

living with energy

IN IOWA

Grundy County REC
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

DECEMBER 2020

Enter to win a Hy-Vee gift card courtesy of Grundy County REC ▶ See Page 12



Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

Happy holidays from
Grundy County REC!

Three steps to improve
indoor air quality

Celebrate the season with
snacks and appetizers

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ON THE COVER



Electric cooperatives across Iowa help their communities celebrate the holidays through events and volunteerism. Grundy County REC employees got into the holiday spirit on a warm November day and submitted this fun photo. Pictured from left to right: Front row – Shane Usher, Aaron Bird, Tony Sienknecht and Derek Snakenberg; Top row – Karl Nielsen, Scott Kuiper, Erik Freese, Mike Geerdes and Vicki Daily. ⚡

Celebrating another strong year of rural economic development

BY RAND FISHER

As 2020 comes to an end, it is easy to look back and recognize all the speed bumps and roadblocks we have had to navigate throughout the year. While the impacts of COVID-19 and the derecho are extensive and ongoing, I would like to offer a positive perspective of interactions that the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) and our utility partners are having with regard to our mission of business and community development.

First, I would like to recognize yet another record-setting year for receiving awards from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDL&G) Program. As highlighted on Pages 10-11 of this issue, your utility providers supported 15 projects that are moving forward across the state. These and other project awards foster investment, create and retain jobs, and strengthen important community services in your communities.

IADG's primary purpose is to support our utility members in finding and facilitating economic development projects. Our staff assistance and support take on various roles and forms as we work with members and other partners to get projects to the finish line. Here are a few more examples of the recent successes of our IADG members:

Access Energy Cooperative, based in Mt. Pleasant, was pleased to see the announcement of a new project in the recently established 60-acre Fairfield South Business & Industrial Park. CARE Ambulance LLC will be establishing a commercial EMS operation and ambulance garage in the park to

serve greater Jefferson County. IADG continues to help market the 30,000-square-foot spec building in the same park.



Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative, based in Allison, is celebrating the announcement of a large project in the recently expanded Butler Logistics Park. Mid-Iowa Cooperative has announced plans to build a \$270 million soy processing plant creating 50 to 60 high-quality jobs. This facility will be a game-changer for area farmers and soybean growers in our state.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, based in Albia, is keeping an eye on 2019 Iowa Venture Award recipient Preferred Wholesale, Inc. The company is expanding in the Albia

Industrial Park with a new, nearly 50,000-square-foot facility for IOWA SMOKEHOUSE meat snacks and Laura Beth's products.

While we celebrate these business projects moving forward, we also know many small businesses across Iowa continue to face significant challenges. Rest assured, IADG and your electric cooperative staff are actively engaged with your community leaders and businesses to connect them in accessing programs and support.

We wish our partners and their members a joy-filled holiday and good health and prosperity in the new year. ⚡

Rand Fisher is the president of the Iowa Area Development Group, which provides business and community support on behalf of nearly 220 Iowa electric and telecommunications utilities.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an ecobee3 Lite Smart Thermostat!

Ring in a new year of energy savings with the ecobee3 Lite Smart Thermostat. By reducing wasted energy in your home, you could save up to 23% annually on your heating or cooling costs with this thermostat, compared to a hold of 72 degrees F. Works with Amazon Echo, Apple HomeKit, Google Assistant, Samsung SmartThings and others. Learn more about smart thermostats on Page 14 of this issue. ⚡



Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than Dec. 31, 2020. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the \$100 local business gift card from the October issue was Darlene Van Meter, Guthrie Country REC.

Volunteer to make a positive impact

BY VICKI DAILY

With the holiday season upon us and the New Year just around the corner, I can't help but reflect on the gratitude I feel for our community. I think most will agree this has been a year like no other – certainly in my lifetime. And while we've seen our share of challenges, I am heartened by how we have all pulled together to make our community stronger.

Here at Grundy County REC, we know the importance of giving back to the communities we serve and those in which we reside. Recently, we collected toy donations for Christmas in Grundy County that will help bring joy at Christmas time to children in need. We are currently



gathering food, personal hygiene items, and household cleaning supplies for Operation Threshold, benefiting those in need in our communities. While these efforts are focused on the holidays, our concern for community is a year-round endeavor for Grundy County REC.

