

DECEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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scholarship applications**

**Iowa businesses honored  
with Venture Awards**

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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Brent Koops, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!

# HEARTFUL GRATITUDE FOR SERVING MEMBERS

BY ROGER SOLOMONSON



Oh, the people I have met and the places I have been during my two years as the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC)!

As my term ends

this month at the IAEC annual meeting, I want to share some important memories.

The highlight of serving as your statewide president was traveling around Iowa to attend 36 electric cooperative meetings and talking with over 300 directors and 35 co-op managers in their own board rooms. These folks are dedicated men and women who are passionate about serving their communities. They are committed to making sure there is safe, reliable and affordable electricity available when member-consumers flip the switch to power their lives every day.

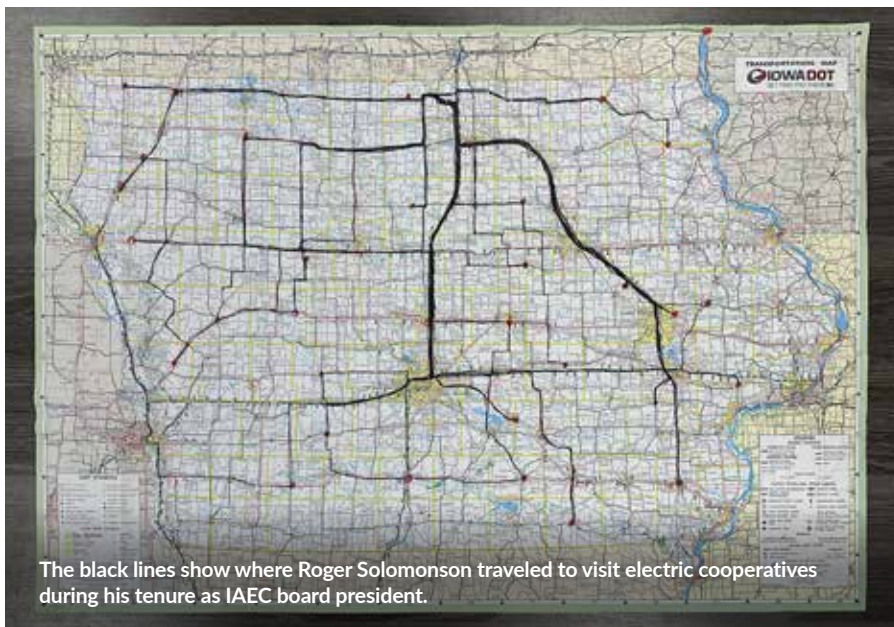
## Raising our collective voice

Another high point was attending statewide legislative fly-ins to Washington, D.C., to speak with our elected officials along with industry lobbyists and experts in various fields. Watching our national government work (or sometimes not work) is always interesting.

I also often traveled to Des Moines during the Iowa legislative sessions to meet with state legislators to advocate for the members of rural electric cooperatives and to make sure electric cooperative voices were heard. As it was told to me, the rural electric movement was started by politics and may someday die in politics if we aren't active and vocal.

## Iowa nice, regional connections

In September, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association held a regional meeting in Des Moines for attendees from six Midwestern states. We spent time learning from experts in several fields and receiving national updates. I also had the pleasure of meeting with other statewide board presidents to discuss mutual goals. I heard several comments about how friendly and clean Des Moines is, to which I shared we're all about "Iowa nice" and encouraged them to come back soon.



The black lines show where Roger Solomonson traveled to visit electric cooperatives during his tenure as IAEC board president.

## Leadership search

One of my final duties as your statewide board president has been starting the search for IAEC's next executive vice president and general manager, as Chuck Soderberg has announced plans to retire in July 2024 after almost nine years serving in that role. This is the most important job for the statewide board, and I know they will do an excellent job selecting the right person to lead Iowa's electric cooperatives into the future.

As I leave the IAEC board in capable hands, I want to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to all I have served with in the past eight years, including fellow statewide board members, IAEC staff, Iowa electric co-op managers and directors.

It has been a pleasure to serve, and I wish you all blessings in the years ahead.

*Roger Solomonson is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a director at Heartland Power Cooperative.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## WIN A HAPPYLIGHT® DUO LAMP!

