

● OCTOBER 2025

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**How co-ops differ from
other energy providers**

**Learn about the Iowa
Firefighters Memorial**

Harvest season recipes



Wholesale power costs are rising ▶ See Page 4

WHOLESALE POWER COSTS ARE RISING — WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR COOPERATIVE

BY TIM MARIENAU



Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) remains committed to delivering safe, reliable and affordable

electricity to our members. It's a commitment we've honored for decades, and one we work toward every day. That's why we want to be fully transparent about wholesale power cost changes that will affect your electric bill over the next two years.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin), PECO's wholesale power provider, has informed us of wholesale cost adjustments that, depending on many factors, could result in significant rate increases. The following are the proposed rate increases in wholesale power costs from Basin, implemented over a two-year period.

- Jan. 1, 2026: 9.9% increase in wholesale power costs
- Jan. 1, 2027: Additional 7.8% increase in wholesale power costs

Consequently, PECO is facing one of the largest wholesale power cost increases in recent memory. While these increases are never welcome, they are part of a broader, nationwide shift in how electricity is produced, regulated and consumed. Many of these forces are beyond the control of local utilities, but all of them influence what we pay for power – and, in turn, what appears on your bill.

The impact of federal policies

Federal production tax credits have provided significant financial incentives for renewable energy development, particularly wind and solar. While these policies have accelerated the transition toward cleaner energy, they have also had unintended consequences. By lowering the market price of renewable generation, it's made it more difficult for traditional, dispatchable baseload plants –

coal, natural gas and nuclear – to remain financially viable. As a result, many of these plants have been retired years ahead of schedule, removing dependable 24/7 generation from the grid.

Rising demand and reliability strains

The closure of these plants comes at a time when electricity demand is surging. Economic growth, population increases, and the electrification of transportation, heating and manufacturing are all placing new demands on the grid. Data centers, electric vehicles and advanced manufacturing facilities require huge amounts of power. Renewable resources play a vital role, but they depend on weather conditions. Without enough baseload generation to cover periods of low wind or sunlight, the system becomes more vulnerable to shortages during extreme weather or high-demand periods.

Regulation and compliance costs

On top of these supply and demand pressures, government



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

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

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

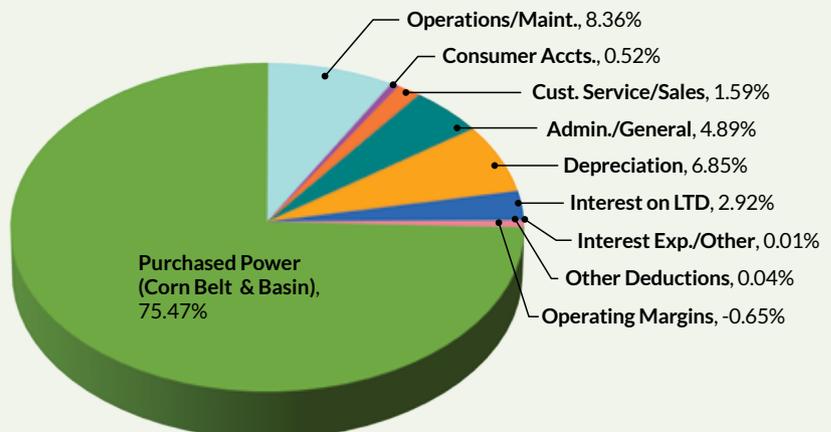
Email: prairieenergy@prairieenergy.coop

Facebook: facebook.com/PrairieEnergyCooperative

Website: www.prairieenergy.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer

WHERE THE DOLLARS GO (YTD 2025)



regulations and environmental controls continue to add significant costs. Meeting stricter emissions standards, upgrading equipment to meet environmental guidelines and complying with new safety requirements can each require investments in the hundreds of millions of dollars. These expenses are built into the cost of producing power and are ultimately reflected in wholesale rates.

Transmission and infrastructure challenges

The existing transmission network was never designed to move large volumes of renewable power from rural generation sites to urban demand centers. Congested transmission lines can force grid operators to rely on more expensive local power. Building new lines to relieve congestion or connect new generation is essential, but it requires significant capital investment – often hundreds of

millions of dollars – which becomes part of the cost of service.

Aging assets and maintenance needs

Many power plants, substations and transmission structures are decades old. As equipment ages, maintenance costs rise, and replacement or modernization becomes unavoidable. Across the industry, utilities are now facing these replacement cycles all at once, driving costs higher.

Labor and supply chain costs

The power industry faces a shortage of skilled labor, driving up wages for lineworkers, plant operators and engineers. At the same time, global supply chain disruptions have made critical components – such as transformers and circuit breakers – more expensive and harder to obtain.

