

MARCH 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Power players of the grid

**Prairie Energy Cooperative
shares legislative priorities**

Pasta and pizza night recipes

Apply for the Energy Trail Tour ▶ See Page 4

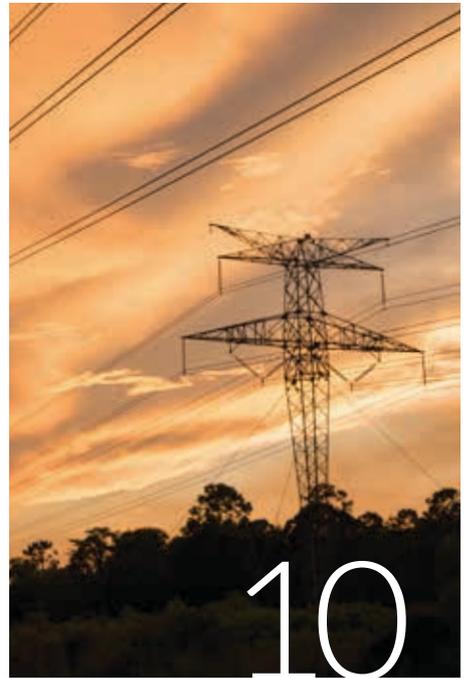
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Luckier than a four-leaf clover

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Stacey Snyder, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CHAMPION UTILITY WORKER SAFETY

BY JAY CEPERLEY



As we enter the month of March, Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to recognize and celebrate the essential work of utility workers across our state.

Iowa Utility Worker Appreciation Day, observed each year on March 8, offers an important opportunity to honor the dedication, professionalism and service of the men and women who keep our communities connected, safe and reliably powered. These workers respond at all hours, often in hazardous conditions, to restore electricity and maintain the systems that power modern life. Their commitment ensures that Iowa families, farms and businesses receive dependable service every day.

A longstanding commitment to safety

Iowa's electric cooperatives have always maintained a strong and unwavering commitment to safety. This priority is deeply rooted in our mission of powering lives and informs how we serve our members, support our employees and protect the communities we operate in. We have consistently championed initiatives that improve the safety of Iowans, including hands-free driving legislation designed to reduce distracted driving, as well as the "Move Over, Slow Down" law, which requires motorists to move over and slow down when passing work vehicles on the roadside. These efforts reflect a broader goal: ensuring that not only utility workers, but all community members, can work and travel safely throughout our state.

With the 2026 Iowa Legislative Session fully underway, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged at the Capitol to ensure that our

members' voices are heard. Safety remains one of our highest priorities, shaping not only our daily operations but also our advocacy efforts.

Strengthening protections for utility workers

This year, our ongoing commitment to safety is reflected in new legislation proposed by Iowa's electric cooperatives that would increase penalties for individuals who threaten, harass or assault utility workers while they are performing their duties. Lineworkers are often required to enter unpredictable, high-risk environments to restore power, post for disconnection and trim vegetation. When they encounter hostile or aggressive behavior, the dangers they face increase significantly. Because Iowa law requires these workers to respond in such situations, they deserve the

strongest possible legal protections already given to other public servants like first responders, corrections officers and healthcare workers.

Regardless of the outcome of this year's legislation, Iowa's electric cooperatives will continue advocating for robust protections for utility workers. Our commitment to safety remains steadfast. These efforts reflect our longstanding mission: to champion safety, support our workforce and serve the best interests of the communities we proudly power.

Jay Ceperley is the advocacy coordinator for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



March 8 is
Iowa Utility Worker
Appreciation Day

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN EMILE HENRY PIZZA STONE AND COOKBOOK!



Finished with Emile Henry's proprietary glaze, this 16-inch pizza stone produces perfectly crispy crusts. The piece withstands exceptionally high heat, so it can be used in the oven or on the grill. Plus, chef and author Alexandra Stafford showcases pizza in her latest cookbook. Each recipe focuses on seasonal ingredients and is paired with a complementary salad.

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 Ninja Crispi Air Fryer from the January issue was **Ray Netherton**, a **North West REC** member-consumer.

ENTER ONLINE BY MARCH 31!

SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR TWO 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.

Two positions on PECO's seven-member board of directors will be open for election this June. The two-year terms of the following directors will expire: Ryan Eekhoff, District 2, and Marion Denger, District 5. Both have indicated their willingness to serve another term.

If you are a member in either district and are interested in serving on the board of directors, contact the nominating committee member in your district by April 1.