Benefit from the power of sunlight with the clarity of premium task lighting with the new HappyLight® Duo. This 2-in-1 floor lamp safely brings daylight indoors by emitting a bright white light that mimics sunlight. This customizable lighting solution is perfect for readers, artists, hobbyists, crafters and anyone seeking a powerful lamp with adjustable light.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Dec. 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 from the October issue was Beverly Summers, a Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

# SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR THREE POSITIONS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is a member-owned electric cooperative governed by a board of directors. As a member, one of your most important roles is to participate in the election of directors. You can become involved in your cooperative by serving on the board of directors.

Three positions on PECO's seven-member board of directors will be open for election at the June 5, 2024, annual meeting. The three-year terms of the following directors will expire: Ted Hall, District 1; Scott Hasty, District 4; and Josh Amonson, District 6.

If you are a member in either District 1, District 4 or District 6, and are interested in serving on the board of directors, call the cooperative office at 515-532-2805 or 800-728-0013 or email [solson@prairieenergy.coop](mailto:solson@prairieenergy.coop) by March 1, 2024.



**Office:** 2099 Highway 3 West – P.O. Box 353  
Clarion, IA 50525

**Office Hours:**  
Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Closed Saturdays, Sunday and holidays

**Phone:**  
1-515-532-2805 (local) or  
1-800-728-0013 (24/7)

**Email:** [prairieenergy@prairieenergy.coop](mailto:prairieenergy@prairieenergy.coop)

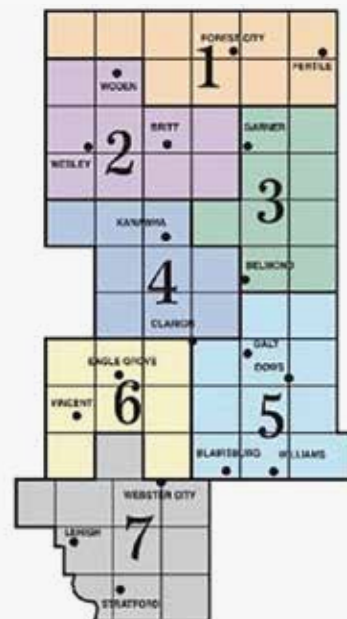
**Facebook:** [facebook.com/PrairieEnergyCooperative](https://facebook.com/PrairieEnergyCooperative)

**Website:** [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## DISTRICT MAP

- **District 1:** German, Grant 150, Linden, Forest, Mt. Valley, Fertile, Crystal, Madison, Ellington and Grant 174 townships
- **District 4:** La Verne, Magor, Amsterdam Boon 250, Norway, Belmond, Liberty 270, Lake and Grant 272 townships
- **District 6:** Norway 289, Eagle Grove, Dayton, Newark, Troy Woolstock, Colfax and Cass townships





# RATE ADJUSTMENT ON THE HORIZON

BY TIM MARIENAU



During the October board meeting, Prairie Energy Cooperative's (PECO) board of directors made the tough decision to implement a rate adjustment effective Feb. 1, 2024, which will show on your March 2024 bill. The decision was not taken lightly and discussed at length. However, with rising inflationary costs on supplies and other goods the cooperative regularly uses, our financial models revealed a rate increase is necessary.

The majority of the rising costs are considered fixed costs to PECO, resulting in board approval of an adjustment to the facility charge only and not to the energy rate. Fixed costs

remain the same regardless of other factors or the level of sales. The facility charge on your monthly bill is what supports the cooperative in covering the cost of fuel as well as poles, wires, meters, insulators, transformers and other equipment. These items must be maintained to continue providing members with safe and reliable electricity, regardless of the amount of power used.

The last time PECO raised its facility charge was 20 years ago. As mentioned above, there have been significant increases in the cost of materials, especially in the last two years. The co-op has seen and endured these prices for as long as possible; however, we are unable to sustain rates as is with the current market conditions.

If you are on a fixed income or would like to seek payment assistance, we are here to help. You may reach out to the co-op at the office or view the resources listed on our website at [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop). On the main menu, click My Account and scroll down to payment assistance. Other resources to potentially help lower your bill include free energy assessments, our free mobile SmartHub app that tracks your energy use, and rebates on new energy-efficient items.

The staff at PECO are always here to help members. We can walk through your bill with you or answer any questions on this facility charge adjustment.

*Tim Marienau is the CEO of Prairie Energy Cooperative.*

## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW ACCEPTED

Every year, a \$1,000 scholarship opportunity is available through our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

The scholarship is considered an investment in the economic future of rural areas. A recipient is selected on the basis of

academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience, and a statement of education and career goals. The scholarship must be used for educational costs, and the student must attend college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is awarded.