Because we are a co-op, volunteerism and giving back are a part of who we are. Several of our employees and directors are volunteer firefighters, coaches for youth sports, involved in school activities or serve on local boards.

I look at volunteerism as the gift that keeps on giving. While it's difficult to quantify the impact that volunteers have, I know they make a tremendous difference in our community and make our corner of the world a better place. Many organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. Volunteers fill in gaps and spread joy and compassion through their efforts.

I hope you'll consider volunteering. Give an organization or cause that you care about the gift of your compassion, time and talent. In addition to the organization and

the community benefitting from your efforts, you will receive a gift as well. Not only will you enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping a good cause, but you may also make new friends, expand your social network, strengthen existing skills or learn a new one.

Volunteering may provide additional dimension and purpose to your life. In the process, you will be a role model for your family because your commitment will offer a powerful lesson to your children. It will show them first-hand how one person can make a big difference and strengthen the community in which they live.

At the end of the day, the gift of volunteerism is a gift that will continue giving all year long. So, this holiday season, consider starting a new tradition – give the gift of time.

This article will be my last for *Living with Energy in Iowa*, as my retirement date is scheduled for Jan. 8, 2021. It has been a pleasure serving you, and I wish you and your families all the best in 2021 and the coming years! ⚡

Vicki Daily is executive vice president/general manager of Grundy County REC.



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Officers and Directors:

District 1: Kevin Pruisner
District 2: Norbert Boyle
District 3: Nick Strohbehm
District 4: Larry Rohach
District 5: Matt Kopriva
District 6: David Schmidt
District 7: Jason Paper

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

OPERATION THRESHOLD



If you are interested in joining Grundy County REC in supporting Operation Threshold, please feel free to drop donations off at our headquarters building, located at 303 North Park Avenue. We will be accepting donations through Dec. 21.

Currently accepting:

- Canned vegetables
- Pasta
- Cereal
- Soup
- Non-perishable food items
- Personal hygiene products
- Household cleaning products
- Toilet paper and paper towels ⚡

CONGRATULATIONS!

National Co-op Month winners announced

Whether you participated in October's National Co-op Month activities in person, on Facebook, or your children showcased their artistic and creative talent in the coloring contest, Grundy County REC thanks you for celebrating with us!

Congratulations to these four lucky members who were randomly selected to receive a \$50 Visa gift card:

- Heidi Biersner

- Sue Lynne Freese
- Allison Schipper
- Sarah Steinmeyer

When it came to the coloring contest, our mini-members didn't disappoint with their creativity and talent! Carly Jesina (pictured below with her family), age 4, was the lucky name drawn for the Amazon Fire HD 10 Tablet – Kids Edition and a special meet-and-greet with our linemen. ⚡



IN THE COMMUNITY

Supporting the local Maroon and White initiative

On Nov. 9, Grundy County REC presented the Maroon and White committee's board of directors with a donation of \$1,000. This donation will assist in funding their initiative to update the Upper Elementary building in Grundy Center into a much-needed, comprehensive early childhood center. ⚡



Pictured from left to right – Maroon and White committee board members: Melody Hoy, president; Robert Hughes; Kristy Sawyer, treasurer; Ally Noteboom; and Jan Onnen, vice president.

DIRECTOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

Director Pruisner receives leadership certificate

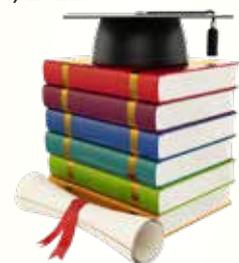
During Grundy County REC's October board meeting, Larry Rohach, president, presented Kevin Pruisner, treasurer (pictured on the right), with a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Director Gold Certification. Obtaining this certification shows Pruisner's commitment to continuous education and building his knowledge. Congratulations! ⚡



STUDENT LEADERS

Scholarship opportunities

Grundy County REC will again award three \$750 scholarships, along with a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship to students of a member of the cooperative. The scholarships go directly to the school of the student's choice to assist with college tuition. For more information, contact Grundy County REC at 319-824-5251 or visit www.grundycountyrecia.com. The deadline to apply is Feb. 8, 2021. ⚡



How to breathe easy about your

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN



Sealing air leaks is one of the best ways to make your home more energy efficient. It's also essential to ensure your home has an adequate amount of healthy, fresh air.

