

A WORD FROM



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Solar array at one-year mark

Butler County REC's 147-kilowatt solar demonstration project was brought online in January of 2017 so that we could learn more about solar energy and share that information with our members. We now have one year of data to share with you.

Our expectations were that the array would produce 268,607 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in the first year. In reality, it produced 232,365 kWh. There were mechanical problems with the array during January and February, which led to lower production. However, the amount produced is equivalent to 957 single-family homes powered for seven days and 4,220 trees grown. For 2018, we are projecting 268,068 kWh production.

When discussing solar arrays, we also talk about capacity factor. The capacity factor compares actual output to full production at full capacity, if that were possible. In the summer (May-September), the capacity factor averaged 26 percent, accounting for 62 percent of the total production. The first

12-month average was 17.8 percent. We projected 21 percent. Most arrays average 16 percent annually but our array has dual panels (facing north and south), allowing for the possibility of a higher capacity factor.

As you can imagine, the production is weather related. We look forward to comparing our first-year production with the coming years in regard to production and sunny skies versus cloudy skies.

Even though we faced challenges with Ten K Solar, supplier of our array and components, choosing to discontinue doing business as they had been, we are still satisfied with the results of our solar demonstration project.

On our website, www.butlerrec.coop, you are able to monitor the output of the array, too—click on Solar Project and then either Live Feed or Output Summary. If you see on the live feed that it's cloudy in Horton, take a look at what that does to the output. The Output Summary page provides a lot of interesting information.

Remember to contact us if you have questions regarding our solar project or a solar project of your own. We want to be your trusted source.

Butler County REC returns \$675,968.26 to member-owners

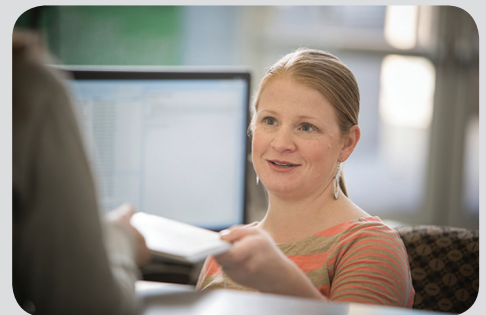
As a member-owner of Butler County REC, you share in the cooperative's profits. Other businesses return their profits to their investors or shareholders. We return your cooperative's profits, or patronage, to you. This is one of many advantages of the cooperative difference. We are here to meet YOUR needs, not the needs of investors or stockholders.

For 2018, Butler County REC patronage distribution is \$675,968.26. This is for 1999 and a portion of 2016. Members who purchased electricity in 1999 and/or 2016 are receiving patronage for those years. The patronage, based on how much electricity you purchased during those two years, was credited to your power bill mailed in February 2018.

Checks have been mailed to qualifying members who no longer receive service from us.

Butler County REC returns patronage on a 19-year cycle. However, our wholesale power supplier, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, is also retiring a portion of the patronage that Butler County REC was allocated in 2016. Your board of directors elected to pass on the retired amount to you.

If you were a member in 1999 and/or 2016 and did not receive a credit on your February power bill, please contact us as soon as possible.



Cooperatives attend legislative reception

Over 150 directors, managers and staff members from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with state legislators and policy makers on January 9 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception at the State Historical Building in downtown Des Moines. Other guests of honor included: Governor Kim Reynolds, Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, Auditor of State Mary Mosiman, Attorney General Tom Miller, Iowa Utilities Board Member Nick Wagner and Iowa Department of Economic Development Director Debi Durham. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance and the Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores of Iowa, hosted the annual reception.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including items central to Iowa's rural economy. The directors, managers and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues allowing Iowa's member-owned electric cooperatives to continue providing safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans.

Electric cooperative representatives will also be in attendance at the annual REC Day on the Hill to be held on March 14, 2018, at the capitol.



(From left) Prairie Energy Cooperative's Key Accounts Director Todd Foss, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, and Prairie Energy Cooperative's Assistant Board Secretary/Treasurer and Corn Belt Board President Scott Stecher, Board Secretary/Treasurer Donald Christopherson and Interim Manager Belva German.

Winter pruning leads to spring growing

As trees grow, it's easy to take their health and our safety for granted. However, maintenance and upkeep of trees is necessary, especially as it pertains to safety. Weak, dying and dead branches can break off in storms, damaging electrical equipment, power lines and buildings.

Pruning can help strengthen tree branches and promote growth. When splits in the tree's wood emerge, they expand as the tree grows. This can result in fallen branches that bring down power lines and damage electrical equipment.

It's best to prune during cold weather when the tree is dormant, not when trees are growing. The ideal time is between mid-November and mid-March. Trees pruned during winter months will have increased growth in the spring.

Make sure to plan before you begin to prune. When selecting equipment, take into consideration the area surrounding the tree so that it will not come in contact with overhead power lines. If you're using a chain saw to prune, never reach above your shoulders. Ladders can be especially dangerous, so make sure that you have a firm foundation before you begin to climb. It can be helpful to have someone stationed at the bottom for added stability.

Start with the largest branches that need pruning before moving to the smaller ones. Trim at the growth points, not in the middle of branches. While pruning, make sure that you take frequent breaks so that you can remain focused on the task. During these breaks, always look up to assess if pruning can be done safely in the surrounding area.

