

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

October 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



A WORD FROM



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## New meters to be installed

I am pleased to announce that your board of directors has made the decision to purchase new metering equipment for our members.

The new Itron/Tantalus meters will replace our current Eaton meters, which are over seven years old. Our Eaton system is now obsolete; therefore, we are no longer able to purchase parts, requiring us to buy equipment from other cooperatives. Itron/Tantalus is the same metering system our neighbors at Franklin REC will be installing.

The decision to purchase a new metering system was not taken lightly by our employees or board. A team of four employees had conversations with eight electric utilities to research and explore various metering systems to ensure the chosen technology was going to help us serve and support you better.

The Itron system offers a number of benefits to you and to the cooperative:

- Integration with our Outage Management System (OMS), which is not a feature of our current metering system.
- Faster outage response due to the integration and automatic reporting from the meter to OMS software. With Itron/Tantalus, if a meter stops working, it will report the stoppage to us immediately.
- Faster isolation of the cause of outages.
- Timelier member information—available every 15 minutes through SmartHub rather than the current 24 hours.
- Even more accurate and reliable information in the field.
- More opportunity for load management.
- Meter demand information. This measures the peak amount of electricity required at any time during the month.

Work on our substations will begin in early spring of 2022 with installation of meters beginning in July of 2022. We will be notifying you when your meter will be exchanged. You may not notice anything other than a brief outage.

In the coming months, look for more information in the newsletter and in my column regarding the new system and how it will help us to serve you better. If you have questions, give us a call at 888-267-2726.



Our new Itron meter.  
Source: Itron

## Mutual aid call answered by four of our neighbors

On Tuesday, Aug. 24, storms and high winds rolled through Butler County REC's service territory, causing numerous outages due to several downed three-phase structures and meter poles.

When we requested mutual aid from the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, four of our neighbors came to help us restore power: Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative with one large bucket truck and two linemen; Grundy County REC with one digger, trailer, and two linemen; Midland Power Cooperative with one digger, trailer, and two linemen; and MiEnergy Cooperative with one large bucket truck and two linemen.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP—WE APPRECIATE YOU!**



# Shoo away vampires this Halloween



Little ghosts, goblins, and princesses are a welcome sight on Halloween night. But beware of the vampire lurking inside your home.

You could be paying for vampire energy—electricity that leaks from your appliances, computers, and entertainment systems—if you leave them plugged in even when they're turned off.

*Any cord that is plugged into an electrical outlet draws electricity.* So if you leave your mobile phone charger plugged in after you've removed the phone or you leave your computer and scanner plugged in after you shut down for the evening, you could be wasting—and paying for—unused energy.

Most people leave electronics plugged in all the time because it's convenient to be able to turn them on without having to plug them in again and again, day after day. The worst offenders are "remote-ready" appliances, like computers, cable boxes, stereos, TVs, microwave ovens, garage door openers, and video game consoles.

As long as they're plugged in, they remain in a "ready" state so they don't have to wake up or warm up when you turn them on.

*That can cost you between \$165 and \$440 per year in wasted electricity,* depending on how many devices you have.

*A tip: Invest in a high-quality power strip*—one that will sacrifice itself during a power surge rather than letting the surge ruin the appliance. Plug multiple items into the power strip and unplug the strip before bedtime. That's easier than unplugging and replugging lots of appliances.

*A caution: Don't overload your home's electrical circuits* by plugging too many appliances into a single power strip. Especially if you live in an older home, consult an electrician about how much of an electrical load your single outlets can handle.



## SmartHub: Your online bill pay option and more

SmartHub offers:

- Payment scheduling that notifies our billing department that you have scheduled your payment
- Automatic bill payment management—sign up or make changes
- New bill notification
- Daily or monthly usage and billing history information
- Contact Us option

Access SmartHub through the app for iOS or Android or through our website.

Sign up today and check out all that SmartHub has to offer! As always, call us if you have questions.

## RECare: Members helping members

Your rural electric cooperative has always extended a helping hand to those needing it. In response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your REC has established RECare, a program of members helping members.

RECare will provide funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and to assist in weatherization of homes of low-income consumers.

You may make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge that will be automatically added onto your monthly electric bill. Even a dollar a month pledge will help others. **You have the power to make a difference.**

### RECare Consumer Authorization Form

- I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month. I understand this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.
- I will make a one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to RECare. My check is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperatives

Return to your local Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative



# Protecting water pipes? Use heat tape with care

Below-zero temperatures can cause pipes to freeze and burst, resulting in a huge mess and expensive repairs. One way to help prevent pipes from bursting is to use heat tape, a product that uses electricity to generate heat.

