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MARCH 2025

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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ON THE COVER Special thanks to Rene Carson, 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!

ENERGY ISSUES AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY HALEY MOON

Energy policy remains a top priority for Iowa lawmakers in the current state legislative session. Since the 91st General Assembly began on Jan. 13, legislative leaders and Gov. Reynolds have emphasized key issues that could impact how electricity reaches Iowans in their homes and businesses. As always, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged in these discussions to ensure the voices of co-op member-consumers are heard and that the best interests of rural Iowa are considered.

The following are key legislative issues under discussion and their potential impact on your local electric cooperative:

Service territory protections

Protecting the state's defined electric service areas remains the top priority for Iowa's electric cooperatives. This law, established nearly 50 years ago, is essential for cooperatives to invest in local economic development, maintain affordable rates and ensure reliable service. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives remains vigilant in safeguarding these protections from legislative proposals that could undermine them. Learn more at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com.

Third-party solar developments

Proposals in the legislature aim to establish third-party community solar programs in Iowa. These arrangements are different from the community solar programs available from some Iowa electric co-ops. You may have received information at your home or heard of neighbors being approached about subscribing to or leasing land for non co-op community solar projects.

While electric cooperatives support a diverse energy generation mix, there are concerns that these entities do not adhere to the same consumer protection standards required of public utilities. Additionally, these projects could disrupt assigned service territories that are crucial for co-ops. If you have questions about solar energy or are approached by one of these third-party entities, please contact your local cooperative for more information.

Governor's energy priorities

Gov. Reynolds has outlined several energy-related priorities aimed at shaping Iowa's future in energy generation, transmission and distribution. These initiatives cover a wide range of topics, including how investor-owned utilities plan for and set rates and invest in new energy projects, ways the state of Iowa can examine the potential of nuclear energy, and making funds available for water infrastructure projects.

One issue of particular importance to electric cooperatives is the Right of First Refusal (ROFR). ROFR grants Iowa-based electric utilities the first opportunity to construct and maintain regional transmission projects within the state. Electric cooperatives support ROFR, as it enables Iowa's utilities to continue working together on critical infrastructure projects that help maintain reliable electricity service.

Iowa's electric utilities employ thousands of Iowans to design, maintain and repair power lines in the state to ensure power continues to flow during our most extreme weather conditions. They invest in our communities and utilize Iowa companies as suppliers while working with landowners to protect Iowans' interests. Learn more at www.IowaElectricHomeTeam.com.

Staying engaged in the legislative process

As the legislative session progresses, your local electric cooperative directors and staff are actively engaging with lawmakers to advocate for policies that protect and strengthen rural Iowa's energy future.

For more information on these issues or to stay updated on legislative developments, please contact your local cooperative.

Haley Moon is the senior manager of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A $100 GIFT CARD FOR LANDSCAPING!

Planting season will soon be here! Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy use, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. To help with your spring landscaping projects, we're giving away a $100 gift card from a local garden center or nursery.

ENTER ONLINE BY MARCH 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than March 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 stainless steel bread machine from the January issue was **Lisa Liles**, an **Access Energy Cooperative** member-consumer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 15	Scholarship application deadline
MARCH 15	Lineworker scholarship application deadline
MARCH 20	Board meeting
MARCH 31	Photo contest entry deadline
APRIL 17	Board meeting
APRIL 18	Office closed for Good Friday

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com or through the SmartHub app for mobile devices. Use SmartHub to report outages to save time and ensure that it goes directly into our system to notify us. You can also call our office at 866-242-4232 for account information or to report service-related concerns.

Access Energy Cooperative is dedicated to exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable and efficient service, while being a good citizen in our communities.

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HOW TO SAFELY USE A PORTABLE GENERATOR

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Iowa's changing seasons often bring times of extreme weather. Tornadoes, derechos and ice storms can lead to power outages. When outages occur, your Access Energy Cooperative team works to safely and efficiently restore service. During an outage, you might be inclined to use a portable generator. If you use a portable generator, it's essential to use it safely. Nearly 70% of deaths caused by portable generators occur at home.

What is a portable generator?

Portable generators offer a reliable backup source of power during electrical power outages, and can provide relief during severe weather such as ice or wind storms. However, these helpful devices must be used and maintained properly to avoid serious health and safety risks. The best way to ensure you and Access Energy Cooperative's line crews stay safe when you are using a generator is to educate yourself and plan ahead.

What are the safety risks?

The main risks to be aware of when using a portable generator are electrocution, carbon monoxide poisoning, electrical accidents and fire. When should portable generators be used? A portable generator should only be used when necessary and only to power essential equipment or appliances. Do not overload the generator by operating more appliances and equipment than it can handle.

Proper installation is critical

Properly connecting the generator is a critical step for your safety since improper installation or use could be deadly. A licensed electrician should be consulted to determine the best equipment for your needs to be sure it meets local codes.

Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring without having an appropriate transfer switch installed. Many electric cooperatives require a double-throw transfer switch, but you should contact your co-op for specific requirements. The transfer switch breaks the path of electricity between the power lines and your main electrical panel. This is the best way to protect you, your neighbors and utility crews from "back feed." Back feed occurs when an improperly connected generator begins feeding electricity "back" through the power lines.