The average home loses about half its air volume every hour, so it can be effectively sealed (often at a low cost) and still have more than enough healthy air.

Pollutants are the leading cause of poor indoor air quality, and the most dangerous pollutant is carbon monoxide (CO). It can come from furnaces, water heaters or stoves that burn natural gas, propane or wood. The problem usually occurs in devices that are old, in need of repair or installed or operated in a manner that prevents clear, unobstructed supply and exhaust of combustion air.

Excessive moisture in the air

can also be considered an indoor pollutant because mold and dust mites thrive when relative humidity is above 60%. One sign your home is sealed too tight is window condensation, which can happen if moist air doesn't exit the home at an adequate rate.

Pollutants can cause physical reactions, such as coughing or sneezing. However, carbon monoxide causes more severe reactions, such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, confusion, blurred vision or loss of consciousness.

Three steps to ensure healthy indoor air

So, what can you do to ensure healthy indoor air as you increase your home's energy efficiency?

STEP 1: Eliminate or reduce pollution

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the first strategy is to eliminate or reduce the source of pollution. And the first pollutant to eliminate is carbon monoxide. If you have a combustion furnace, it should be inspected and serviced regularly by a professional. If you have any combustion appliances, CO detectors must be installed and replaced every five to seven years.

If you live in an area with radon, keep it out of your home because it is the second leading cause of lung cancer. To determine if radon is in your area, check out EPA's radon map (www.epa.gov/radon/epa-map-radon-zones). Radon tests are not expensive,

home's air quality

and your local health authorities can provide more information. If radon levels are too high, you'll need to hire a professional to install a system that will divert radon gas to the outside of your home.

Consider these additional pollutant reduction measures:

- Never smoke tobacco inside.
- Run the exhaust fans in bathrooms and your kitchen after use.
- Store toxic cleaning and painting products outside.
- Never idle a vehicle, even for a minute, in an attached garage.

STEP 2: Have adequate ventilation

The second strategy is ventilation. Your home probably has more than enough natural ventilation from outside air leaking into the home. If you suspect this isn't adequate, the best way to know for sure is to

hire an energy auditor to conduct a blower door test.

Many experts recommend sealing the home as tight as possible and using mechanical ventilation to ensure a consistent and adequate supply of outside air. The most energy-efficient ventilation system is a heat recovery ventilator (HRV), which pulls in fresh air from outside and captures the heat from indoor air before it is exhausted to the outside.

STEP 3: Clean the air

The third and final strategy is to clean the air. The easiest step is simply changing your furnace filter at least once every three months and keeping your furnace supply and return air registers free of obstructions. If any rooms do not have an air return, keep the doors open. There are several home air



cleaning systems available – some are effective, and some are not. The EPA offers a handy online guide: www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/air-cleaners-and-air-filters-home.

As you seal air leaks in your home, enjoy breathing in fresh, healthy indoor air! ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.



A furnace that has been inspected by an HVAC professional and is properly vented can help you have a pollution-free home.



An HVAC professional can inspect and test a furnace to ensure it is operating safely and efficiently.



