

● JANUARY 2024

Iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

RVEC offers scholarships

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

New Year's resolution recipes

Win an All-Clad immersion blender ▶ See Page 3

LINE PATROL BEGINS

Annual maintenance of our entire system has started. Our linemen are inspecting lines for defective items, checking meters and looking for any safety hazards.

During the inspections, we look for shot insulators, blown arrestors, loose guy wires and split or bad poles. We check to make sure poles have nothing stapled to them and that trees are not close to our electric lines. We are also looking for inadequate clearances from buildings and other driveways.

We have maintenance programs to upgrade lines, which ensures you have the most reliable and safest system possible.

If you have questions about the trucks in your neighborhood, give us a call.

NEW YEAR, CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO SERVING YOU

BY JIM GOSSETT



Happy New Year! Turning the calendar to a new year at Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) means we have reviewed what went right or wrong

in the previous year, and we plan for an even better year in every phase of the business. I thought I would start the year off by passing along some of the opportunities and challenges the RVEC board, management and employees intend to address in the upcoming year.

Accessible information, reliability efforts

As we head into 2024, we will provide information concerning your electric usage and how to take control of your monthly bill. A significant amount of planning and coordination goes into providing the useful data RVEC member-owners are asking for. You can expect greater access to information on how to use your energy wisely – especially managing your peak demand – and more.

An exciting update is coming to SmartHub, your online account access. SmartHub will feature improved security, performance and a more user-friendly format. You, our member-owner, should have received a bill insert last month with more information. The newly redesigned SmartHub will be live on Jan. 15. If you don't currently use SmartHub, it is easy to sign up! Go to www.rvec.coop and set up an account under "Pay My Bill." Contact the office if you need assistance.

In operations, the line crews are currently performing annual line patrol. This identifies issues that need repair or replacement. After, they will move to tree trimming to keep lines safe from contact. All this work is completed as weather permits. Shop maintenance of trucks and equipment also takes a good

amount of the crew's time. This year, we will also work with our engineering firm to complete a five-year construction work plan. This document is our guide to what needs to be built or rebuilt to ensure greater reliability.

Cost of service, power supply challenges

Our challenges are similar to last year, and they have not subsided. The RVEC board received the Cost-of-Service Study report from our rate consultant in November, which suggests where rate adjustments could be made to continue covering costs and meeting our financial obligations. Soon, management will recommend to the RVEC board options for rate adjustments in 2024. RVEC has not had a rate increase since 2016, but like many utilities, we have had significant cost increases, especially in the last couple years.

Another challenge is one you have read about in this space regularly – the reliability of the power supply and the potential for rolling blackouts. As the coldest of winter comes, so does a higher demand for power. This, coupled with federal regulations that are forcing a change in the mix of energy sources, namely the rapid reduction of coal and natural gas as a source of baseload generation, will continue to be a primary concern for electric providers like RVEC.

It is not a matter of if, but when, this happens. Please remember that rolling blackouts are a temporary outage (approximately 45 minutes) of an RVEC substation. This outage is performed by our power supplier to prevent a more serious, system-wide outage.

As always, we are more than happy to visit about how we deliver reliable, affordable, responsible power. If you ever have questions, contact us at info@rvec.coop or 712-659-3649.

Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR ENERGY CAREERS

Wind Energy and Turbine Technology Program Scholarship

Committed to the communities it serves and to the production of renewable energy, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, power supplier to Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), partners with Iowa Lakes Community College to offer a scholarship opportunity to students who study wind energy and turbine technology. Corn Belt Power Cooperative is interested in maintaining a skilled and educated workforce that can install, maintain and service modern wind turbines.

Applicants must be enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program at Iowa Lakes Community College.

One \$500 scholarship will be awarded annually to an individual who has met the requirements set forth. Recipients may be either first- or second-year students but are eligible for only one scholarship. Each scholarship will be split equally between the first two semesters of enrollment after receiving the scholarship. Scholarship proceeds will be used for tuition, fees and books.

To be considered a candidate for the Corn Belt Power Cooperative Scholarship, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Achieve a high school grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
2. Accepted as a full-time student in the identified program at Iowa Lakes Community College.
3. Be an Iowa resident.
4. File scholarship application with Iowa Lakes Community College by April 1.
5. Maintain 2.5 minimum grade point average; eligibility shall be reviewed each semester.

The primary criteria for the award will be the candidate's potential for success and grade point average.



For more information, contact Iowa Lakes Community College, 800-242-5106, ext. 4491.

Electrical Technology, Powerline, Powerline Technology or Substation Technician Scholarships

Corn Belt Power Cooperative, power supplier to RVEC, is partnering with Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon to offer scholarship opportunities. As a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative is committed to the communities it serves and to maintaining a skilled and educated workforce to serve its members well into the future.

Applicants must be enrolled in one of the following technical programs at Northwest Iowa Community College: Electrical Technology, Powerline, Powerline Technology or Substation Technician.

Four separate \$500 scholarships will be awarded annually to individuals who have met the eligibility requirements. Recipients may be either first- or second-year students but are eligible for only one scholarship. Each scholarship will be split equally between the first two semesters of enrollment after receiving the scholarship. Scholarship proceeds may be used for tuition, fees and books.

To be considered a candidate for the Corn Belt Power Cooperative

Scholarship, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Reside in a county served by a member cooperative of Corn Belt Power Cooperative.
2. Achieve a high school grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
3. Accepted as a full-time student in one of the identified programs at Northwest Iowa Community College.
4. File scholarship application with the Northwest Iowa Community College Foundation by March 1.
5. Maintain 2.5 minimum grade point average; eligibility shall be reviewed each semester.

