

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

June 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO
ccodner@butlerrec.coop

Our employees

What if you call Butler County REC and no one answers? Or have an outage and the line crew doesn't respond? Or you need a water heater and nobody is available to deliver one?

Butler County REC does not exist without our members, nor does it exist without our employees, who take customer service very seriously.

Every few years we participate in an examination of our corporate culture. This encourages us to take a look at how healthy our culture is and what we need to work on to make it better. Every employee and every director participate in this training. Our culture guides us, and we refer to it often when making decisions.

One very important component of our culture is safety. Although we have over 1 million hours of no-lost-time accidents, this was never a goal. Rather, it is an on-going expectation, evident in the high marks the cooperative received on our Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program audit from the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Another component is training, with opportunities for our employees to further educate themselves to enhance their positions. Our national organization, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), offers a number of certificate programs, including Supervisory, Key Accounts, Management Internship, Certified Cooperative Communicator, Speak Up! Listen Up!, and Management Essentials. Many of our employees have earned certifications in these programs that require countless hours of personal time spent studying and may require testing or writing papers to complete the designations.

In addition to NRECA accredited programs, many of our employees have other affiliated professional certifications and have participated in numerous on-line classes to educate themselves on how to better serve our members.

At Butler County REC, not only did we receive high marks for our safety audit, but our financial audit required no adjustments, a trend for at least 10 years. Audit preparation never ends. Our accountants continually update financial information throughout the year but the big push is the three weeks prior to the audit. Six of our employees are directly responsible for gathering information for the auditors. It is a great accomplishment to have a revision-free audit.

Another great accomplishment for our employees was their response to the pandemic. We were able to keep our office open due to our enclosed lobby, sanitation measures, online meetings, and social distancing. Our employees seamlessly adapted to these changes, as I am sure many of you did as well. As a result, business for the most part carried on as usual.

Our organization appears to run effortlessly because of the dedication of our employees. "To improve quality of life for those whose lives we touch" is our mission, our culture, our belief. We are grateful for the support of our members and proud to serve you.



Take a permanent vacation from mailing your REC bills

From June through August when you sign up for automatic bill pay with us, your name will be entered into a drawing for a **\$100 bill credit** for the month in which you enroll!

As a new sign-up, if you mail in a form (for checking or savings), you will receive a one-time **\$5 bill credit**. Forms can be found on our website at butlerrec.coop, or call the office and we will send you the form. Sign up through SmartHub on our website (for checking, savings, or credit card), and you will receive a one-time **\$10 bill credit**.

This promotion runs through August 31, 2021.

Leave everything behind, including remembering to pay your Butler County REC bill, when you go on vacation!

Thank you!

We are thankful for our 70 members contributing to RECare, our program of members helping members.



Funds through RECare are distributed by local community action agencies to help pay heating bills and to assist in the weatherization of homes of low-income consumers.

If you would like to contribute, please call us at 888-267-2726.



Suds and savings in the laundry room

By Abby Berry, NRECA

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion of energy consumption from major appliances. Follow these Department of Energy tips for saving on suds:

Wash with cold water. Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half.

Wash full loads when possible. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy.

Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle in the washer. This setting removes more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.

Dry heavier cottons separately. Loads will dry faster and more evenly.

Make use of the "cool down" cycle. Your clothes will finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer.

Use lower heat settings to dry clothing. Regardless of drying time, you'll still use less energy.

Use dryer balls. Dryer balls help keep clothes separated for faster drying, and they can help reduce static, so you can eliminate dryer sheets.

Switch loads while the dryer is warm. This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.

Clean the lint filter after each drying cycle. If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.

Purchase ENERGY STAR®-rated washers and dryers. ENERGY STAR®-rated models rating use about 20% less energy than conventional models.

To learn about additional ways you can save energy at home, visit your Touchstone Energy cooperative website.



BUILT by our community.
SHAPED by our community.
LED by our community.

**WE'RE PROUD TO
POWER YOUR LIFE.**

Brownouts: What are they, and why do they happen?

The lights flicker and dim. Your computer screen goes dark. As soon as you start to wonder when or if you clicked save, the lights become brighter and everything seems to return to normal.

When these events occur simultaneously, it could mean that you have experienced a brownout. But what is a brownout, and how is it different from a blackout — also known as a power outage?

A brownout means that energy is reduced by 10 to 25 percent, where a blackout is a complete shutdown of power. Brownouts typically occur when outdoor temperatures are extreme, causing a significant spike in energy demand. This heightened demand can cause electricity production to be near or at capacity.

To prepare for high-energy demand, we recommend:

- Keeping your home stocked with flashlights, batteries, water, non-perishable food, and other emergency items in the event of an extended outage.
- Installing point-of-use surge protectors.
- Considering a whole-home surge protector, installed by a qualified electrician, which helps protect all your home's electrical devices.
- Having a fully charged portable power bank on hand. It is also good to have a fully charged cell phone on hand in case of an emergency.

During high-energy demand, we recommend:

- Unplugging unessential appliances. If done in multiple homes, it may help shorten the length of the brownout.
 - Unplugging computers and high-end electronics to protect them from potential damage caused by power sags and surges.
- For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Safety first: Take cover when a storm is brewing

Sometimes a storm pops up or changes direction without any warning, while other times it is forecast days in advance and follows its predicted course. In either case, knowing what to do can help to keep you safe.

