

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

The importance of tree maintenance to your power staying on

A WORD FROM



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

Northeast Iowa is not exempt from powerful natural disasters that can impact the poles, wires and other equipment needed to provide reliable power.

In 2017, in our service territory Bremer and Chickasaw counties were declared presidential disasters after July storms. In 2016, Bremer, Butler, Chickasaw and Floyd counties were declared disasters after late summer, early fall storms.

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

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

When the wind blows, limbs growing too close to power lines may sway and touch wires. These brief power disruptions or "blinks" aren't just mild annoyances; they can damage computers, TVs and other sensitive electronic equipment.

Our systemwide maintenance program also includes an annual pole inspection completed on a 10-year cycle. Poles are inspected for structural integrity to identify any weaknesses. We also inspect all vegetation in our service territory every year.

We can discover, locate and resolve power outages in a more informed, orderly and timely manner thanks to our enhanced Outage Management System. This enables us to restore power sooner and more efficiently than before.

At Butler County REC, our vegetation management program is also about safety by ensuring that tree branches do not become energized due to close contact with a downed power line. Power lines can carry up to 12,470 volts, and an energized tree branch is incredibly dangerous – even deadly. Make sure your children know that climbing trees near power lines is extremely dangerous.

With winter fast approaching, contact us if you have concerns about branches or trees too close to power lines. When it comes to weather, we know Mother Nature is in charge. But, through our proactive planning and programs, we can work to lessen the impact on your electric service when bad weather hits.

High school juniors invited to apply

The Iowa Youth Tour is an all-expense paid trip that takes high school students to Washington, D.C. every June. Approximately 35 students participate, chosen by their local electric cooperatives from across the state of Iowa.

Butler County REC will select one student from its service area to participate in the 2018 Iowa Youth Tour. High school juniors whose parents are Butler County REC members or residents of Aplington, Fairbank, Fredericksburg or Readlyn are invited to apply for the 2018 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 8-14.

Is your high school junior planning to attend college? We offer \$500 college scholarships for the top three students who apply for the youth tour during their junior year of high school. **For more information, contact Anne Siemons at anne@butlerrec.coop or 319.267.2726 or 888.267.2726.**



Are you on our life support list?

If you – or a friend, neighbor or relative – depend on electrically powered life-support equipment, please let us know. We will work with you to make sure the necessary forms are on file so you will be given priority when we restore power after a storm.

If you are already on our life support list and have changed your phone number, contact information or back-up power supply, please call our office as soon as possible.



Generate electricity safely

Electric generators provide backup power during outages, and while convenient, they can also generate risks if not handled properly.

Take care when selecting a generator. Verify that the model you choose can handle the amount of electricity that you need to power your home.

Know the difference between standby and portable generators. Standby generators are wired directly into the home and must have an approved safety transfer switch to avoid feeding electricity back into the electrical system outdoors, creating what's known as "backfeed." Backfeed is dangerous for line workers as well as anyone who may be near downed power lines.

Portable generators are not permanently attached to the home and can only power appliances plugged into the generator. To avoid backfeed into the utility electrical system, a portable generator should never be plugged directly into the home.

Safe Electricity offers these tips for using your generator safely:

- Make sure you understand how to properly vent fumes to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Do not store your generator in enclosed areas such as a basement.
 - Avoid running the generator in areas where carbon monoxide can enter the home - near windows, doors and vents. Maintain at least three to four feet clearance on each side of the generator to aid with ventilation.
 - Always operate the generator on a stable, dry surface. Never use a generator with wet hands or stand in water to turn it on. When possible, use extension cords and generators with additional ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection.
 - When refueling the generator, make sure it is first powered off and the engine is cool. If you add fuel to a hot generator, it could ignite. Always use the proper type of fuel, which should also be stored in an approved safety container.
 - Plug appliances directly into the generator using grounded, 3-prong extension cords rated for outdoor safety. Remember, plugging the generator directly into the house could result in dangerous backfeed. Check that the extension cord is free of damage. Once your generator is in use, follow all associated maintenance instructions.
 - If you suspect that carbon monoxide is present in the house, seek fresh air immediately.
- For more information about generator and storm safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Run full dishwasher to save water, energy

Chances are you'll run your dishwasher several times on Thanksgiving Day: after breakfast, after you clean up your prep mess and after dinner.

Each time, stuff it as full as your turkey. If you run your dishwasher when it's loaded to capacity instead of washing a half-load at a time, you'll use way less water and electricity.