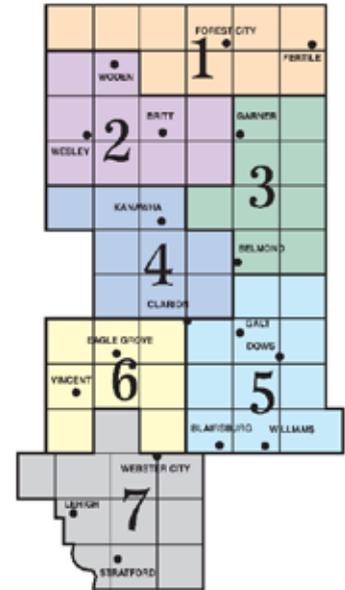
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Energy Trail Tour 2026

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) and Corn Belt Power Cooperative invite you to join us for one of two Energy Trail Tours being offered this summer. This three-day adventure will allow you to experience, first-hand, how your power providers convert energy from water, wind and coal into electricity. View coal being mined and see how those mines are then returned to productive farm and native grass lands. Enjoy interactive walking tours through a hydroelectric and coal-fired energy generation facility and other stops along the way. Meet other cooperative member-owners while traveling together across the Dakotas onboard a motorcoach bound for the North Dakota's Energy Loop. \$100 per couple covers your lodging, meals and entry fees. The remainder of your tour costs are covered by PECO. Two lucky couples from PECO will be selected at random from those who sign up.






YES, please enter our names in the drawing for the trip. We understand that if our names are drawn, we will be billed \$100.

Our first and second choice of dates:

June 24-26	1st	2nd (please circle)
July 15-17	1st	2nd

I/we have have not participated in this tour in the past.

First Person _____

Second Person _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

Clip this coupon and return to cooperative by April 29, 2026.

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES DISCUSS PRIORITIES AS IOWA'S 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS

More than 150 senior staff and directors from Iowa electric cooperatives, including Prairie Energy Cooperative, were in downtown Des Moines on Jan. 13 for a legislative “welcome back” reception at the start of the 91st Iowa General Assembly. It was an important opportunity for co-op advocates to discuss priorities face-to-face with state legislators.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) hosted the reception in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Communications Alliance, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives and FUEL Iowa.

“Hosting this annual reception at the start of the legislative session is a way for Iowa electric cooperatives to form long-term relationships based on trust and open communication,” said Leslie Kaufman, IAEC executive vice president. “With many new legislators and new faces in leadership this session, we value every opportunity to talk about the cooperative business model and the needs of our member-consumers.”

Priority areas for advocacy

Representatives from Iowa’s locally owned electric cooperatives covered several important issues that could impact the affordability and reliability of electricity for the members and communities we serve.

Electric cooperatives are again focusing on protecting Iowa’s defined electric service territories, an important law that helps ensure every corner of the state receives consistent, cost-effective electric service.

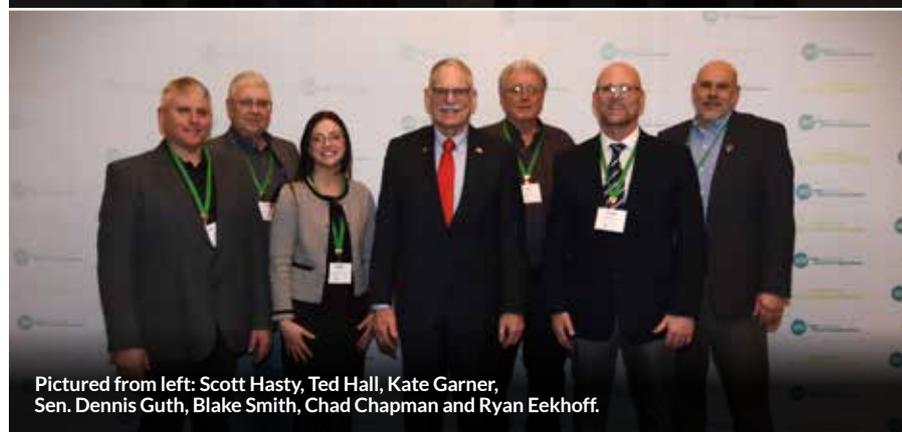
Another legislative challenge that could resurface involves third-party or “community solar” proposals that would attempt to allow non-utility solar developers to provide retail electric service inside an established utility’s service area, in direct conflict with service territory law.



Pictured from left: Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) Directors Scott Hasty and Ted Hall, Member Service Representative Chad Chapman, Sen. Tim Kraayenbrink, PECO Business/Community Development Manager Kate Garner, and Directors Blake Smith and Ryan Eekhoff.



Pictured from left: Chad Chapman, Kate Garner, Ted Hall, Rep. Ann Meyer, Rep. Wendy Larson, Blake Smith, Scott Hasty and Ryan Eekhoff.



Pictured from left: Scott Hasty, Ted Hall, Kate Garner, Sen. Dennis Guth, Blake Smith, Chad Chapman and Ryan Eekhoff.

Iowa’s electric co-ops are also seeking to further protect utility workers, who encounter threats, harassment and assaults while on the job. Strengthening penalties for violence against utility workers reaffirms our commitment to the safety of cooperative employees and our communities.

Iowa’s 91st General Assembly is addressing a multitude of issues,

including energy-related matters that are central to Iowa’s rural economy. Iowa electric cooperatives are important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues as we work to power lives and empower communities.

