

Electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to the members we serve. Our top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

We will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of our local communities. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid.

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Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



FOR THE LOVE OF BOOK CLUBS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, I'm intrigued by surveys showing that more people (especially younger generations) plan to spend the holiday with friends. It's a different approach that's far less focused on romance.

To me, that's a good reminder of the many forms of caring and love. One of the most inspiring stories I've heard lately came from my friend Marlene Armbrecht, who mentioned she's been a member of a local book club since the fall of 1973.

Once a novel concept

While book clubs are common today, this was a novel concept (no pun intended) 50 years ago.

"All of us were stay-at-home moms or worked part time, so we enjoyed meeting in the afternoon the third Thursday of every month," recalls Marlene, one of the club's original members.

There had been no grand plan to start the club. Arlene Christensen of Lake City and her friend Marilyn Willis (also a Lake City resident) had been reading the new novel, "My Name Is Asher Lev" by Chaim Potok. They decided to invite a few friends to join them.

Within a few years, the club had grown to about nine members, including several newcomers who had moved to Lake City and Rockwell City in the late 1970s. For years, the club met once a month at members' homes. Each member had the opportunity to choose a book every few months. The member who chose the book would purchase copies for her fellow club members, who would then reimburse the hostess at the meeting. The club "modernized" its system when books became available through interlibrary loans at the local library.

Fast forward to March 2020, when club members gathered at Karen Willis's home in Lake City. No one



Marlene Armbrecht (back row, right) is pictured with members of her book club.

knew everything was about to change forever due to COVID-19. As the pandemic spread, club members decided to keep meeting via Zoom video calls – a tradition they still maintain.

"Zoom has allowed several members who had moved out of the area to be active in our group again," says Marlene, who notes that club members are responsible for getting their own books.

The ladies maintain an impressive record book listing the titles they've read through the years. Marlene estimates the total is close to 500 books. No time to read the entire book before the club's next gathering? No worries!

"Everyone is always encouraged to come and just listen," Marlene says. "Sometimes our book discussions are fairly short, but we always share what's going on in our busy lives. What a fabulous support group we were – and still are – for each other!"

A club extending far beyond books

These friends know a book club is much more than books. It's a support system, a second family. Once you're in, you're in for life.



Lake City area book club members in 1986.

"I love these ladies," says Diane Ely of Iowa City. The former Lake City resident is grateful to reconnect with the club, thanks to Zoom. "The richness comes from sharing life experiences. These women feel like extended family."

I had the chance to visit with these ladies this past summer at the Lake City Country Club, where they reminisced, shared updates about their family (including their grandchildren) and looked ahead to the club's 51st year. It's clear their connections become more precious as the years go by.

Author Louis L'Amour once said, "Once you read a book you care about, some part of it is always with you." I love how this truth is also reflected in the cherished friendships that have endured a lifetime, thanks to one remarkable book club.

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



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