If you have questions about using a portable generator, please contact us at 866-242-4232.

Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/ CEO of Access Energy Cooperative.

CONSIDERING THE SWITCH TO AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE?

BY RICARDO ORTIZ

Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly common on the road and at public charging locations. New models, lower prices, expanded charging networks, financial incentives and improved safety ratings are fueling their rising popularity. According to *Kelley Blue Book*, EVs made up 7.6% of sales in 2023 – up from 5.9% in 2022 – and *The New York Times* noted that 1.3 million vehicles (about 8% overall) were sold in 2024. Not including hybrids, EVs now command an even larger market share, and I'm happy to count myself among the users.

While EVs might not meet everyone's needs due to differences in commute lengths and access to charging, they offer significant benefits like lower operating costs and reduced maintenance – no more oil, transmission or radiator fluid changes. Another unique feature of EVs is called regenerative braking. It's a system that uses the motor to slow the vehicle and channel the recovered energy back into the battery, extending its range and reducing brake wear.

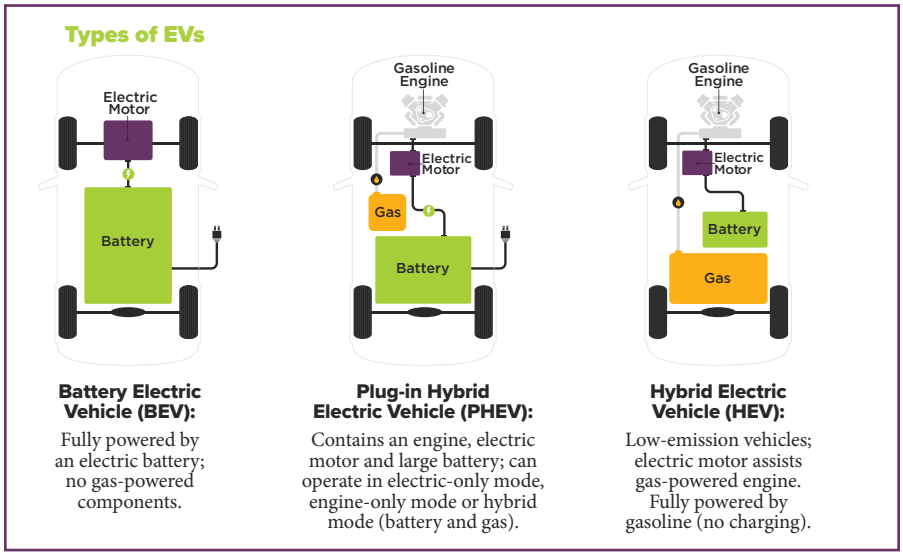
Types of EVs

There are three common categories of EVs.

1 **All-Electric Vehicles (known as Battery Electric Vehicles, BEVs):** Powered solely by rechargeable batteries, BEVs produce zero emissions and can typically travel between 110 and 300 miles on a single charge, depending on the battery size.

2 **Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs):** These vehicles combine a medium-to-large battery, an electric motor and a gasoline engine. They primarily recharge by plugging in and can usually cover 15 to 60 miles on electric power alone before the gas engine engages to charge and/or supplement the onboard battery pack.

3 **Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs):** HEVs use an electric motor to assist a gas engine and come with smaller battery packs that recharge through regenerative braking or the engine. Unlike BEVs and PHEVs, HEVs cannot be plugged in, and their power mainly comes from gasoline.



Charging options

Most new BEVs and PHEVs come with a Level 1 charger (compatible with standard 110-volt outlets), which typically adds 2 to 7 miles of range per hour (16 to 56 miles over 8 hours) – adequate for shorter commutes. For those needing more daily range, Level 2 chargers, which operate on a 240-volt supply and require installation by a licensed electrician, deliver 10 to 30 miles of range per hour (80 to 240 miles over 8 hours). Level 3 (DC Fast Charging) stations, reserved for longer trips, can provide 50 to 350 miles of range per hour, with most sessions lasting 15 to 60 minutes, depending on the vehicle, temperature and the station itself.

If you're considering switching to an EV, ensure your home's electrical system can support the necessary charging equipment. A licensed electrician should evaluate your service – especially if you plan to install a Level 2 charger. Also, please contact Access Energy Cooperative before installing a charging station at your home for any required service changes or if you have questions about EV charging and usage.

Ricardo Ortiz is the IT administrator for Access Energy Cooperative.

Considerations Before Buying

- Public charging options near you
- Federal, state and local financial incentives
- Battery warranties
- Potential changes to auto insurance

CHANGES IN WASHINGTON SIGNAL POSITIVE ENERGY IMPACTS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

The 2024 election centered on widespread frustration with America's economy and immigration. While energy policy didn't receive as much time in the campaigning spotlight, the second Trump presidency is likely to result in significant changes in how our nation approaches its ever-growing demand for electric power. For electric cooperatives, it appears those changes will be positive.