Seniors and college students can obtain an application through our website at [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop) or by contacting the co-op office at 515-532-2805. Applications are due by Feb. 16, 2024.



## UPCOMING WINTER CLOSURES

Prairie Energy Cooperative will be closed the following days:

- Friday, Dec. 15: Safety meeting
- Monday, Dec. 25: Christmas Day
- Tuesday, Dec. 26: In observance of Christmas
- Monday, Jan. 1: New Year's Day

Beginning in 1988, the Iowa Area Development Group and its electric cooperative, municipal utility and independent telecommunication company partners have annually honored growing companies with an Iowa Venture Award. The award spotlights entrepreneurs and organizations for their leadership, capital investment and the job opportunities they create.

The following businesses were honored on Dec. 7 at a luncheon held as a part of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting. View all 293 Iowa Venture Award recipients in the Hall of Fame at [www.IADG.com/HallOfFame](http://www.IADG.com/HallOfFame).

# IOWA VENTURE AWARDS: CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING COMPANIES

BY KAY SNYDER



## M3 Fabrication

*Nominated by Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative*

Established in 2014 by brothers Tyler and Sam McClure, M3 Fabrication reflects the entrepreneurial heritage passed down by their father Phil, completing the trio that inspired the name "M3 Fabrication." Situated in the Bloomfield Industrial Park, their recent expansion tells a tale of growth and vision.

May 2022 marked a milestone as M3 acquired a similar fabricator, expanding its footprint with a 50,000-square-foot building on 15 acres, allowing for future development. Now spanning two campuses half a mile apart, M3 boasts upgraded processes, including two new fiber laser cutting machines and an integrated sheet storage system enhancing productivity.

As a family-owned and community-driven enterprise, M3 prides itself on

high-quality craftsmanship. Specializing in stainless steel, aluminum and mild steel fabrication, M3 ensures durable products, from individual pieces to large-scale orders. Customers value personalized service, competitive pricing and on-time delivery – hallmarks of M3's commitment to excellence.

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative provides power to the Bloomfield Industrial Park and supported M3's growth with a passthrough loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) program.



## Ihle Fabrications LLC

*Nominated by Midland Power Cooperative*

Ihle Fabrications was started by brothers Mike and Brian Ihle on a family farm in central Iowa in 2002. They began fabricating liners to solve issues they faced with their combines. With a

growing demand for their products, Ihle Fabrications relocated to an existing 45,000-square-foot facility with additional ground between Slater and Polk City in July 2021.

An 82,000-square-foot expansion project began in August. The expansion will accommodate an increase in demand for the existing line of parts and an expanding line of wearable steel parts for agricultural machinery. Ihle Fabrication's products are sold in 38 states and internationally in Canada, Mexico and Australia.

As of June 2022, Ihle Fabrications became a Certified CNH Reman Supplier for one part. This relationship significantly expanded in mid-2023 to include an additional 140 parts. The company is committed to working alongside farmers and end-users to help solve problems of the future.

In addition to providing power to Ihle Fabrications, Midland Power Cooperative and Central Iowa Power Cooperative assisted with a pass-through loan from the USDA REDL&G program to augment the purchase of equipment to support its expanding operation.



## COLD-LINK LOGISTICS NAMED “OUTSTANDING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR”

*Nominated by Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative*

In 2016, brothers Michael, Mark and Nick Mandich embarked on a new career trajectory – founding Cold-Link Logistics. From a humble bay freezer facility in Doral, Florida, they leaped into the logistics industry. Today, with 14 members in management and more than 200 employees across five states, Cold-Link is a full-service logistics company driven by family values and innovative cold chain solutions.

The company initiated expansion to Sioux City in 2021, reflecting a strategic move to offer a cold storage warehouse in the Midwest. From meticulous planning, customer engagement and infrastructure development, the 189,000-square-foot facility, poised for future expansion, became a reality in March. Key customers include Wells Blue Bunny, Purdue Premium Meats and empirical foods, among others. The Cold-Link Logistics Sioux City team has grown to more than 75 members.

Cold-Link Logistics is committed to employee welfare and customer-centric solutions. The company anchors itself in the heart of the Sioux City community, ready for a future of successful partnerships and continuous growth.

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative provides power to the Southbridge Business Park and has supported park upgrades to accommodate Cold-Link Logistics and the needs of future tenants.



