

A WORD FROM



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You're invited!

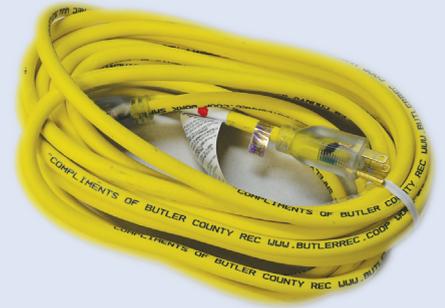
The board and employees of Butler County REC invite you to attend your annual meeting on Saturday, April 6, at the North Butler Elementary School in Allison.

You can count on a delicious lunch and great entertainment, plus you'll have the opportunity to meet with your directors and staff.

At the annual meeting you will vote for three board directors and two amendments to our Articles of Incorporation. Please see the back of this newsletter for more information re-

garding the amendment proposals. Board election and additional amendment details will be in the official annual meeting notice in the bill you receive in March.

This year we are automating registration. Included with your annual meeting notice you will find a Registration Certificate. Please bring this with you to the meeting for our employees to scan. Those bringing their certificates will have their names entered into a drawing to receive one of two \$25 gift cards to Casey's General Store. In addition, you will turn in the top half of your certificate to receive your annual meeting gift of a 25-ft. extension cord.



Members attending the annual meeting will receive a 25-ft extension cord. Visit the gymnasium to sign up for additional giveaways.

Annual Meeting: April 6

10:30 a.m. – Doors open at North Butler Elementary School, Allison

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Lunch in the cafeteria and displays in the gymnasium

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Wichita country band performs in the auditorium

1 p.m. – Business meeting in the auditorium, including reports, election of directors, voting on proposed amendments and drawing for cash prizes

We look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting!



Scam alert

Recently a Butler County REC member phoned our office to alert us to two scam phone calls they had received from the same entity.

The member was told their power would be shut off within a half an hour but that they did have options, includ-

ing giving payment information over the phone.

Butler County REC will NEVER call you for payment information. If you receive a call such as this, do not give any payment or personal information. Hang up immediately, and please contact us so that we can alert other members.

If you have any questions, call us at 888.267.2726.

ECA decrease

After analysis of Butler County REC's year-end financial information, your board of directors has approved an energy cost adjustment (ECA) decrease effective on your January usage bill received in February. The ECA was decreased to \$.00511 from \$.00683.

We expect this ECA factor will remain the same for 2019, but will evaluate our monthly power costs and may adjust the factor if needed. Call us at 888.267.2726 if you have questions. We are here to serve you.

Farm Bill provision supports rural economic development

The 2018 Farm Bill was signed into law in late December, providing some certainty and stability for the years ahead.

One provision within the \$867 billion Farm Bill is helpful to electric cooperatives as we work to fund economic development efforts.

Iowa's electric co-ops have been working with the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, or REDLG. The REDLG program provides funding for rural projects through zero-interest loans to electric cooperatives that they, in turn, pass through to local businesses for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The businesses repay the lending co-op directly, and the co-op is responsible for repayment to USDA.

Because of the 2018 Farm Bill, electric co-ops can continue to provide financing for projects within and beyond our service areas. After the

current formula for REDLG funding expires in 2021, the \$5 million of mandatory funding that Sen. Joni Ernst helped secure will kick in. These funds will be in addition to the funds typically marked for the program.

This is great news for your cooperative and for the Iowa Area Development Group, the business and community development organization for Iowa's electric cooperatives that provides technical assistance and development services to Iowa businesses and communities. Participating in the REDLG program is a major component of our core cooperative principle to invest in the communities we serve.

In addition, we want to recognize the efforts of Sen. Ernst, who served on the 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee, for her tireless work in securing key provisions. We are also thankful to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association for their advocacy efforts



Prairie Energy Cooperative, Clarion, partnered with the City of Woolstock, loaning \$140,000 toward an additional building for the fire department. (L to R): Sarah Olson, Prairie Energy administrative assistant/office manager; Bruce Rhol, mayor of Woolstock; Robert Hisler, Woolstock council member; Todd Foss, Prairie Energy key accounts director

on our behalf.

Contact us to learn more about the REDLG program.

Would your home pass an electrical inspection?

If you're getting ready to sell your home or just wondering how electrically sound it is, there are some guidelines to assess the condition of your home's wiring and electrical bones.

Most local codes follow the National Electric Code (NEC). Check with your qualified electrician or building department (start with your city or town) for code requirements.

If your home has any of the following defects, it may not pass an electrical safety inspection:

- New lights and receptacles installed into old wiring
- Spliced wires illegally installed
- Broken or missing carbon monoxide detectors or smoke alarms
- Non-insulated/non-contact-rated recessed lights touching insulation

- A breaker or fuse that is too large for the wire rating
 - Improper grounding and bonding of electrical panels and devices
 - Kitchen: Does your electric stove have a dedicated 240-volt circuit? Is the breaker sized correctly?
 - Bathroom: Do the light fixtures in the shower or tub area have a "lens" cover?
 - Other rooms: Does each room have a wall switch beside the entry door? Are outlets installed no farther than 12 feet apart?
- There are also hallway, staircase and garage code requirements, as well as those for the electrical service panel and wiring. For more about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Home Electrical Inspection:

Pass or Fail?