"America is at an energy crossroads, and the reliability of the electric grid hangs in the balance," explained Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), in a message expressing the association's desire to work closely with President Trump and Congress to protect energy affordability and reliability. "Critical generation resources are being retired faster than they can be reliably replaced. At the same time, electricity demand is skyrocketing as power-hungry data centers and new manufacturing facilities come online. Smart energy policies that keep the lights on are more important than ever."

A critical juncture in energy policy

Shortly after the election, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) warned that many regions face an elevated risk of electricity shortfalls in the face of extreme weather such as prolonged cold snaps. NERC, the nation's grid watchdog, reiterated that older power plants are being retired at the same time Americans are using more electricity. While solar and wind farms have been sprouting up, they can't deliver the always-available electricity that coal- and gas-fired plants have

long provided. Hurricanes Helene and Milton compounded the problem by damaging critical grid infrastructure.

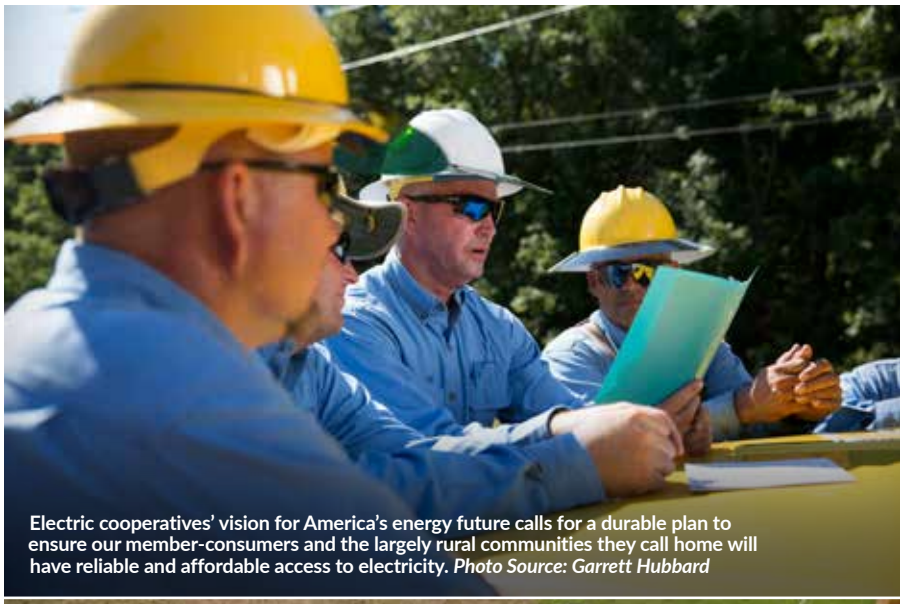
The first Trump administration scaled back many of President Obama's initiatives to replace fossil fuels with "clean power," so observers expect President Trump's team to overturn many of the Biden administration's energy-related policies. NRECA has been urging officials to eliminate regulatory burdens such as the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) power plant rule – which many believe exceeds the EPA's legal authority – and to encourage the U.S. Department of Energy and other agencies to take steps that will eliminate bureaucratic roadblocks and bolster the long-term reliability of the nation's grid.

Advocating for reliable, affordable power

Electric cooperatives' vision for America's energy future calls for a durable plan to ensure our member-consumers and the largely rural communities they call home will have reliable and affordable access to electricity in the face of the nation's skyrocketing demand.

Electric cooperatives are comfortable taking a leadership role in this effort because we have worked hard with elected officials and their staffs to advocate for our members. Policymakers from both parties have consistently commended electric cooperatives as reputable energy providers and engines of economic development that play a vital role in transforming the local communities they proudly serve.

Solidifying a positive and resilient energy future for co-op communities involves a long list of issues and elements. For example, NRECA is pressing Congress and the Trump administration to take concrete steps to overhaul outdated permitting laws that delay or frustrate efforts to build the new infrastructure tomorrow's energy needs demand. We need to address public lands and conservation regulations that make it challenging to operate powerlines, maintain rights of way and reduce potential wildfire threats. Electric cooperatives are also working to support their member-consumers by maintaining federal programs and tax credits that bolster electric reliability and affordability.



Electric cooperatives' vision for America's energy future calls for a durable plan to ensure our member-consumers and the largely rural communities they call home will have reliable and affordable access to electricity. *Photo Source: Garrett Hubbard*

Electric cooperatives are pressing Congress and the Trump administration to take concrete steps to overhaul outdated permitting laws that delay or frustrate efforts to build the new infrastructure tomorrow's energy needs demand. *Photo Source: Robb McCormick Photography*

While President Trump has earned a reputation for demanding swift action on his priorities, we need to remember that change doesn't happen quickly in Washington. For example, undoing the EPA power plant rule will require a robust regulatory process that will take some time to ensure this repeal can withstand expected legal challenges. While the exact path we'll take is still coming into focus, our top priority is the interest of the local communities we serve and the everyday Americans who call them home.

We will continue to strengthen our voice by making sure our representatives at the federal and state level are aware of our concerns and the importance of ensuring reliable, affordable electricity for all Americans.

The strength of the electric cooperative movement and the clout we have when we work together are unsurpassed, positioning us for continued success as we work with the new administration.

