

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

September 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO  
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**A**s I'm sure you remember, in February Butler County REC encountered historically low temperatures and record-high electricity use that resulted in load curtailments, better known as rolling blackouts.

The events during the week of February 14 were unprecedented. The extreme and prolonged arctic weather significantly impacted Southwest Power Pool's (SPP) 14-state footprint, stretching from Canada to northern Texas. In the following weeks SPP worked to find the root causes of the event and find ways to mitigate future energy emergency alerts.

In March, SPP's board of directors directed a comprehensive review of the event to identify how SPP can better prepare for future extreme reliability threats. Five teams and several hundred stakeholders—including representatives from our power supplier Corn Belt Power—conducted an in-depth analysis.

## February SPP outages update

SPP announced the analysis produced key observations including:

- Lack of available generation was the primary cause of the event's reliability impacts. Lack of fuel was the biggest cause of generation unavailability.
- Extremely high natural gas prices were the primary driver of record-high energy offers, exceeding SPP's market offer caps for the first time.
- Rapid spike in SPP's market prices raised concerns about market participants' liquidity and exponentially increased short-term credit exposure.
- Relationships and interconnections with neighboring systems facilitated critical helpful assistance.

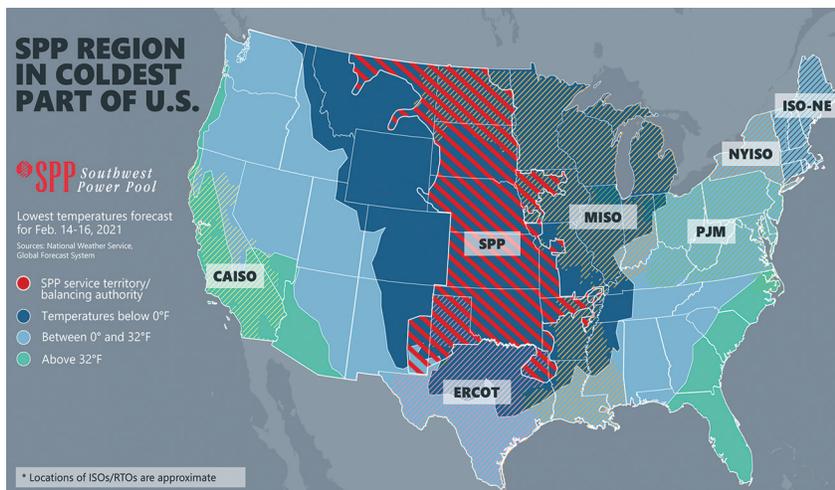
satisfaction with SPP's emergency communications, information sharing and credibility, while recognizing the need for improvements.

The analysis is complete and now work begins. Following these findings, the SPP board directed work to immediately begin on recommendations that address root causes, and requested additional analysis to explain the failure of natural gas supply. Staff were instructed to prioritize work on the remaining recommendations, provide a project plan and quarterly progress updates, and issue letters to generator operators in the SPP region requiring them to inform SPP about their plans to assure generation availability for the upcoming winter.

As SPP completes its comprehensive review, we will keep you abreast of findings and solutions. For our part, Butler County REC continues to work with Corn Belt Power on ways to improve processes should an energy emergency situation ever take place again. We're working to refine our communication and emergency operation plans to allow for more advanced notice of load curtailments. We're also

working with policymakers on all levels to ensure electric grid reliability.

We can't promise an energy emergency situation won't happen again, but we can assure you that we're working with our partners on solutions to mitigate the impact. We strive daily to deliver reliable and affordable electricity, and our dedication to that won't change.



- Full use of generation in certain locations was limited by congestion on SPP's system.
- Early preparation, timely decisions and effective communication helped minimize reliability impacts while effective execution of load-shed procedures mitigated the risk of uncontrolled blackouts.
- Stakeholders indicated general

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

# Why do we advertise?

Your electric cooperative's unique relationship with its members goes beyond the mere flip of a light switch and can be traced back to decades of serving consumers with unmatched integrity and accountability.