The road ahead

The reality is that there is no single

cause behind this increase – it's the result of a combination of market forces, policy decisions, infrastructure needs and changing patterns of electricity use. While we can't control these external pressures, our cooperative will continue working to manage costs, advocate for a balanced energy mix, and make strategic investments that protect both reliability and affordability for our members.

As wholesale power rate increase projections become clearer in the coming months, we'll keep you informed with updates in this magazine.

PECO's mission remains the same as always: to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity. While the challenges may be different and greater today than in the past, our commitment to serving you is stronger than ever.

Tim Marienau is the CEO of Prairie Energy Cooperative.

CYBERSECURITY STARTS WITH YOU

BY BILL HICOK



Cyberattacks are an unfortunate reality in today's digital world, ranging from large-scale corporate breaches to

targeted phishing scams. While October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, good cyber hygiene is essential year-round – and every individual plays a role.

Here are four practical ways to protect your devices and data:

1 Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)
MFA adds a second verification step – such as a PIN, security question, emailed code or secure token – making it much harder for cyber criminals to access your accounts. Use it whenever available.

- 2 Use strong, unique passwords**
Treat passwords like the keys to your online home. Each should be at least 12 characters, a mix of cases, numbers and symbols, and never reused. A password manager can help store them securely.
- 3 Keep software updated**
Regular updates patch security flaws. Enable automatic updates when possible or set reminders to update quarterly. Avoid clicking on suspicious “update” pop-ups from unknown sources.
- 4 Recognize and report phishing**
Watch for urgent language, poor grammar, generic greetings, mismatched email addresses or suspicious links. Most email platforms allow you to report phishing attempts – do so when in doubt.



Cyber criminals aren't going away, but by practicing these habits, we can all contribute to a safer online environment. For more tips, visit www.staysafeonline.org.

Bill Hicok is the IT manager for Prairie Energy Cooperative.

WHO OWNS WHAT? UNDERSTANDING ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT

BY DARREN JOHNSON AND CHAD CHAPMAN

Severe weather can strike at any time of year, often arriving quickly and with enough force to cause significant damage to essential electric equipment throughout our community.

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is always prepared to respond swiftly to outages and restore power safely, but it's also important for homeowners to understand which parts of the electric system are their responsibility and which are maintained by the co-op. Knowing these differences can help speed up repairs and keep everyone safe when the weather turns rough.

- Before the meter: PECO
- After the meter: Member

PECO is responsible for maintaining and repairing the equipment and lines that run to your home, including utility poles, distribution power lines, electric meters and padmounted transformers.

Members are responsible for the equipment located between the electric meter and your home or business, including any underground service lines that lead into the structure and the service panel. Members are also responsible for the weatherhead and service mast located outside the home.

Repairing damaged equipment

If any equipment that you (the homeowner) are responsible for is damaged, please call a licensed electrician to conduct the repairs. A professional has the experience and know-how to assess and manage these types of repairs.

When storms or other severe weather damage electrical equipment, any necessary repairs to the homeowner's equipment must be completed before PECO crews can restore power to your home or business. By understanding the equipment you are responsible for, the repair and restoration process will be smoother and faster.