Source: Robert Couse-Baker

HOLIDAY Appetizers & SNACKS



Deck the Halls Mini Cheese Balls

- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 cup crushed pineapple, well drained
- 1/4 cup green onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups pecans, chopped
- 2 tablespoons parsley flakes
- 24 tree shaped pretzels
- 24 red bell pepper strips, 1/4 x 1 inch

In large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, seasoned salt, cayenne pepper and Worcestershire sauce on low speed until smooth. Stir in pineapple, green onion and chopped bell pepper. Shape mixture into 24 walnut-sized balls. Roll each ball in chopped pecans. Place cheese balls on a large plate, sprinkle tops with parsley flakes. Cover and chill for 1 hour or until serving time. Just before serving, place each ball on center of a tree pretzel and add pepper strip to top. *Serves: 12-16*

**Nancy Anderson • Ankeny
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

Holiday Pepper Cheese Dip

- 1 cup sour cream
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 8 ounces pepper jack cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 1/4 cup black olives, chopped
- 2 ounces diced pimentos, drained
- 1 tablespoon green onion, sliced

Combine sour cream and cream cheese in a small bowl. With an electric mixer, beat at medium speed until smooth. Stir in by hand the remaining ingredients. Cover, chill at least 2 hours. Serve with tortilla chips, crackers or veggies. *Servings: 48*

**Tina Woelber • Sibley
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Toffee Pretzels

- 1 bag pretzels, crushed
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 12 ounces chocolate chips
- coarse sea salt, to taste

Spread crushed pretzels over parchment lined baking sheet. Melt and cook together butter and brown sugar. Let cook 3 minutes on medium heat without stirring then, pour mixture over broken pretzel pieces. Bake at 375 degrees F for 5 minutes. Sprinkle chocolate chips over top after baking and let set until you can spread the chips. Sprinkle with coarse sea salt. Cool until chocolate hardens; break apart and store in airtight containers.

**Joni Rus • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

Salmon Dip

- 6 1/8 ounces skinless and boneless pink salmon, drained
- 12 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup green onion, finely chopped (use some of the green tops)
- 1 tablespoon red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped (optional)
- crackers

Place salmon, cream cheese and green onion in a mixing bowl. Mix well with a fork until smooth. Garnish with red pepper and parsley, if desired. Serve with crackers. *Makes 6, 1/4-cup servings.*

**Stacy Venteicher • Glidden
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative**

These tips can be part of a recipe for staying on track with healthy eating this holiday season!

HOLIDAY-PROOF YOUR PLAN

Don't skip meals to save up for a holiday feast. It will be harder to manage your blood sugar, and you'll be really hungry and more likely to overeat.

HOLIDAY TIPS

Cranberry Salsa Over Cream Cheese

- 12 ounces fresh cranberries
- 1-2 jalapeno peppers, deseeded and chopped
- 2 tablespoons onion, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh orange zest
- 2 tablespoons orange or lime juice
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened crackers

Rinse the cranberries, then chop them in a food processor. Mix chopped cranberries, jalapeno, onion and cilantro with sugar, orange zest and juice until well blended. Cover and store in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes or overnight. To serve, spread cream cheese on a serving tray. Strain away juices from cranberry salsa and spoon on top of cream cheese. Serve with assorted crackers. *Serves: 12*

Diane Kruse • Salem • Access Energy Cooperative

White Almond Bark Puffcorn

- 1 bag puffcorn
- ½ bag white chocolate chips
- 3 almond bark squares holiday sprinkles

Spread puffcorn out on wax paper and set aside. Melt the white chocolate chips with the almond bark squares then pour over top of the puffcorn. Gently stir to mix throughout the puffcorn. Add sprinkles if desired. Set to dry. Once dry, store in baggies or an airtight container. Enjoy! *Serves: 12*

Jamie Zomermaand • Maurice North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Chocolate Chip Cream Cheese Ball

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¾ cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ¾ cup pecans, chopped graham crackers or vanilla wafers

In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, butter and vanilla until fluffy. Gradually add sugars and beat until just combined. Gently stir in chocolate chips so that they don't break. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours. Place mixture on a large piece of plastic wrap and shape into a ball. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Just before serving roll ball in pecans. Place on holiday plate with crackers. Double recipe if needed.

Mary Anne Lahr • Glidden Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Sauerkraut Dip

- 2½ cups corned beef, cubed
- 16 ounces sauerkraut
- 2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup mayonnaise rye bread or crackers

Cook ingredients in a slow cooker for 3 hours on low. Serve with rye bread or crackers.

