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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Ways to help protect
roadside crews**

**What to know if you're
considering solar energy**

Spring-inspired recipes

Win \$100 in beef certificates ▶ See Page 3

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Emerson Landas, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

HELP US SHINE THE LIGHT ON LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND DESERVING CHARITIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



We are gearing up for year five of our statewide Shine the Light program, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. During the month of June, member-

consumers and employees of Iowa electric cooperatives are invited to nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference in their Iowa communities. Three winning volunteers will each receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity and be featured in the September issue of this magazine.

Your nomination makes a difference

Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination. Simply enter some basic contact information for you and your nominee and answer this question in 500 words or less:

How has your nominee made a difference in the community and how might their local charity/nonprofit use the \$3,000 donation?

The success of our Shine the Light program depends on co-op member-consumers who take the time to nominate a friend, neighbor or relative who deserves to be recognized. If you have nominated a volunteer in a previous year and they weren't selected as a winner, you are welcome to nominate them again.

Additionally, I will share that the judges who read through all the volunteer nominations respond positively to essays that tell a story and draw in the reader. A little creativity can help your nomination stand out in a crowded field!

A diverse impact statewide

In the first four years of the program, our 12 winners (three winners each year) represent a diverse group of charities and nonprofits. Some of the winners have included an education



Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination.

foundation, an animal shelter, a community garden, a local food and furnishings closet, an agricultural pavilion and an air transportation service for medical treatments. You can see our past winners at www.IowaShineTheLight.com to learn more about these incredible groups. We are continuously impressed with the range of volunteer activities and local organizations that are nominated each year.

Many of these organizations are small operations that don't have the resources to seek major funding or media attention. Beyond the monetary

donation, the Shine the Light program has been helpful in spreading the word about the great work being done by some incredible volunteers.

Thank you for considering the nomination of someone in your community who should be celebrated for their volunteer efforts and for helping us shine the light on these deserving organizations. Make your nomination online from June 1 through June 30 at www.IowaShineTheLight.com.

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN \$100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away \$100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 31. 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 gift card for landscaping from the March issue was **Jeanie Hall**, a **Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

TRAVEL IOWA

This spring, fuel up and hit the road for a getaway that feels worlds away. Explore these European-inspired villages throughout Iowa, each full of flavor and tradition. As you pass through Iowa's small towns en route to your destination, you'll also discover many electric cooperative-served communities, each with its own charm.

AMANA COLONIES

German traditions are alive and well in these seven villages founded in 1855 by German immigrants and collectively a National Historic Landmark. Make sure to stop in for wiener schnitzel at the Ox Yoke Inn. Shop for gourmet specialties at the High Amana General Store. Get a good night's sleep at A Touch of Home Bed & Breakfast.

CZECH VILLAGE, CEDAR RAPIDS

The Czech Village is teeming with European history thanks to thousands of Czech, Moravian and Slovak descendants. This quaint neighborhood boasts a variety of shops and authentic Czech dining. Try a kolache from Sykora Bakery or sip an artisan brew at Lion Bridge Brewing Company. Learn about this wonderful heritage at the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library.



DECORAH

A rich Norwegian heritage comes to life in Decorah, where you'll find the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum with more than 33,000 artifacts. Locals love the annual Nordic Festival held every July that celebrates their culture. Check out Mabe's Pizza, a regional favorite. Visit Seed Savers Exchange where you'll find lush display gardens. Stay at the historic Hotel Winneshiek.

ELK HORN/KIMBALLTON

The villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton are the two largest rural Danish settlements in America. Grab a bite to eat at Larsen's Pub (a best breaded tenderloin winner). Visit the authentic Danish Windmill and witness true Danish hospitality by attending Tivoli Fest in May or Julefest in November.

ORANGE CITY

Orange City's charming Dutch atmosphere serves as a colorful backdrop for their annual three-day Tulip Festival that attracts thousands of visitors each May. Orange City is a must-see anytime of the year. Enjoy amazing dishes at the Blue Mountain Culinary Emporium and interactive learning experiences at the Dutch Heritage Center.