### Post Equipment

*Nominated by North West Rural Electric Cooperative*

Established just outside Rock Valley, Post Equipment has evolved into a thriving farm equipment supply company since moving its operations from a family farm in 2008. The company has consistently expanded its offerings to align with continuous growth.

With a vast inventory of new and used feed mixers, manure spreaders, bale processors and diverse farm equipment, Post Equipment is a hub for replacement parts and specialized livestock equipment. Their comprehensive solutions also include custom augers, skid loader attachments, and equipment repair and rebuilding.

Beyond equipment, the company extends its reach with Post Metal Recycling, offering industrial and on-site scrap metal recycling services. Its Ironwood 53 company specializes in designing and producing agricultural and industrial parts, recently manufacturing the “Herd-Boss Feeders” line of original equipment manufacturer (OEM) cattle feeding equipment for further diversification.

In the last 18 months, a significant 54,000-square-foot expansion underscores their commitment to growth, accompanied by a boost in employment with 15 new hires. Owned by Mike and Ruth Post, the company's success is propelled by an 80-member team, cementing its position as an industry leader in farm equipment and innovation.

North West Rural Electric Cooperative provides power and support for the ever-growing Post Equipment and family of companies.



### HiPer Ceramics

*Nominated by Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative*

Ann Kathryn Hoffmeister launched HiPer Ceramics in 2018. The business is a strategic addition to the Hoffmeister family's array of businesses, including HiPer Ceramics GmbH, HiPer Medical AG and Zellwerk GmbH, owned by her husband Dr. Hans Hoffmeister. Operating since 2019 in a state-of-the-art, 16,800-square-foot facility in Spirit Lake, the company specializes in crafting high-performance ceramic material for advanced industrial components and endoprosthetic hip implants.

With Iowa's conducive business environment and electric power reliability, HiPer Ceramics employs high automation in material manufacturing. Recently integrating a cutting-edge shuttle kiln, the company produces the high-quality, reliable product necessary to support its precision medical and industrial applications. Teaming up with German HiPer-Group partners, their focus is on cost-effective products that deliver exceptional clinical performance and safety.

Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative has been an instrumental partner for HiPer Ceramics, as reliable and affordable power is imperative in the high-performance ceramic manufacturing process.



### Centro Incorporated

*Nominated by Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative*

Centro Incorporated continued its strategic expansion by acquiring a 30,000-square-foot building in the Hampton Air Industrial Park. The facility now houses two rotational molding machines and employs 40 new associates. This expansion aims to bolster production capacity across the Midwest, catering to surging demand and accommodating future business growth. Hampton is the eleventh location in an ever-growing footprint that encompasses locations across the U.S., Northern Ireland and Brazil.

Headquartered in North Liberty, Centro specializes in custom rotational molding for various industries. This recent expansion marks a milestone in the company's growth strategy, serving leading OEMs in the agriculture, construction, and lawn and garden sectors. With a workforce of nearly 1,200 associates and multiple domestic and international facilities, Centro's growth trajectory demonstrates its market leadership and commitment to meet evolving customer needs.

Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative provides power to the Hampton Air Industrial Park and was instrumental in constructing the speculative building, now home to Centro Incorporated.

*Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.*

# Holiday

## DINNER RECIPES



### PECAN PIE

- 3 eggs
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter, melted
- 1 cup white corn syrup
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 pie crust (9-inch), unbaked

Beat eggs, then add brown sugar, salt, butter and corn syrup. Mix, then add pecans. Pour into pie crust. Bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes then at 350 degrees F for 20 more minutes or until set. You can use a pie crust cover for the last 20 minutes to prevent burnt edges. Serves 8-10

Stephanie Messner • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### PUMPKIN SCRUMPTIOUS

- $\frac{1}{2}$  gallon vanilla ice cream
- 2 cups cooked pumpkin
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 graham cracker pie crust

Softened ice cream. Mix in all ingredients and pour into a prepared graham cracker pie crust. Freeze until firm.

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### SALMON PARTY SPREAD

- 1 can (16 ounces) salmon
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated
- 1 teaspoon horseradish
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon liquid smoke
- crackers

Drain salmon, remove skin and bones, then flake. Combine salmon with remaining ingredients, except crackers, and mix thoroughly. Chill several hours. Serve with your favorite crackers.