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

Seafood Favorites

MAINE BAKED FISH

- 4-6 white fish fillets, any type
- 1 can cream of shrimp soup
- milk
- 1 can small shrimp, drained and rinsed
- buttered breadcrumbs

Place fish in a buttered, flat baking dish. Thin the shrimp soup with milk and pour over fish. Add canned shrimp over soup layer. Cover lightly with breadcrumbs. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. *Serves 4-6*

Jane Person • Batavia
Access Energy Cooperative

BLACKENED WALLEYE

- 2-4 walleye fillets
- 1 stick butter
- Zatarain's blackened seasoning, to taste

Rinse the walleye fillets in cold water, pat dry. Place in plastic or metal bowl in the refrigerator. Melt butter in a small pan, then remove from heat and let cool briefly. Pour melted butter over the chilled fillets. Toss with tongs to ensure they are coated entirely. Shake Zatarain's blackened fish spice over the fillets, stir and add spice until the fillets are coated well. Outside, heat a cast iron skillet over a propane fish fryer until smoking hot. Use tongs to put a few fillets into the hot pan. Leave room between fillets. Cook for 2-3 minutes on each side. Remove and enjoy. *Serves 2-4*

Allyson Bailey • Hamilton
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CAROL'S MOCK LOBSTER

- 3 quarts water
- 1 tablespoon mixed pickling spices
- 2 bay leaves
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 1 pound frozen haddock or cod fillets, thawed
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- lemon butter, as desired

Bring water to boil on high heat. Place pickling spices in a cheesecloth bag and place in boiling water. Add bay leaves and vinegar. Reduce heat to medium and add fillets. Cook for 2-3 minutes, until the fish turns white. Remove and place fillets on oven broiler rack. Brush with butter and sprinkle with paprika. Broil 3 inches from broiler unit for 7-8 minutes. Don't turn over. Serve with lemon butter. *Serves 4*

Nancy Pelzer • Ames
Consumers Energy

"NORWEGIAN" FISH BOIL

- 8-10 6-ounce haddock fillets, or any white fish
- 3-5 pounds small red potatoes
- 1 bag pearl onions

Rinse fish and tie fillets in cheesecloth. In a large pot, boil potatoes and onions for approximately 20 minutes. Add fish and boil for an additional 10 minutes. Remove and serve on a large platter. This goes well with coleslaw and lefse. *Serves 8-10*

Janmarie Olson • Holland
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

SALMON WITH TOMATOES AND FETA

- **4** 4-ounce salmon fillets
- Old Bay seasoning, to taste
- **1½** cups cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- **¾** cup crumbled feta cheese
- **¼** cup lemon juice
- **¼** cup olive oil
- **1** teaspoon dried basil
- **1** teaspoon dried oregano
- **1** teaspoon parsley flakes

Place salmon fillets on individual pieces of foil, pulling the foil up around the sides to form a boat. Sprinkle salmon with Old Bay seasoning. Mix the remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Spoon mixture over the salmon in the foil. Wrap the foil around the salmon and topping, closing the edges. Place in baking dish and bake at 350 degrees F for 30-35 minutes. *Serves 4*

MacKenzie Dreeszen Rutter • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

OYSTERS BURGUNDY

- **10-15** medium oysters
- **1** teaspoon lemon juice
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- **2** tablespoons butter
- **1** tablespoon green onion, chopped
- **2** teaspoons parsley, chopped
- **½** teaspoon garlic, minced
- breadcrumbs
- Parmesan cheese
- paprika

Place oysters and lemon juice in a casserole dish; add salt and pepper to taste. Blend butter, green onion, parsley and garlic. Spread mixture over oysters. Sprinkle top with breadcrumbs, cheese and paprika. Bake at 350 degrees F for about 10 minutes or until crumbs are brown. *Serves 4*

Cheryl Schiller • Donnellson
Access Energy Cooperative

SALMON LOAF

- **1** 15.5-ounce can salmon
- **⅓** cup milk
- **¾** cup soft breadcrumbs
- **2** eggs
- **2** tablespoons onion
- **1** tablespoon lemon juice
- **1** tablespoon parsley
- **¼** teaspoon salt
- dash pepper

Drain salmon, reserving liquid. Pour milk over breadcrumbs and let stand for 5 minutes. Then add salmon, liquid reserved from salmon, eggs, onion, lemon juice, parsley and seasonings. Spread in greased pan and bake at 350 degrees F for 40-50 minutes, until firm. Serve plain or with sauce of your choice.