Here are five other energy-saving dishwasher tips:

- Stop rinsing. You've been doing it for years, but newer dishwashers do such a good job that you're wasting water and time if you're still washing the dishes before you load them. A surprise: Loading unrinsed dishes could save you up to 55,000 gallons of water over the life of your dishwasher.
- Air dry. Selecting the "heated dry" option is unnecessary. If your dishwasher doesn't have an "air dry" option, prop open the door once the cycle completes and let the load dry naturally.
- Afraid of spots during an air dry? Use a rinse aid. It will speed drying time and prevent spots on glasses.
- Run the dishwasher after dark. Just about everyone washes dishes right after dinner, so the demand on your electric cooperative is greatest then. Also, after a long day of cooking and a house full of company, the last thing your kitchen needs is the heat that your dishwasher produces while it's running.
- Finally, get your dishwasher away from other appliances like the oven and refrigerator. Because all of those appliances emit heat, they force each other to work harder—and wear out faster—when they're too close together.



Brighten your holidays with an LED lighting rebate



It's the most wonderful time of the year. And your Touchstone Energy cooperative can help make it the most beautiful time of the year—with LED holiday lights and decorations.

The benefits of LED lights are:

1. Energy efficient - use less electricity compared to conventional bulbs.
2. Long lifespan - up to 50,000 hours or more used outdoors and twice as long indoors.
3. Safe - No chance of combustion since the bulbs are cool to the touch, regardless of how long they are left on.

Contact us today for a rebate form for \$2 off each LED-lighted item purchased

Scholarships available for co-op dependents



- Dependents of cooperative members are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship for tuition at a two-year or four-year college. Contact your electric cooperative for an application form.
- Corn Belt Power Cooperative partners with Northwest Iowa Community College (NWICC) in Sheldon, Iowa, to offer four \$500 scholarships. Recipients must be students at NWICC studying Electrical Technology, Powerline or Powerline Technology. Contact the NWICC Foundation, Sheila Van Engen, (800) 352-4907 ext. 246, svanengen@nwicc.edu.
- Corn Belt Power partners with Iowa Lakes Community College to offer one \$500 scholarship for students enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program. For more information, contact Tony Condon, institutional advancement manager, Iowa Lakes Community College, 800-521-5054, ext. 4491, tcondon@iowalakes.edu.

WHAT TO DO: IF YOUR CAR CRASHES INTO A UTILITY POLE

Accidents happen. Would you know what to do if your car crashed into an electric utility pole? Knowing what to do could be the difference between life and death.

Always consider power lines and other electrical equipment to be live and dangerous!

IF A POWER LINE FALLS ON YOUR VEHICLE AND THERE IS **NO** FIRE:

Your safest option is to stay inside your vehicle until help arrives. The vehicle acts as a path for the electrical current to travel to reach the ground. You are safe inside the vehicle, but if you get out, you could be electrocuted.

Call 911 or your local electric utility for help.

