

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

September 2025

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

We're looking for students interested in public service and leadership

High schoolers who attend our Zoom sessions will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship!

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Butler County REC has a long history of supporting students in the communities we serve through scholarships and leadership opportunities. We've also been sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital every summer for years as part of the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to once again offer a virtual opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities, and the cooperative business model with a three-part webinar series in October. The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is open to any high school student in our service area, and they are invited to register at www.IowaYouthTour.com.

"This program is perfect for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership, or government," remarked Craig Codner, Butler County REC CEO. "We want to raise students' awareness of how local electric

co-ops power people's lives and empower communities. We also want to talk about exciting cooperative career paths that are available in smaller communities."

Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic:

- **Thursday, Oct. 2, 7:00 p.m. – Cooperative Business Model**
- **Tuesday, Oct. 14, 7:00 p.m. – Advocacy**
- **Thursday, Oct. 23, 7:00 p.m. – Leadership**

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship. All students who register online by September 30 will receive a special box of co-op goodies in the mail.

WANTED:
Rural Iowa
high school
students
who have a
passion for
leadership



Attend our webinar series in October for a chance to win Apple AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship! Learn more at IowaYouthTour.com



During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our lineup of speakers and presenters. Participants will learn how to advocate for issues that are important to them and build leadership skills from a dynamic speaker. Attendees will also hear about Iowa Youth Tour. Students with an interest in government and public service are encouraged to apply for this weeklong trip to Washington, DC. The 2026 Youth Tour is slated for June 14-20 next summer.

Learn more at www.IowaYouthTour.com or contact Anne at anne@butlerrec.coop for more information.

Change of seasons = change in electric bill

As summer fades and fall arrives, you may notice changes in your electric bill. Here's what to expect and how to prepare:

- **Cooling drops, heating rises:** Your air conditioning use will decrease, but heating needs may start increasing, especially in late fall.
- **Shorter daylight means more lighting:** With fewer daylight hours, you'll likely use indoor lights earlier in the evening. Switching to LED bulbs can help reduce the impact.
- **Holiday decorating ups energy use:** Halloween and early holiday lights can add to your electricity consumption. Using timers helps control costs.
- **Appliance use shifts:** You might start using appliances like ovens, space heaters, or humidifiers more frequently.

Understanding these changes could help you plan and manage your energy use better.

AI tools for electric cooperatives

Article provided by NRECA

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly popular tool for many industries and even in our daily lives.

AI is a hot topic—sometimes exciting, sometimes a little scary. It has the potential to bring many opportunities—and a few challenges—to the electric utility sector. But machine learning takes time, and we're still in the process of determining how AI can really be used.

Many electric cooperatives are already exploring emerging technologies like AI, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR). Most of AI's current applications are task-specific—like using chatbots to answer common questions from co-op members or analyzing data to better understand members' needs.

Contrary to what Hollywood would have you believe, AI can't think for itself. Its abilities depend on how it's programmed, the quality of its training, and the data it receives. AI is essentially about learning from patterns and making decisions based on that input—not about having thoughts or opinions of its own.

Because AI interacts with both internal systems and external networks,

cybersecurity is a top priority. As Butler County REC looks to adopt tools powered by AI and other tech, we will ensure our systems are safe from potential cyber threats. Strong digital defenses are essential to using any new technology safely.

As we consider emerging AI tools, our focus won't be so much on the technology as on solving real problems. If AI can streamline a process, predict an issue, or improve service for our members, it's worth considering. It could even help our staff better manage the local grid or predict storm damage to more efficiently deploy crews.

Additional exciting areas are AR and VR. Many electric utilities are currently testing AR for training, giving lineworkers a hands-on experience to prepare for dangerous situations before facing them in real life. In the future, smart glasses (VR) may help crews instantly identify and troubleshoot equipment in the field.

Ultimately, AI, AR, and VR are tools that can help utilities like Butler County REC serve their communities better—making energy more reliable, services faster, and operations more efficient.