Ardine Dillingham • Hartley
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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

SHRIMP TACOS

- **⅓** cup mayonnaise
- **3** tablespoons sour cream
- **1** garlic clove, minced
- **¼** cup cilantro, chopped
- **2** tablespoons lime juice
- **1** cup green cabbage
- **½** cup red cabbage
- **1** pound shrimp, raw
- **1** tablespoon taco seasoning
- **1** tablespoon olive oil
- **1** tablespoon butter
- **6-8** medium tortillas
- avocado, optional
- tomatoes, optional

In a bowl, combine mayonnaise, sour cream, garlic, cilantro and lime juice for a cilantro lime sauce. Finely shred cabbage and add cilantro lime sauce. Mix well and set aside. Season the shrimp with taco seasoning. Heat oil and butter in a skillet. Once hot, add shrimp and cook for 2 minutes per side until opaque. Warm the tortillas, add a bed of slaw mix and top with shrimp. Add any other ingredients to your liking such as avocado or tomatoes. You can also substitute hoagie buns for tortilla shells and make a po'boy sandwich. *Serves 4-5*

Crystal Hammes • Libertyville
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

FIRECRACKER FAVORITES

THE REWARD:
$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is March 31
Submit your favorite **firecracker (spicy!) recipes.** Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

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IOWA'S REA POWER PLANT MUSEUM RECEIVES NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

BY MADISON ALERT

The history of electric cooperatives is woven into the fabric of rural America, where a shared sense of purpose has always united individuals in pursuit of a brighter future. Before electrification, rural life was defined by darkness, isolation and relentless challenges. Yet, even in the most trying times, these communities possessed a determined spirit – a vision that would forever change the course of American history. Fueled by grit and willpower, that spirit laid the foundation for one of the most profound and transformative movements in our nation's past: rural electrification.

On May 11, 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037, establishing the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). This pivotal moment in history created the Rural Electrification Act, a federal loan program that sought to bring the power of electricity to rural America. While investor-owned utilities resisted, farmers of rural America saw an opportunity and flooded the newly formed program with applications, signaling the dawn of the electric cooperative movement.

Embracing the call for rural electrification

Northern Iowa embraced the call for electrification. Newspapers like the *Hampton Chronicle* served as champions for electrification, urging community support with articles like the March 12, 1936, piece, "Are You Interested in Rural Electrification?" It was a call for unity to bring light to the countryside. And so, Iowa farmers gathered, forming cooperatives that would forever change the landscape of rural life.

The cost of this dream was shared among farmers committing to pay a monthly fee, roughly $5, for 100 kilowatt-hours of electricity. It was a leap of faith for many as skepticism and doubt lingered. However, the cooperative spirit ran deep, and farmers' collective perseverance soon proved naysayers wrong.

On Feb. 10, 1937, northern Iowa farmers joined together to incorporate the generation cooperative Federated REA. Days later, REA Deputy Administrator John Carmody announced the decision to fund Federated REA to serve Franklin, Hardin, Wright, Butler, Grundy and Hancock counties in Iowa. The $222,000 loan laid the groundwork for Iowa's Reeve Power Plant south of Hampton.

A dream becomes reality

The Reeve Power Plant is situated on six acres next to the Rock Island Railroad, which helped ensure that construction materials and fuel could be easily transported to the site. The

winning construction bid of $51,875 by a local contractor allowed work to begin on Sept. 1, 1937, signifying construction of the power plant was full steam ahead. Concrete was mixed and poured by hand; innovative methods of steam and tarps helped overcome the freezing temperatures of Iowa's winter.

By January 1938, the Reeve Power Plant was fully enclosed, and in mid-March, the first two engines – massive Nordberg powerhouses – were tested and successfully fired up. Then, on March 23, 1938, at 8:30 a.m., the dream became a reality. The Reeve Power Plant began operations, delivering 24-hour electric service to its six rural counties. With that, Federated REA became the first cooperative west of the Mississippi River to generate and distribute farmer-owned electricity, marking the beginning of a new era. In less than seven months, rural electrification had arrived. In the years that followed, two additional engines were added, and crews braved challenging weather and the struggles that came with expanding.

In 1947, Federated REA merged with the Central Electric Federated Cooperative Association in Pocahontas to form Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Corn Belt Power). This new cooperative structure responded to the soaring demand for electricity, utilizing the Reeve Power Plant to manage overflow from its primary generation facility. During this period of peak demand, energy brownouts became a common occurrence, with sections of the service territory experiencing reduced electricity usage to balance the grid. Concurrently, rural electrification had reached over 90% of U.S. farms, a remarkable achievement that underscored the success of the cooperative business model.

In 1950, Corn Belt Power transitioned the Reeve Power Plant to standby mode after a new generation source was commissioned to meet the grid's growing needs. Despite this change, the site continued to house a substation, providing vital support to the cooperative's members in the region and maintaining its role in the legacy of rural electrification. After serving its membership for decades, the generation plant was finally taken out of commission in 1974.

Maintaining historical significance

In 1988, the plant was donated to the Franklin County Historical Society, and through the efforts of countless volunteers, the REA Power Plant Museum was born. The museum, which opened to the public in 1990 as a Historic Place on the National Register, stands as a powerful reminder of the hard work, sacrifice and unity that made rural electrification possible. In 2002, the museum earned recognition as a point of interest within the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area.

In December 2024, the Reeve Power Plant was designated as a National Historic Landmark, honoring its legacy as the last remaining original plant built following the 1936 Rural Electrification Act. This recognition commemorates the plant's physical structure and celebrates the remarkable spirit of innovation and perseverance it represents.

