

DECEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Learn what it takes  
to restore power

Iowa businesses honored  
with Venture Awards

Holiday dinner recipes

Tips to pay your bill safely ▶ See Page 5



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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.

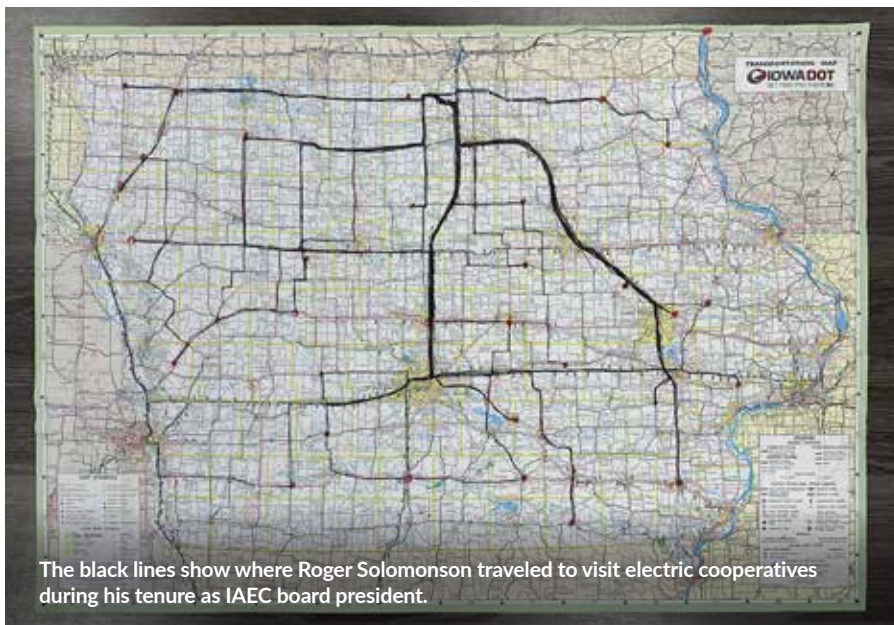
## Raising our collective voice

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!



# LIGHT THE WAY TO YOUR FUTURE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The 2024 Light the Way to Your Future Scholarship program is underway, and applications are now open for our seven \$1,000 scholarships! Account number three zero two four zero zero nine one one.

For the third year, Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is awarding seven students from our service territory with a \$1,000 scholarship. Eligible school districts include Denison, Boyer Valley, Woodbine, West Harrison, Logan-Magnolia, Missouri Valley and Tri-Center. Should Harrison County REC not have applications from each school, winners will be chosen from the group of schools within the applications until all seven awards have been designated.

Applicants do not need to be related to Harrison County REC members to apply, and all high school seniors are encouraged to apply. Students can request an application by visiting our website at [www.hcrec.coop](http://www.hcrec.coop).

In addition to completing the application, Harrison County REC requires applicants to submit a resume, letter of recommendation and an essay answering the question: ***"How does a cooperative benefit my community?"***

Applications can be submitted via email to [harrisoninfo@hcrec.coop](mailto:harrisoninfo@hcrec.coop) or can be placed in the drop box at our headquarters parking lot at 105 Enterprise Drive, Woodbine, IA 51579. Questions? Contact Kristi Travis at 712-647-2727.



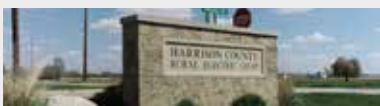
All applications are due by Friday, March 8, at 4 p.m.



## DID YOU READ OUR NEWSLETTER CAREFULLY?

**We have selected two lucky winners for a \$25 bill credit!**

Spot your account number in our newsletter and call us! (Example: Account 4321 is written four three two one.) Members must contact Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative by Dec. 29 to be eligible to claim this credit. Questions? Contact Tara Ganzhorn at 712-647-2727.



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Monday through  
Friday

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# HELP US FIND THESE MEMBERS

Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative is holding unclaimed property resulting from patronage dividend refunds for members listed below. Please contact 712-647-2727 if you have information or if your name is listed below. If a person listed is deceased, please send the name of the next of kin for our records. The list below represents members who have not cashed checks from the cooperative as of Nov. 1, 2023.

