

NOVEMBER 2024

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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# NAVIGATING GRID RELIABILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

BY JIM GOSSETT

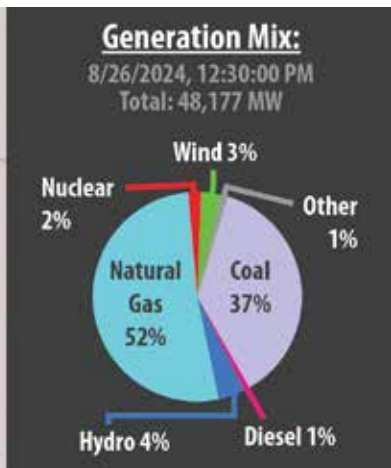
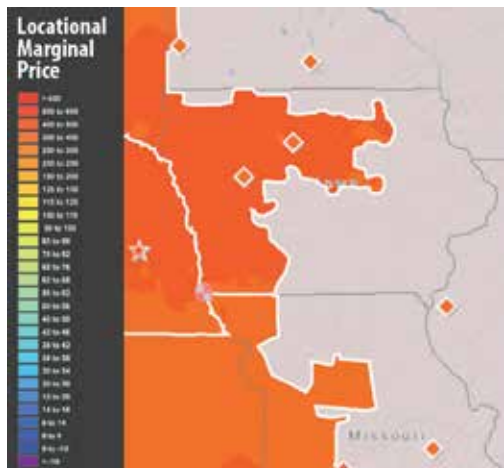


As CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), my top priority is ensuring our employees return home safely to their

families. A close second is providing you with reliable and affordable electricity.

I am increasingly concerned about the future of our electric grid. Demand for electricity is growing faster than supply, especially as homes, businesses and data centers use more power. While we've added a lot of renewable energy in our region, like wind and solar, they aren't always available when we need them.

For example, a wind farm may only produce about 30% of its capacity over time, and solar is around 20%. Meanwhile, coal and natural gas plants are reliable about 90% of the time. This doesn't mean renewables are not valuable, but we need backup power from coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydropower to keep the lights on, especially during extreme weather.



On Aug. 26, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) declared an Energy Emergency Alert-Level One (EEA1). This alert indicates that while SPP had sufficient generation capacity to meet demand and maintain its reserve obligations, the situation was precarious enough that reserves could be at risk if conditions worsened.

The image at the top illustrates two key points: first, the cost of wholesale power during the EEA1 was significantly elevated. More critically, it underscores the vital role of fossil fuel generation (e.g., coal and natural gas) in maintaining grid reliability. During this event, wind energy contributed just 3% to the total power supply, while coal and natural gas accounted for 89% – a stark reminder that on the most extreme days of summer, renewable generation can fall short. This highlights the ongoing necessity

of dispatchable, baseload generation sources like coal and natural gas, particularly during periods of peak demand when renewable sources may be less reliable.

Families and businesses expect reliable power at an affordable price, so we need a balanced energy mix – using renewables alongside dependable sources like coal and natural gas. We are working with policymakers to ensure this approach is adopted so we can continue safely providing reliable, affordable and responsible electricity.

Our mission remains the same: to safely provide reliable, affordable and responsible service while being a leader in our community's prosperity and growth. We'll keep advocating for a sensible approach to achieve this goal.

*Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.*



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative will be closed**

**Nov. 11**  
Veterans Day  
— and —  
**Nov. 28-29**  
Thanksgiving

# POLE-TOP RESCUE DRILLS KEEP LINEMEN SHARP

Have you ever stopped in at the office on a weekday morning, only to find our doors locked and the parking lot bare? There's a good reason, and that reason is our top priority for employees: safety.

Every month, all Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) employees come together for a safety meeting. The main point of the meeting is to educate everyone at the cooperative about the risks around them and advise on the best way to stay safe. Preventative and proactive measures help ensure safety for all.