Although not adhesive, heat "tape" acts as a heating pad for exposed pipes. There are two installation methods. The first, and less common, method is when the tape is hardwired to a home's electrical system and has its own breaker(s). In this case, the tape should be installed by a licensed contractor.

The second installation method uses heat tape that plugs directly into a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet. This type of tape typically allows you to control the temperature.

If you are considering installing heat tape, extra care should be taken.

- Due to its potential to over-heat and cause a fire, **do not use heat tape on pipes behind**

walls or ceilings. It should only be used for exposed pipes, such as those found in your crawl space or outside your home.

- **Select the right kind of tape for your pipes.** If you use tape designed for PVC on metal pipes, it will not be as effective; if you use heat tape designed for metal on PVC pipes, it can melt them.
- **Always purchase heat tape that is backed by a reputable testing lab,** such as UL (Underwriter Laboratories), and do not use damaged or worn tape, cords, or plugs.
- **Unplug the heat tape in the spring.** Heat tape is not a must for everyone, but if you have had an issue with exposed pipes freezing in the past, it



might be worth considering.

Heat tape involves plugging in something in an area that could become wet, so never step into a flooded or damp area that could have an electrical current running through it. In other words, always use caution with heat tape since it runs on electricity. While installing the specialized covering may help prevent freezing pipes, always follow the instructions provided for installation and use.

## Help us stop copper theft

This summer, Northwest Power Cooperative, LeMars, and its member distribution cooperative, Western Iowa Power Cooperative, Denison, were victims of copper theft. Vandals cut through locked gates and mesh fencing where they stripped copper grounding wire.



Copper thefts can cause power surges, outages, fires, explosions, and injuries. Common post-theft repairs cost tens of thousands of dollars.

If you see someone suspicious at a substation or around any electrical equipment, please call 9-1-1 or Crime Stoppers at 800-452-1111. Your information and identity will remain anonymous, and you could earn a reward.

## CO-OPS ARE GUIDED BY 7 PRINCIPLES

- 1 Voluntary & Open Membership
- 2 Democratic Member Control
- 3 Members' Economic Participation
- 4 Autonomy & Independence
- 5 Education, Training, & Information
- 6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- 7 Concern for Community

**Community born. Community led. Focused on YOU.**

October is National Co-op Month!



## Give safety a shot when preparing for hunting

Hunters have their sights on wild game when preparing for hunting season. At Butler County REC, we urge hunters to take precautions and be aware of potential electrical hazards.

- **Always carry emergency supplies** in the event of an accident. A cell phone, whistle, and flashlight are necessary items to carry with you.
- **Note the location of power lines and other electrical equipment** before you begin a hunt. Be especially careful and observant in wooded areas where power lines are easy to overlook.
- **Obey all signs** that advise electrical safety, especially when selecting the location for a tree stand. Tree stands are the leading cause for hunting injuries.
- **Never use power poles to support a tree stand.** Look for an ideal tree for your stand, one that is sturdy and alive. While going up to the stand, keep at least three points of contact while you climb.
- **Never shoot nearby power lines or other electrical equipment.** A single shot can cause vast damage to the electrical system. Damage to electrical equipment can result in power interruptions and physical risks to those nearby.
- When setting up and taking down the stand, make sure you **do not make contact with any overhead electrical equipment.**
- Make sure that you **do not run a portable electrical generator in a confined area.** Do not use it inside a cabin or RV. Make sure that it is used outside where there is plenty of ventilation.



## Summer ACH promo winners announced

Jeff Busch, Shell Rock; Trevor Deutsch, Parkersburg; and Merlyn Duffy, Fairbank, have taken a vacation from mailing their Butler County REC payments, and were our summer ACH promotion winners!

They each received \$100 bill credits for the month they signed up for automatic bill pay.

Congratulations Jeff, Trevor, and Merlyn!



Through December, when you sign up for automatic bill pay with us, your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 bill credit for the month in which you enroll!

As a new sign-up, if you mail in a form (for checking or savings), you will receive a one-time \$5 bill credit. Forms can be found on our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop), or call the office and we will send you the form. Sign up through SmartHub on our website (for checking, savings, or credit card), and you will receive a one-time \$10 bill credit.

This promotion runs through December 31, 2021.

This Christmas, give yourself a gift—auto pay!



At your electric co-op, we're proud to be a part of it, bringing people together by providing energy for all the things you love.

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