PELLA

Pella keeps its European heritage on display with authentic Dutch bakeries, meat markets and historical buildings on the town square flanked by tulips in the spring. Bite into a flaky Dutch letter from Jaarsma Bakery. Tour the Vermeer Mill, a fully functional 1850s-style windmill. Rest your head at the Royal Amsterdam Hotel.

ENTER TO WIN

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution.

To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line. Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



IAEC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS VISIT WITH LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

It has become tradition for the March meeting of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative's (IAEC) board of directors to include Capitol visits with legislative leadership. Due to Winter Storm Lola, the meetings were moved to a virtual format on March 5.

The IAEC board had productive discussions with Senate Majority Leader Jack Whitver, Senate President Amy Sinclair (pictured), Senate Minority Leader Janice Weiner, House Minority Leader Jennifer Konfrst, Speaker Pat Grassley and Majority Leader Matt Windschitl.

The group discussed three key legislative priorities – defined electric service territory, right of first refusal and third-party solar.

Defined electric service territory laws in Iowa support affordable rates, foster a resilient grid and encourage



rural economic development. In place for almost 50 years, these service territories provide a high degree of certainty which enable electric co-ops to make long-term investments to best serve our members.

Allowing Iowa's incumbent electric providers the right of first refusal (ROFR) in constructing and maintaining electric transmission projects, as included in the governor's energy bill, provides benefits to Iowans.

A third-party solar bill (which ultimately did not survive the second funnel) raised concerns because it would have undercut defined electric service territory and allowed nonutilities to provide retail electric service within rate-regulated utility territory.

Learn more about the legislative priorities of Iowa's electric cooperatives and Iowa Rural Power grassroots advocacy at www.iaruralpower.org.

SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS IN YOUR COUNTY

It's the season for severe weather. To make sure you stay weather aware, it's a great idea to sign up to receive important weather and emergency notifications in your area. One service to consider is Alert Iowa, which is the State of Iowa's official emergency notification system.

Through Alert Iowa, state and local officials use a single, statewide notification system that provides local control of how and when to disseminate emergency and public safety messages to residents.

There are three ways to sign up for county alerts:

- 1 Create a profile through your county's website opt-in page
- 2 Download the Smart911 app and create a customized profile
- 3 Send a text message to opt-in

Scan this QR code to learn if your county is participating and sign up to receive free alerts via text message, email and/or voice message.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

OWNED BY THE MEMBERS THEY SERVE,
LOCALLY GOVERNED ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES POWER THE LIVES OF

650,000 IOWANS

THROUGHOUT ALL 99 COUNTIES
EVERY DAY.

CO-OPS ARE COMMITTED TO
DELIVERING POWER THAT IS

**SAFE,
RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE
AND SUSTAINABLE**

WHILE ALSO INVESTING IN RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.



"MOVE OVER" TO PROTECT ROADSIDE CREWS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Iowa state law requires motorists to move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, which are usually well-marked. Electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they often work along remote stretches of roads, frequently in adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

Move over laws vary

The danger of work zone crashes led every state to adopt "move over" laws that require drivers to lower their speed and switch lanes when possible to protect emergency vehicles. The goal is to provide an added safety buffer and minimize the potential for accidents. Drivers caught violating the laws can face penalties such as significant fines.

Unfortunately, the Journal of Road Safety reports that just 14 states' "move over" laws protect other types of service vehicles, such as construction trucks and utility vehicles. That means drivers in those states are under no legal obligation to give lineworkers that added margin of safety.

In accordance with Iowa state law, motorists must move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle

stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

Distracted driving poses additional risks

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers' attention away from the road. The most common is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles per hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they'll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.