Barb Haman • Marengo  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

### CHEESY POTATOES

- 6 medium potatoes
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups sour cream
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 tablespoons onion bits
- Velveeta cheese, sliced

Peel potatoes and slice into 1-inch pieces. Boil about 10 minutes until tender, drain. Add sour cream, cottage cheese and onion bits to potatoes. Mix well and pour into greased casserole dish. Cover and bake at 375 degrees F for 35 minutes. Uncover and add Velveeta cheese slices in a single layer over potatoes. Bake 10 more minutes until cheese melts. Serves 10-12

Diane White • Waverly  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative



## ROASTED TURKEY

- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 15-pound turkey, or larger
- 1 onion, cut in quarters
- 2 stalks celery, chopped in large pieces
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 6 pieces bacon
- ½ cup butter, room temperature
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock

The day before roasting, remove giblets and save for roasting with the turkey, if desired. Combine pepper, salt, mustard, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce into a paste. Rub the thawed turkey inside and out with the paste, cover and refrigerate. On the day of roasting, place onion, celery and parsley inside the turkey. Work butter between the crevices of the legs and wings (the butter will be thick). Lay uncooked bacon across the breast and over the legs. Place the turkey in a roaster and add stock. If using giblets, lay them in the bottom of the roaster next to the turkey. Loosely cover the turkey with tin foil. Bake at 300 degrees F for 30 minutes per pound, or according to package instructions. Baste once or twice while baking. Remove foil for the last hour.

**Brenda Zylstra • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## HOLIDAY PUMPKIN PECAN PIE

- 4 eggs, divided
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¾ cup pumpkin
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 deep-dish pie shell (9-inch), unbaked
- ½ cup dark corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 1 cup pecan halves

In a mixing bowl, beat two eggs, sugar, ¼ cup packed brown sugar, 1 teaspoon flour, pie spice and ¼ teaspoon salt until smooth. Mix in pumpkin. Gradually beat in milk. Pour into pastry shell. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 350 degrees F and bake 15 minutes longer. For pecan topping, beat two eggs until foamy. Add corn syrup, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, molasses, 1 tablespoon flour, vanilla and ½ teaspoon salt. Pour over filling. Sprinkle with chopped pecans. Cover with pecan halves. Continue baking at 350 degrees F for 30-35 minutes or until set. Cool. Store in the refrigerator. *Serves 8*

**Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SCALLOPED CARROTS

- 1 2-inch chunk Velveeta cheese
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 3 tablespoons butter
- onion to taste, diced
- ¾ bag croutons
- 2 cans (14.5-ounces each) sliced carrots, drained

Cut up Velveeta and mix with soup, butter and onion. Heat in microwave until cheese is melted. Slightly smash croutons in the bag. Stir croutons and carrots into cheese mixture. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes or until bubbly. *Serves 8-10*

**Karen Heiden • Dows  
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

## MOIST EASY DRESSING

- 1 small onion, chopped
- 4 ribs celery, chopped
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 10 pieces dry bread, torn
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- Lawry's seasoning salt, to taste
- poultry seasoning, to taste
- turkey neck and gizzard, optional

Sauté onion and celery in butter until tender. Mix with eggs, soup and bread pieces. Season to taste with salt, pepper, seasoning salt and poultry seasoning. If desired, boil turkey neck and gizzard. Remove meat from the bone, chop and add to mixture. Use stock or warm water to moisten mixture as needed. Place mixture in 9x13-inch pan and bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. *Serves 12-15*

**Karen Crossland • Fairfield  
Access Energy Cooperative**

### WANTED:

## EGG DISHES

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

**Deadline is Dec. 31**

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

**EMAIL:** [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

**MAIL: Recipes**

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Photo Source:  
Northwest Iowa  
Power Cooperative

# A STORM IS BREWING: ELECTRIC RELIABILITY IS IN JEOPARDY

BY CHUCK SODERBERG AND  
CONGRESSMAN RANDY FEENSTRA

**Editor's Note:** The following column was published in *The Washington Times* as an op-ed in October to educate Congressional leaders about reliability concerns within the electric industry. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has a strong legacy of working with Iowa's elected officials and policymakers to raise awareness about issues affecting the safety, affordability and reliability of power for the cooperative member-consumers we serve.



Supply chain delays. Disorderly retirements of dispatchable electric generation. Complex regulations on power plant emissions. Regional warnings about a lack of generation capacity to cover electric demand. Permitting delays for needed electric transmission infrastructure.

Individually, any one of these issues is enough to seriously impact reliability of electric service.