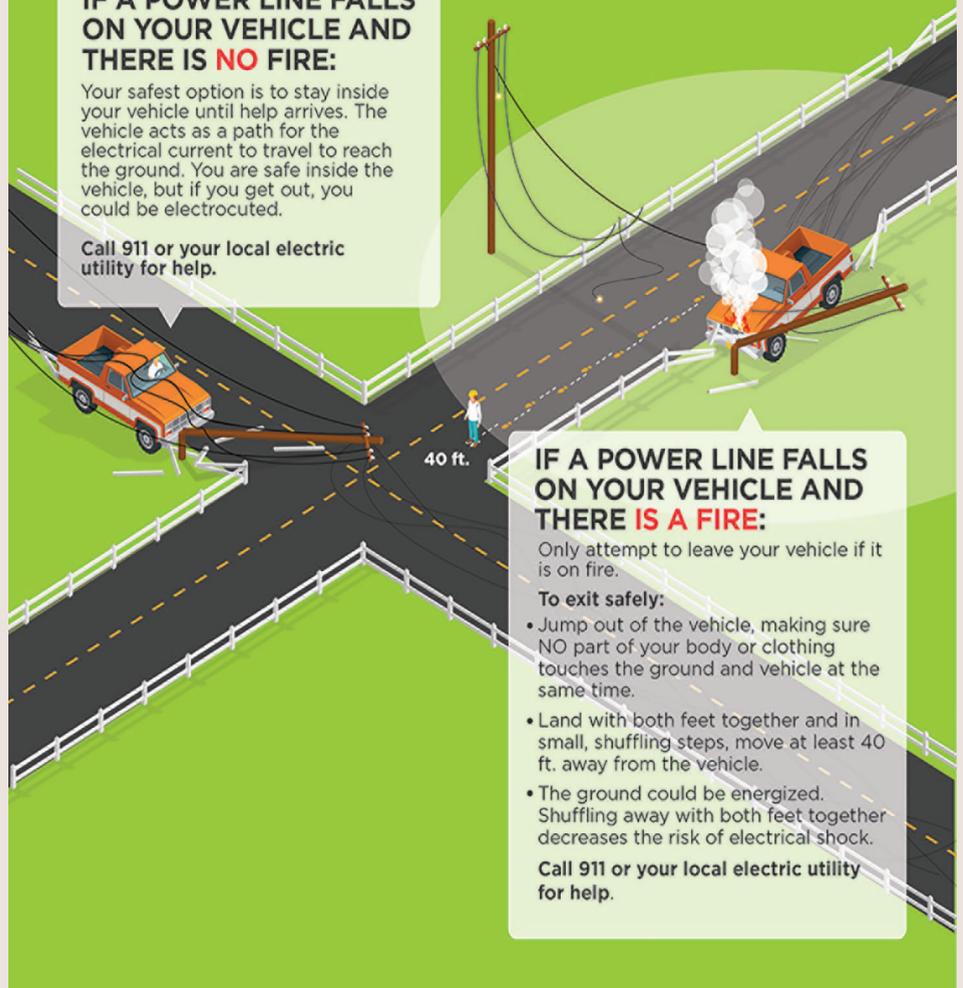
IF A POWER LINE FALLS ON YOUR VEHICLE AND THERE IS **A** FIRE:

Only attempt to leave your vehicle if it is on fire.

To exit safely:

- Jump out of the vehicle, making sure **NO** part of your body or clothing touches the ground and vehicle at the same time.
- Land with both feet together and in small, shuffling steps, move at least 40 ft. away from the vehicle.
- The ground could be energized. Shuffling away with both feet together decreases the risk of electrical shock.

Call 911 or your local electric utility for help.





Promotion winner

Bill pay promotion winner, Jack Van Laere, Rockford, is pictured above, left, with Mandy Brouwer, Butler County REC billing clerk. Jack won a \$100 bill credit for participating in automatic bill payment.

Eighty-nine members signed up through the promotion, which saves your cooperative and members' time and money in payment processing. Thank you to all those participating!

Water heater rebates and LCRs

Effective immediately, when a member purchases a rebated (free or reduced) water heater from Butler County REC, a load control receiver (LCR) will be installed on the unit. The rebated cost of the water heater is dependent on the installation.



It is important to have this LCR installed on the water heater so that during peak demand on our system Corn Belt Power Cooperative, our generation and transmission cooperative, can intermittently shut off the water heater to reduce demand. This saves energy and money for your cooperative and you.

Contact us today if you are interested in purchasing a Marathon water heater. After the LCR is installed, you will receive a one-time \$10 bill credit.

Pay-by-Phone coming

Later this year, Butler County REC will begin using Pay-by-Phone for phone payments, rather than a Butler County REC employee taking your payment.

Pay-by-Phone will involve calling a different toll-free phone number than the one you call to talk to us in the office.

For this automated system, you will need your account number, located in the upper-right corner of your bill, and the payment method you want to use—your bank account or credit or debit card numbers. No registration or password will be required.

This change is an additional step to keep your information safe, and we are happy to be able to offer you this service.

Watch your December newsletter and bill inserts for more details on Pay-by-Phone.

Contractor appreciation event held

Butler County REC appreciates the work contractors do for our members. In late September a supper was held at the Waverly Area Veterans Post for contractors and their guests to show that appreciation.

The gathering of approximately 80 people enjoyed a meal catered by Frederika Locker, Frederika, and Hy-Vee, Waverly. Mike Boomgarden, energy services advisor, welcomed the group, and Craig Codner, CEO, thanked the attendees and made employee introductions. Mark Siefken, engineering manager, discussed the changes in the state electrical inspection law, followed by Matt Mahoney, energy services manager, commenting on load control receiver installations for load management and new rebates.

"Contractors are the first contact our members make for decisions regarding new homes or home or business improvements," said Mahoney. "Helping our members arrive at the right decision for their needs helps Butler County REC and everyone involved. We enjoy the opportunity to thank the contractors for their service to our members."



Everyone enjoyed the conversation and meal at Butler County REC's contractor appreciation event held in September.

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