The design of today's vehicles contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Geography can also be a factor. Co-ops serving rural and remote areas often have power lines along hilly roads. Locals accustomed to driving those roads at fairly high speeds may be startled and have little time to react when they encounter a work crew past a hill or around a curve.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op's ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

Maintaining focus is essential

Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers, such as reconnecting high-voltage power lines, are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus. When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they're more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Co-op employees are not only at risk only when their vehicles are parked and repairs are underway. Lineworkers frequently have to drive slowly along the shoulder of roads to pinpoint broken power lines or failed transformers, especially in darkness or conditions that interfere with visibility.



Many state transportation agencies, including Iowa, have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op's advertising, publicity and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them even more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting, such as flashing strobe lights and lighted detour

arrows, can attract attention from a distance. Reflective "work zone ahead" signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation.

Remember, if you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road; their families thank you!

Scott Flood writes on energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





SPRING-INSPIRED RECIPES



ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 cups asparagus, cut into 1 to 1½-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- toasted sesame seeds, optional

Stir broth, cornstarch and soy sauce in a small bowl until the mixture is smooth. Heat oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus, ginger root and garlic and stir-fry until crisp-tender. You can substitute ginger root with ½ teaspoon ground ginger. Add broth mixture to the skillet. Cook and stir until the mixture boils and thickens. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired. Asparagus can be substituted with broccoli, cauliflower or baby carrots. Serves 4

Tammy Neubauer • Ida Grove
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

FRESH CILANTRO DIP

- ½ bunch cilantro
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can black olives, minced or chopped
- 1 small jar pimentos
- 5 banana peppers, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- nacho chips

Mix all ingredients together and serve with nacho chips.
Serves 12

Jenny Hall • Woodbine
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

HAM MACARONI SALAD

- 3 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 cup cooked ham, chopped
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 1¼ cups mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Prepare macaroni according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cold water until cool. Combine remaining ingredients, then add macaroni. Mix until blended. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours. Serves 8-10

Bryce and Kelly Godbersen • Odebolt
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB CUSTARD PIE

- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter, divided
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups rhubarb, diced
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- cinnamon

Cream together 1 tablespoon butter, sugar and nutmeg, then mix in eggs. Fill unbaked pie shell with diced rhubarb, then add custard mixture. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix ½ cup butter, flour, oatmeal and brown sugar into a crunch topping. Break topping into chunks over top of pie. Bake pie at 350 degrees F for 30 more minutes then sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 8

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison
Access Energy Cooperative

KALE SALAD

- 8 ounces kale, finely cut
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 medium apple, chopped
- ½ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup bacon, crumbled
- poppy seed dressing, optional
- Mandarin oranges, optional

Mix all ingredients and top with poppy seed dressing, if desired. Cranberries can be substituted with Mandarin oranges. *Serves 4*

Audrey Kreykes • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

ASPARAGUS AND SPRING PEA SOUP

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 cups water or broth
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and sliced
- 2 cups green peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped, optional

In a large saucepan, add butter, onion, celery and garlic. Cook over medium heat until veggies soften, stirring frequently. Stir in choice of liquid (water, vegetable broth or chicken broth). Add asparagus and peas. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 15 minutes, until asparagus is tender. Puree using blender or an immersion blender. Strain through a sieve if needed. Add salt and lemon juice to warm soup. Ladle into soup bowl and pour a drizzle of canned coconut milk into bowl. Top with fresh dill, if desired. *Serves 6*

Anita Doughty • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TERRI'S PASTA SALAD

- 5 ounces dried rotini noodles
- 3 cups broccoli florets, chopped
- 3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In a large pot, cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Add broccoli and cook for 3 more minutes or until pasta is done. Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, honey and garlic. Add pasta mixture, pepper, onion, almonds and basil. Toss to combine. Gently stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. You can substitute goat cheese with feta, fresh Parmesan or pearled mozzarella. *Serves 4-6*

Lori Kautzky • Perry
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



STRAWBERRY RHUBARB UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1 cup rhubarb, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 cup strawberries, hulled and halved
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

