

# THE CONNECTION

## Reliability Is Our Daily Priority

**W**e know that our members' satisfaction with Consumers Energy is directly related to the reliability and affordability of the services we provide. The cornerstone of our business model is providing service that meets or exceeds your expectations, which is why reliability is one of our top priorities. In fact, reliability is part of the cooperative's mission: Consumers Energy's mission is to provide our members with reliable electric service in a safe manner at affordable and equitable rates.

Recently, your board of directors and co-op staff filed our annual reliability report with the Iowa Utilities Board for the 2017 calendar year. Each year, maintaining a reliable system takes hundreds of hours of planning, maintenance, inspections, and system upgrades. Equally important is our commitment to balancing reliability and affordability with member expectations, which requires a mindset of continuous improvement and looking ahead to anticipate your future needs.

Reliability isn't something that happens by chance. Throughout the year, our distribution and transmission infrastructure – which includes such things as poles, wires, transformers, and substations – is subject to many perils. On any given day, ice storms, high winds, tornadoes, squirrels and birds, and even errant drivers, can interrupt electric service and cause a power outage. We are constantly preparing for the things we can control on our system, such as planned and routine maintenance outages,



continued on page 8-B ►

### WIN

ONE OF TWO MONTHLY \$5 BILL CREDITS

#### THIS MONTH'S CONTEST:

*How many hidden lineman icons can you find in this issue of The Connection?*



Winners for the month of March:  
**Sue & Peter Relyea, Ankeny**  
**Mona & Merrell Kilborn, Marshalltown**

#### Here's how to enter:

1. Answer the question or challenge posed each month.
2. Send answers to Consumers Energy with:
  - Name
  - Service address
  - Account number
  - Phone number
  - Email address

Email to: [kglennv@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:kglennv@consumersenergy.coop)  
Subject line: Contest

Mail to: Consumers Energy  
2074 242nd Street  
Marshalltown, IA 50158
3. Winners' names will be drawn at random and published in upcoming issues of *The Connection*.

### April 2018

– Your Source for  
*Power and Information*

#### Dates To Remember:

- April 1 Winter Moratorium Protection Ended
- April 1 Easter
- April 2 Read Meters
- April 3 Bills Due
- April 3 Automatic Payments Deducted
- April 9 **National Lineman Appreciation Day**
- April 10 Mail Bills
- April 25 Automatic Payments Deducted
- May 1 Read Meters
- May 3 Bills Due

## Reliability Is Our Daily Priority *(continued)*

and for unexpected outages that are often beyond our control. We set high goals for the reliability and accessibility of the power we provide to you.

Our annual reporting falls into two categories – the Reliability Plan and the Reliability Report. The Reliability Plan is designed to address what your cooperative is doing to prevent outages on your system, such as tree trimming, animal contact reduction programs, and lightning outage mitigation programs. The Reliability Plan also includes an inspection and maintenance plan, details about how we track and monitor interruptions, and how your cooperative plans to communicate its plan with our members.

The Reliability Report is designed to show past performance by reporting on three core measures: the System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI), the Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI), and the System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI). We include the three indices for each of the past five years and they are calculated both including major events and excluding major events. We use these data points to come up with an Average Service Availability Index (ASAI) – a reliability index commonly used by electric power utilities throughout the U.S.

Now that we have crunched the numbers and analyzed the data, how did we do? We're pleased to report that Consumers Energy's overall reliability rate is 99.98%.

As we look at our results, we're proud that we've performed well because we know that you count on us to provide reliable and affordable electric service to your homes and businesses. Looking ahead, we're already planning for your future needs, anticipating the service expectations of the communities we serve. You'll see this in action as we work in your neighborhoods and across the 1,255 miles of line we maintain to provide you with extremely reliable service.



– Jim Kidd  
General Manager

## 2017 Reliability Report

By Kevin Peterson, Operations Manager



In 2017, the cooperative continued to grow at a steady rate. The following indices provide insight into specific areas of growth over the past years.

### SYSTEM GROWTH INDICES

	Annual Number of New Services	Total System Miles of Line	Total System Plant Value
2017	146	1255	\$43,260,061
2016	198	1249	\$40,303,587
2015	173	1239	\$40,732,132
2014	329	1233	\$40,763,724
2013	228	1217	\$41,124,482

Throughout the year the cooperative's outside crews worked extensively on maintenance and upkeep of the distribution system.