When a storm hits

- Never seek shelter under tall objects.
- Immediately vacate elevated areas.
- Get away from ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity—wires, fences, golf clubs.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Pick a safe place in your home, away from windows and doors.
- Know the difference between a weather watch and a warning. A watch means that the weather is possible in and near the area. A warning means that severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar.

After the storm

- Never step into a flooded basement or other standing water or touch (or use) electrical appliances, cords, wires, or switches while you are wet or standing in water.
- Never go near a downed line. If you see one, call 9-1-1.
- If you encounter a downed power line while driving or after an auto accident, do not get out. Call 9-1-1 to report the downed line (pull over first if you are driving). If you must exit your vehicle after an accident because of a fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump out, landing with both feet together. Make solid hops with your feet together, hopping as far away as you can.
- If your home has been damaged by a flood, turn off the power to your house if it is safe to do so.
- If the wiring, electrical system, or appliances have been damaged by water, have your home inspected by an electrician; also, have appliances serviced by a qualified technician before using them.

For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR AFTER A STORM

When the skies clear and the birds sing, know that the storm's fury could have created **electrical hazards that you may or may not be able to see**. Conditions in which stray electricity could energize the area, a person or objects include:

DOWNED POWER LINES

- On the ground.
- Under storm debris.
- Draped over or touching a metal fence.
- Covered by standing water.
- Across or by the road.
- Hidden in tree branches.

OTHER POSSIBLE DAMAGE

- Drooping or sagging lines (never try to move one).
- Split or broken utility poles.
- Damage to a padmount transformer (green box).
- Lightning strike to a substation transformer.
- Damaged or unstable guy wires.

NEVER GO NEAR downed power lines or other damaged electrical equipment to assess damage or clean up the area. **STAY AWAY** and call 9-1-1 to report damage.

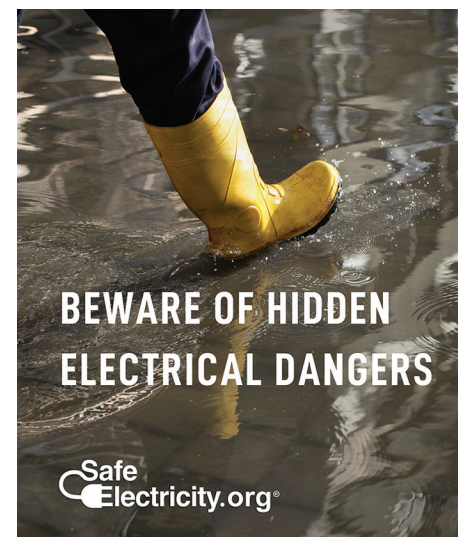
Power lines and other electrical equipment do not have to be sparking, arcing (giving off a flame) or on fire to be energized.

 Safe
Electricity.org®



Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$1,500 for their charity!

Contest entries accepted during June at IowaShineTheLight.com





Cael Ruzicka



Evan Bjelica

Youth Tour scholarships awarded

Two recent high school graduates who were finalists for the 2020 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. have qualified for scholarships from Butler County REC.

- Cael Ruzicka, 2021 graduate of Charles City High School. Cael will attend Iowa State University, Ames, and study agricultural engineering. He is the son of Michael and Angela Ruzicka of Marble Rock.
- Evan Bjelica, 2021 graduate of Charles City High School. Evan will attend Iowa State University, Ames, and study agricultural engineering. He is the son of Tom and Roxann Bjelica, Charles City.

Butler County REC wishes Cael and Evan the best of luck!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Karen Schwickerath, Waverly, who won a \$25 bill credit from *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine when her recipe for pecan chicken was published in the April 2021 issue.



Consider sending your favorite recipe to *Living with Energy in Iowa*. If yours is chosen, you will earn a \$25 power bill credit. Page 9 of every issue details how to submit your recipe either by email or by mail to the magazine's headquarters.

If you're looking for a new recipe, visit livingwithenergyin-iowa.com, click on Recipe Archive at the top and search by main ingredient and/or category.

Let's get cooking!

EnergyWise Renewables program supports renewable energy

Butler County REC's EnergyWise Renewables program was established in 2006 to give co-op members the opportunity to support member-owned renewable energy projects in its service territory. Initially, the program supported only wind generation. Today the program includes solar and any type of distributed generation that provides an alternative or enhancement to the traditional electric power system. All contributions go to support small-scale distributed generation in our service territory. Butler County REC does not charge for the administration of this program.

To take part in this voluntary program, complete the information below and return to Butler County REC. If you already contribute, there is nothing you need to do now. Your participation is greatly appreciated.



EnergyWise Renewables Participation Form

I wish to support (the amount you select will be automatically added to your monthly power bill):

- 100 kilowatt-hours (\$1.50 per month) 200 kilowatt-hours (\$3.00 per month)
- 300 kilowatt-hours (\$4.50 per month) 400 kilowatt-hours (\$6.00 per month)
- Other per month _____. Maximum contribution is 3,000 kilowatt-hours (\$45.00 per month)
- One-time contribution. I wish to support EnergyWise Renewables with a one-time contribution. My check for _____ is enclosed.

Name _____ Account Number _____

Signature _____ Date _____

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521 North Main • PO Box 98 • Allison, IA 50602
PHONES: 319.267.2726 or 888.267.2726 • FAX: 319.267.2566
OFFICE HOURS: Mon. - Fri., 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
WEBSITE: www.butlerrec.coop • E-MAIL: butler@butlerrec.coop
Craig Codner, CEO • EDITOR: Anne Sesker, CCC

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