

Reducing Mother Nature's impacts

Vicki Daily, General Manager

The recent hurricanes that impacted the southern U.S. and Puerto Rico are vivid reminders of the power of storms and the toll they can take on an electric distribution system.

While our state is nestled in the heart of the Midwest – and far away from hurricanes – we are not exempt from powerful natural disasters that can impact the poles, wires and other equipment needed to provide reliable power.

In fact, Iowa has experienced 41

presidentially declared disasters from 1990 to 2017, and 59 disaster declarations total. Iowa's main hazards are those associated with severe weather, including heavy rains and flooding, tornadoes and high winds, blizzards and heavy snow, and ice storms.

While the impacts of some disasters can't be prevented, there are other risks that we can mitigate through proactive methods, such as tree trimming as part of our vegetation management program. As the winter season approaches – and the heavy snow and ice that often accompanies it – vegetation management becomes more important than ever.

Trees may seem harmless on a calm, sunny day, but add a bit of wind or ice on a stormy night and they may threaten your home's electric supply. Many storm outages are related to trees and branches contacting power lines, which is why regular trimming of trees and brush along power lines reduces the

number of power interruptions.

Outages can occur when branches break and fall across power lines or when trees tumble onto power lines. When strong winds blow, limbs growing too close to power lines may sway and touch wires. These momentary power disruptions or "blinks" aren't just mild annoyances; they also can damage computers, TVs and other sensitive electronic equipment.

Our system wide maintenance program also includes an annual pole inspection completed on a nine-year cycle. Poles are inspected for their structural integrity to identify any weaknesses. We also inspect all vegetation in our service territory on a nine-year cycle.

When it comes to Mother Nature, we know she is ultimately in charge. But, through our proactive planning and programs, we can work to lessen the impact on your electric service when bad weather hits!

Member contacted by utility scammer

Recently a Grundy County REC member received a phone call from a person claiming they were from Alliant Energy and that our member's power was going to be disconnected. Remember that we will never call members and ask for payment information. Here are some tips to prevent yourself from being scammed:

Red flags for scam activity

- Caller becomes angry and tells the member his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment isn't made – usually within less than an hour.
- Caller instructs the member to purchase a pre-paid debit or credit card – widely available at retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment to the utility.
- Caller asks the member for the prepaid card's receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to funds.

How to protect yourself

- We will never ask or require a member with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card.
- Members can make payments in a variety of ways.
- Members with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.
- Members who suspect or experience fraud, or feel threatened during contact with one of these thieves, should contact local authorities, and then the co-op. Never dial the phone number the scammers provide.

When winter winds howl, power lines can gallop

While power lines can sway in high winds, add freezing rain or icy conditions and the result can be galloping power lines.



Galloping is the bouncing or bucking movement of overhead lines and can cause several problems, from temporary power interruptions to equipment damage, the collapse of power poles and downed lines.

Galloping lines often result from ice buildup on one side of the power line due to strong winds. The buildup of ice creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the line, causing bouncing wires, or galloping power lines.

There isn't much utility workers can do until the wind dies down. That's why many power lines have objects, like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to the line. These help reduce galloping of lines and prevent potential danger.

If you see galloping power lines:

- Keep your distance - ice can break off or power lines break loose.
- Contact your utility to make them aware of the potential damage as soon as possible.

If you see a downed line:

- Stay far away and warn others to stay away too.
- Remember, a downed line can remain energized even if it is not sparking or arcing.
- Always report the location of a downed power line and damaged electrical equipment.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. This kit should include bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, first aid kit/medicine, flashlight, radio, extra batteries and toiletries.

To learn more, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Contact us for a rebate form or visit our website if you purchased LED holiday lights.

If you purchased LED holiday lights or decorations to brighten your property served by your REC, you are eligible for a \$2 rebate for each item purchased!

10 Quick Tips to Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.

- Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.
- Reduce waste heat by installing a programmable thermostat.
- Turn off lights when not in use.
- Lower your water heater temperature. The Dept. of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.
- Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.
- Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.
- Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.
- Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.
- Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Scholarships available for co-op dependents



If you or a member of your family plans to attend college or technical school next year, contact your electric cooperative for scholarship opportunities.

Deadlines vary. Check with us soon.

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Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters can be a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

DO: Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.