As a Touchstone Energy cooperative, we are part of a national alliance of more than 700 local, member-owned electric co-ops that pool together to advertise and communicate at a fraction of the cost that it would be if each co-op did them independently.

We are your local electric cooperative that operates to efficiently deliver reliable and safe energy to everyone we serve. Whether through radio, newsprint, television, or newsletters, it is our responsibility to inform the public and provide answers about the services we offer.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY** – How is power restored? How can I protect my family during a severe storm? What should I teach my kids about electrical safety? Why should I “look up and live” around power lines?
- **EDUCATION** – What is clean energy? Is solar energy right for me? What scholarships and programs are available for my family? Why should I attend my co-op's annual meeting? How do I choose a heating and cooling system? What is budget billing and how can it help me?
- **ENERGY EFFICIENCY** – How can I reduce my energy use and save money? What rebates and incentives are available? What is load management? Can my electric co-op give me more control over how I use energy?
- **FEDERAL AND STATE MANDATES** – How do I file a complaint? What are the requirements for a grain bin? If I cannot pay my bill, is help available? Is my co-op helping low-income families?

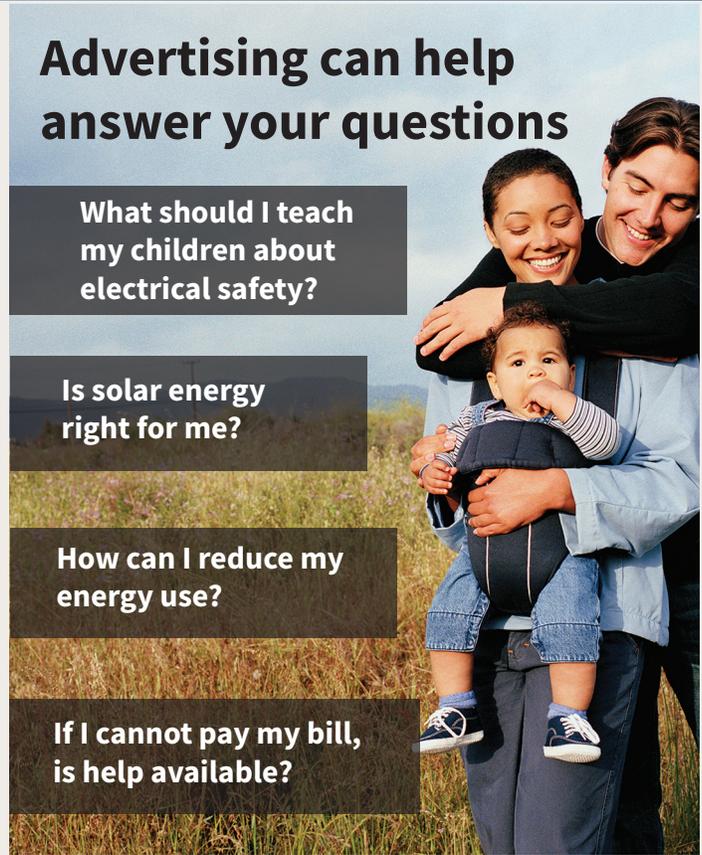
## Advertising can help answer your questions

What should I teach my children about electrical safety?

Is solar energy right for me?

How can I reduce my energy use?

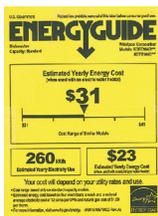
If I cannot pay my bill, is help available?



## Rebates for appliances

Contact us for information on our rebates for new, ENERGY STAR rated appliances installed at members' locations:

- Clothes dryer - \$50
- Clothes washer - \$50
- Dishwasher - \$25
- Freezer - \$25
- Refrigerator - \$25



Check the Energy Guide for the Energy Star label on the bottom right.

