

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE

August 2021 Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Understanding power surges and blinks

Director of Operations/Engineering Butch Norem

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or maybe you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade, or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts—this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal

sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers.

Prairie Energy encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds, or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events. When it comes to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme. In 2019, squirrels were responsible for over



Lineman Andrew Stupka restores a power outage.

1,200 outages.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, Prairie Energy crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage as quickly and as safely as possible. And you can help too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling 1-800-728-0013, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Our line crew responding to an outage call.



Stop by and see us at the Iowa State Fair!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the Bruce Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair. We are proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned co-ops that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member-consumers use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair this summer, make sure to stop by and see us in the newly renovated 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. Come into the air-conditioned facility for a break from the heat and look for us near the new concession area.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats for the kids while supplies last. They can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station!

Electric co-op members who take a quick survey on our iPads will automatically be entered into our fair contest. After the fair, three lucky winners will be randomly selected to choose one of three prize options:

- Roomba 614 Robot Vacuum
- DEWALT 20V MAX XR Blower
- Breville Smart Oven Pro

We will also announce the winners of our new Shine the Light contest during the fair. Iowa electric co-op member-consumers and employees had an opportunity to nominate local community volunteers for the contest in June. Three deserving volunteers will each receive a \$1,500 donation for their charity as we celebrate our cooperative commitment to community.

We look forward to connecting with our co-op members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!

Using a generator for backup power protection and peace of mind?



Generate Safely.

Never use a portable generator indoors.

Do not plug generators into standard electrical outlets.

Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances into the generator.

Start the generator before connecting appliances.

Electrical safety basics for back to school

As children head back to school, parents can teach them a valuable, potentially life-saving lesson: to respect electricity.

Here are five electrical safety basics every child should know:

- 1. Mixing water and electricity can harm you.** Teach children not to use electrical toys or other devices near water or in the rain.
- 2. Electrical outlets have limits.** Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.
- 3. When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord.** Yanking a cord out of an electrical outlet can damage the appliance, the outlet or the plug, leaving the appliance or toy unable to operate safely.
- 4. Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines.** If a tree has a power line running through it—or if it's even within reach of the line—that's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.
- 5. Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and pets out.** If a toy or small pet gets inside of the fence, the child should tell a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

August 11 is 811 National Safe Digging Day

Don't start that project until you've located all underground utilities. Contact Iowa One Call at 811 at least 48 hours before work is scheduled to begin.

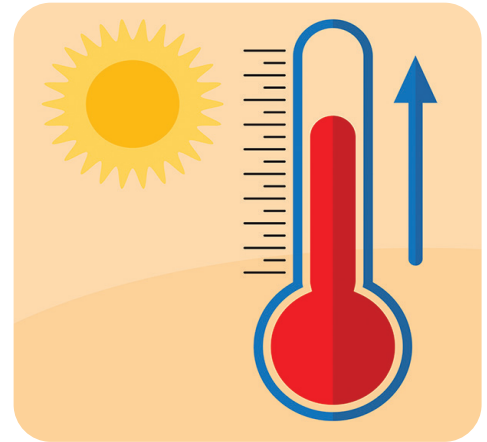
As an Iowa law, you are required to contact One Call so that utilities can mark their services. The call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Making the call can eliminate disruption of service and more importantly, reduces the chance of injury.

Take the time to make the call. It's a fast, free call that will help keep you, your family, and your farm safe. Or, visit www.iowaoncall.com to request your locate.

Keep cool during August heat

Unless you keep your thermostat so low that you send your cooling bill through the roof in August, it's a good idea to find some energy-friendly ways to keep your cool during the hottest month of the year. Here are five tips:

1. **Take cool showers.** If your house isn't cold—and there's no reason it should be, even with the air conditioner on—ease up on the hot showers. A cool shower will lower your body temperature and get you just as clean.
2. **Chill the meal plan.** Instead of baking, broiling, boiling, sautéing and frying every night, how about chopping fresh veggies, making colorful salads and satisfying your family's hunger with healthy raw foods that will fill them up and give your stove and oven a break?
3. **Filter the sun.** Install solar screens or window films on east- and west-facing windows so you can keep the heat out while allowing the light to come in.
4. **Seal leaks and cracks.** You'll find them all over your home—around windows, doors, and electrical and cable outlets. It's easy to caulk and weatherstrip, and it's an activity you can do with your kids as you teach them to use energy responsibly.
5. **Schedule a check-up.** Even if you skipped your air conditioner's spring maintenance, go ahead and schedule it now. Your HVAC tech can tell you if your air conditioning unit is running efficiently.



Affordable electricity powers quality of life By Anne Prince

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater, and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV, and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. Typically when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity.

Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses. Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4%, medical care increased 2.8%, and education increased 2.2%. But the cost of electricity only increased 1%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

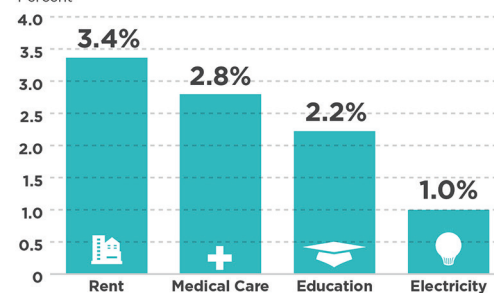
We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity—it's a necessity. That's why we will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020

Percent



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Consumer Price Index

Prairie on parade!

If you were able to partake in any of the festivities this summer that took place in our service territory, you may have noticed a friendly face or two during one of the parades. Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) employees volunteered their time to represent your co-op at Festival in the Park, Belmond 4th of July, Wright County Fair, and Duesey Days parades during the June and July months. While PECO wasn't able to participate in all of the parades and favorite summer events, such as the Wright and Hancock County Fair breakfasts normally provided to the communities, it was good to get back out there and see all the smiling faces!



Lincoln Evje - possible future linemen?



Lineman Wes Held volunteered to drive a bucket truck for a couple of the parades this summer.



PECO employee Heather Evje and son Lincoln ride along during the Wright County Fair parade.



Festival in the Park, Clarion



Belmond 4th of July - Cooper Reiland, son of PECO lineman Pat Reiland, rides along.



PECO Lineman Andrew Stupka's wife and daughters ride along in the Duesey Days Parade in Garner.



Members win \$25 bill credits

Congratulations go out to Karen Heiden of Dows and Donna Johnson of Kanawha! Karen's dessert recipe was featured in the June issue of Living with Energy in Iowa, featuring "Fresh Vegetable & Fruit Recipes," while Donna's dip recipe was featured in the July issue of the magazine, featuring "Favorite Sweet Corn Recipes."

Submit your recipes to Living with Energy in Iowa by following the directions found in the magazine.



iNtouch® is the official publication of Prairie Energy Cooperative
2099 Highway 3W • Clarion, Iowa 50525-0353
Phones answered 24/7: (515) 532-2805 • Pay-by-Phone: 844-241-0265
Offices hours: Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Tim Marienau, CEO

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