But all these scenarios are playing out simultaneously across the nation and a perfect storm may be on the horizon.

Electric reliability across America is in serious jeopardy, and frankly, it's unacceptable.

### **The facts about reliability**

Dispatchable sources of electric generation like coal and nuclear are being retired far too early. And their generation capacity is being replaced by intermittent sources of generation like wind and solar. The downside: These intermittent sources only work when the wind blows and the sun shines.

Battery storage is not yet feasible for longer durations on a utility-scale level. For all practical purposes, electricity must be generated as it is being consumed. This becomes a problem when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining and energy consumption is high.

Demand for electricity continues to grow as our society becomes increasingly reliant on electricity.



### **Co-ops prioritize affordable, reliable energy**

Locally owned electric cooperatives work hard to provide reliable and affordable electricity for the member-consumers they serve. Co-ops are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities and they make long-term decisions to ensure power is available when it's needed.

That's why we believe in a power generation strategy that prioritizes energy diversity. The same adage used for sound financial investing also applies to power generation: don't put all your eggs in one basket. Iowa's electric cooperatives use dispatchable sources of power like coal and natural gas because they can control the output and ramp up generation when needed to match sudden increases in electric demand. But our ability to provide reliable electricity is in jeopardy.

In May, the Environmental Protection Agency released its proposed rule to limit greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing fossil-fuel-fired electric generating units. The proposal is part of the current administration's misguided regulatory agenda to create a carbon-free power sector by 2035 and net zero

emissions economy-wide by no later than 2050. We believe this proposal will further strain America's electric grid and undermine decades of work to reliably keep the lights on across the nation.

### **Assessment reinforces concerns**

But that's not the only threat we face. The 2023 North American Electric Reliability Corporation summer reliability assessment is just the latest in a series of alarming reminders about the new electric reliability challenges facing the nation. Nine states experienced power interruptions last December as the demand for electricity exceeded available supply.

It's imperative that policymakers work to prioritize reliability in every energy policy discussion. Federal policies must recognize the compromised reliability reality facing the nation before it's too late.

The families, farms and businesses served by electric cooperatives deserve affordable AND reliable electricity to power their lives.

*Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, and Congressman Randy Feenstra represents Iowa's 4th congressional district.*



# PATRONAGE RETURNED TO MEMBERS

Prairie Energy Cooperative has always been a not-for-profit entity. This means that as a member of the co-op, you share in the excess revenue and the return of that excess revenue, called patronage. As new funds continue to come in, the original funds can be paid back to members in the form of a patronage retirement.

This year, members who purchased electricity from the co-op for a portion of 2008, and all of 2009 and 2010, are receiving patronage for those years, totaling \$594,283.71. This retirement was paid out in the form of a bill credit, which was included on your December bill.

Call the co-op office with any questions regarding this year's patronage payment.

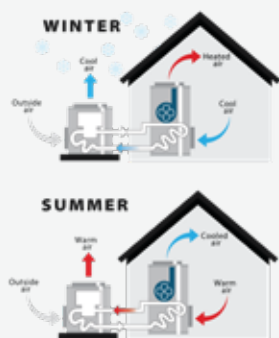
## ENERGY MATTERS

# HOW TO SELECT A HEAT PUMP FOR YOUR HOME

Whether it's a ground source or an air source system, a heat pump is an excellent way to heat and cool your home. Like many appliances in our homes, the technology in these systems is constantly improving. If your current heating/cooling system is struggling, or if you are just looking for a more efficient way to heat and cool your home, take a look at this great information to make your options less confusing. If you have additional questions or need help finding a mechanical contractor in your area, our member service department would be glad to talk to you about your needs.

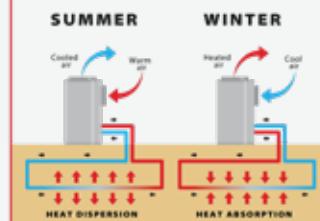
### air-source HEAT PUMP

- **Pulls heat** indoors from the outdoor air in the winter and from indoor air in the summer
- When properly installed, requires **little maintenance** and delivers 1.5-3.5 times the energy it uses
- **Easy to convert** from propane or oil system
- More **efficient** than gas
- **Dehumidify better** than standard central air conditioners, resulting in **less energy usage** and more cooling in summer months
- Possibly eligible for energy-efficiency rebates and incentive heat rate