## Inspect your outdoor home maintenance electrical equipment

It's leaf-blowing season. Is your blower in good shape?

Don't use it until you find out. Same goes for your lawn mower, shrub trimmers, and winter equipment like the snowblower.

As you dust off equipment that's been in storage all summer, check for:

- *Worn parts and power cords.* If you find them, don't try to eke one final season out of the tool. Have the parts repaired or replaced.
- *Caked-on dirt or sap on blades.* A blast of water from your garden hose should loosen and remove it. A stiff-bristled brush will help, too.
- *Rust.* That might take more elbow grease and some steel wool to remove.
- *Splintered wood on handles and shafts.* A light sanding can remove splinters. Apply boiled linseed oil to prevent the handles from drying out.

Once you finish your fall chores, clean the tools so they'll be in good shape next year. And store them in a dry, clean place. The electrical parts of tools that get wet while in storage can corrode.



# Tips for a Safe Harvest By Abby Berry

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous—even deadly—when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, we see collisions where tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- **Maintain a 10-foot clearance** around all utility equipment in all directions.
- **Use a spotter** and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, **contact 9-1-1 immediately and remain inside the vehicle** until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it), and hop away to safety.
- **Consider equipment and cargo extensions** of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

September 19-25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week but practicing safety on the farm year-round yields positive results. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, we hope you'll remember these safety tips.



# Let's Beat the Peak Together By Abby Berry

You know how to make smart energy choices that help you save money.



But did you know that when you use electricity can be just as important as how much you use?

Throughout the day, energy use fluctuates based on consumer demand. Typically, most households use larger amounts of electricity in the morning when most people are getting ready for their day, and in the evenings when people return from work, cook dinner, wash clothes and watch television.

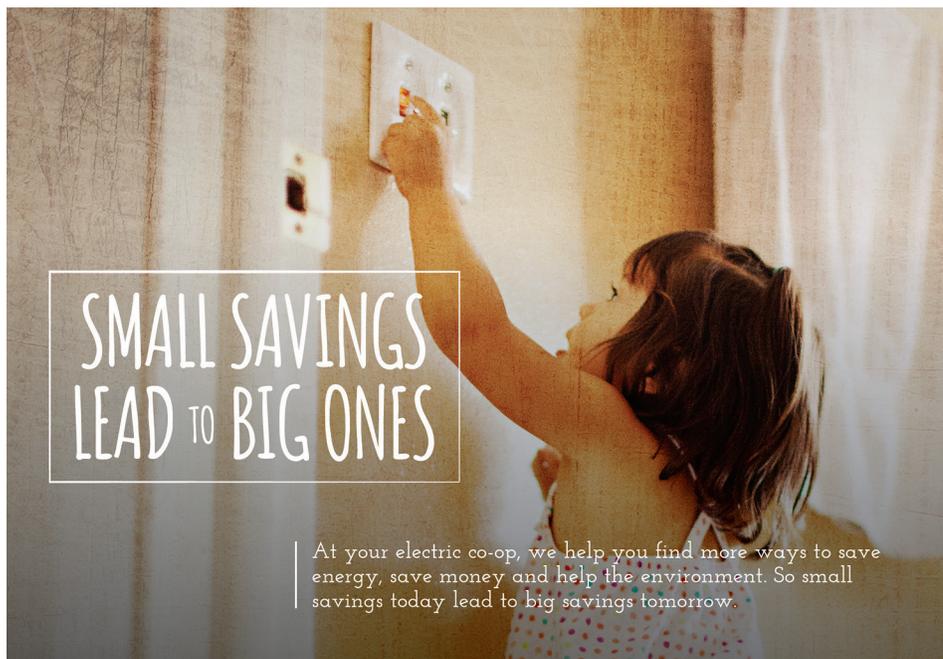
These times are called "peak" hours. Your electric cooperative's cost to provide power is higher during these times because of the additional demand for electricity.