Learn more about advocacy efforts at www.IAruralpower.org

A NATIONAL VIEW WITH LOCAL ROOTS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN



Mike Partin
President of the
National Rural
Electric Cooperative
Association



Leslie Kaufman
Executive Vice President
and General Manager of
the Iowa Association
of Electric Cooperatives

In 2025, Mike Partin was elected president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). He began working for the members of Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative in central Tennessee in 1998, has served as CEO since 2015 and has represented Tennessee on the NRECA board of directors since 2019. NRECA is the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives across the U.S.

During the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) annual meeting in December, Partin sat

down with Leslie Kaufman, IAEC executive vice president and general manager, to discuss important energy topics. More than 375 Iowa cooperative leaders and directors were in attendance to engage in the discussion. We are pleased to share a snapshot of the discussion with *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* readers.

Leslie Kaufman: Mike, you serve as both president of NRECA and CEO of your local electric cooperative. Why is it so important for cooperative leaders to be involved at the state, regional and national levels?

Mike Partin: Engagement matters because this industry is changing fast. Whether you're a director or a staff member, you don't come to the table just to hear reports. You come to make a difference. If we think we're on an island as one cooperative, we're doing our members a disservice. The best ideas come from learning what other cooperatives are facing and how they're responding. Electric cooperatives serve nearly 60% of the nation's landmass, and

rural areas, including places like Iowa, are growing. To stay ahead, we have to lean into leadership, training and collaboration. That's how we remain drivers of innovation in our communities.

Kaufman: As you travel across the country, what common challenges or trends are you hearing about from electric cooperatives?

Partin: One big issue is data centers. They're moving into rural America, and that creates opportunity but also risk. We need to have reliable energy capacity to serve those loads. A key question is also how to serve that load without shifting costs onto existing members. Those agreements must be structured carefully.

Cybersecurity is another growing concern. A decade ago, we weren't talking about ransomware. Now it's a real threat. On the East Coast, some cooperatives recently went into major storms unable to access their systems and maps because of cyberattacks. That's something no cooperative can afford.

Workforce development is also a top priority. How do we recruit, train and retain good people, especially as experienced workers retire and younger employees come in with different expectations?

Kaufman: From an advocacy standpoint, what are the top priorities for NRECA right now?

Partin: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reform is at the top of the list. The system is broken. Currently, cooperatives can wait five or six years for reimbursement after a major disaster, forcing them to borrow just to stay afloat. That's not sustainable.

We're pushing legislation that would require FEMA to act within 120 days and reimburse interest if delays continue. Of the 435 congressional districts, 433 experienced a disaster declaration in the last decade, so this issue affects everyone, including Iowa. That's why cooperative leaders are actively talking with their elected officials and helping move this forward.

Kaufman: You stepped into the NRECA presidency during a new presidential administration. How does that affect the way NRECA operates in Washington, D.C.?

Partin: One of the biggest challenges is policy whiplash. Our industry, especially generation and transmission cooperatives, makes 60- to 80-year investments, but national energy policy often swings dramatically from

one administration to the next. That uncertainty makes planning harder.

What we're seeing now is more recognition that electricity is foundational. Data centers, manufacturing and national defense all depend on reliable, baseload (24/7) power. Energy security is national security. That understanding gives us a chance to push for policies that support an all-of-the-above approach to generation and faster permitting for needed infrastructure.

Kaufman: You've talked about some powerful moments you've experienced in leadership. Is there one that really stands out?

Partin: One that still gives me goosebumps is seeing lights come on for the first time in a village in Guatemala through the electric cooperative international program. Walking up a ridge at night and seeing that village lit up reminds you of why this work through the NRECA International Program matters.

Another moment was being at the White House and seeing one of my linemen standing behind the President of the U.S. No matter your politics, that's a powerful reminder that the people who keep the lights on matter.



Scan the QR code to learn how Iowa's electric cooperatives support international electrification.

Kaufman: Partnerships are critical in Washington. Who are some of the key allies cooperatives work with?

Partin: Depending on the issue, we partner with municipal utilities, investor-owned utilities, farm organizations like Farm Bureau and homebuilders. Strategic alliances help open doors and amplify our voice. For three years running, NRECA has been named the most effective trade association in Washington, D.C., but that effectiveness comes from collaboration. Relationships matter.

Kaufman: From a CEO perspective, what keeps you up at night?

Partin: Safety, without question. We know how to build lines and restore power, but keeping employees safe is the responsibility that weighs heaviest. Am I doing enough? Am I setting the right tone? Am I leading by example?

That concern doesn't change when I put on my national hat. Whether at the local or national level, leadership means making sure people go home safe at the end of the day.

Kaufman: With all the challenges facing the industry, what gives you hope?

Partin: The people. When I attend director trainings or emerging leader programs, I see how committed electric cooperative folks are. They all "signed up" to make a difference.

This is not a stale industry. There's innovation everywhere, from technology to workforce development to global electrification. I truly believe there's never been a more exciting time to be part of America's electric cooperatives.

Electric cooperatives were founded to power possibility, and that mission continues today, from Iowa's rural communities to villages halfway around the world. As Partin reminded attendees, the cooperative model works because it puts people first and because leaders are willing to step up, engage and shape the future together.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.