Being a lineman is a hard, dangerous job. The majority of work occurs outside, including in the extreme heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter. While using the booms on utility trucks to reach lines is common practice with today's technology and fleet, it's not always an option. Certain situations may require linemen to climb 35-foot-tall poles. In these situations, the height isn't the danger – it's the 7,200 volts flowing through the power lines and the ever-lingering possibility of an electrical contact.

## A safety scenario

*A lineman is working and becomes unconscious while up on a pole due to an electrical contact or other health issue. Crew members on site have mere moments to call for help, race up the pole and lower the injured person to the ground.*

Because of this possibility, RVEC linemen are required to perform an annual exercise called pole-top rescue. One by one, all linemen practice strapping on their climbing gear and climbing the pole using only the spikes attached to their boots and a safety harness that goes around the pole. They must then rescue a life-size dummy that weighs approximately

185 pounds by securing a rope around the dummy's chest, looping the rope over a cross arm and then lowering the dummy safely to the ground before descending the pole. In an actual emergency, crew members on the ground would then perform basic first aid and CPR until first responders arrive.

Our linemen take pride in their profession and the essential job they perform. Their dedication to keeping the lights on for our member-owners also requires extreme diligence in performing the work safely. It's all part of our commitment to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity.



RVEC linemen performed pole-top rescue drills in conjunction with the September safety meeting.

# THIS THANKSGIVING, THANK A FARMER

It's easy to take electricity for granted when all we have to do is flip a light switch or plug a computer in to use it.

And it's common to forget about the farmers who spend their days and their lives making sure we have a safe and plentiful supply of food to eat. It's especially easy to do when all we have to do is drive to the grocery store and pick up whatever we want.

Here are 10 reasons to thank a farmer as you slice into your golden, juicy turkey this Thanksgiving.

**1** America's food supply is among the world's safest. Plus, we have plenty to eat and generally pay affordable prices.

**2** Farmers work hard to get that food on our table. They don't get to take a day off when it's 100 degrees outside or a blizzard.

**3** Agriculture creates jobs, including more than 24 million and counting in the U.S.

**4** Our country's farmers produce about 40% of all the corn in the world.

**5** Each farmer feeds an average of 155 people.

**6** For every dollar you spend on food, a farmer receives \$0.12.

**7** Some farms are big, corporate enterprises. But most are family-owned operations.

**8** Approximately 210,000 full-time American farmers produce 80% of our food and fiber.

**9** As the world's population grows from 7 billion to 9 billion by 2050, farmers will need to double the amount of food they produce to feed us all.

**10** An American's grocery bill is about 10% of our income – the lowest percentage of any other country.

Source: Farm Policy Facts



# USE YOUR SPACE HEATER SAFELY

Many people turn to space heaters as a convenient source of warmth in the winter. However, space heaters can be dangerous if not used properly.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with space heaters. More than 300 people die in these fires. In addition, an estimated 6,000 people annually receive hospital emergency care for burn injuries connected with space heaters.



Follow these safety tips from CPSC when using a space heater:

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from flammable items such as curtains, furniture or bedspreads.
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- When buying a heater, choose one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Never leave a space heater unattended or go to sleep with it on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Do not use a heater in a bathroom; it's a high moisture area that could cause damage.
- Keep heaters away from water to prevent electrocution.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Do not use the heater to dry clothes.
- Be sure the heater's plug fits snugly in an outlet. The cord and plug may feel warm when operating since the unit draws so much power, but they should not feel hot. If they do, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair person check for problems.
- Do not attempt to repair a broken heater yourself. It should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center.

For additional safety tips on using space heaters that use wood or kerosene, visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

## BUY LED-LIT CHRISTMAS TREES EARLY

If you want to buy an artificial Christmas tree strung with ever-lasting LED bulbs, buy it now.

LED-strung trees sell out quickly – even though they cost more than artificial evergreens with traditional lights – because the bulbs never burn out. They're expected to burn without trouble for 200,000 hours, which is estimated 20 years.