With many thanks to the Franklin County Historical Society and volunteers like Rick Whalen of Hampton, the historic site remains a testament to rural America's transformation. This dedication helps to preserve the spirit of hope, resilience, and effort that made electrification possible, ensuring the story continues to inspire future generations.

Museum exhibits showcase the challenges and triumphs of a bygone era, while displays highlight life before and after electrification. Visitors can also see artifacts like the original three-cylinder engine, circuit panels, transformers and the iconic concrete blocks engraved with "REA." The museum offers a living history of rural America's transformation, powered by the cooperative spirit and the collective will of those who dared to dream of a brighter future.

Madison Alert is the communications specialist/key accounts representative for Franklin REC.

6 WAYS TO GO GREEN THIS ST. PATRICK'S DAY

This St. Patrick's Day, don't just wear green – live green! While celebrating with shamrocks, parades and festive attire, also think about ways to make your home more energy efficient and save money on your energy bills. Consider these tips to go green this month and throughout the year!

1 **Replace your HVAC filter**
Generally, these need to be replaced every three months, but factors such as having pets, climate and age of your system can cause this to vary.

2 **Install a smart thermostat**
A smart thermostat can add convenience, generate savings and help you go green. Let it automatically turn your temperature down when you are away or asleep.

3 **Analyze your energy bill**
Review past bills to understand your energy consumption and demand patterns. Understanding these patterns can help you determine the best time to run appliances or whether to pursue energy efficiency upgrades. It can also help you find ways to reduce your usage.

4 **Upgrade to energy-efficient appliances**
Look for appliances that are ENERGY STAR®-certified. They can use 10-15% less energy and water than standard models.

5 **Consider going geothermal for your heating and cooling needs**
Geothermal systems are literally powered by the Earth. These systems heat and cool your home using a piping system, referred to as a loop. Water circulates in this loop to exchange heat between your home, the ground source heat pump and the Earth. There can be significant start-up costs, but we can help with rebates.

6 **Use all you need, but need all you use.**
If you don't need the lights or TV, simply turn them off!

YOUTH PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINES

Scholarship applications – Due March 15
Access Energy Cooperative is offering $9,000 in scholarships to high school seniors. Applicants must be high school seniors receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative living at a location served by the cooperative.

Lineworker scholarship applications – Due March 15
Up to two $2,000 scholarships may be awarded per year to students enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a one- or two-year electric lineworker program. Applicants are not required to be members of the cooperative, but must live in a county served by the cooperative.

Details about each program, including applications, can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com. Applications can also be obtained at qualifying area high school guidance counselor offices or by contacting our office at 866-242-4232.

SUMMER HELP WANTED

Part-time help is needed this summer in the Access Energy Cooperative operations department. Applicants must graduate high school before this summer and must be enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall. Contact Diane Magnani at dmagnani@accessenergycoop.com.

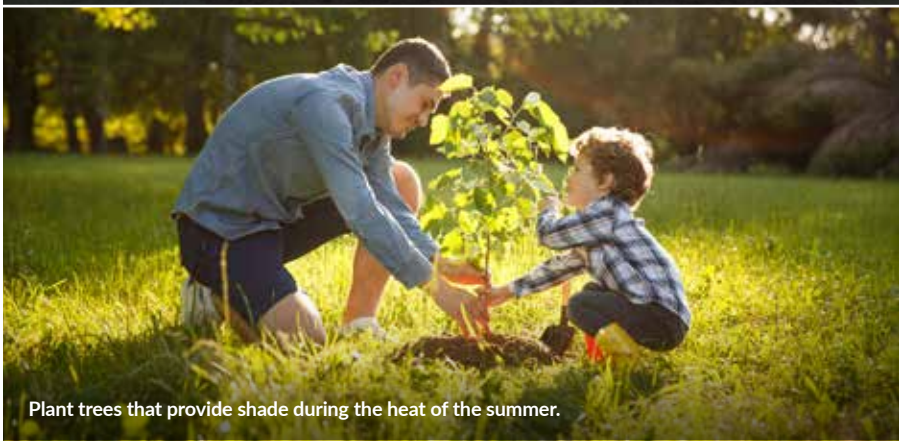
LANDSCAPING TO SAVE ENERGY

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

There's a lot going on in the space around our homes. Competing factors of aesthetics, safety, energy efficiency, water conservation and increasing risk of wildfires are a lot to consider. Thoughtful planning and good design can address these factors and result in year-round energy savings.

Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy use, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). When selecting the right trees and other foliage, research what is best for Iowa. Select native species for lower maintenance.

Strategically placed trees shade your home during the summertime, which can lower your energy bills.



Plant trees that provide shade during the heat of the summer.

Plant for multiple benefits

Strategically placed deciduous trees allow for summer shade and passive solar heat gain in the winter when leaves have fallen. This can lead to energy savings in the summer and winter.

Slower-growing trees might take longer to provide maximum shading benefit, but their roots are typically deeper, and branches are stronger. These factors can make them less likely to be damaged by wind, snow or ice, and they are more drought resistant.

Be sure to plant large trees far enough away from your home to prevent damage from falling branches or root damage to your home's foundation.