RASPBERRY-CHIPOTLE BARBECUE CHICKEN PIZZA

- 1 thin ready-made pizza crust
- ¼ cup red raspberry preserves or jelly
- ¼ cup hickory smoke flavored barbecue sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ground chipotle chili powder
- 6 ounces chicken, cooked and cubed
- 2-3 tablespoons onion, chopped
- 1½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Place pizza crust on a pizza pan. Mix preserves, barbecue sauce and chili powder. Spread mixture evenly over dough. Top with chicken, onion and cheese. Bake at 425 degrees F for 12-20 minutes, until cheese is melted and pizza crust edges are golden brown. Raspberry preserves can be substituted with Concord grape jelly. *Serves 4, two pieces per person*

Mary Grossman • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

SPINACH AND CHICKEN PESTO PIZZA

- 1 ready-to-serve, 12-14-inch pizza crust
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup pesto
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 cups fresh baby spinach leaves, washed
- 1 cup chicken, cooked and diced
- ¼ cup roasted red bell peppers, chopped and drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- hot pepper flakes, to taste

Place pizza crust on an ungreased pizza pan and brush the edges with olive oil. Spoon pesto onto the middle and spread evenly out to the crust. Top with mozzarella, spinach, chicken, red bell peppers, garlic salt and hot pepper flakes. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10-12 minutes, or until crust is golden brown. *Yield: 6 servings*

MacKenzie Rutter • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TOMATO AND FETA BAKED PASTA

- 12 ounces rigatoni pasta, cooked and drained
- 1½ cups ham, chopped
- 4 large plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup feta cheese
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 cup half and half
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Place cooked pasta in a buttered 9x13-inch dish. Mix ham, tomatoes, cheese and thyme. Spread over pasta, then pour half and half over top. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes. Stir and continue baking 40 minutes longer. *Serves 6*

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

GOAT CHEESE MUSHROOM PASTA

- 1 8-ounce box of your favorite pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ red onion, diced
- 1 package baby bella mushrooms, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 4 ounces plain goat cheese, cubed
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme

Boil noodles until al dente. While boiling, place a pan on medium heat, add olive oil and onion. Cook until translucent, then add mushrooms. As the mushrooms soften, add garlic and sauté for another 30 seconds. Place the goat cheese in the pan and add heavy cream. Add rosemary and thyme. Once goat cheese is combined with the cream to create a smooth sauce, toss drained noodles into the pan and coat. *Serves 3-4*

Monika Olmstead • Huxley
Consumers Energy



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

UPSIDE DOWN PIZZA

- 1½ pounds ground beef, pork or turkey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- optional vegetables: mushrooms, onion or green pepper (chopped)
- pepperoni
- 1 16-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- Parmesan cheese

Brown meat with salt, pepper and optional vegetables. When the meat is cooked, drain fat. Mix the meat with pepperoni and spaghetti sauce. Add mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix together flour, eggs, milk and oil into a pizza dough. Sprinkle the mozzarella cheese on meat mixture in baking dish then top with dough. Finally add parmesan cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Yield: 12 servings*

Judy Jackson • Hedrick
Access Energy Cooperative

SALMON PASTA

- 1 12- or 16-ounce salmon filet
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ package Gustare Vita tagliatelle (8 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup white wine
- ⅓ cup sundried tomato paste
- 1 12.5-ounce jar alfredo sauce
- fresh basil, optional for garnish

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place salmon on prepared baking sheet. Pat salmon dry with paper towel. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Bake at 425 degrees F for 4-6 minutes per half inch thickness, until 145 degrees F and salmon flakes easily with fork. Meanwhile, cook tagliatelle according to package directions in a large pot of boiling salted water. Drain, reserving ½ cup pasta water. Return pasta to the pot and keep warm. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add butter and sauté onion until translucent. Add garlic and cook about 30 seconds, until fragrant. Pour in wine and simmer until reduced by half. Stir in sundried tomato paste and alfredo sauce. Cook until heated through. Add sauce to cooked pasta and toss until coated. If sauce is too thick, add reserved pasta water until desired consistency. Flake salmon into large pieces and gently stir into pasta. Garnish with fresh basil if desired. *Serves 4*

Pam Dick • Dexter
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CHICKEN ORZO

- 2 chicken breasts
- salt
- black pepper
- paprika
- onion powder
- red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1½ cups orzo pasta
- 1 16-ounce can chicken broth
- spinach leaves, to taste
- splash heavy cream
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan

Cut chicken into large serving size pieces and add seasonings to taste. Sear chicken on both sides in medium skillet, then lower heat and add butter. Cover and continue until cooked through. Remove chicken and brown garlic and onion in the drippings. Add orzo, allow to toast while stirring. Add chicken broth, spinach and heavy cream. Stir slowly on medium heat while distributing all evenly. Add chicken and cook on low until orzo is done and all flavors have permeated throughout. Serve topped with parmesan cheese. *Serves 4*

Marilyn Alferts • Neola
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED :

ICE CREAM RECIPES

THE REWARD :

\$25 BILL CREDIT FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is March 31

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream! We're looking for your favorite **ice cream recipes** - anything from homemade blends to desserts with ice cream or tasty toppings. Selected submission will appear in our July issue to celebrate National Ice Cream Month. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
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POWER PLAYERS OF THE GRID

BY ANTHONY BUCKLEY

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions.
Photo Source: NRECA

Every time you flip a switch, you're connecting to one of the most complex systems ever built, also known as the North American electric grid. Often called the largest interconnected machine in the world, this network spans the U.S., Canada and parts of Mexico. It includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night.