Keep in mind: Never trim trees that are close to overhead power lines, including the service connection to your home. That is a job for trained professionals.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



90% of deciduous trees can be pruned in the winter once the trees have gone into dormancy.

Safe
Electricity.org

research collected from the Chicago Botanic Garden

Blanket yourself safely this winter

When winter chill begins and you bring out your electric blanket, first make sure it is safe to use.

- Check the product label and that the model was tested and approved by a safety laboratory. Verify that there is a safety mark, such as "UL."
- Check that all of the wiring is snug.
- When your blanket is in use, it should be flat so the coils aren't folded, which can create a fire risk and burns to the blanket.
- Be careful not to tuck blanket areas with electric wires or run cords under the mattress. This could create friction once you sleep on top of the mattress.
- If you are not in the room, turn off your blanket.
- Check your electric blanket for signs of damage—scorch marks, discoloration, fraying—these can be indications of damaged wiring.
- Stop using your blanket if you smell smoke or a buzzing sound during use.
- If your blanket has been used 10 years or longer, replace it.
- Never dry clean an electric blanket. Check manufacturer's instructions on whether it can safely withstand limited machine washing on the gentle cycle.
- Use your blanket on top of your body. Body weight on top of the blanket can create a fire hazard.
- Don't allow pets near your blanket. Claws can cause rips and tears possibly exposing the electric wiring of the blanket.



Know the Facts

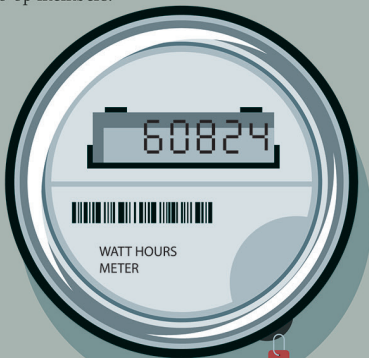
electric blanket safety

SafeElectricity.org

Your Touchstone Energy cooperative wants everyone to have a warm winter season and safe, peaceful rest. For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

DO NOT TAMPER WITH YOUR ELECTRIC METER

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.



- ⊘ Never break a meter seal.
- ⊘ Never open a meter base.
- ⊘ Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.



What's cookin'?

Have a recipe everyone loves? Living with Energy in Iowa is always looking for recipes for the magazine. If yours is chosen, you will earn a \$25 power bill credit! Take a look at Page 9 in any issue of the magazine to learn how to submit your recipe either by email or by mailing to the magazine's headquarters.

Looking for a new recipe? Go to the website and click on Recipe Archive at the top and search by main ingredient and/or category. Try a new recipe tonight!



BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM STRIKES

In the event of a power outage, be prepared by keeping the following items in an easy-to-find emergency supply kit.



■ WATER

Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.



■ TOOLS

Flashlight, extra batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.



■ FIRST AID KIT AND PRESCRIPTIONS

First aid supplies, hand sanitizer and at least one week's supply of prescriptions and medications for the family.

Learn more at www.ready.gov



Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency.



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Cooperatives

The power of human connections®

Nominating committee selects board candidates

The nominating committee of Butler County REC, duly appointed by the board of directors and consisting of Gene Carpenter, Phil Barnett and Steve Brouwer, met Dec. 28, 2017. They nominated the cooperative members listed below for the office of director for the ensuing term of three years each. The election will take place at the annual meeting to be held Sat., March 17, 2018.

To represent the west half of Bremer County

- Duane Rieckenberg (incumbent), Ionia

To represent the northeast quarter of Butler County

- Troy Feldman, Greene
- David Nicholson, Clarksville

To represent the southwest quarter of Butler County

- Dawson Ackerman, Ackley
- Share Brandt, Allison



Nominating committee members (from left) Phil Barnett, Gene Carpenter and Steve Brouwer.

Candidate information will be mailed to members with the February electric bills and will be online at www.butlerrec.coop.

Attend your annual meeting Sat., March 17, North Butler Middle School, Allison, and vote for your choice of candidates.

COURTESY OF YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

WIN A WEEK-LONG TRIP

2018

- Join 1,800 other students from across the country
- Meet Iowa's members of Congress
- Tour historic sights
- Take a boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Visit Smithsonian museums
- Make new friends
- Learn more about electric cooperatives
- Sharpen your leadership skills

NEXT YOUTH TOUR • JUNE 8-14, 2018

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS—look for this 2018 Youth Tour informational poster at your school! If your parents are co-op members or residents of Aplington, Fairbank, Fredericksburg or Readlyn, you are invited to apply. Go to our website at www.butlerrec.coop or contact us at 888.267.2726.



Our employees' generous spirit

In the spirit of the Christmas season, Butler County REC employees came through in December again by donating hats, mittens and socks for area schools and food for area food banks. A raffle was also held at the November employee/safety meeting where employees raised \$425 for an employee of another cooperative who recently finished cancer treatments.

Call us today for a FREE energy audit

Mike Boomgarden, energy advisor, will come to your home, perform an assessment and let you know what you can be doing to make your home more efficient and possibly warmer. Mike can also use our infrared camera to detect air leaks. Call 888.267.2726 and ask for Mike!

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