**These activities directly enhance the reliability and efficiency of Consumers Energy's system.** In 2017:

- **82 poles were replaced.**
- **92 oil circuit reclosers (breakers) were serviced.**

When it comes to reliability, the cooperative has implemented controls to reduce many of the outages caused by avoidable circumstances, such as trees or animals coming into contact with the powerlines. However, as a distribution cooperative, we are unable to control outages on the transmission system or those caused by major weather events. In 2017, **no major storms affected the cooperative's electric service area.** In total, co-op members were without power for 69.6 minutes in 2017.

### SERVICE RELIABILITY

	SAIDI Outages/Member	Outages/Member (Excluding Major Events)	Outages/Member (Excluding Transmission)	Service Reliability
2017	69.6 minutes	69.6 minutes	54 minutes	99.98%
2016	82.2 minutes	82.2 minutes	73.2 minutes	99.98%
2015	96 minutes	96 minutes	80.4 minutes	99.98%
2014	71.4 minutes	71.4 minutes	41.4 minutes	99.98%
2013	102 minutes	102 minutes	63 minutes	99.98%

# Looking for Members With Director Qualities

**A**s a cooperative, Consumers Energy follows the Second Cooperative Principle, Democratic Member Control, which means, you, the member, ultimately selects who represents you on the cooperative's Board of Directors and determines the direction of our locally run, not-for-profit business. A director's decisions will impact issues such as rates, rights of way, and work plans.



Our board is a democratically-elected body nominated by the members of the cooperative and voted into position by any member who chooses to participate in the cooperative's election. Any co-op member is welcome to run for an open position on the Board of Directors, and each director's term is for three years. The election is completed each year at the co-op's Annual Business Meeting. Consumers Energy members may vote by mail or in person at the Annual Business Meeting and Breakfast on Saturday, August 25, 2018.

**Do you or someone you know have the following qualities that make an excellent director?**

- A willingness to take time to be on the board

- A good listener – individually, and as a member of the board
- Civic-minded individual who takes part in the community
- Know cooperatives are like other businesses EXCEPT that members control the cooperative with their votes – democratic control. The cooperative does not keep the profit from operations, but gives it back to its members as patronage capital credits
- Willing to devote the time necessary to really work at being a director and be informed about cooperatives, including attendance at statewide, regional, and national meetings
- Makes sure rules and regulations adopted for the operation of the cooperative are fair to the members, to the cooperative, and to the general public

*Directors matter. The nominating committee will meet in May to choose candidates for the Board of Directors. If you, or a fellow member you know, would be a good member-candidate to serve on the Consumers Energy Board of Directors or on next year's Nominating Committee, please contact the cooperative.*

**By phone:** 800-696-6552

**By mail:** Consumers Energy  
Attn: Nominating Committee  
2074 242nd Street  
Marshalltown, IA 50158

**By email:** [info@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:info@consumersenergy.coop),  
Subject line: Nominating Committee

## WAYS TO PAY YOUR CONSUMERS ENERGY BILL

Automatic recurring  
monthly payments



By dropbox



By mail

By phone



In person

Online



For more information, contact the Member Services Department at  
800-696-6552 or [info@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:info@consumersenergy.coop).

# APPRECIATE YOUR LOCAL LINEMEN

Lineman Appreciation Day celebrates those men and women who put their lives at risk to keep the power flowing through our communities. Linemen have existed for as long as electricity has been a standard part of modern living. Without them there would be no power lines carrying electricity to our homes and businesses, keeping the lights on and the furnaces going, and ensuring that we have the warm glow of the TV to curl up around as the night creeps in. Linemen are often called to do their jobs in the most dangerous of conditions and facing the worst weather the world has to offer. After all, we rarely lose power on a windless, sunny day.

Of course, even the best of conditions leaves them handling wires that carry thousands of volts of electricity every day. But when the chips are down, and Mother Nature is doing her worst, these are the people who will be out there restoring power, setting up emergency systems to carry us through, and putting life back in order when the storms have finally passed.

While we appreciate their hard work every day of the year, Consumers Energy is celebrating Lineman Appreciation Day on April 9. In celebration of Lineman Appreciation Day, here are answers to member questions posed to our linemen. If there are other things you would like to know about linemen or electricity, please contact Consumers Energy at 800-696-6552 or [info@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:info@consumersenergy.coop).

## WHAT OUR CO-OP MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT LINEMEN:

Where do linemen get training to climb poles? Or do they only go up in a bucket truck?

Training for climbing poles is done at school as well as on the job. Most of the time, the work is done out of the truck because it's safer.

In technical school mostly. We mostly do use bucket trucks. Climbing is necessary in certain areas.