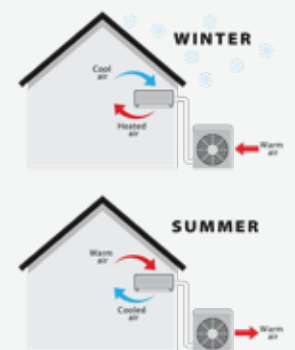
### ground-source HEAT PUMP

- **One system** for heating, cooling, and water heating
- Uses the abundant, **natural energy** the earth stores beneath us
- **Highest efficiency**, documenting heating efficiencies of up to **500%**, meaning homeowners get \$5 of heating for every dollar they spend
- Excess heat energy can be routed to the water heater, **saving** homeowners **two-thirds** of their water heating costs year-round
- Higher installation costs than standard forced-air furnace and central air conditioner, but **shorter payback periods** because of increased operating efficiency
- Possibly eligible for energy-efficiency rebates, incentive heat rate, tax credits and a Homeward, Inc. low-interest loan



### mini-split/ductless HEAT PUMP

- Like an air-source heat pump, but **smaller**
- **Ductless**, so works on houses that don't have duct work
- **Cost effective** and **easy to install**
- Only runs when and as hard as it needs to, thus is **extremely energy efficient**
- Scalable so one outdoor compressor can **run multiple units** inside
- Ideal for those who want **air conditioning** in homes that don't currently have it
- Possibly eligible for energy-efficiency rebates



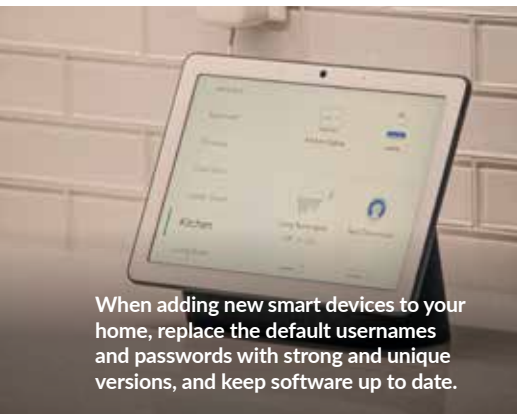


# TIPS FOR INTEGRATING SMART HOME TECH

BY MICHAEL LEITMAN

Once pursued by only the most tech-savvy consumers, smart home technologies are becoming an increasingly common way to enhance home convenience, comfort and safety.

Smart technologies have proliferated as the 'internet of things' has grown to include home security and safety systems, lighting, entertainment, HVAC systems, and even appliances.



When adding new smart devices to your home, replace the default usernames and passwords with strong and unique versions, and keep software up to date.

Consumers are interested in a variety of technology combinations and uses for their homes. Regardless of the applications, here are three key tips to keep in mind when integrating smart technologies into your home.

## TIP 1

**Ensure various devices can talk to each other.** This might seem like a no-brainer, but ensuring compatibility is vital to ensuring that convenience is not overcome by annoyance. One way of ensuring compatibility is choosing a single brand for as many applications as possible.

If you're interested in using several smart technologies, you might also look into investing in a central hub to coordinate and control various devices. Many of the hubs available today offer additional features of their own, doubling as speakers, routers or displays. One major consideration for all these technologies is a fast and reliable internet and Wi-Fi connection.

## TIP 2

**Enable all security measures to prevent hacking.** Adding smart devices to your home can increase the surface area that bad actors can use to hack equipment. While common-sense cybersecurity measures are always important, this additional technology in your home increases the importance of being cybersafe.

Choosing smart devices with built-in security features and ensuring these features are all turned on is an important step to reduce these risks. It is also essential to replace default usernames and passwords with strong and unique versions, enable dual and/or biometric authentication, and keep your device software up to date through patches. Finally, if you are controlling your home devices from your phone, tablet or laptop, refrain from doing so while using unsecured public Wi-Fi networks.



Smart technologies have proliferated as the 'internet of things' has grown to include home security and safety systems, lighting, entertainment, HVAC systems and even appliances.  
Photo Source: James Yarema, Unsplash

## TIP 3

**Look for technologies to help control and manage home energy use.** Smart home technologies can be a great way to control and manage home energy use. If you are looking into home automation, devices like smart thermostats, grid-controllable water heaters and schedulable or motion-controlled indoor and outdoor lighting can be smart ways to save money on your electric bill.

When used wisely and efficiently, smart home technologies can add great convenience to everyday life. Keep these tips in mind as you integrate smart devices into your home.