Would your home pass an electrical inspection? Local electrical codes vary, so check with your qualified electrician, but here are **five things** your home should have:

- Wiring should be sound (not overcrowded or knob-and-tube wiring used in old homes).
- Ceiling fixtures should be controlled by a wall switch and not just a pull chain.
- Outlets near water should have GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters).
- Your refrigerator, microwave and garbage disposal should each have its own circuit.
- Your island should have its own outlet.

Energy-saving DIY projects

Make the most of your water heater. If your water heater is warm to the touch, it needs additional insulation. Purchase a pre-cut jacket or blanket. First, turn off the water heater. Wrap the blanket around the water heater and tape it to temporarily keep it in place. Use a marker to note the areas where the controls are so you can cut them out. Once the blanket is positioned correctly tape it permanently in place, then turn the water heater back on.

Seal air leaks with caulk. Applying caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing can save energy and money. Before applying new caulk, clean and remove any old caulk or paint.



The area should be dry before you apply the new caulk. Apply the caulk in one continuous stream, and make sure it sticks to both sides of the crack or seam. Use a putty knife to smooth out the caulk, then wipe the surface with a dry cloth.

Weather strip exterior doors. One of the best ways to seal air leaks is to weather strip exterior doors. Before applying the new weather stripping, clean the molding with water and soap, then let the area dry completely. Measure each side of the door, then cut the weather stripping to fit each section. Make sure the weather stripping fits snugly against both surfaces so it compresses when the door is closed.

Completing these efficiency projects can save you energy (and money!) while increasing the comfort level of your home.

To save even more, contact us for insulation and weatherization rebates.



HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE



Be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and **safely** to restore power.



ZONE IN ON SAFETY



Respect **roadside** work crews.



Don't drive distracted.
Reduce your speed.
Change lanes.

1 work zone crash occurs every **5.4 minutes**



70 work zone crashes result in **injuries** each day



12 work zone crashes result in at least **1 fatality** each week



Never plug a generator into a wall outlet in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line **could electrocute a utility worker** or neighbor.



DON'T post signs on **utility poles**.

Foreign objects can **tear** utility workers' **protective clothing**, which is the first line of protection from an **electric shock**.



Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!



Learn more at  **Safe Electricity.org**

Board proposes changes to Articles of Incorporation to be voted on at annual meeting

The board of directors has the responsibility of periodically reviewing the Articles of Incorporation of the cooperative to determine if any modifications are in order. At the Feb. 4, 2019, board meeting, the board identified two areas in the Articles recommended for modification. The cooperative members will be asked to cast a ballot at the annual meeting scheduled for April 6, 2019, for the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation. The full text of the proposed amendments will be included with the Annual Meeting Notice.

One amendment would allow members to vote by mail as an alternative to voting in person at the meeting. It would also give the board the ability to consider whether voting by electronic means should be allowed. The cooperative prides itself on being democratically member controlled, and the board is evaluating ways to increase member participation in the business of the cooperative. Allowing members alternative voting methods

may be one way to increase participation. *The members will continue to have the option of voting in person.* The board is confident that the mail option can be implemented for future meetings, as a number of electric cooperatives around the state already permit mail voting. The board is aware some cooperatives are also moving toward electronic voting; but the board will only choose to allow such voting if it can be done in a manner that is secure and user friendly. Therefore, the amendment would not mandate electronic voting but would allow the board to explore this option. Without this amendment, the Articles only permit voting in person at the meeting.

The other amendment would expand the language of the Articles describing the eligibility requirements for directors. The Articles presently require directors to be members, but do not contain any restrictions or other qualification details. The proposed amendment would include restrictions on the eligibility of individuals who do

not receive electric service at a location in the area from which they have been elected, individuals who have been adjudged to be guilty of a felony within five years prior to nomination, individuals who are employees or former employees of the cooperative, relatives of board members or employees, individuals who have financial or business interests that create a conflict of interest with the cooperative or individuals who have diminished mental or physical capacity that preclude them from fulfilling the fiduciary duty required of directors.

You are encouraged to vote in favor of the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation. Should you have any questions regarding the proposed amendments, please do not hesitate to call or stop by the office. The full text of the proposed amendments can be obtained from the office and will also be mailed to members with the Annual Meeting Notice.

Directors earn Gold recertification

Congratulations to Butler County REC directors Duane Rieckenberg, president, and Gary Poppe, vice-president, for earning their Director Gold Renewal Certificates from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Duane has served cooperative members as a director for 40 years, and Gary has served members as a director for 36 years.

The renewal requirements included three credits of continuing education over a two-year period. The Director Gold Credential goes beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificates.

At Butler County REC the education of your board is an essential investment in helping enable the directors to make informed decisions about the future of the cooperative.



(Left to right) President Duane Rieckenberg and Vice President Gary Poppe

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