Combine rhubarb, strawberries and melted butter. Spread evenly across the bottom of a 9-inch round cake pan that has been greased and lined with parchment paper on the bottom. Set aside while making cake mixture. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Cream room temperature butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add eggs, vanilla and milk and beat. Mix with dry ingredients then pour over the strawberry and rhubarb topping. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen cake. Place serving plate over pan and invert cake onto the plate. Remove the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Serve warm or at room temperature with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. *Serves 12*

Kristin Goddard • Charles City
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

FALL APPLE RECIPES

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY
ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31

Submit your favorite fall apple recipes. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
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Des Moines, IA 50322



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CONSIDERING SOLAR

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE



Often, homeowners conflate installing solar at home with energy efficiency. But what most people don't realize is solar is not energy efficiency. Solar is generating energy. Energy efficiency is finding ways to use less energy. While these are not one in the same, both are thought of as beneficial to the environment and a way to save money.

If you are interested in installing solar, it is important to understand your motivations. It may be saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency can address both motivations.

Here are the five key energy efficiency considerations to evaluate when adding solar to your home.

① Energy consumption Solar systems are sized based on a home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system – which will save money and reduce your home's environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy, and those insulation measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy efficiency projects before installing solar.

② Affordability Consider your overall out-of-pocket expenses. The expected lifespan of a heating and cooling system is 15 to 25 years. Check the age and condition of your HVAC equipment and consider the expenses of replacement.

③ Roofing Consider the age, orientation and shade of your roof. It is more difficult and expensive to reroof a home with solar panels. Evaluate if the roof will need to be replaced before the solar panels need to be replaced.

The best orientation for solar panels is south facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof helps keep your home cool in the summertime but reduces solar energy production.

④ Maintenance A solar system doesn't last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy. Maintenance and repairs may be needed.

⑤ Electric bills and storage Solar is not "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill.

Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in battery storage system, which comes at an additional cost.

During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects lineworkers from injury while making repairs.

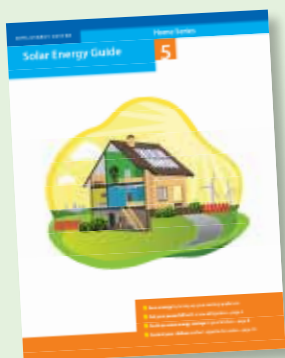
BEWARE OF SOLAR SCAMS

Before working with any vendor, Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage you to do your homework to ensure you choose a reputable provider.



If you have a complaint regarding solar installation or financing, you can complete and submit an electronic complaint at bit.ly/3usfVj7.

Consumers can also call the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 or email consumer@ag.iowa.gov.



SOLAR ENERGY GUIDE

Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to helping member-consumers make educated energy decisions that make sense for their home or business. Before moving ahead with a solar project, contact your local co-op first and also review the Solar Energy Guide for tips and to learn interconnection requirements.

www.iowarec.org/publications/solar-resources

Contact your electric co-op

Solar contractors often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with your co-op's offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, check with your electric co-op for local information rather than relying on what the contractor says.

As with any other system for your home, get bids from three contractors to compare equipment and pricing. Another option may be community-owned solar. Many electric co-ops offer community solar programs. You may have an option to enjoy the benefits of solar without the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



