

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

July 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## Bruns joins BCREC

Butler County REC is pleased to announce that Bryce Bruns, apprentice lineman, has joined the cooperative. Bryce began working out of the Allison warehouse on May 25 and will be on call out of the Horton warehouse.

No stranger to Butler County REC, Bryce worked with us as seasonal help for three summers. He grew up on a farm north of Allison and graduated in 2017 from North Butler High School. A May 2021 graduate of the powerline program at Northwest Iowa Community College, Sheldon, Bruns is also taking classes through Iowa State University, Ames, to earn a degree in ag studies.

Bryce recently purchased a home in Clarksville, and he enjoys spending time with family and friends and working on his family farm.

Of his new job, Bryce commented, "I really enjoyed my summer months working at Butler County REC—especially the friendly atmosphere. It's easy to get along with the employees. I have a lot to learn but have had good teachers here and am excited." Welcome to Butler County REC, Bryce!

## Businesses benefit from Butler County REC loan fund

They had dreams of purchasing a chiropractic clinic, building benches, opening a daycare on their community's main street, and constructing a new fire station. And they borrowed from Butler County REC's revolving loan fund to realize those dreams.

The fund, made up of grants and loans from USDA Rural Development, was established in the mid-1990's. Since that time, we have funded over 50 loans to businesses for approximately \$7.2 million in loan funds. Low-interest loans are available for start-ups, construction, expansions, machinery, and equipment, and your business does not have to be a member of Butler County REC or in our service territory to apply. Loans are available from \$5,000 to \$250,000.

"The loan fund is a great tool that our utility offers to help ensure rural Iowa is able to prosper," said Katie LaBree, Butler County REC business development manager.

The loan application is available on our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop) or feel free to call Katie at our office at 888.267.2726, ext. 123. Resources are available to assist with completing the application. Isn't it time to make your business dreams a reality? Butler County REC is committed to your community and the local economy.



The Butler-Grundy Development Alliance recently borrowed USDA revolving loan funds from Butler County REC and Corn Belt Power Cooperative. With Jeff Kolb (center), executive director of the Butler-Grundy Development Alliance, are Katie LaBree (left), Butler County REC business development manager, and Brittany Dickey, Corn Belt Power development finance director.



Iowa Choice Renewables is here to help you make the best decisions about your energy needs. To get started, call Butler County REC at 888.267.2726 and ask for Matt Mahoney, energy services manager.

# How renewable energy helps power our world

Renewable energy is continuous energy supplied by natural resources. Although endless, the amount of renewable power produced in a specific period is restricted.

According to the University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems, about 80% of the nation's energy comes from fossil fuels, 8.4% from nuclear power, and 11.4% from renewable sources.

Wind and solar are the fastest-growing renewable sources; however, they provide just 3.8% of the total energy used in the U.S., according to the Center.

In 2019, renewable energy sources accounted for about 17% of energy generation, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). The administration projects that the share of renewables used for U.S. electricity generation will increase to 42% in 2050.

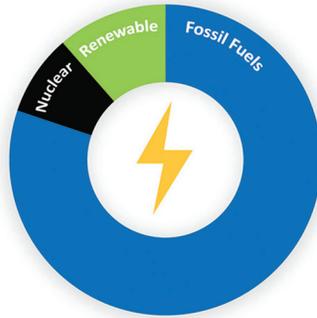
Types of renewable energy include:

**Biomass:** An organic material that comes from plants and animals.

Examples of biomass include wood, agricultural crops; food, yard, and wood waste in garbage; and animal manure and human sewage.

**Geothermal:** Garnered from the heat of the earth. It can heat and cool homes and buildings through

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**Safe Electricity.org**

Source: University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Studies

heat pumps, generate electricity via geothermal power plants, and heat structures directly.

**Hydroelectric:** Relying on the water cycle for power. According to the EIA, hydropower was one of the first sources used for electricity generation, and it is the largest single renewable energy source for U.S. electricity generation.