But how does electricity actually get from a power plant to your home? And where do electric cooperatives fit in? Let's break it down.

The U.S. electric grid has three major components: generators, transmission and distribution. Each plays a critical role in delivering electricity where and when it is needed.

Generators: Making the power

In the U.S., most power plants produce electricity by burning fossil fuels or by harnessing renewable resources like solar, wind and water. To ensure

that enough electricity is generated to keep the lights on at an affordable price, two main structures exist.

The first is a "vertically integrated" model, where in some regions, a single utility owns everything from power plants to power lines and delivers electricity directly to consumers.

In other areas, a second model is used. Instead of one company making and delivering power, many companies sell electricity in a competitive market. Utilities buy electricity from these generators and deliver it to consumers like you. In this model, a group called a regional transmission operator (RTO) or independent system operator (ISO) helps keep everything running smoothly. They make sure enough power is available every second of the day. This system is called a wholesale market, and it lets utilities buy extra power when they need it.

Most electric cooperatives don't own large power plants. Instead, they purchase power through long-term contracts, wholesale markets or from

their generation and transmission cooperative (G&T), a member-owned utility that serves multiple co-ops in a designated region. G&T cooperatives are owned by distribution co-ops like yours. There are 64 G&T cooperatives across the U.S., and they often own power plants and transmission lines. G&Ts also plan for the future by investing in new generation sources, building infrastructure and integrating renewables, all while staying true to the cooperative model: member-focused, not profit-driven.

Once electricity is generated, it doesn't stay at the power plant. It begins a long journey to reach homes, farms and businesses. Power must travel across regions to where it's needed most, and that's where the transmission system comes in. These high-voltage lines act like energy superhighways, moving electricity efficiently over hundreds of miles before it's stepped down for local distribution and, ultimately, for the devices you use every day.

Transmission: The energy superhighway

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. Most distribution co-ops don't own these transmission lines, but they rely on their G&T cooperative to handle this part of the journey. G&Ts make sure power gets from the plant to your local co-op.

However, the electricity carried by transmission lines cannot be used as is because the voltage levels are too high. That's the job of the distribution network, which is the final step that brings power to your lights, appliances and devices.

Distribution: The last mile

The distribution network is the "last mile" segment of the electric grid and delivers generated energy

from the transmission network to consumers. The high-voltage power from transmission lines is converted to lower voltages that home appliances, electric vehicles and personal devices can use. This is where your electric cooperative comes in to keep local lines maintained and power flowing to members 24/7.

Understanding how power moves from generation to your home helps explain why reliability and affordability depend on teamwork and collaboration between your local co-op, its G&T partners and the broader grid. Together, co-ops are preparing for tomorrow's challenges, so you can count on safe, reliable power for years to come.