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DUNLOP DEREK K  
DUVAL SUSAN E  
DYE VERLIN C  
EDGELL MELISSA J  
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EILERS LORIN J  
FAIRCHILD MICHAEL  
FARRIS THOMAS D  
FEAUTO DALE R  
FERGUSON MARVIN  
FLINT MOTORS J  
FOGLE ELLEN  
FORD JOHN C  
FORD LEO  
FOREMAN DIANA  
FOSTER PAUL D  
FOSTER ROGER G  
FRANKS RICHARD  
FRAZIER JAMES J  
FRITZ JERRY W  
FROST D J  
GARREN FRANKIE J  
GAY ANNA  
GENEREUX MARK A  
GOBEN LARRY G  
GORMAN FRANK  
GRADY DELORES  
GRAF EDWIN A  
GRAHAM RICHARD/RONDA  
GRIFFIS LINDA L  
GRIFFIS TONY R  
GRIFFITH JANICE J  
HAARS MITCH A  
HANSEN ROBERT E  
HARDER JAMES AJR  
HATCHER CLARA I  
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HEIMAN MELISSA N  
HENSON KELLY M  
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WINCHELL DENISE R  
WITHERSPOON MIKE  
WRIGHT CODY G  
WYSCARVER JAMES H  
YOUNG JERRY R

## SAFE WAYS TO PAY YOUR BILL

With a rise in utility scammers looking to force honest customers to pay over the phone, Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative reminds our membership that we do not accept payment over the phone, nor will we ever call you and demand payment for your utility bill. This protects both the cooperative and its members from losing confidential information.

All credit and debit card payments can only be made using SmartHub.

- Visit our website at [www.hcrec.coop](http://www.hcrec.coop) and select "Pay Your Bill Now." This feature allows you to pay your bill using your debit or credit card by entering your last name and account number, which can be found on your bill.
- HCREC bills can be paid in person during regular office hours, Monday through Friday. We also have a drop box, located on the east side of our parking lot, which can be used for after-hours payments. Please note, our drop box is checked daily at 7:30 a.m., and any payments dropped off after that time will be collected and credited to your account the next business 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**

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# 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.*



# A LINEWORKER'S TIMELINE: RESTORING A POWER OUTAGE

BY SHADON BLUM

"How long is it going to take?" Those are familiar words to all who work in the electric industry. It's a phrase I've been asked thousands of times in my career. It's the first thing people think when the lights go out. It doesn't take long sitting in the dark to realize how dependent we are on electricity. How much it makes our lives better and easier. Account number two seven one four zero zero nine one two.

But what does it take to get those lights back on? Hopefully after reading this, you will have a better understanding of the process and the work that Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) line crews are doing to restore your power.

## How electricity reaches you

The electricity you use travels a great distance and goes through several steps to get to your home. It starts with a power plant. A power plant typically produces voltages of less than 30,000 volts. That voltage needs to be "stepped up" to travel long distances. That process starts next door in the power plant's substation and switchyard. In the substation, a transformer will step the voltage up to 345,000 volts, or sometimes higher, and send it out on transmission lines to another substation.

At the next substation, electricity starts to get closer to its destination. Here, we start stepping the voltage down. In this second substation, a transformer will step the voltage down to 69,000 volts and send it out to smaller local substations.

These local substations are the final substations before the electricity reaches your home. Power is stepped down, again with a transformer, to the 7,200/12,470 volts that can then be delivered to the poles outside your home. Once it arrives to your home, it is stepped down a final time

by another transformer. This final transformer will step the voltage down to 120/240 volts, which operates many devices that power your life.

What I just described are hundreds of miles of line and thousands of poles. That's a lot of exposure for something to happen and cause an outage.

Just like your home, our system has breakers. Our breakers help us reduce the exposure of the line and allow us to split our system into sections. Doing so helps limit the size of the outages and allows us to keep as many people on as possible.

Ever wonder why your lights blink a few times before going off? That's the breaker. They operate a few times, trying to give the fault a chance to clear the line before they open for good.

Now that the lights have blinked, and your breaker has opened, the power is off. So, what happens next?

## AN EXAMPLE TIMELINE FOR OUTAGE REPAIRS

### The outage begins

#### 6:35 p.m. Your local lineworker gets a phone call

When we answer the phone, we are told that we have an outage. Our first question is, "Is this an individual or a line outage?" A line outage will be a large section of line and affect several people. An individual will be just a single transformer or pole. If it's a line outage, our next question is, "What's the pole number?" This is why it's important to report your outage. It verifies the outage, and it helps the lineworker decide where to go.

### Heading toward the outage

#### 7 p.m. The drive

An after-hours outage requires

your lineworker to respond from home. Depending on where the outage is, the drive alone can sometimes take an hour.