**Solar:** The most abundant energy resource on earth according to the Department of Energy, with 173,000 terawatts of solar energy striking the earth continuously. That is more than 10,000 times the world's total energy use.

**Wind:** Wind occurs because the sun cannot heat the surface of the earth evenly. Today, wind energy is mainly used to generate electricity.



*70% of lightning fatalities occur June through August - National Weather Service*

*There is no safe place from lightning when you are outside. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose an immediate threat. That is why the National Weather Service advises, "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!" Lightning can strike up to 10 miles away from rain, even if you don't see clouds.*

Learn more at

**Safe Electricity.org**

## LEDs = Energy savings

What makes LEDs different? LED light bulbs work when an electrical current passes through a microchip, which illuminates the tiny light sources we call LEDs, and the result is visible light. LED light bulbs produce light up to 90 percent more efficiently than traditional incandescent light bulbs.

Moreover, many LEDs are rated with a lifespan of 50,000 hours. That means if one is used 8 hours a day, it is projected to last 17 years!

LEDs help the environment while reducing energy costs. According to the Department of Energy, use of LEDs is on track to save the equivalent annual electrical output of 44 large electric power plants, with a total savings of more than \$30 billion, by the year 2027!

## MAKE THE SWITCH

SAVE MONEY and REDUCE ENERGY USE by replacing outdated lightbulbs with newer, more efficient LED lights.



**Safe Electricity.org**

# Don't fall victim to utility scams

By Abby Berry, NRECA

Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers.

We want you to be aware of two trending scams. One is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your banking information to deposit the credit to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, we will automatically apply the credit to your account, carrying over to your next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. At this time, your electric utility does not send text messages to members.

Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

- **Take your time.** Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency. Think about the situation before acting.
- **Be suspicious.** Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Remember, if the request seems out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.
- **Confirm before you act.** If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent us but you're unsure, hang up the phone and call us directly to verify the situation.

Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. Be vigilant, and please report any utility scams to us so we can let others in our community know.



- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let us know as soon as possible.

## Tornado Safety Tips

### Practice and Prepare

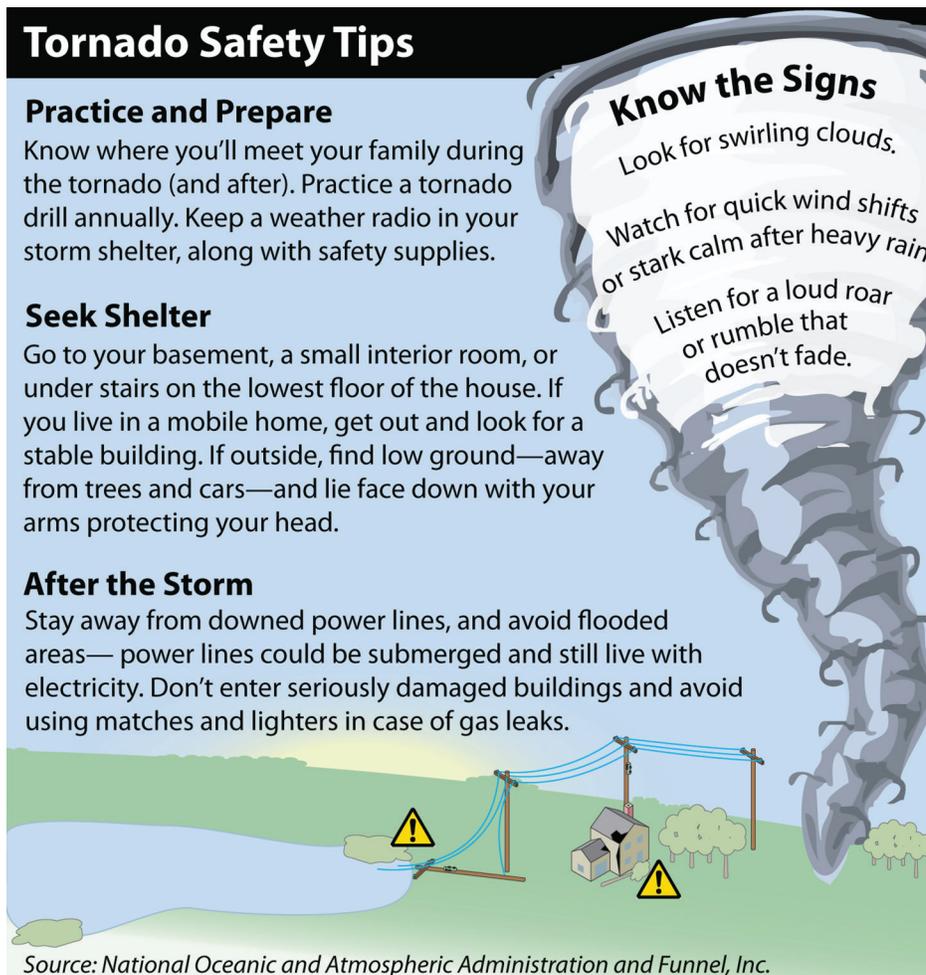
Know where you'll meet your family during the tornado (and after). Practice a tornado drill annually. Keep a weather radio in your storm shelter, along with safety supplies.