Keep in mind, if you have a rooftop photovoltaic solar system, even a small amount of shade can significantly reduce energy production. Consider smaller plantings closer to the home to shade walls, windows or hardscaped surfaces, such as driveways and sidewalks.

Windbreaks are another landscaping strategy that can be beneficial for energy savings in windy areas. The DOE says windbreaks reduce wind speed by as much as 30 times the windbreak's height. That, in turn, reduces wind chill near your home and can lower heating costs. The DOE recommends planting two to five times the mature tree's height away from your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs for windbreaks and consider adding fences or earthen mounds to help lift the wind up and over your home. In cold climates, they offer the added benefit of acting as a snowdrift to keep snow from piling up against your home.

Keep landscaping clear of dryer vents, heat pumps and air-conditioning units to ensure access for maintenance and airflow around those locations.

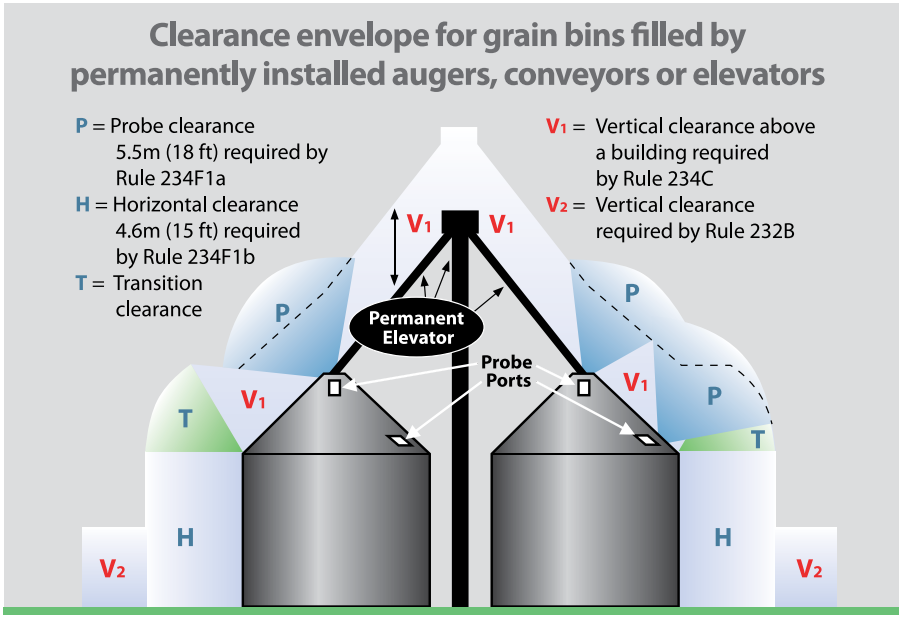
Consider safety first

When landscaping, always consider safety first. Call before you dig to ensure you know where any underground power, gas, water or sewer lines are located. The national 811 Underground Service Alert program routes you directly to your local resources. Call 811 or go to IowaOneCall.com before you dig.

Be mindful of overhead power lines, too. Look up and check the surroundings before setting up ladders. Be thoughtful when planting new landscaping that could encroach on power lines. Utility equipment should have at least 10 feet of clearance, when possible.

As you prepare to refresh your yard for the coming spring and summer, consider ways you can boost your energy efficiency for more comfort and savings year-round.

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



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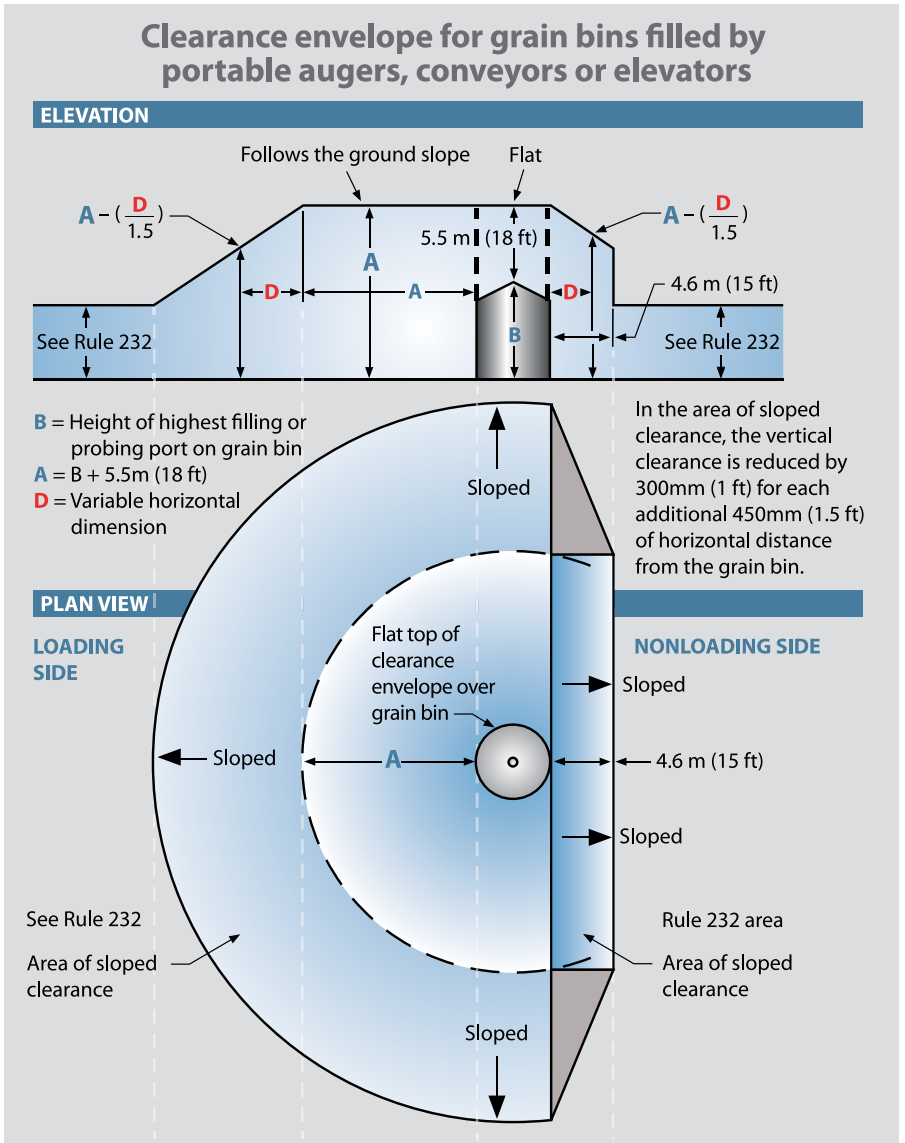