Martha Allen • Mount Pleasant Access Energy Cooperative



Search our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's rural kitchens.

www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com/recipes

Wanted: Pecan Recipes! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

April is National Pecan Month! The buttery taste of pecans adds a delicious crunch to salads and can be incorporated into everything from main dish to dessert recipes. Share your favorites, and if we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com.

The deadline is Dec. 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **NEW:** Please also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL:
recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL:
Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

STAY ACTIVE

Break physical activity up into smaller chunks so it's easier to schedule, like walking 10 minutes several times a day.

HOLIDAY TIPS

STRIVE FOR BALANCE

If you have a sweet treat, slow down and savor a small serving. Make sure to count it in your meal plan. Then, cut back on other carbs (like potatoes and bread) during the meal.

HOLIDAY TIPS

OUTSMART THE BUFFET

Start with vegetables to take the edge off your appetite. Eat slowly. It takes at least 20 minutes for your brain to realize you're full.

HOLIDAY TIPS

SLEEP MATTERS

When you're sleep-deprived you'll tend to eat more and prefer high-fat, high-sugar food. Aim for 7 to 8 hours per night to guard against mindless eating.

HOLIDAY TIPS

Iowa leads the nation in USDA

BY KAY SNYDER

Iowa's electric cooperatives go far beyond delivering power that is safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible to 650,000 Iowans. For decades, they also have been leaders in heavily investing in local and state economic development.

A strategic federal program that the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) and its utility partners have expertly leveraged to support growth is the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) Program. The REDL&G program was introduced in 1989 to provide competitive funds to local utilities, which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses for projects that create and retain jobs in rural areas.

Seeing this as an incredible opportunity to bring money into the state, Iowa's electric cooperatives and the Iowa Area Development Group created a formula for success. Once a compelling project is identified, IADG works with its utility partners to compile the necessary information and then writes and submits the REDL&G application. This process is no small feat since the applications typically exceed 100 pages.

Iowa leads the nation in the number of projects and the amount awarded through the three decades since the REDL&G program was established. As a result of aggressive grant writing, Iowa has received **347 awards** totaling **\$141.5 million** to support business growth and community vitality.

This year, Iowa secured **25 awards** totaling over **\$16.8 million** in funding, which created or retained over **200 jobs**. These projects are located across the state and include manufacturing facilities, dental clinics, medical clinics, industrial parks, marketing companies, food production, a pharmacy and a



city aquatic center. USDA Rural Development State Director Grant Menke recognized Iowa's efforts at a news conference in late October. "The REDL&G program is one of the most versatile, efficient and effective funding tools to enhance economic opportunities and create jobs in rural America," Menke says. "Through key partnerships with rural electric cooperatives, rural telephone

cooperatives, municipal utilities and supporting organizations, such as the Iowa Area Development Group, Iowa continues to lead the nation in delivering REDL&G investment and projects."

The project list is impressive. Two projects are featured in this article, but please keep in mind there are 345 additional stories across the state. You likely have one or more projects in your community.

Main Street Drug, Charles City

Charles City is now home to Main Street Drug, opened by owners Cindy and Shane Uetz. Cindy is a pharmacist who returned to her hometown of Charles City and managed the Kmart pharmacy. In 2019, the retail chain closed the store, leaving Charles City with only one pharmacy to serve the community. Seeing an opportunity, the couple purchased the former Lidd & Cordray building on Main Street, completely



program support



remodeled the first floor of this former clothing store and opened the pharmacy in early April.

“This project would have never gotten off the ground without the help of Butler County REC and their staff,” states Cindy Uetz. “Pharmacy economics are complicated and different than your typical brick and mortar business. Butler County REC understood this and helped us get the funding we needed. The loan we received has allowed us to provide our community with vital healthcare services. While opening in the middle of a pandemic was never in our vision, our delivery and curbside pickup have helped to protect our rural community and the surrounding area.”

Main Street Drug is entirely independent. The business is committed to providing public education in a wide variety of areas and superior customer service, including options for curbside pickup and delivery, even outside of Charles



City. While the majority of the business is the pharmacy, Main Street Drug also has over-the-counter items available. Rounding out its offerings are a wide variety of consignment items from local artists and designers.