#### 7:45 p.m. Arrival and line inspection

Our line crews often see people outside when their power is off, sitting on their porch or working in the yard. Sometimes, we drive by several times.

The first time you see our crews, they're most likely driving to the breaker. We need to go to the breaker to verify that it's open. The second time you see them drive by, they're visually checking the line for what may have caused the outage. It's one of the more time-consuming steps we take, but also one of the most important parts of restoring an outage.

Our crews can't just flip a switch and restore the power. The outage could be a line down in someone's yard, or it could have been caused by equipment failure. Re-energizing the line under those two examples would be very dangerous to the public and could cause more damage and extend the outage longer. So, it's essential to visually check the line before trying the breaker. Another factor that can add time to inspecting the line is terrain. We try to put poles along the road, but that isn't always possible. If it's not along the road, the line must be checked on foot.

### The process of repairs

#### 8:30 p.m. Outage cause located, but first safety

Once we find the cause of the outage, there are safety steps that must be taken before our crews can start the work. These safety procedures add time, but they are vital. It's how our cooperative





ensures lineworkers are protected and everyone goes home to their families.

The most important thing we do is isolate and ground the line. Lineworkers always try to be aware of their surroundings. An important thing we listen for and try to be aware of is home generators. The transformer on your pole that drops the voltage down can also work in reverse. Your home generator, if installed wrong, could back feed through your transformer and put primary voltage back on the line.

To protect lineworkers, we install grounds as close to the work location as possible on both sides of the work. These grounds connect the neutral wire to all primary wires, making them all the same “grounded potential” and safe to work on.

The final safety step is the briefing where the job plan is discussed and explained, hazards are identified, and everyone is made aware of the grounds, their location and the breaker’s location.

#### **9 p.m. All safety procedures are in place, work begins**

Let’s say a tree caused this outage. A 50-foot-tall oak tree fell through the line. It’s off the road, but we got lucky – it broke a crossarm, but the pole is good. The wire isn’t broken either but is currently under the oak tree.

We’ve got to chop the tree and free the wire which will take time. We also have power lines under tension, pinned down by the tree, adding an extra layer of danger. Sometimes, the power lines must be tied down so that they can be let up in a more

controlled manner once the tree is cut. While our crews work to clear the tree from the line, new material is on the way. The crew will need a crossarm, crossarm braces, new insulators, bolts and ties.

#### **10:30 p.m. The tree has been cleared and material has arrived**

The pole is off the road, so our crew can’t get a bucket truck to it. They will have to climb the pole. One of our lineworkers will put on his belt and hooks and climb to the top of the pole.

Once he gets to the top of the pole, he will get to work. This starts by removing all the broken material. He’ll also inspect the top of the pole for damage we couldn’t see from the ground. Once he has it cleaned up, we will send material on a handline.

Next, the lineworker on the ground will tie the crossarm onto a handline in a way that will allow the lineworker on the pole to just guide the arm onto the bolt as it’s being lifted. Once the new crossarm is on the pole and all the bolts are tightened, the wire will be lifted and placed on the arm. The wire ties will be sent up and the lineworker will tie in the wire.

After completing all the work in the air, the lineworker will send down the handline and climb down. They will all carry the tools that were used back to the truck and pack them away. Lastly, they will remove the grounds.

#### **11:45 p.m. Repairs complete**

If you still happen to be on your porch, you will see our crews drive by a third time. This is good news because power is about to be

restored. The crew will be heading for the breaker. Once they get to the breaker, they’ll call dispatch and get clearance to re-energize and let dispatch know who is with us and if they are in the clear. They will check to make sure no one else is working on the line and then give the lineworker clearance to try the breaker. At this time, they will close the breaker and your power will be restored.

#### **12:05 a.m. Power restored; outage over**

Keep in mind this is just one scenario; not every outage is the same. Each outage varies in time for restoration. This example outage took around five and a half hours to restore. If the tree had broken a pole, it would have been even longer.

#### **1 a.m. Lineworker returns home, safe and sound**

#### **We work for you, our neighbors**

We’ve become so dependent on electricity that every outage, whether it is a short outage or an extended one, can be stressful for those without power. The longer outages last, the more stressful and irritating it can become. I hope that I’ve provided a better understanding of the restoration process so you have an idea of what’s happening while you wait. Harrison County REC and its employees are members of your community. We will always be committed to serving our members and communities by providing safe and reliable electricity – 24/7, year-round.

*Shadon Blum is the director of operations for Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative.*

# '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).*



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