What is the most challenging part of being a lineman?

The tasks get more challenging as you age and your body wears out.

**Weather.**

*Middle of the night calls.*

Getting members' power on in major storms is challenging.

Making sure all members have power.

Why would anyone want such a dangerous and all-kind-of-weather job?

The variety of the job makes it enjoyable.

**Pretty much outdoors all day, every day.**

*Being outside - keeping everyone's power on.*

It is a rewarding job, to get power on in adverse conditions. It can be dangerous if you're not safety-conscious.

**I like to do hands-on work.**

*Staying inside is not for me.*

It's fun and exciting - something different on a daily basis, not boring.

How much training does a lineman need?

1 year of school and 4 years of apprenticeship, which is paid on-the-job training for linemen.

**Apprentice Linemen take tests during this period and then become a Journeyman Lineman.**

There will always be training due to changes in the system and industry.

# PLANT TREES OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Early spring is an ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Safety should also be a consideration in tree-planting, and Consumers Energy has tips to make sure your trees are out of harm's way.

Large trees near power lines are a safety hazard. They can cause fires, electric shocks, and power outages. If you have a tree near a power line, children should not climb it, and you should not attempt to trim it. Only tree trimming professionals or utility workers should trim trees near power lines.

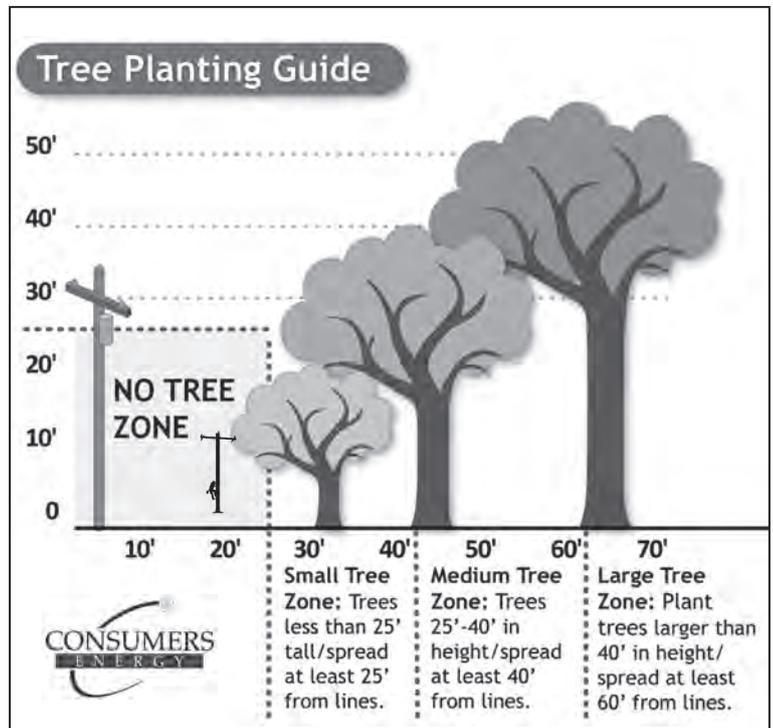
You can avoid this stress by planting the right tree in the right place. Ground hugging shrubs and small trees that reach no more than 25 feet in height should be planted at least 25 feet from overhead lines. Trees that mature within a 25 to 40 foot height should be planted no closer than 40 feet from the power lines. Trees that exceed 40 feet in height should be planted no closer than 60 feet from the line.



In addition to overhead lines, buried power lines can also be a problem for trees and vice versa. If utility crews need access to a buried cable, the root system may suffer. Trees and shrubs should not be planted deliberately over an underground utility line.

Not only do trees add to the beauty of your landscape, they also help the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and can also help improve energy efficiency. Shade from trees can reduce the air temperature around your home. Trees can also break cold winter winds. Plant the right tree in the right place, and visualize it when it is fully grown. While fast growing trees will reach a mature height sooner, their wood is softer, and they are more susceptible to losing limbs in winds and ice storms.

Remember to contact Iowa One Call before you dig by calling 811 or by visiting their Website at [www.iowaonecall.com](http://www.iowaonecall.com). If you need more information on planting the right tree in the right place, contact Consumers Energy at 800-696-6552.



