

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

August 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Posting items on utility poles creates safety risks

Signs, balloons, flags, and other materials on utility poles are more than just an unpleasant eyesore; they can be dangerous — even life threatening — to the professionals who maintain our electricity, communication, and other vital services. Butler County REC urges everyone to help keep utility poles free of such materials.

The safety boots used by line workers to climb poles are vulnerable to becoming snagged on staples and nails in posts. Foreign objects can tear utility workers' protective clothing, which is the first line of protection from an electric shock. These objects can also injure

workers despite the safety gear they wear to avoid contact with rough surfaces.

Posting items to power poles can also be a public safety hazard. The materials posted on the poles not only distract people as they drive, but degrade the quality, effectiveness, and stability of the wood. Posting items to utility poles may be a violation of local ordinances as well.

It is just as important to avoid tampering with or disrupting the guy wires that surround utility poles. Please

inform children not to play or swing on these, and maintain your distance when performing yard work. If you see that poles or guy wires are disrupted in some way, please call Butler County REC immediately at 319-267-2726.



### UTILITY POLES ARE NOT BULLETIN BOARDS

**Think before you post that sign!**  
Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs and fliers create dangerous obstacles for electric lineworkers. *Their jobs are dangerous enough — help us keep them safe!*

## Opperman named energy services advisor

Butler County REC is pleased to announce that Tyler Opperman, energy services advisor, has joined the cooperative. Tyler began work on July 6. His office is located at the headquarters in Allison.

Tyler earned a business degree from Hawkeye Community College and most recently was a civil engineer designer with a consulting firm in Mason City.

A resident of Allison, Tyler and his wife Tasha are the parents of two daughters.

"I am looking forward to getting to know everyone and my job assignments," Tyler said of his new position.

Welcome to Butler County REC, Tyler!



Take a permanent vacation from mailing your REC bills

## Sign up for automatic bill payment to be entered into a \$100 bill credit drawing

- Mail in a form from our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop) for checking or savings to receive a one-time \$5 bill credit
- Sign up through SmartHub for checking, savings, or credit card to receive a one-time \$10 bill credit

Promotion runs through August 31, 2021.



## Stop by and see us at the Iowa State Fair!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the Bruce Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair. We are proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned co-ops that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member-consumers use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair this summer, make sure to stop by and see us in the newly renovated 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. Come into the air-conditioned facility for a break from the heat and look for us near the new concession area.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats for the kids while supplies last. They can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station!

Electric co-op members who take a quick survey on our iPads will automatically be entered into our fair contest. After the fair, three lucky winners will be randomly selected to choose one of three prize options:

- Roomba 614 Robot Vacuum
- DEWALT 20V MAX XR Blower
- Breville Smart Oven Pro

We will also announce the winners of our new Shine the Light contest during the fair. Iowa electric co-op member-consumers and employees had an opportunity to nominate local community volunteers for the contest in June. Three deserving volunteers will each receive a \$1,500 donation for their charity as we celebrate our cooperative commitment to community.

We look forward to connecting with our co-op members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!

## Electrical safety basics for back to school

As children head back to school, parents can teach them a valuable, potentially life-saving lesson: to respect electricity.

Here are five electrical safety basics every child should know:

1. **Mixing water and electricity can harm you.** Teach children not to use electrical toys or other devices near water or in the rain.
2. **Electrical outlets have limits.** Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.
3. **When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord.** Yanking a cord out of an electrical outlet can damage the appliance, the outlet or the plug, leaving the appliance or toy unable to operate safely.
4. **Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines.** If a tree has a power line running through it—or if it's even within reach of the line—that's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.
5. **Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and pets out.** If a toy or small pet gets inside of the fence, the child should tell a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it.

### Using a generator for backup power protection and peace of mind?



## Generate Safely.

Never use a portable generator indoors.

Do not plug generators into standard electrical outlets.

Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances into the generator.

Start the generator before connecting appliances.





Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## August 11 is 811 National Safe Digging Day

Don't start that project until you've located all underground utilities. Contact Iowa One Call at 811 at least 48 hours before work is scheduled to begin.

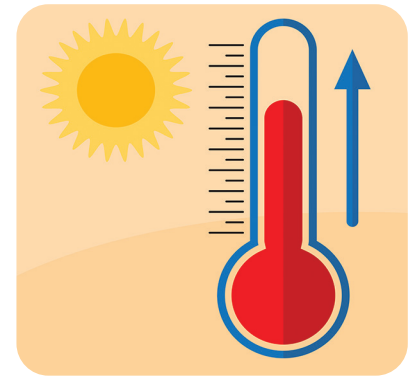
As an Iowa law, you are required to contact One Call so that utilities can mark their services. The call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Making the call can eliminate disruption of service and more importantly, reduces the chance of injury.

Take the time to make the call. It's a fast, free call that will help keep you, your family, and your farm safe. Or, visit [www.iowaon-call.com](http://www.iowaon-call.com) to request your locate.