The challenges AI brings

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence, particularly energy-intensive technologies like generative AI and large language models, is presenting several challenges for electric utilities. One of the biggest concerns is the dramatic increase in energy demand. AI relies heavily on data centers, which require massive amounts of electricity to operate. As these technologies expand, power consumption is expected to rise significantly.

This growing demand is also creating a strain on our nation's electric grid, which can lead to instability and a higher risk of outages, especially in areas already dealing with high energy use or aging infrastructure.

While AI tools offer great potential in improving utility operations, these challenges highlight the growing tension between AI advancement and the long-term capability of the grid.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association is the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

AI PUT INTO ACTION

Electric cooperatives are already using artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) for key tasks and activities. Looking ahead, co-ops see great potential for AI and AR as helpful tools for improving grid reliability and the services they provide to consumer-members.

SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

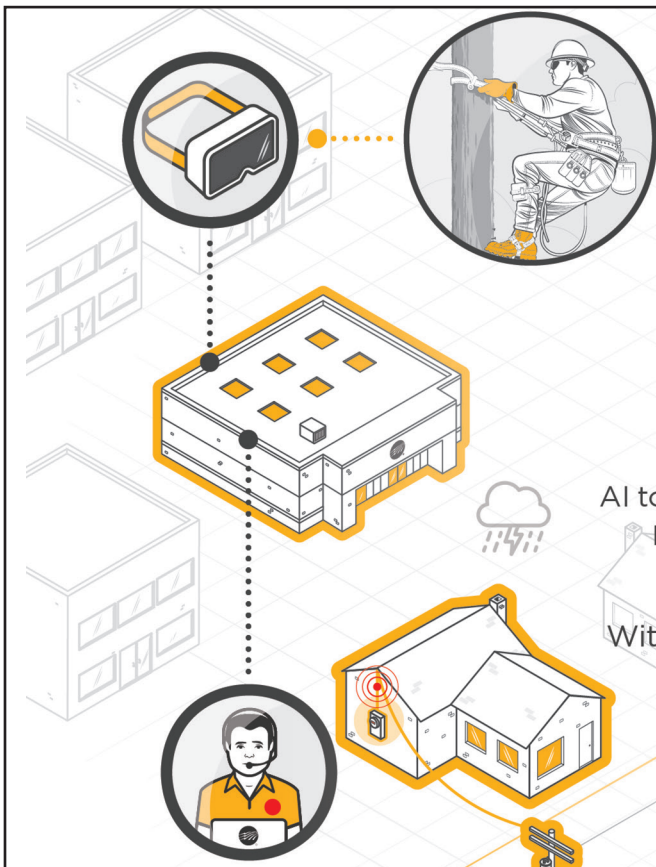
AI tools like chatbots can enhance member interactions and provide a tailored experience based on energy use data.

WEATHER FORECASTING

With the help of AI, weather forecasts will become more accurate, pinpointing areas to station utility crews.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through augmented reality, or AR, lineworkers can experience interactive, lifelike trainings, rather than watching a video or webinar.



Saving energy during peak times benefits everyone

Article provided by NRECA

Conserving electricity during peak energy use times lowers your monthly bill, and it can benefit our entire community.

“Peak times” refer to periods of the day when the demand for electricity is highest. Think early mornings when people are getting ready for work or school and evenings when families return home, cook dinner, and unwind with electronics. When everyone uses energy at once, it adds pressure on the electric grid.

Butler County REC works around the clock to ensure that electricity flows to your home whenever you need it. Behind the scenes, an enormous and intricate system is at work—one of the most complex machines in the world: the U.S. power grid. The grid is made up of three major interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to keep the lights on and our economy running smoothly.

Electricity comes from a diverse mix of sources—hydropower, natural gas, coal, solar, wind, and more. Some power plants can respond quickly to spikes in demand, while others are less flexible. When electricity demand surges during peak times, it's more expensive to generate or purchase power. If supply can't keep up, the risk of outages increases. That's why using less energy during peak hours is more important than ever. It not only eases strain on the grid but also helps you save money.