## CONSUMERS ENERGY ELECTRIC WATER HEATER OFFERINGS

### Marathon WATER HEATERS



**50-Gallon Marathon**  
\$700 plus tax  
Retail Price: \$1,199 plus tax

- No rust, no corrosion— EVER!
- Toughest and strongest tank in the industry.
- Self-cleaning and more complete draining.
- Renowned durability and energy savings makes the total cost of ownership lower than typical water heaters.
- Foam insulation minimizes heat loss.
- Lightweight tank is easier to maneuver and position.
- Lifetime tank warranty on registered water heaters. Call Consumers Energy at 800-696-6552 for warranty claims or to purchase parts.
- Dimensions: 66 3/4" tall x 23 1/2" diameter.

### RUUD

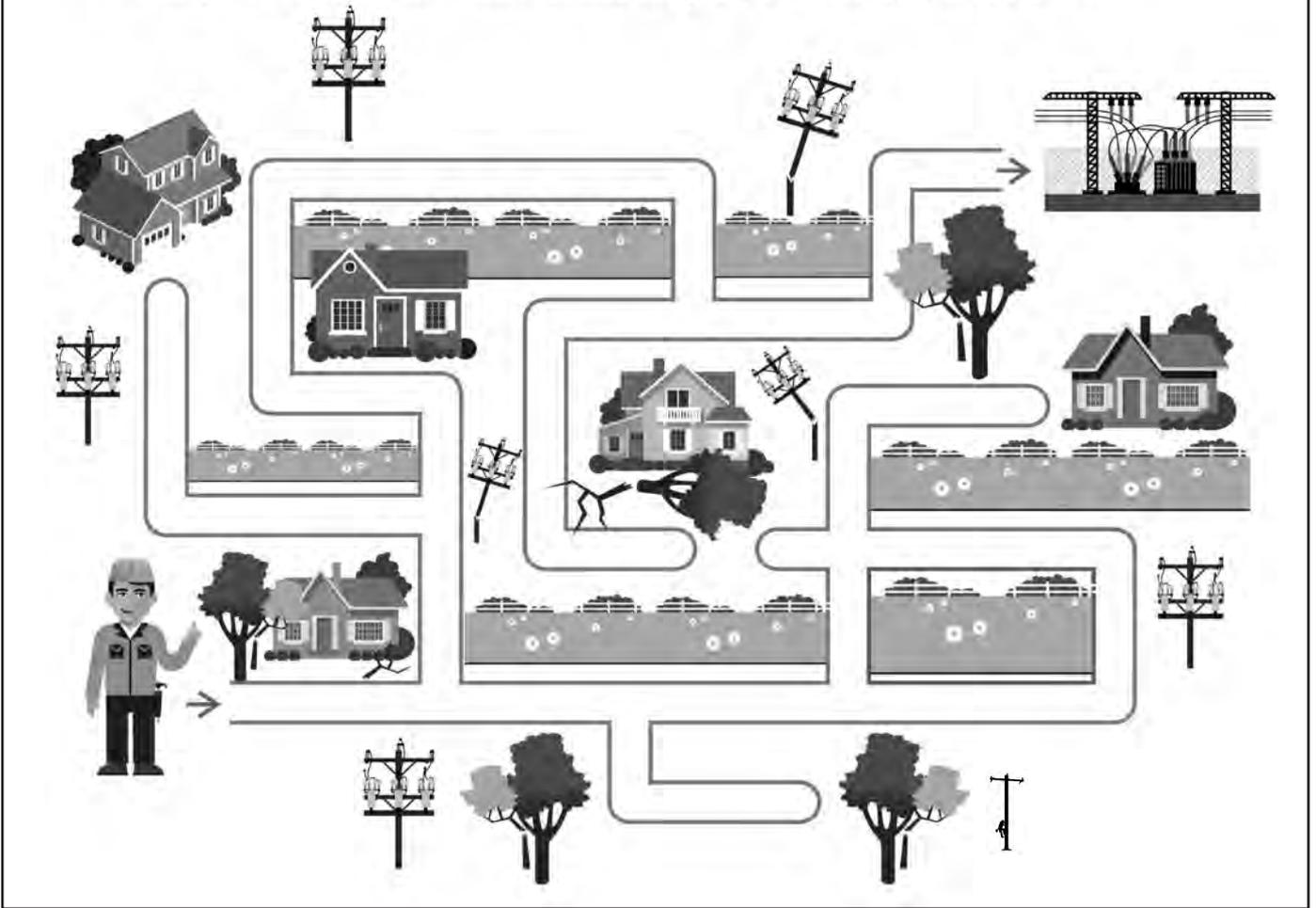


**50-Gallon Ruud**  
\$400 plus tax  
Retail Price: \$938 plus tax

- Exclusive diagnostic system that verifies heating element operation. LEDs pinpoint the exact location of functioning or non-functioning heating elements.
- EverKleen™ self-cleaning device fights harmful sediment build-up which saves electricity, saves money, and improves tank life.
- Isolated tank design reduces conductive heat loss.
- Restored stainless steel heating elements prolong anode rod and tank life.
- Limited 8-year tank and parts warranty. Call Consumers Energy at 800-696-6552 for warranty claims or to purchase parts.
- Dimensions: 57" tall x 22 1/4" diameter.