## Keep cool during August heat

Unless you keep your thermostat so low that you send your cooling bill through the roof in August, it's a good idea to find some energy-friendly ways to keep your cool during the hottest month of the year. Here are five tips:

1. **Take cool showers.** If your house isn't cold—and there's no reason it should be, even with the air conditioner on—ease up on the hot showers. A cool shower will lower your body temperature and get you just as clean.
2. **Chill the meal plan.** Instead of baking, broiling, boiling, sautéing and frying every night, how about chopping fresh veggies, making colorful salads and satisfying your family's hunger with healthy raw foods that will fill them up and give your stove and oven a break?
3. **Filter the sun.** Install solar screens or window films on east- and west-facing windows so you can keep the heat out while allowing the light to come in.
4. **Seal leaks and cracks.** You'll find them all over your home—around windows, doors, and electrical and cable outlets. It's easy to caulk and weatherstrip, and it's an activity you can do with your kids as you teach them to use energy responsibly.
5. **Schedule a check-up.** Even if you skipped your air conditioner's spring maintenance, go ahead and schedule it now. Your HVAC tech can tell you if your air conditioning unit is running efficiently.



## Affordable electricity powers quality of life By Anne Prince

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater, and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV, and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. Typically when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity.

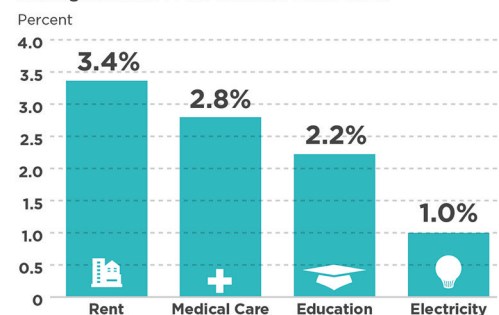
Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses. Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4%, medical care increased 2.8%, and education increased 2.2%. But the cost of electricity only increased 1%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity—it's a necessity. That's why we will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

### ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index

## What does that mean?

In most professions there is industry-specific jargon, and your electric utility is no different. The following are terms you may hear or see when we discuss a power outage:



**Animal contact:** A power interruption caused by birds, squirrels, or raccoons.

**Arc:** The flow of an electric current across a gap between two conductors, terminals, or contacts. An arc can result in sparks, a loud noise, and a momentary or sustained outage as protective equipment operates.

**Back feed:** The routing of power for an alternate direction. This can be intentional or unintentional.

**Blinks:** A momentary outage usually lasting less than 2 seconds.

**Brown outs:** A drop in voltage in electrical power supply; so named because they typically cause the lights to dim.

**Cable fault:** When the insulation of a power cable deteriorates enough that it's no longer able to contain the voltage, causing a short; a hole, a crack, or burning through the cable.

**Flicker:** A slight fluctuation in the voltage of AC (alternating current) power lines in which a directly visible change in the brightness of a light source is noticed.

**Galloping:** Overhead lines with extreme sway under high wind conditions.

**SCADA:** Acronym for Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition. Technology that monitors and controls distribution and transmission systems.

**Substation:** An electrical facility containing equipment for controlling the flow of electricity from supplier to user.

**Switch:** A device used for making, breaking, or changing connections in an electrical circuit.

**Transformer:** A device used to raise or lower voltage within electric distribution and transmission lines.

**Voltage:** The pressure from an electrical circuit's power source that pushes charged electrons (current) through a conducting loop, enabling them to do work such as illuminating a lamp.

## The cooperative advantage

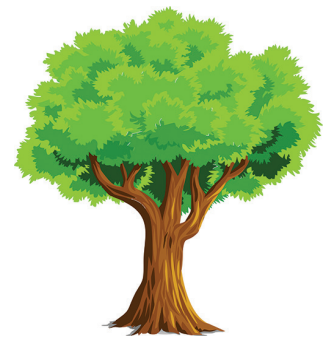
- Electric co-ops are **community-focused organizations** that deliver safe, reliable and affordable energy.
  - Our electric co-op is unique because **we belong to the communities we serve**. The co-op is **led by its members**, which gives us an understanding of the needs of our communities.
  - We answer to local members rather than far-away shareholders, so **we're able to respond quickly to the changing needs of our community**.
  - We share any excess revenue with our members because **we're not-for-profit**.
  - Even though we're locally owned and operated, **we cooperate with other electric cooperatives** across the country to develop new technologies, invest in equipment and infrastructure that benefit multiple co-ops in a region, and assist with major outages.
- Our electric co-op was built by the community, belongs to the community, and continues to be led by the community—that's the cooperative difference!



## Winner of 10 shade trees announced

Lavern Hoepfer, Waverly, was one of 10 *Living with Energy in Iowa* Editor's Choice May contest winners. Lavern's name was randomly drawn as the winner of 10 free shade trees up to one-foot tall and a one-year membership to the Arbor Day Foundation, which includes a subscription to the organization's bimonthly newsletter, a copy of "The Tree Book," and discounts on future tree and shrub purchases.

Iowa electric cooperative members can enter the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine contest each month by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com). Entrant information is not shared and only one entry per account is allowed.



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