Anthony Buckley writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

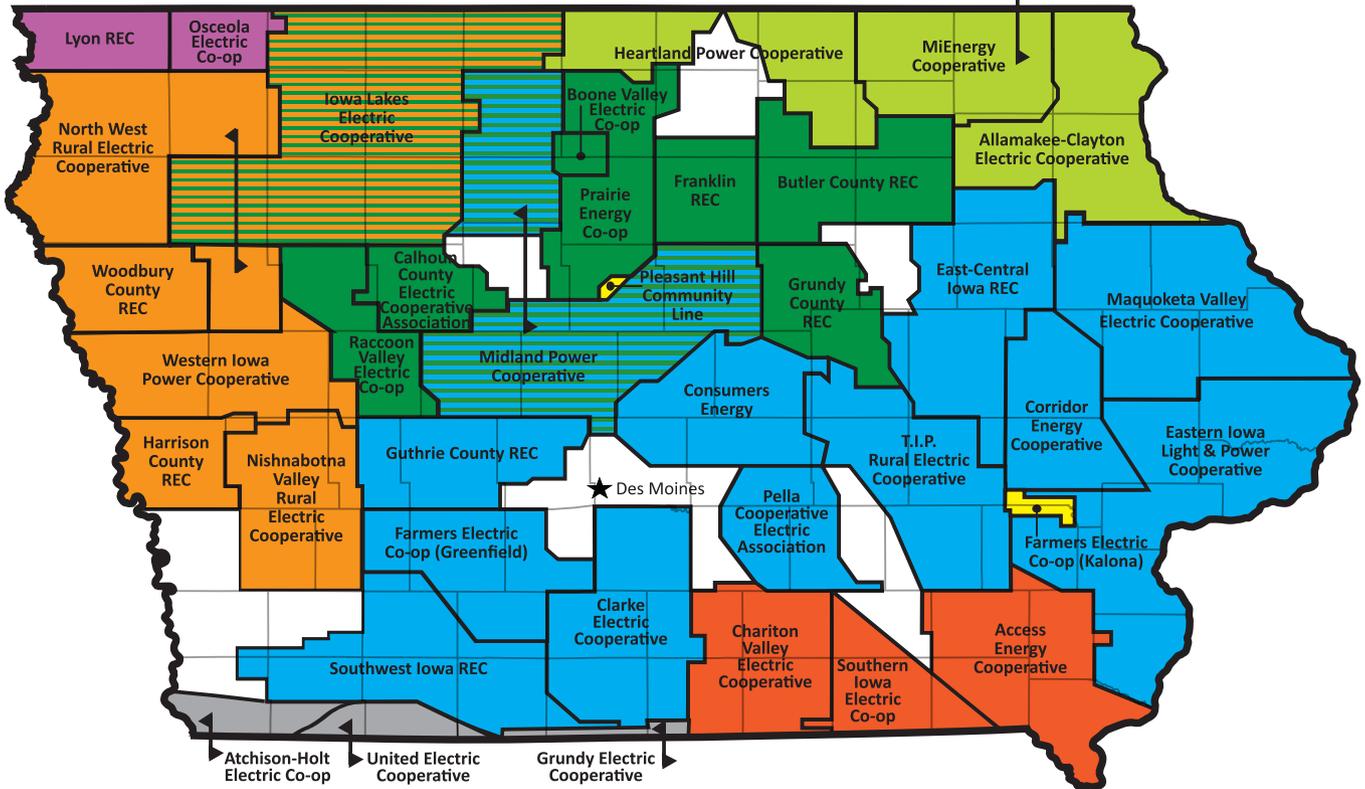


The complex electric grid includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night. Photo Source: NRECA



Your local electric co-op maintains distribution power lines to keep electricity flowing to members 24/7. Photo Source: Dairyland Power

Electric Distribution Cooperative Members of IAEC:



Generation & Transmission Cooperative Members of IAEC:

- Central Iowa Power Cooperative
- Dairyland Power Cooperative
- N.W. Electric Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Associated Electric Co-op
- Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Associated Electric Co-op
- Corn Belt Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Basin Electric Co-op
- L & O Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Basin Electric Co-op
- Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative / wholesale power from Basin Electric Co-op





WELCOME, ERIC WINTER

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is pleased to welcome Eric Winter to the team! Eric joined PECO on Jan. 28 as a journeyman lineman.

Originally from Postville, Eric is relocating to the area from West Union along with his wife Hannah and their two children, Payden and Leif. He is a graduate of Iowa Lakes Community College and brings valuable experience to his role at PECO.

Outside of work, Eric enjoys running, hunting and working on a project car plus staying busy both indoors and outside.

When asked why he wanted to join the co-op, Eric shared: "I wanted a safe, stable place and community to work and raise my family." He added that he's looking forward to "becoming a member of the community and seeing how both the community and I grow together."

We're excited to have Eric on board and look forward to the skills and dedication he brings to our cooperative. Please join us in welcoming Eric and his family to PECO and our communities!

WES HELD PROMOTED TO CLARION CREW FOREMAN

Prairie Energy Cooperative congratulates Wes Held on his promotion to Clarion crew foreman. Wes celebrated 10 years of service with the cooperative in January and brings a strong work ethic, leadership skills and valuable field experience to his new role. We appreciate Wes's dedication and look forward to his continued contributions.

Congratulations, Wes!



NEW CONTRACT PARTNERSHIP

Please help us welcome our new contractor, Tjader & Highstrom Utility Services, LLC! They began work with Prairie Energy Cooperative last month and started just east of Garner. You'll see their crews working in and around the Garner area.



WHERE BELOVED CLASSICS MEET NEW DISCOVERIES



BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

The 2026 Iowa Travel Guide has arrived! Uncover farm-fresh flavors, endless trails, must-visit destinations and countless other surprises waiting to be discovered across the state. Let curiosity lead you somewhere unexpected.

A new year brings fresh reasons to explore the Hawkeye State, and the 2026 Iowa Travel Guide is your go-to source for inspiration. Whether you're planning a weekend escape, a family road trip or a longer stay to truly soak in the scenery, the guide highlights both the timeless experiences Iowans love and the exciting new attractions debuting across the state.

Timeless Iowa experiences

Iowa's classic charms remain at the heart of every journey. Scenic byways wind through rolling farmland and vibrant small towns, while welcoming main streets invite visitors to shop local, savor comforting Midwest cuisine and meet the people who make each community unique. Miles of trails, tranquil lakes and iconic parks continue to offer space to slow down and reconnect with nature, no matter the season.

From historic communities to beloved outdoor destinations, these familiar experiences form the foundation of what makes Iowa a place travelers return to year after year.