For more information, call one of the co-op's Energy Advisors at 800-696-6552.

Lineworkers work in dangerous conditions to restore electricity after major storms and other types of power outages. Many times, lineworkers make substation repairs to get the power back on.  
**Can you help the lineworker get to the substation?**



**Make sure your refrigerator door seals are airtight for maximum energy efficiency.**

Test the seal by closing the door over a piece of paper so that it's half in and half out. If you can easily pull the piece of paper out, your seal may need to be replaced or the latch may need to be adjusted.



**CONSUMERS ENERGY**  
Your Source for Power and Information

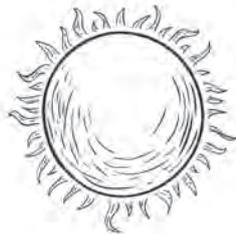
# Always PLAN before you PLANT!



S E I S R U G R I A N A E L C D  
 E R E O Y P I O U T A G E S C D  
 E S E U A O D O P L A N T I N G  
 R E A N W W U V S E H C N A R B  
 T E L D F E O E G T C R S L U P  
 T R A E O R Y R I T U S S L Y P  
 R T N R T L E H I W T C N T D M  
 O L D G H I R E E T I A I C I H  
 H L S R G N O A N N L L Y D S G  
 S A C O I E F D O P I S T I T B  
 H T A U R S E I I B T T E G A T  
 E A P N M R B S A I I O F G N F  
 I E E D I N L I I G E O A I C Y  
 G F A U R R L N O N S R S N E O  
 H E A N T E A I O N I S L G U A  
 T E A R R E C T R S H A D E A E

- BRANCHES
- CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
- CLEAN AIR
- DIGGING
- DISTANCE
- HEIGHT
- LANDSCAPE
- OUTAGES
- OVERHEAD
- PLAN
- PLANTING
- POWER LINES
- RELIABILITY
- RIGHT OF WAY
- ROOTS
- SAFETY
- SHADE
- SHORT TREES
- TALL TREES
- TRIM
- UNDERGROUND
- UTILITIES

Search for the words related to safe digging and planting trees.



## Answers

Answers are provided in a grid format, showing the words found in the crossword puzzle.





**Office Hours**  
7:30 am — 4:30 pm  
Monday through Friday

## Contact Us

2074 242nd Street • Marshalltown, Iowa 50158  
Phone: 641-752-1593 • Toll-Free: 800-696-6552  
Fax: 641-752-5738 • E-mail: [info@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:info@consumersenergy.coop)

**[www.consumersenergy.coop](http://www.consumersenergy.coop)**

### Directors:

Bill Hobson, President  
Mark Wampler, Vice President  
Pat VonAhnen, Secretary-Treasurer  
Allan Armbrecht, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer  
Terry Benskin  
Jeff Edler  
Arden Greiner  
Bob Meimann  
John Ripley

## ANNUAL NOTICE

Consumers Energy is committed to providing safe and reliable electric service to our members. Our employees are trained and qualified in screening and resolving complaints and will work to assist in answering your questions.

If your complaint is related to Consumers Energy's service rather than its rates, and Consumers Energy does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 877-565-4550; by writing to 1375 East Court Avenue, Room 69, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069; or by email to [customer@iub.iowa.gov](mailto:customer@iub.iowa.gov).

If you have an idea for a topic for The Connection, please contact Kippen Glenney at 800-696-6552 or [kglenney@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:kglenney@consumersenergy.coop).



## EVER WONDERED?

How can my kids be safe around electricity?  
How can I make my farm or home electrically safe?  
What about renewable energy?

CONSUMERS ENERGY OFFERS  
**FREE**  
PRESENTATIONS & DEMONSTRATIONS  
TO VARIOUS GROUPS, CLASSES, CLUBS,  
& ORGANIZATIONS.

For more information or to schedule a presentation, contact the Member Services Department at  
**800-696-6552** or [info@consumersenergy.coop](mailto:info@consumersenergy.coop).