

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE

September 2021 Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



September is National Preparedness Month

It's your worst-case scenario. A major storm was predicted and this time, the predictions were right. Many power lines are down, and your electricity may be out for several days. You are low on everything—food, pet supplies, toilet paper, batteries, diapers and your medication.

Imagine how you would feel in this situation. While you can't predict which weather forecast will come true, you can plan ahead so when a severe weather event strikes, you have the tools and resources to effectively weather the storm. This month we urge you to make a plan for yourself and your family to be prepared.

With advance warning

If a severe storm is expected with high winds and sustained rain, you may need to take extra steps to safeguard your home. Shutter windows and securely close exterior doors. Fully charge all cell phones, laptops and devices so you have maximum power in the event of a power outage. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

During a prolonged outage

In the event of an outage, turn off appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If utilizing a small household generator, consider using LED holiday lights to illuminate a living area. A strand of 100 white lights draws little



energy yet produces considerable light. Solar lights also work if they can receive some sunlight during the day for charging.

During thunderstorms, the American Red Cross recommends avoiding electrical equipment and land-based telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead. Keep away from windows. Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates, or check Prairie Energy's Facebook page for restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs – including on your property.

Power in planning

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings to stay current with restoration efforts, and bookmark Prairie Energy's Facebook page for important co-op news, information, and updates. For a more detailed storm preparedness list, check out our website at www.prairieenergy.coop and act today, because there is power in planning!



Prairie Energy welcomes new employee

Nathan Hughes, apprentice lineman, joined Prairie Energy on July 27. Originally from Humboldt, Iowa, Nate is familiar with Prairie Energy as he interned here in 2015 after graduating from Northwest Iowa Community College's powerline program. When he's not spending time with his girlfriend Erin and their daughter Adley, Nate enjoys racing, hunting, fishing, and farming. Welcome to the crew!



IT Professionals Day is September 21

September 21 is IT Professionals Day, and Prairie Energy is thankful for our very own unsung hero, Bill Hicok who works hard every day to keep us connected. Thanks for all your hard work, Bill!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Why do we advertise?

Your electric cooperative's unique relationship with its members goes beyond the mere flip of a light switch and can be traced back to decades of serving consumers with unmatched integrity and accountability.

As a Touchstone Energy cooperative, we are part of a national alliance of more than 700 local, member-owned electric co-ops that pool together to advertise and communicate at a fraction of the cost that it would be if each co-op did them independently.

We are your local electric cooperative that operates to efficiently deliver reliable and safe energy to everyone we serve. Whether through radio, newspaper, television, or newsletters, it is our responsibility to inform the public and provide answers about the services we offer.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY** – How is power restored? How can I protect my family during a severe storm? What should I teach my kids about electrical safety? Why should I “look up and live” around power lines?
- **EDUCATION** – What is clean energy? Is solar energy right for me? What scholarships and programs are available for my family? Why should I attend my co-op's annual meeting? How do I choose a heating and cooling system? What is budget billing and how can it help me?
- **ENERGY EFFICIENCY** – How can I reduce my energy use and save money? What rebates and incentives are available? What is load management? Can my electric co-op give me more control over how I use energy?
- **FEDERAL AND STATE MANDATES** – How do I file a complaint? What are the requirements for a grain bin? If I cannot pay my bill, is help available? Is my co-op helping low-income families?

Advertising can help answer your questions

What should I teach my children about electrical safety?

Is solar energy right for me?

How can I reduce my energy use?

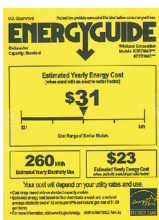
If I cannot pay my bill, is help available?



Rebates for appliances

Contact us for information on our rebates for new, ENERGY STAR rated appliances installed at members' locations:

- Clothes dryer - \$50
- Clothes washer - \$50
- Dishwasher - \$25
- Freezer - \$25
- Refrigerator - \$25



Check the Energy Guide for the Energy Star label on the bottom right.

Inspect your outdoor home maintenance electrical equipment

It's leaf-blowing season. Is your blower in good shape?

Don't use it until you find out. Same goes for your lawn mower, shrub trimmers, and winter equipment like the snowblower.