TOP 10 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

- 1 Address energy efficiency.** Implementing energy efficiency measures in advance can help reduce your overall energy or water consumption, and subsequently, the size of your solar system.
- 2 Do your homework before writing a check.** Talk to your electric co-op at the outset of the process. Then speak with credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals that will help guide you through the process.
- 3 Know your co-op's rate structure and policies.** Your co-op will help you understand the rate structure and what type of charges are likely to be incurred. They will also let you know how you will be compensated for the excess, unused energy that is generated by your solar system.
- 4 Analyze your electric load.** Understanding your electricity use and overall energy needs will help determine if solar is a good investment for you.
- 5 Determine costs upfront.** You will likely be responsible for initial upfront costs to install the system, as well as maintenance and repair costs. Doing your homework upfront will help determine if it is economical for your energy needs.
- 6 Research incentives and tax credits.** Visit with your co-op to see if there are financial incentives to offset your investment costs. These are often driven by laws and policies and can vary on the type and size of system.
- 7 Understand responsibilities.** A variety of parties are involved in making a solar project a reality, so it's important to know exactly what tasks and costs you're responsible for.
- 8 Know safety requirements.** Solar is connected to the grid, so it's important that you work with your co-op to ensure you're meeting their requirements to keep the grid reliable and safe.
- 9 Choose a reputable vendor.** It is important to find a reputable installer who will give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check reviews and ask for third-party input.
- 10 Keep thorough records.** Establish a thorough record-keeping process to retain all data and research you gather.

ELECTRIFICATION TRENDS EMPOWER CO-OP MEMBERS

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Electric cooperatives have a rich history of improving the quality of life for their members. Since the early 20th century, electric cooperatives have brought electricity – or electrification – to rural communities, transforming daily life and boosting local economies.

Today, the modern electrification movement continues this legacy by providing significant cost savings and empowering smarter, more informed co-op members.

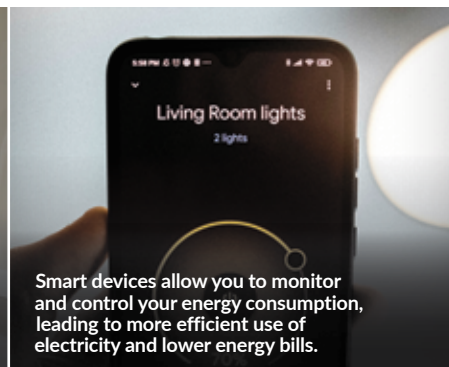
Technologies can lead to cost savings

The concept of beneficial electrification focuses on replacing direct fossil fuel use with electricity in ways that reduce overall costs. By adopting electric technologies, members may see financial savings. Here are some of the key ways electrification can lead to cost savings:

- **Heat pumps:** Replacing traditional heating systems with electric heat pumps can improve energy efficiency and lower home heating bills. Heat pumps use electricity to transfer heat rather than generate it, making them more cost-effective in the long run.
- **Energy-efficient appliances:** Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances can reduce electricity consumption and save money on utility bills. Modern appliances are designed to use less energy while providing the same level of performance.
- **Smart home technologies:** Using smart thermostats and home energy management systems can optimize energy use and reduce waste. Smart devices allow you to monitor and control your energy consumption, leading to more efficient use of electricity and lower energy bills.
- **Electric vehicles:** Transitioning from gasoline-powered cars to electric



Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances can reduce electricity consumption and save money on utility bills.



Smart devices allow you to monitor and control your energy consumption, leading to more efficient use of electricity and lower energy bills.



Transitioning from gasoline-powered cars to electric vehicles can significantly reduce fuel costs.

vehicles (EVs) can significantly reduce fuel costs. Electricity is generally cheaper than gasoline, and EVs often have lower maintenance costs due to fewer moving parts.

Creating a sustainable energy future

Beyond financial savings, electrification has been a cornerstone of improving the quality of life in communities served by electric cooperatives. A century ago, the introduction of electricity revolutionized rural areas, providing access to modern conveniences and fostering economic growth.

Today, the benefits of electrification continue to enhance daily life in several ways. Electric technologies, such as heat pumps and smart home devices, offer greater comfort and convenience. Consumers can enjoy consistent heating and cooling, as well as the ability to control their home's energy systems remotely. Additionally, electrification can improve indoor air quality and reduce health risks associated with burning fossil fuels.

Electric stoves, for example, eliminate the need for open flames and reduce the emission of harmful pollutants. Smart technologies also empower consumers to make informed decisions about their energy use. Access to real-time data and insights provide a better understanding of energy consumption patterns and identify more opportunities for savings.