Percival Scientific, Perry

Percival Scientific, a 100-year-old business, is moving forward with the expansion of its existing facility in the Perry Industrial Park in Perry, Iowa. Percival is a worldwide leader in designing and manufacturing

environmental growth (research) chambers for universities, colleges, governmental institutions and businesses. The 33,000 square feet of new space will allow the company to increase its production by 60% and add 10 or more employees to its 80-person workforce.

Financing for the expansion comes in the form of two zero-interest, \$1 million loans from the REDL&G program through Central Iowa Power Cooperative and Minburn Communications. These funds will be used to purchase equipment and build out the larger facility’s electrical and high-speed internet infrastructure.

“The company has wanted to expand for some time, but the \$2 million REGL&G loans tipped the scale,” says Percival President and CEO Gary Wheelock. “As thrilled as we were about this type of program from the USDA, it was even more exciting to learn that since two different rural utilities serve us – Guthrie County REC for electric service and Minburn Communications for phone and internet – we could apply for two USDA loans. Thanks don’t begin to convey how grateful we are to the USDA for offering the REDL&G program, seeing the value in our expansion projects and awarding both loans to us.”

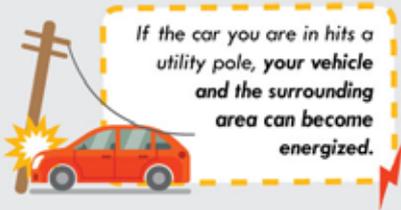
As the economic development entity for Iowa’s electric cooperatives, the IADG team has the opportunity to see the multifaceted commitment rural utilities have to support the businesses and communities they serve. You can be assured that your member-owned cooperative is working diligently to foster investment, create jobs and enrich the quality of life for rural Iowans. ⚡

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.

KNOW WHAT TO DO



if in an Auto Accident with Power Lines



If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.

Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.



1. Do **NOT** leave the car, and warn others to stay away.

2. Call **911** to have the utility notified.



3. **Wait** until a utility professional has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason to exit the vehicle is if it's on fire.

If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: **with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground at the same time.**



Continue to **hop away** with your feet together as far as you can.



OFFICE CLOSING

From all your friends at Grundy County REC, we hope you and your family have a joyous and bright holiday season. We look forward to serving you in the new year!

Our office will be closed Dec. 24-25 for Christmas and Jan. 1 for New Year's Day.

Our phones are answered 24/7.

ENTER TO WIN

Christmas holiday giveaway

Christmas is just around the corner. Join Grundy County REC in a fun and festive giveaway drawing this holiday season!

We are giving six participating members a \$25 Hy-Vee gift card to help with those long, holiday shopping lists.



Entering is simple, just follow the steps below:

1. Call our headquarters building at 319-824-5251 to enter; **OR**

2. Participate via Facebook Entries are accepted Dec. 1-15; winners will be randomly selected and announced on Dec. 16. You must be a current member to qualify. One winner per service address permitted.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Linemen complete annual pole top rescue training

During October's Safety Meeting, Matt Pociask, safety instructor with Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, conducted pole top rescue training and corresponding exercise. While we hope it's never needed, pole top rescue is a task that any lineworker may have to perform in an emergency to save the life of a fellow team member. Lineworkers must prove proficiency in this task every year.



Save energy by setting a timer for outdoor lighting and decorations.