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MAINTAIN PROPER CLEARANCE AROUND GRAIN BINS

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b: *An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997.* The Iowa Utilities Commission has adopted this language.

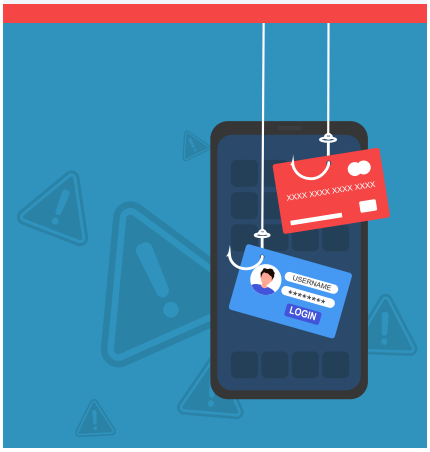
Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Commission to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op's policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call your electric co-op for help.

These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives' annual public information campaign and are based on the 2017 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type Access Energy Cooperative's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar and a padlock icon. If you're ever unsure, call 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232 to verify payment or account details. Stay vigilant to protect yourself from utility fraud.



FORD LIGHTNING EV

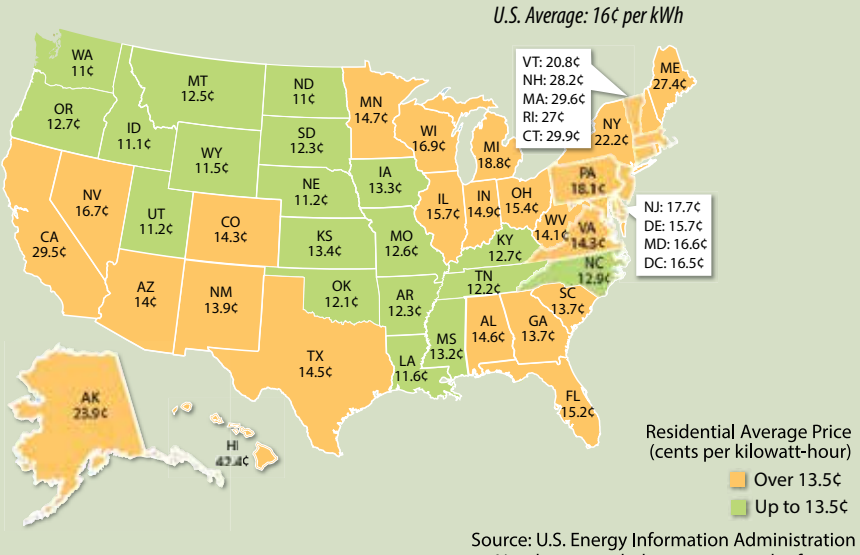
As part of a research project, Access Energy Cooperative is tracking data from the cooperative's Ford Lightning electric vehicle to share with members. The following is the data for January.

- 1,285 miles driven
- 3,533 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 631 total kWh for charging
- $78.90 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 73.4 gallons of gas equivalent
- $204.90 total cost of gas equivalent at $2.79 per gallon

Note: Dollar values are dependent on electric and gas prices.

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2023 figures, in cents per kWh



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration
Numbers rounded to nearest tenth of a cent

2025 PHOTO CONTEST

WIN UP TO $100!

We are accepting photos for the 2026 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Color and horizontal photos work best for calendar entries. Submissions can be sent to mktg@accessenergycoop.com before March 31, 2025.

Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos. Winners will be awarded $75, plus an additional $25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.

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The magazine for members of Iowa's electric cooperatives

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