All applicants are required to submit a letter of reference from a high school instructor, guidance counselor, current employer or manager of a member electric cooperative with their applications. This reference should address the applicant's potential for success in the program chosen for enrollment. The primary criteria for the award will be the candidate's potential for success and grade point average.

For an application form or more information, contact the Northwest Iowa Community College Foundation, 603 West Park Street, Sheldon, IA 51201-1046, 800-352-4907, ext. 246.



INVESTING IN YOUR ELECTRIC SYSTEM

For Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) linemen, flame-resistant (FR) clothing is an essential type of personal protective equipment used every day. High-quality, specially engineered FR garments protect our linemen from burns caused by flashfires, electric arcs and combustible dust – allowing them to tackle potentially hazardous tasks.

Benefits of flame-resistant clothing

FR clothing is any garment that has been specifically designed to protect the wearer from flames and thermal injury. FR clothing resists ignition and self-extinguishes once the source of the ignition is removed. This helps prevent burns from initial exposure to the flames and residual heat transfer. However, it is important to note that

FR does not mean fireproof, and all FR clothing will burn if heated for a long enough period.

Everyday fabric vs. flame-resistant material

The difference between everyday clothing and FR clothing is the fabric. To be considered flame resistant, a FR garment must undergo a complex and costly process using special fibers and/or treatment and rigorous testing before it reaches our linemen's hands. FR clothing also needs to be laundered separately from any other garments. Not doing so might damage the fire retardant treatment of the clothes or damage the high-visibility components of the clothing.

RVEC supplies our linemen with quality FR ARC-Rated clothing to

keep them safe while they are tackling even the most hazardous of tasks for our member-owners!

ELECTRIC CO-OP TRIVIA

How much does it cost to clothe one RVEC lineman with FR clothing on a winter day? Clothing items include pants, shirt, sweatshirt, bibs, coat and balaclava.

- A. \$586
- B. \$786
- C. \$986
- D. \$1,286

Answer: D

HAVE YOU CASHED YOUR PATRONAGE CHECK?



If you were a Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative member-owner in 2002, you should have received a patronage check in the mail. Electric cooperatives operate differently from other utilities because we operate at cost. This means any excess revenues (or margins) are allocated and returned to our member-owners.

Your board of directors approved retiring the general patronage for a portion of 2002. These checks will be void after 90 days, so we encourage you to cash the check as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please contact our office at 712-659-3649.

OUTAGE INFORMATION

If you don't have power or if you have a power emergency, call 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211. Our phones are answered 24/7 year-round.



RESOLVE TO STAY SAFE IN THE NEW YEAR

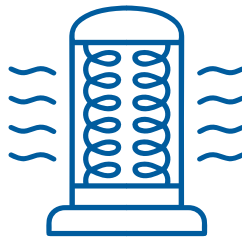
We are highly dependent on electricity and use a lot of energy to keep our homes warm during the winter and cool during the summer. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) encourages our member-owners to save energy when possible. This is not only a benefit to the environment because it saves us from building new electric generation plants but also keeps local co-op costs down and returns money to the membership in the form of patronage.

Homes account for 22% of the energy usage in the U.S., according

to the U.S. Department of Energy. Our lights, chargers, laptops and televisions are always plugged in. We have numerous options for saving money and conserving energy in our homes. Simple tasks, such as taking shorter showers, keeping thermostats turned down and unplugging unused appliances, can all make a difference.

To mark the occasion of "National Cut Your Costs Day" on Jan. 10, here are a few energy-saving reminders you can resolve to do in the new year.

ARE PORTABLE SPACE HEATERS EFFICIENT FOR MY HOME?



Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, some people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can take a toll on energy bills. If you're considering using a space heater, it depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

Proactive energy efficiency solutions

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or inefficient heating systems, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors are low-cost, easy ways to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose-fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-

saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

When to use space heaters

Perhaps your home is energy efficient, but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months.

Only use a space heater in small spaces you're occupying and try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, ensure the heater is sized correctly for the space. Most heaters include a general sizing table.

Space heater safety

If you must use a space heater, purchase a new model that includes

NATIONAL CUT YOUR COSTS DAY IDEAS

1. Commit to energy-efficient practices

Changing lightbulbs to more energy-efficient LEDs or weatherstripping windows and doors can make a difference.

2. Be smart about smart technology

If you don't have a programmable thermostat, research purchasing one. Scheduling a smart mode on current models will ensure you use the minimum amount of energy for maximum comfort.

3. Declutter appliances

Do a thorough cleaning of your lint trap in the clothes dryer, wash air filters and remove dust from under the fridge. Keeping your appliances clean helps them last longer and operate more efficiently.

4. Make use of natural sunlight

South-facing windows allow natural warmth and light into your home when the sun shines this time of year.

the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating. Place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, area rugs provide additional insulation and maintain warmth.

If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, visit our website at www.rvec.coop or call 712-659-3649. We're here to help you manage your energy use!



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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Visit our website at www.rvec.coop

A photograph of two men shaking hands at a community event. The man on the left is older, with white hair and a beard, wearing a blue patterned polo shirt. The man on the right is younger, with a beard and glasses, wearing a yellow and grey plaid shirt. They are standing in front of a table with coffee service. Other people are visible in the background.

WHERE WE HAVE MEMBERS WE ACTIVELY LIVE OUR COMMITMENT



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

As your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**, we are your energy community. The power we provide is much more than a way to keep the lights on, it plugs into the family, friends, and neighbors that make up your local co-op.