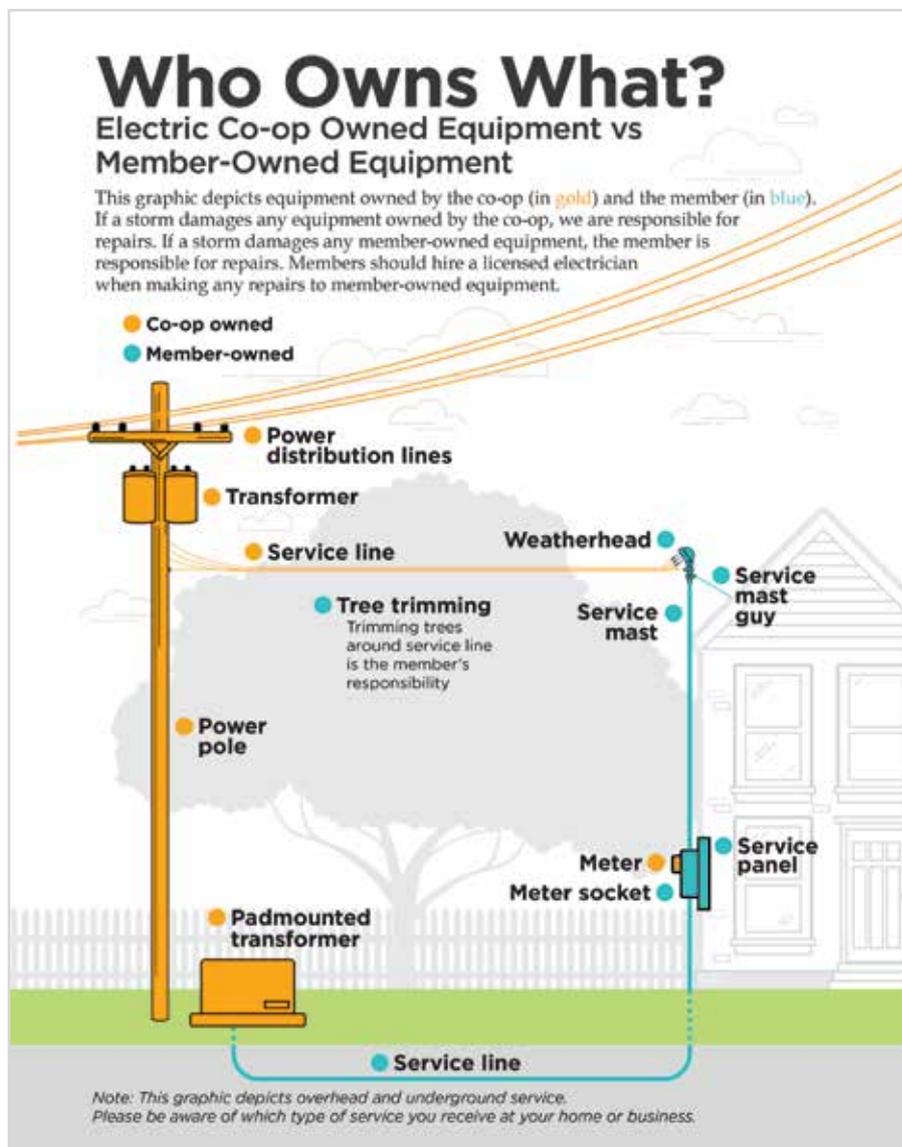
Vegetation management

Our community takes great pride in the beautiful trees and landscaping that contribute to the natural beauty where we live. However, regular trimming is essential to ensure reliable electric service and minimize damage from severe weather. PECO regularly trims trees throughout our service territory to improve service reliability. If you spot a tree limb that is obstructing a distribution power line, please call the co-op so we can trim those limbs and maintain those lines.

By working together to understand the essential equipment that powers daily life, we can all be better prepared to start the repair and restoration process if severe weather impacts our community.

If you have any questions about your electrical equipment, we're here to help. Please contact PECO at 515-532-2805.

Darren Johnson and Chad Chapman are member service managers for Prairie Energy Cooperative.



FIRST-EVER LINEMAN RODEO AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR

On Aug. 15, the Iowa State Fairgrounds became the site of a historic event – the first-ever Iowa Lineman Rodeo. Held at Elwell Family Park, the competition was organized by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Unions 55, 109 and 204 along with the Iowa Utility Association.

Preparation began early, with crews installing 29 utility poles across four lines on Thursday, Aug. 14, to set the stage for the competitions. The event brought together 15 teams of three, representing utilities from across the state, including Alliant Energy, MidAmerican Energy, ITC Holdings Corp and IBEW Local 55.

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) proudly stood out as the only electric cooperative to participate.

The rodeo challenged linemen both individually and as teams, with participants vying for the coveted “Pride of Iowa” trophy and the honor of being named Iowa’s top line crew. Events included a speed climb while holding an egg in their mouth, a hurt man rescue involving a 165-pound dummy and two surprise mystery events. In addition to the competition, attendees enjoyed display trucks, vendors, bucket rides and even a visit from Gov. Kim Reynolds.

PECO had much to celebrate. Apprentice Lineman Asa Wayland earned a belt buckle in the apprentice speed climb. Meanwhile, Apprentice Lineman Cole Schisel had a standout performance, winning the apprentice hurt man rescue, apprentice mystery event and overall apprentice title – bringing home one of the prestigious “Pride of Iowa” trophies.

The inaugural Iowa Lineman Rodeo was a free, first-of-its-kind event that not only highlighted the skill, safety and strength of Iowa’s linemen, but also offered the public a closer look at the essential work they perform every day.





IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

October 2025

Visit our website at www.prairieenergy.coop

WHERE WE HAVE MEMBERS WE ACTIVELY LIVE OUR COMMITMENT



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

As your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**, we are your energy community. The power we provide is much more than a way to keep the lights on, it plugs into the family, friends, and neighbors that make up your local co-op.