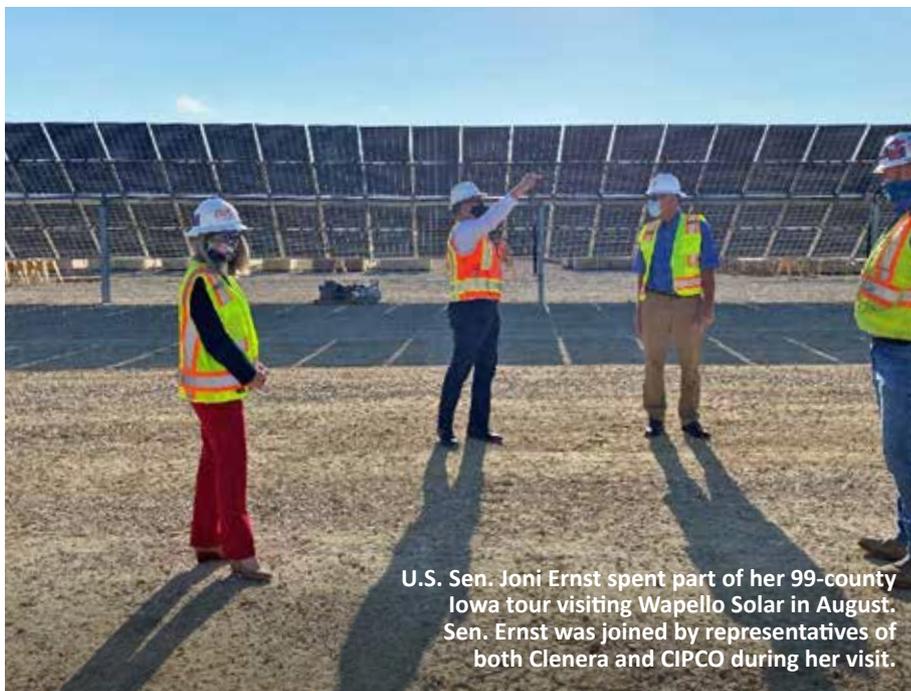
Iowa's largest solar project will provide power to co-op members

Two years ago, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) announced it would purchase 100% of the power from Wapello Solar, currently the largest solar project in Iowa, owned and developed by Clēnera, LLC. Today, the project is well underway and on schedule to produce low-cost energy to CIPCO member-owners in early 2021.

Located on approximately 650 acres in Louisa County and served by Eastern Iowa Light & Power, Wapello Solar incorporates cutting-edge solar panel technology with efficient solar inverters and a single-axis tracking system to maximize energy generation. CIPCO will purchase 100% of the energy and capacity output for 25 years from the 100-megawatt solar facility.

“The crew working on the project really seem to enjoy Iowa and some of them even bought houses here,” says Terry Fett, director of engineering & operations, CIPCO. “While Clēnera refers to this as a ‘small’ solar project, it’s big for Iowa, and it’s certainly big for CIPCO and its member-owners.”

Construction on the substation that will serve Wapello Solar began in May 2020 and is currently on track to receive backfeed power by the end of the year from CIPCO. RES Americas is also on target to have the plant mechanically complete by the end of year, with testing and commissioning of the system taking place at the beginning of 2021. Commercial operation is currently targeted for the beginning of 2021. ⚡



U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst spent part of her 99-county Iowa tour visiting Wapello Solar in August. Sen. Ernst was joined by representatives of both Clēnera and CIPCO during her visit.

Photo Credit: Central Iowa Power Cooperative

Milestones and quick facts about Wapello Solar

May 18, 2020: Work begins as local site contractor Triple B Construction clears the site and builds the interior roadway. Solar panels are delivered and stored in a warehouse in Muscatine until site prep work is complete.

July 2020: RES Americas, the engineering, procurement and construction provider, begins receiving and installing the solar panel pile and racking system.

September 2020: A local transportation company begins to transport solar panel modules from a warehouse in Muscatine to the project site.

70: Approximate percentage of solar panel modules that have been delivered to the site to date.

81.5: Approximate percentage of pile and racking system installed to date.

5,000: Estimated number of sawhorses used by Clēnera during construction

100: Estimated number of sawhorses discarded every day due to damage from assembling the solar panel tracking systems.

600+: Anticipated number of people who have worked on Wapello Solar. This is normal. For reference, a project a little bigger than Wapello Solar went through 1,500 people!

4: Number of miles of public/county roadways that encompass the site.

Three electronics to upgrade for energy savings

BY MARIA KANEVSKY

Looking for easy ways to save more money on your monthly energy bills? Beyond some of the more traditional energy efficiency measures, such as sealing air leaks or adding additional insulation, several popular electronics can help you use energy more efficiently.

These devices are relatively easy to incorporate into your home, making them a simple way to help manage your energy use.