LED means light-emitting diode. The light is built into the fixture, so there's no bulb to change. LEDs are cool to the touch, so they're easier to handle and don't present a fire hazard when they come into contact with your tree's limbs. They use up to 90% less energy than traditional holiday lights, and their casings are shatterproof.

Take some of the hassle out of the holidays by switching to LEDs. Even if you don't want an artificial tree, you can replace your lights with removable strings of LEDs.

## ATTENTION SNOWBIRDS



If you plan to leave your home for an extended period this winter, remember to make billing arrangements while you are away. Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) offers several options.

**ACH:** Automatically deducting your bill from your checking account is simple and reliable, and it can help you save time and money. There are no checks, stamps or trips to the office. We offer this service free of charge. To sign up, call our office or complete and return the form on our website.

**Electronic Bill Pay:** Use your credit/debit card or checking/savings account to pay your electric bill online. This is a free and easy-to-use service. Visit RVEC's website and click on "Pay My Bill." You will need your account number to create a password and register.

**Pay by Phone (Interactive Voice Response):** Call 855-939-3612 to make your payment. This automated system is available 24/7, 365 days a year. You will be prompted to choose the option you wish to complete. You will need to have your account number and can pay by credit/debit card or check. You are not required to create a password or register.

# SAVE ENERGY WHILE PREPARING THE HOLIDAY FEAST

Baking pies, roasting a turkey, and warming up the side dishes for your family's Thanksgiving feast can be hard on your electric bill if you rely on your oven to do all the work.

This Thanksgiving, consider using your stovetop, barbecue grill, microwave oven, slow cooker, toaster oven, electric skillet, and even your blender or food processor to "cook" your bird and all the trimmings.

Consider these tips for a more energy-efficient Thanksgiving.

**TIP 1** Give your oven a break and your family a treat by smoking or grilling your turkey outdoors in your barbecue grill. It's a quicker way to cook a bird, and the smoky flavor is a nice change from a traditional, oven-roasted turkey.

**TIP 2** Use the microwave oven to heat vegetables, potatoes and other side dishes.

**TIP 3** Consider serving some food that doesn't need cooking. Add some variety to the menu by preparing a few cold salads and raw vegetables with dip. Experiment with no-bake desserts, like frozen peanut butter pie or no-bake cheesecake.

**TIP 4** When you do use the oven, resist opening the door to check on the turkey or pies. Every time you peek inside, you let heat out and the oven has to work harder to get back to the proper temperature.

**TIP 5** Bake everything at the same time: pies, bread, turkey and potatoes. The more your oven can do at once, the less time you'll need to use it. Leave enough room between items for air and heat to circulate.

**TIP 6** Choose glass or ceramic pans for the oven. They cook food at temperatures as much as 25 degrees lower than metal pans.

**TIP 7** The burners on your cooktop will work more efficiently if you match the size of the burner to the size of the pot. Placing a small pot on a larger burner wastes the heat from the part of the burner that doesn't touch the pot.

**TIP 8** Clean the burners and the oven. There's no need for your appliance to spend any energy heating spilled, baked-on food that you haven't cleaned up yet. If you use the self-cleaning function on your oven while it's still hot after preparing a meal, it will use the residual heat and work more quickly.



## SHOW YOU CARE WITH RECare

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative has established RECare, a program of members helping members. RECare provides funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and assist in the weatherization of homes of low-income members.

You may make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge that will be added to your monthly electric bill. You may also make a contribution to part of a matching fund if there is one available. Even a dollar-a-month pledge will help others!



### RECare Consumer Authorization Form

Yes, I would like to make a (check one):

One-time contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(My check is enclosed)

Monthly contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(That will be added to my bill)

My gift is a matching fund gift.  
The matching fund is to be matched by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Account # (if known) \_\_\_\_\_



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives.

November 2024

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