As you dust off equipment that's been in storage all summer, check for:

- *Worn parts and power cords.* If you find them, don't try to eke one final season out of the tool. Have the parts repaired or replaced.
- *Caked-on dirt or sap on blades.* A blast of water from your garden hose should loosen and remove it. A stiff-bristled brush will help, too.
- *Rust.* That might take more elbow grease and some steel wool to remove.
- *Splintered wood on handles and shafts.* A light sanding can remove splinters. Apply boiled linseed oil to prevent the handles from drying out.

Once you finish your fall chores, clean the tools so they'll be in good shape next year. And store them in a dry, clean place. The electrical parts of tools that get wet while in storage can corrode.



Tips for a Safe Harvest By Abby Berry

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous—even deadly—when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, we see collisions where tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- **Maintain a 10-foot clearance** around all utility equipment in all directions.
- **Use a spotter** and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, **contact 9-1-1 immediately and remain inside the vehicle** until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it), and hop away to safety.
- **Consider equipment and cargo extensions** of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

September 19-25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week but practicing safety on the farm year-round yields positive results. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, we hope you'll remember these safety tips.



SMALL SAVINGS
LEAD TO BIG ONES

At your electric co-op, we help you find more ways to save energy, save money and help the environment. So small savings today lead to big savings tomorrow.

Let's Beat the Peak Together By Abby Berry

You know how to make smart energy choices that help you save money. But did you know that when you use electricity can be just as important as how much you use?



Throughout the day, energy use fluctuates based on consumer demand. Typically, most households use larger amounts of electricity in the morning when most people are getting ready for their day, and in the evenings when people return from work, cook dinner, wash clothes and watch television.

These times are called "peak" hours. Your electric cooperative's cost to provide power is higher during these times because of the additional demand for electricity.

By shifting some of your energy use to hours when demand is lower, also known as off-peak hours, you can save money on your energy bills and help keep rates lower for our community.

Here are a few easy ways you can shift energy use to off-peak hours:

- Adjust your thermostat. During summer months, raise the thermostat a few degrees during peak hours.
- Wash full loads of clothes in cold water during off-peak hours.
- Run the dishwasher right before you go to bed, or air-dry dishes by opening the dishwasher instead of using the heated dry cycle.
- Turn off lights and electronics when not in use. (Try to make this a daily habit, whether during peak or off-peak hours.)

We're here to help. Contact us with questions about your energy bill or for additional energy-saving tips.

We're looking for high school students interested in public service and leadership

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Prairie Energy has a long history of supporting students in the communities we serve through scholarships and leadership opportunities. We've also been sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital every summer for years as part of the national Electric Co-

Students who attend our Zoom sessions in October will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship!

operative Youth Tour program.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to offer a new opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model with a three-part webinar series in October. The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is open to any high school student in our service area, and they are invited to register at www.IowaYouthTour.com.

"This new program is really

designed for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership or government," remarked CEO Tim Marienau. "We want to raise students' awareness of how local electric co-ops power people's lives and empower communities. We also want to talk about cooperative career paths that are available in smaller communities."

Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic:

- Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7:00 p.m. – Cooperative Business Model
- Thursday, Oct. 14, 7:00 p.m. – Rural Iowa Advocacy
- Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7:00 p.m. – Civic Involvement and Leadership

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholar-

ship!



During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our line-up of speakers and presenters. Students will learn how to advocate for issues that are important to them and learn about leadership development from a motivational speaker. Attendees will also hear from former Iowa Youth Tour students who pursued their passion for government service and leadership after attending the week-long trip to Washington, D.C. The 2022 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is slated for June 18-24 next summer.

Learn more at www.IowaYouthTour.com or contact our member service department at 515-532-2805 for more information.

Magazine will be receiving a makeover next month

The monthly magazine for member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives will have a new look starting in October. *Living with Energy in Iowa* will be rebranded to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* and will continue to include 16 pages of news, tips, stories, and recipes you've come to appreciate every month in your mailbox. Our local Prairie Energy Cooperative news will continue to appear in the center pages of the magazine.

The design of the pages may look a bit different, but all of the content our readers enjoy will still be inside including our monthly editor's choice contest, our reader-submitted recipes, and our humorous "out back" column.

"As a locally owned and governed electric cooperative, it's essential for Prairie Energy to communicate regularly with our members. Mailing a monthly magazine is a very effective way to share important co-op news," said Tim Marienau, CEO. "In fact, one of our core cooperative principles is to educate, train, and inform our members."

Starting Oct. 1, the magazine website can be found at www.IECLmagazine.com. You can also follow *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for helpful tips and updates.



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.
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