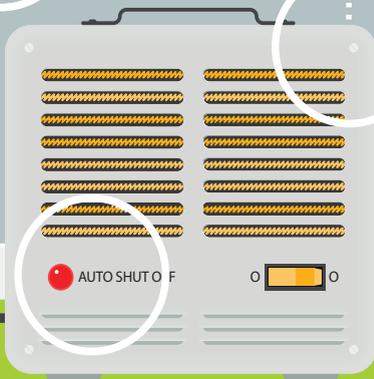


DO: Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

DO: Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.



DO: Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.



DO: Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



DON'T: Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



DON'T: Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.

DON'T: Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



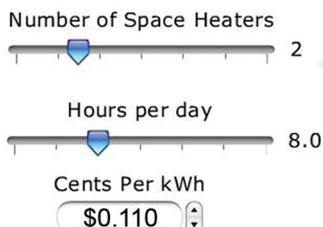
DON'T: Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



DON'T: Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.



On average, how much will it cost to run two 1,500-watt space heaters this winter?



Cost per month
\$79.20

Clean Power Plan update

In October 2017, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced plans to repeal the Clean Power Plan (CPP), a regulation that would have increased costs and impacted many electric cooperatives.

Your cooperative is working with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), our national trade association, to encourage the EPA to replace the rule with a plan that focuses on individual power plants.

Electric co-ops depend on a diverse fuel mix to meet the energy needs of 42 million members, protect reliability and ensure affordability. No two electric co-ops are alike. Each makes strategic long-term investments in energy sources that make the most sense for them.

The flexibility to pursue a diverse fuel mix allows co-ops to respond to local and regional factors and member preferences. Past federal policy pushed cooperatives away from natural gas use for electricity to developing coal-based electric generation. In many cases, co-op members are still paying for those facilities—and the roughly \$12 billion in pollution control measures added to them.

Significant changes have been made in how power is generated. Co-op-owned coal-fired generation has dropped 9 percent since 2014, and co-op solar capacity has increased five times in just the past two years. Since 2005, co-ops have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 10 percent.

Regulatory certainty helps ensure a reliable supply of affordable power. A common-sense rule that adheres to the law allows co-ops to make smart, long-term investments in electric generation.

Iowa's electric cooperatives celebrate 75-year legacy

With the theme of “Building Legacy through Leadership,” the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) celebrated its milestone 75th anniversary with more than 600 attendees at its annual meeting in West Des Moines on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

Board directors and senior staff from dozens of Iowa's not-for-profit rural electric cooperatives attended the one-and-a-half-day meeting, where they had an opportunity to hear from Scott Pruitt, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), who was introduced by EPA Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford on Friday morning. Pruitt sat with IAEC Executive Vice President Chuck Soderberg, answering questions about how the EPA is providing flexibility and certainty to power suppliers through a common-sense regulatory framework under the Trump Administration. Mr. Soderberg remarked, “We commend Director Pruitt for working to provide a common-sense regulatory framework that gives electric co-ops flexibility and certainty to meet the needs of our member-owners.”

The Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) held its 30th annual Venture Awards luncheon on Thursday, Nov. 30 where it honored several distinguished Iowa companies for entrepreneurial leadership.

About IAEC

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives represents the interests of not-for-profit electric cooperatives in the



Chuck Soderberg (left), IAEC vice president, speaks with Scott Pruitt, EPA administrator.

state, including 36 distribution co-ops and eight generation and transmission co-ops. Owned by the members they serve, Iowa's electric cooperatives power the lives of 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties and are committed to delivering power that is safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible. Formed 75 years ago, IAEC provides many vital functions for its members including legislative representation, regulatory oversight, training and education services, safety programs, and communications support. Learn more at www.iowarec.org.

Mid-Iowa Cooperative builds on Grundy REC lines

Mid-Iowa Cooperative announced their plans to build a new elevator north of Grundy Center along Highway 14. This project is now well underway. So far, they have poured some concrete for the pits and for one of the bins. They will continue to work on this project as long as the weather allows.

The plan is to be in operation by the fall of 2018. The project is planned in two phases. The first phase includes four 750,000-bushel bins plus a 565,000-bushel wet holding, for a total of 3.5 million bushels of storage. Phase two would be to get to 5 million bushels of upright storage with an additional 1.5 million of conditioned bunker space.

Unloading at the Mid-Iowa Co-op will be very efficient. They are installing a 40,000 bushel/hour leg and two 1,300-bushel dump pits. This will make the wait to dump during harvest season a lot shorter. Grundy County REC is excited to welcome Mid-Iowa Cooperative to their system.



Work is underway on the new Mid-Iowa Cooperative on Grundy County REC's lines.

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