What's new for 2026

What makes 2026 especially exciting is the wave of new experiences opening statewide. Communities have been busy investing in attractions that blend innovation with Iowa's deep-rooted heritage. Travelers can look forward to new museums and interactive exhibits that bring history, science and culture to life in engaging ways. Expanded arts venues and revitalized downtown districts are creating fresh hubs for live performances, galleries



White Water Festival,
Charles City



Field of Dreams,
Dyersville



Hitchcock Nature Center,
Honey Creek



Hoover Library,
West Branch



Children's Museum,
Sioux City

and festivals, adding even more energy to Iowa's cultural landscape.

Outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty to celebrate as well. New trail segments, park improvements and outdoor recreation expansions are making it easier than ever to hike, bike, paddle and explore. From enhanced riverfronts to upgraded camping and park amenities, Iowa continues to prioritize outdoor access for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Major League Baseball returns to Iowa in August when the Minnesota Twins and Philadelphia Phillies will meet for an exciting game at the Field of Dreams in Dyersville. The game will take place on a field next to the famed movie site.

Flavor, fun and family adventures

Food lovers will discover new flavors alongside familiar favorites. The 2026 guide highlights a growing number of farm-to-table restaurants, craft breweries, wineries and distilleries that showcase Iowa's agricultural roots in creative ways. New dining concepts and tasting experiences are popping up across the state, giving travelers even more reasons to plan a culinary adventure.

Families and multigenerational travelers will also find fresh attractions designed with everyone in mind. New entertainment venues, expanded zoos, family centers and hands-on experiences ensure there's something to spark curiosity for kids and adults alike. These additions pair seamlessly with Iowa's trusted family favorites, creating trips that balance nostalgia with discovery.

The 2026 Iowa Travel Guide brings all of this together in one resource. Inside, you'll find trip ideas, seasonal highlights, regional itineraries and insider tips to help you plan an unforgettable experience – whether you're revisiting a beloved destination or discovering a corner of the state for the first time.

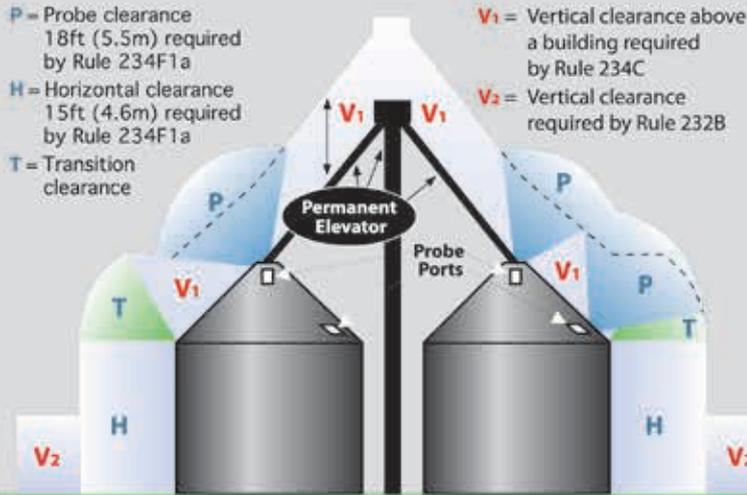
This year, let Iowa surprise you. From cherished traditions to what's brand new in 2026, adventure is waiting around every corner.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.



Scan the QR code
to download or
order the free 2026
Iowa Travel Guide.

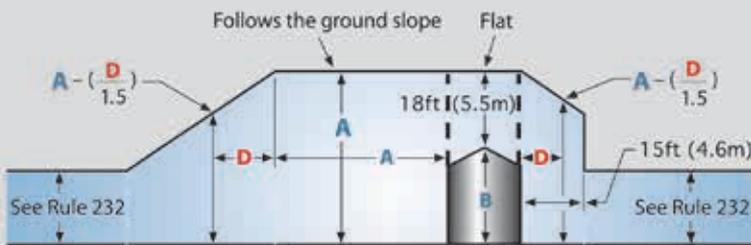
Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by permanently installed augers, conveyors or elevators



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Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors or elevators