How can you “beat the peak”? Adjust your thermostat a few degrees during peak hours. Smart thermostats can automate this for you. Delay using energy-hungry appliances like ovens, clothes washers, and dishwashers until later in the evening.

Small actions taken by many households can lead to big results. When we all work together to reduce energy use during peak times, we protect our power grid, help control costs, and ensure reliable electricity for our communities.

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LET'S CONNECT!



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www.butlerrec.coop



A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative

DOWNED POWER LINE and Large Equipment Safety

Wait to fold/unfold or raise/lower equipment until you are well into the field, and away from the field's edge.

In an accident or contact with a power line:

1. **Stay Inside the Cab:** The ground may be energized.
2. **Call 9-1-1:** Report downed or damaged lines.
3. **Warn Others:** Tell bystanders to stay away.
4. **Wait for Utility Crew:** Do not exit until it's safe.



If you notice smoke or fire:

5. **Exit Safely:** Cross arms over your chest and jump out with feet together. Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.
6. **Move Away:** Shuffle or bunny hop with feet together. Get as far away as you can.



Learn more:

 **Safe
Electricity.org®**

Top tips to protect kids on the farm

Farms give kids unique opportunities to gain responsibility, independence, and strong work ethics. Growing up on a farm helps children develop problem-solving skills, build close family bonds, gain respect for the food cycle, and cultivate a deep passion for the land.

However, agriculture is also one of the most dangerous industries for youth in the U.S. More young people die working in agriculture than in all other industries combined, with a child lost to an agriculture-related incident approximately every three days. Many of these tragedies occur when kids take on tasks that aren't suited to their age or abilities.

The impact of a farm injury or fatality extends beyond the individual, affecting families and entire communities. The emotional and mental toll can last a lifetime, underscoring the importance of making safety a priority for everyone.

By implementing safety strategies, farmers, families, and employees can reap the benefits of farm life while minimizing risks.



Why are kids at greater risk? Injuries often occur when children are doing something beyond their mental, physical, or emotional abilities. They are susceptible to certain types of accidents and injuries:

- Children often work on farms at young ages and in hazardous jobs.
- Their bodies and brains are still developing, affecting coordination, decision-making, and impulse control.
- Kids tire easily, are more likely to get distracted (think cell phones and social media), and may take risks to prove themselves.
- Many lack experience and may be reluctant to ask questions or admit uncertainty.

Five essential farm safety tips for kids Keep kids off tractors. Tractors are involved in more than 40% of fatal farm accidents involving children under 15. Most kids are not tall enough or strong enough to operate them safely. Only let youth operate a tractor if they meet safety guidelines for age, size, and maturity.

1. Supervise and restrict access. Young children should never be in work areas unsupervised. Fence off or lock hazardous areas like grain bins, animal pens, and equipment storage.
2. Assign age-appropriate tasks. Match chores to the child's abilities and maturity. Teens are more likely to take risks, so clear guidelines and supervision are essential.
3. Create a safe environment. Remove hazards such as slippery or uneven surfaces, keep equipment keys out of reach, and avoid repetitive motion. Provide protective gear like gloves, non-slip shoes, and hearing protection.
4. Train and model safe behavior. Teach kids how to do tasks safely, practice together until they are proficient, and always demonstrate safe habits yourself. Kids learn by watching adults.

Farm safety starts with open communication Talk regularly with your kids about farm safety. Clearly explain which areas are off-limits, how to spot hazards, and why following rules is important. Frequent, open conversations help build safe habits and encourage kids to think before they act.

Together, conduct safety audits of your farm and home. Identifying and fixing hazards not only protects your children but also helps them learn how to prevent injuries.

Supervision is key. Always keep an eye on children, especially around potential dangers. Remember, learning safe habits takes time and patience — be prepared to repeat instructions to encourage smart, lasting, and safe work habits.

For more tips on assigning safe farm tasks to kids, check out the Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines at CultivateSafety.org/AYWG.

Farming is more than a job; it's a way of life. By making safety a family priority, we can help ensure that future generations enjoy the rewards of farm life with fewer risks.

INtouch® is published monthly for members of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative
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