*Michael Leitman writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*



Many smart home hubs available today offer additional features of their own, doubling as speakers, routers or displays.  
Photo Source: Anete Lusina, Pexels

# 'TIS THE SEASON FOR SAFETY

## 12 DAYS OF HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

This isn't just the time of year that we eat more than usual, it's also the time when we have the most household accidents and fires. To help make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary, remember these tips.

### 1 CANDLES OUT

Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep. And, keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources – especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles.

### 2 NO CHRISTMAS TREE

If you have a natural Christmas tree, water it to keep it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all. Get rid of the tree after Christmas. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard.

### 3 TREE TOPPERS

The best decorations are safe decorations, so when you are decorating, make sure not to run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows, or across walkways and sidewalks.

### 4 LIGHTS OFF

Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping. Most deadly fires happen while people are asleep.

### 5 TWINKLE TWINKLE

Be mindful of how you are using electrical outlets. If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, consider having a qualified electrician add more outlets to your home.

### 6 KEEP IT DRY

Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, you just can't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights!

### 7 SAY GOODNIGHT TO ELECTRONICS

Remember that phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to the muffled crooning of Bing Crosby and Michael Bublé, but overheated electronics under pillows and blankets are dangerous.

### 8 AN ALARMING GIFT

Need a perfect gift idea? How about a smoke alarm? Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas, and on every level, including the basement.

### 9 CAUTIOUS HEATING

If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible.

### 10 MERRY & BRIGHT

Inspect your decorations and discard any that are damaged or worn out. Talk to your aunt about that life-sized Elvis-dressed-as-Santa statue. It's falling apart, it's creepy, and it's got to go.

### 11 NOT SO MERRY BATTERIES

Keep batteries stored safely in their packaging and out of reach of anything that might try to eat them, like small children and pets. Eating a battery can be deadly.

### 12 OUT ON AN ARC

The best gift for your family is to upgrade to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breakers or outlets. It is estimated that half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented by AFCIs.



# GIVING GIFTS THAT DON'T COST A CENT

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

'Tis the season for giving back and spreading cheer and goodwill to others. You'd never know it, though, if you walked into my local convenience store around here recently.

I heard the clerk chatting with a customer about fall cleanup day, which an area high school was sponsoring that morning. During the two-hour event, students were excused from classes. They and their teachers helped local residents and businesses with yard work and other small projects.

"Yeah, about 75% of the kids who came in here this morning were upset they had to help," the clerk said, shaking his head.

It was sobering to hear this, especially since I had recently worked with six students and their teacher at Central School Preservation, the museum in Lake City. Like many nonprofits, Central School depends on volunteers. The student crew dusted, vacuumed, swept the stairs, polished woodwork, removed trash, hung banners and more. Truly, many hands make light work.

The morning passed quickly, and we got a lot of work done. The kids seemed to be in good spirits, especially since we had time for a break (complete with homemade chocolate chip cookies I baked) and a tour of the museum.

This experience reminded me of my high school days. One afternoon, our FFA instructor told us we were going to plant and water flowers in the big containers near the town square in Lake City. The job was fast and easy, since we had a group of students to help.

While I learned a little about floriculture, this experience planted a seed of understanding that took root years later. I learned that volunteering can be enjoyable, especially when you're working with people who share a common goal. I also learned it's important to give back to the



No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden for someone else. Thank you to the South Central Calhoun High School students who gave the gift of time recently to volunteer at Central School, the museum in Lake City. Dwight Morenz (center) and his fellow board members at Central School Preservation appreciated this gift!

community where you live, and kids can be part of the solution.

I hope this seed was planted with the students who volunteered at Central School. As Winston Churchill observed, we make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.

In this season of giving, I'd like to give you this poem (author unknown) that I clipped years ago and keep on my refrigerator. May it inspire you to share these eight priceless gifts throughout the year.

## 8 GIFTS THAT DON'T COST A CENT

**The Gift of a Favor:** Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

**The Gift of Listening:** But you must really listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

**The Gift of Affection:** Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these

small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

**The Gift of Laughter:** Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

**The Gift of a Written Note:** It can be a simple "thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime and may even change a life.

**The Gift of Solitude:** There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

**The Gift of a Compliment:** A simple and sincere, "You look great in red," "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

**The Gift of a Cheerful Disposition:** The easiest way to feel good is to make others feel good.

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*

Visit our website at [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop)

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