### Seek Shelter

Go to your basement, a small interior room, or under stairs on the lowest floor of the house. If you live in a mobile home, get out and look for a stable building. If outside, find low ground—away from trees and cars—and lie face down with your arms protecting your head.

### After the Storm

Stay away from downed power lines, and avoid flooded areas—power lines could be submerged and still live with electricity. Don't enter seriously damaged buildings and avoid using matches and lighters in case of gas leaks.



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Funnel, Inc.

## Join us at the Iowa State Fair!

At the Iowa State Fair August 12-22, 2021, the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are again sponsoring the Rastetter 4-H Building on the south side of the fairgrounds.

Look for our August newsletter and watch our Facebook page for more information on how you can WIN ONE OF THREE PRIZES when you visit us at our booth.

We can't wait to see you at the Iowa State Fair next month!



## \$2,617,476.77 allocated by Butler County REC board

As a member-owner of Butler County REC, you share in the excess margins of the cooperative in the form of patronage dividends. This is part of the cooperative difference. Investor-owned utilities pay their excess margins to their investors, not those who use their services.

After reviewing the operating revenues for 2020, your board of directors approved to set aside \$2,617,476.77 in excess margins. These margins – retained as patronage capital – will be used to help keep your electric cooperative financially sound and the quality of service as high as possible.

### Allocation

Your share of the 2020 margin – your patronage allocation – was listed in the box directly below your name on the June 2021 electric bill for May's usage. The total unretired patronage for all of your accounts was included.

The amount you earn in a given year is based upon the amount of electricity you use. The sum of your bills for the year is multiplied by a percentage to determine your allocation.

### Payment

Butler County REC is currently on a 19-year payback schedule, so this patronage allocation will likely be paid in 2039. The latest distribution of patronage was in February 2021, when \$1,213,691.29 was returned to those who were members in 2002 and/or a portion of 2019.

### Address

If you move out of our service territory and will no longer receive electrical service from Butler County REC, it is important to keep your address current with us. We rely on former co-op members to send us their new address for patronage disbursement mailings.

## Our Touchstone Energy Values



Touchstone Energy®

**Integrity | Accountability | Innovation | Commitment to Community | Teamwork**



Sign up for automatic bill pay with us in July or August and your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 bill credit for the month in which you enroll!

As a new sign-up, if you mail in a form (for checking or savings), you will receive a one-time \$5 bill credit. Forms can be found on our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop), or call the office and we will send you the form. Sign up through SmartHub on our website (for checking, savings, or credit card), and you will receive a one-time \$10 bill credit.

This promotion runs through August 31, 2021.

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