By shifting some of your energy use to hours when demand is lower, also known as off-peak hours, you can save money on your energy bills and help keep rates lower for our community.

Here are a few easy ways you can shift energy use to off-peak hours:

- Adjust your thermostat. During summer months, raise the thermostat a few degrees during peak hours.
- Wash full loads of clothes in cold water during off-peak hours.
- Run the dishwasher right before you go to bed, or air-dry dishes by opening the dishwasher instead of using the heated dry cycle.
- Turn off lights and electronics when not in use. (Try to make this a daily habit, whether during peak or off-peak hours.)

We're here to help. Contact us with questions about your energy bill or for additional energy-saving tips.



At your electric co-op, we help you find more ways to save energy, save money and help the environment. So small savings today lead to big savings tomorrow.

# Park volunteer winner of Shine the Light

Earlier this summer, the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa sponsored a new contest to highlight the cooperative principle of Concern for Community. The Shine the Light contest launched during the month of June and members and employees of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate volunteers in their communities who are working to improve quality of life.

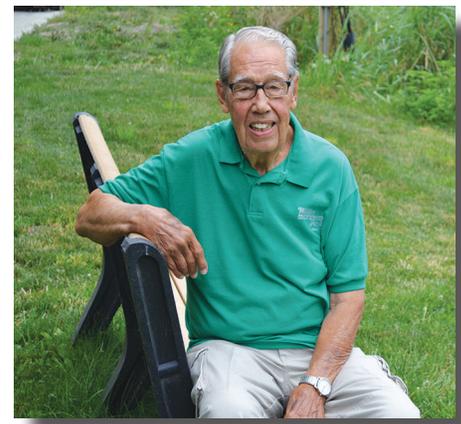
This contest gave our members and employees a new opportunity to show their appreciation for family, friends, and neighbors who are making a positive difference in the community.

Thirty-nine nominations were submitted from across the state, highlighting the work of many incredible Iowans. Three finalists were selected, including a local volunteer.

Deb McWhirter, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member, nominated George North of Allison for his work with Wilder Park. Driven by his desire to serve others, George is a retired dentist with a long record of community involvement, including several years as a scout leader. He was instrumental in developing Wilder Park as it has grown to provide affordable outdoor recreational services in Butler County.

Each finalist was honored with a \$1,500 donation to their local charity. The winners are featured in this issue of Living with Energy in Iowa magazine. All of the 39 nominators and nominees were highlighted in the August issue of the magazine.

The Shine the Light contest will return next year during the month of June at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).



Dr. George North, Allison, one of three 2021 Shine the Light contest winners.



## Your source for saving money and energy

If you have recently purchased an EnergyStar appliance; installed a heat pump, electric furnace, or central air unit; or insulated your home, don't forget that we have rebates for those and other purchases you may have made!

Contact Tyler, our energy services advisor, at 319-231-2980 to discuss our rebates and other money and energy saving options through Butler County REC.

## Give yourself the gift of auto pay

This holiday season you'll have one less thing to remember when you sign up for automatic bill pay with Butler County REC. Sign up between October and December and your name will be entered into a \$100 bill credit drawing for the month you enroll. In addition:

- Mail in a form from our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop) for checking or savings to receive a one-time \$5 bill credit
- Sign up through SmartHub for checking, savings, or credit card to receive a one-time \$10 bill credit

**Promotion ends Dec. 31, 2021.**

## Students: You could win AirPods!

Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to offer a new opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities, and the cooperative business model with a three-part webinar series in October.

The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is open to any high school student in our service area - just register online at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com).

Then, attend the webinars from a computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic:

- Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7:00 p.m. – Cooperative Business Model
- Thursday, Oct. 14, 7:00 p.m. – Rural Iowa Advocacy
- Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7:00 p.m. – Civic Involvement and Leadership

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to **win a pair of Apple AirPods**. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random **drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship!**

Learn more at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com) or contact us at 319-267-2726!



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