1 Smart thermostats

Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy at home. With smart thermostats, there's no longer a need to adjust the temperature continually. They can be programmed to follow a heating and cooling pattern throughout the day and year to maximize your comfort and energy use. Some advanced smart thermostats can even learn your habits and adjust the temperature accordingly.

Another great benefit is the ability to control a smart thermostat remotely from an app on your phone, allowing you to set the temperature to your liking before you even arrive home. Some smart thermostats can be integrated with a smart home hub, like Amazon Alexa or Google Home.

2 Smart plugs

If you're looking for ways to save energy on a budget, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs can be inserted into any standard electrical outlet and can help manage the energy of the devices that are plugged in. With control of the smart plug, you can stop power-hungry devices from



Photo Credit: Eobee

being on longer than necessary.

Some smart plug models have a scheduling option, allowing you to turn on lights or turn off the TV at certain times of the day. Others offer a dimming function, enabling you to change the brightness of lights plugged into the smart plug. These features can be controlled through an app on your phone, and some models also have voice-controlled options when connected to a smart home hub.

3 Home energy monitor

A home energy monitor helps you monitor home energy use and set energy budgets. If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal. They are connected to your electric meter and provide a big picture of your home's energy use.

Some home energy monitors

can show which appliances are using the most energy, giving you the knowledge on which devices to cut down on. Other models can show real-time electricity use and costs, while some can help create a personalized plan for energy efficiency. Most home energy monitors can be connected through a smartphone app, which can send notifications, warn about abnormal energy use and provide tips for further energy savings.

These simple devices can help you save a little more energy each month. Considering what your needs are will help you choose a device with the appropriate features. With any new product, do some homework first to determine which device suits your home best. ⚡

Maria Kanevsky is a program analyst for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

One of the carols we're bound to hear this season is *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. I'm not into calling birds, French hens or drummers drumming – but hey, if you want to send five gold rings this way, I'll take them.

It occurs to me that the carol might be a *tad* dated. If you want a more realistic version of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, here it is . . .

1. On the first day of Christmas, my child gave to me: a note to send the makings for a snowman costume for the fourth grade holiday skit – only flame-retardant items, please.
2. On the second day of Christmas, advertisers gave to me – a toy that doesn't need batteries! Consider it purchased.
3. On the third day of Christmas, Mother Nature gave to me: -10 degree temps, a biting wind and a glare of ice on my driveway.
4. On the fourth day of Christmas, my offspring gave to me: 211 text messages, 18 telephone calls and one email about the date of our virtual get-together. How hard can it be to schedule eight adults who will be wearing pajamas?
5. On the fifth day of Christmas, my family gave to me: the gift that keeps on giving – a wrapped candle that claims to smell of "Woodland Morning." Perfect for the present everyone keeps around in case someone shows up with something for you and you have nothing for them . . . you know who you are.
6. On the sixth day of Christmas, my church worship committee gave to me: meeting reminders for three rehearsals and sheet music for a song with six sharps, all of which will be performed with masks via Zoom. We sounded remarkably like No. 8 in this list!



7. On the seventh day of Christmas, my co-workers gave to me: a Secret Santa gift that was inappropriate for the office, was photographed with me looking horrified and was then posted on Facebook.
8. On the eighth day of Christmas, my local radio station gave to me: Alvin and the Chipmunks. 'Nuff said.
9. On the ninth day of Christmas, our neighbors gave to me: a lovely plate of fudge that was devoured immediately, even though my family usually spurns anything with nuts in it.
10. On the tenth day of Christmas, home decorating TV shows gave to me: a theme tree that includes 22 glass baubles, 10 oversized bows and do-it-yourself nutcrackers that can be put together "with ease and celebration!"
11. On the eleventh day of Christmas, I gave to my family: the gift of a "cereal supper"; choose your favorite cereal, because Mama is too tired to cook.
12. On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me: Not one single idea of what to get him. Thus, he was gifted socks.

This year's Christmas is necessarily going to look a little different. Things will be easier in some ways and harder in others. But I can promise, you'll still be hearing *The Twelve Days of Christmas* on the radio! 🎧

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.



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