Electric cooperatives have a long history of empowering their member-consumers through electrification, and beneficial electrification is a powerful strategy for creating a sustainable and cost-effective energy landscape.

From the early days of bringing electricity to rural areas to today's modern electrification movement, electric co-ops continue to play a vital role in enhancing quality of life. As co-op members embrace electric technologies, they can enjoy immediate benefits while contributing to a smarter energy future.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

TIPS TO BEAT THE ENERGY PEAK

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

When your electric cooperative talks about “beat the peak,” it is a call to action for energy consumers to reduce electricity use during periods of highest demand. Using less energy during peak times can ease the strain on the electric grid, benefit your cooperative and sometimes lower your electric bill.

Electricity generation and energy supply must match consumption in real-time to ensure safe, reliable power. Every moment of every day, an entire workforce monitors energy use, adjusting power plant production up or down as needed to keep the grid balanced.

As energy demand grows, all of us can do our part to use less. To put this in perspective, peak electricity demand is expected to increase by 38 gigawatts over the next four years, according to the Energy Information Administration. That’s like adding another California to our nation’s power grid.

Energy peak impacts price

Peak time varies for each electric utility but typically occurs in the morning when people get ready for the day and in the evening when they return home from work and school. During these times, we turn on lights, cook, adjust the thermostat, run the dishwasher and do laundry – to name just a few energy-consuming activities.

Typically, the price of power increases when demand is higher. Reducing your electric use during peak times can help lower market prices for everyone and lessen stress on the electric grid.

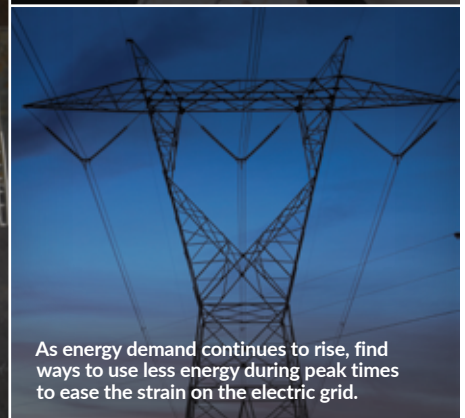
Electric cooperatives set rates to cover costs. Some have time-of-use rates that reflect higher costs during peak demand periods. Whether you have time-of-use rates or not, these tips can help keep costs down for your cooperative and establish off-peak energy habits.



Instead of running the dishwasher right after you load it, use the delay start setting so it runs overnight.



Still haven't made the switch to LED lighting? You could be using at least 75% less electricity with LED bulbs.



As energy demand continues to rise, find ways to use less energy during peak times to ease the strain on the electric grid.

Ways to use less energy

As a general rule, try to spread out the use of equipment and appliances. For example, avoid washing dishes and clothes, and cooking all at the same time. Running a lot of hot water will cause your water heater to use more energy, too.

Increasing the energy efficiency of your home can lower its impact on the grid. Weatherize windows and doors and add insulation to improve the comfort of your home. You can also consider upgrading to energy-efficient appliances or using energy-saving features on your existing appliances.

If you haven't already, switch your incandescent lighting to LEDs, which use at least 75% less electricity and last up to 25 times longer, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. There are many affordable options on the market.

Schedule your dishwasher run time. Setting it to start after you

go to bed shifts that energy consumption to off-peak hours.

Running your washing machine and dryer during off-peak hours can help, too. If you're in the market for a new washer or dryer, look for a model with a high Integrated Modified Energy Factor and a low Integrated Water Factor to save water and energy.

Also, consider switching your charging habits for all devices to off-peak hours. If you have an electric vehicle, use the scheduled charge settings. You'll plug in your vehicle when you get home, and it will start charging automatically during the off-peak hours you choose.

Small changes at home can make a big difference to the energy grid. Incorporate these energy-wise habits into your daily routine.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

5 ESSENTIAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

BY ABBY BERRY

Every May, National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your local electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May but also year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1 Be vigilant. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2 Use surge protectors. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness



National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home.



Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity.

over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3 Practice safe power strip use. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4 Avoid contact with water. It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)



The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying.

should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5 Educate family members. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

HONORING IOWA'S HOMETOWN HEROES

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Faces capture attention. That's something I learned early in my journalism career when I was trained to take pictures of the people I featured.

I think about this each time I drive through Auburn. As I roll along Highway 71 through the heart of this Sac County town, I see patriotic banners featuring pictures of local men and women who served in the U.S. military. The black-and-white images – some with smiling faces, some with sober expressions – grace the streetlight poles.

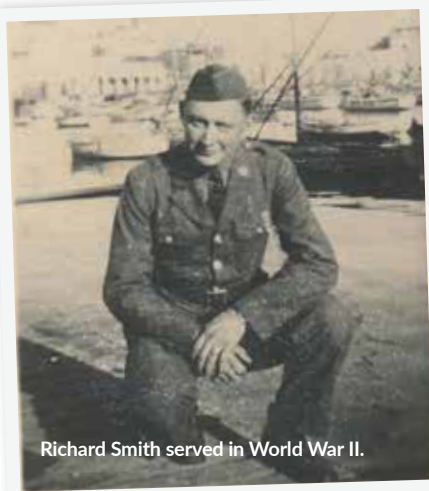
I've always wondered about the stories behind these captivating banners, so I contacted my friend Donetta (Smith) Stewart. For the past 17 years, she has been the librarian at the Auburn Public Library. She's also one of the keepers of knowledge in this small town of roughly 300 residents.

Donetta's uncle, Richard Smith, is featured on a banner southeast of the library. "Dad didn't talk much about Richard when I was growing up," says Donetta, referring to Don Smith, Richard's younger brother. "It was only later in life when I started asking more questions that he started telling me more."

Remembering a life cut short

Richard was born to Frank and Janet Smith on Dec. 23, 1919. He attended country school and graduated from Auburn High School in 1936. The likeable, easygoing young man was farming with his father when the U.S. entered World War II.

As his buddies began enlisting, Richard wanted to join the service, too. When Janet pleaded with him to stay home, he honored his mother's wishes. Uncle Sam came calling, however, in 1941. Richard was drafted into the U.S. Army and completed basic training at Camp Claiborne in Louisiana.



While his Auburn buddies served stateside, training other soldiers, Richard was sent to England and then Africa, along with the Red Bull Infantry Division. Richard was on the front lines when Erwin Rommel (a German field marshal known as the "Desert Fox") launched the Battle of Kasserine Pass on Feb. 14, 1943.

The next day, Feb. 15, Richard was killed in action. He was just 24 years old. "Dad always said that after Richard died, the laughter went out of the house," Donetta says.

After the war, one of Richard's commanding officers traveled to the Smith farm to pay his respects and fill in some gaps. "He told Frank that one minute Richard was there, and the next minute he was gone," Donetta explains.

Honorable legacies live on

Richard was buried near Carthage, Tunisia, in the North Africa American Cemetery, which contains the remains of more than 2,800 war dead. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, including Jane Barto, coordinator for the Auburn Historical Society (AHS), he now has a banner along Pine Street in his hometown.



It's one of 23 banners that the AHS and the City of Auburn installed in November 2024, in time for Veterans Day. "It's important to honor this heritage," says Jane, who was inspired by similar banners she'd seen in Arlington, Nebraska. "There's something very personal about putting faces with the names."

The Auburn banners feature local men and women who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. They include Jane's father, Floyd Barto, an Army veteran, and her uncle, Frank Lee, who helped the Allied forces liberate the Auschwitz concentration camp in early 1945. "My uncle said the human suffering was beyond description and wouldn't talk about his war experiences," Jane says.

That's why the banners are so important, she adds. They draw people in and start the conversation about these veterans' stories.


"We get so many positive comments," Donetta says. "Richard and the other local heroes are not forgotten."

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.

Visit our website at www.ieclmagazine.com

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