ELEVATION



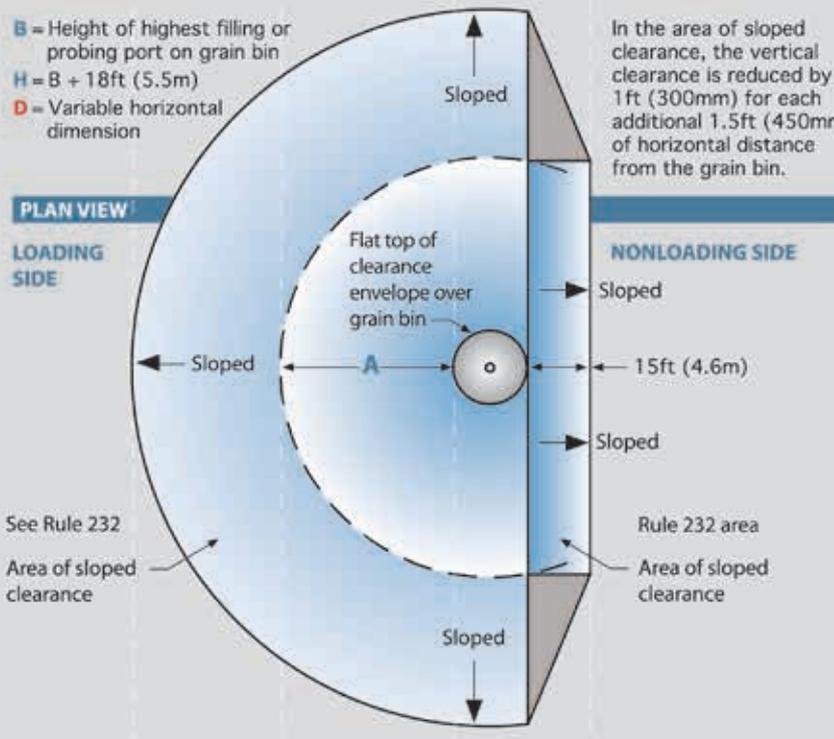
- B** = Height of highest filling or probing port on grain bin
- H** = B + 18ft (5.5m)
- D** = Variable horizontal dimension

In the area of sloped clearance, the vertical clearance is reduced by 1ft (300mm) for each additional 1.5ft (450mm) of horizontal distance from the grain bin.

PLAN VIEW

LOADING SIDE

NONLOADING SIDE



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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) C2-2023 "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 2023 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.

LUCKIER THAN A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

March is a time to celebrate all things Irish, including proverbs like “a good friend is like a four-leaf clover; hard to find and lucky to have.”

I’ve been thinking about the clubs that have thrived in Iowa’s small towns and rural neighborhoods, like the Friendly Club my grandma and mom belonged to. While many of those clubs are memories now, I was lucky to be a guest at Carol Hardy’s home in Lohrville for the January meeting of the Adaza Thursday Club.

My friend Lou Blanchfield tipped me off that the club is 100 years old. I asked how one becomes a member. “Your mother-in-law invites you!” joked Lou, noting that her mother-in-law Margaret’s grandmother was a charter member.

True to the club’s name, members still gather on the first Thursday of the month in each other’s homes. Their club has even outlived Adaza itself.

Keeping Adaza alive in spirit

Adaza’s story began in 1881. Around this time, the railroad put in a stub track southeast of the new Calhoun County town of Lohrville, at a little spot called Cottonwood. When a landowner named Captain Albert Head stepped off the train in 1882, he looked at Cottonwood and said, “Ain’t it a daisy?”

That offhand comment transformed Cottonwood into Adaza, which grew to include general stores, a grain elevator, creamery, hotel, blacksmith, bank, lumberyard, post office, school and two churches.

Adaza started fading by the 1920s. The Methodist Episcopal Church disbanded in 1924. Undeterred, a group of ladies met at Ruth Baldrige’s home on Aug. 6, 1925, and created the Adaza Thursday Club. They elected club officers, set dues at 25 cents a year, and established roll calls and programs for upcoming meetings.



A recent meeting of the Adaza Thursday Club at Carol Hardy’s home in Lohrville.

Through the decades, club members also hosted picnics, wedding showers and baby showers with skits and plenty of homemade food. New members were advised to wash their windows and bleach their porch steps before hosting club. For many years, Irene Rossmanith, followed by Pat Schmitt, dutifully recorded the club’s activities, submitting this Adaza news to local newspapers.

The club endured, even as Adaza dwindled to a ghost town. By 1981, dues were \$2 a year – “still a bargain for nine or 10 get-togethers with friends and neighbors,” noted “The History and Memories of Adaza: 1881-1981.”

Still gathering, still connected

While many of those friends and neighbors are gone, the ties that bind are strong. Jane (Hardy) Beschorner, Marty (Guess) Hennesy and her sister Ann (Guess) Gemberling, are second-generation club members. Most members today reside in a 10-mile radius of Adaza.

Dues (\$5 a year) are donated to food pantries, the high school after-prom party or flowers for club members who are ill. While members still enjoy refreshments at meetings, gone are the ornate glass snack-set trays that every good hostess used back in the day.

Sometimes this fun bunch schedules field trips to area orchards, wineries



A Maple Bacon Onion Cheese Dip was served at the meeting (recipe pictured below).



or the local care center, where they visit club member Barb Winkelman, who’s almost 99.

Other times the ladies get crafty. A few years ago, they had a jewelry-making workshop to transform Swarovski crystals into earrings and necklaces. The crystals were extras from the chandeliers at the renovated Community Memorial Building in Lake City. Club members donated the jewelry to support fundraisers for this historic gem.

Newer members like Marilyn Parker appreciate how the club helps them get to know more people. All the members treasure their deep friendships – gifts that are hard to find and lucky to have. “It’s fun, and we like each other,” said Jane Beschorner. “Why wouldn’t we keep getting together?”

Were there any clubs like this in your neighborhood? Share your stories with me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



Scan the QR code for the Maple Bacon Onion Cheese Dip recipe pictured above.



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