

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

July 2023

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Frerichs earns journeyman lineman status

The road to becoming a journeyman lineman is long and intense. We are proud to announce that Lee Frerichs, five-year Butler County REC employee, recently traveled that road and is now a journeyman.

The requirements that an apprentice lineman must meet are set forth by the Department of Labor. The apprentice is chosen and sponsored by their cooperative, which agrees to follow the requirements.

The program contains three parts: written, evaluation of technical skills, and on-the-job training. The written portion has eight steps over which the apprentice is tested individually and then in a comprehensive final exam. For their technical skills, each apprentice needs to show competency in over 70 skills. Supervisors track the skill level to show gaps and levels of understanding. The third element requires 7,000 hours of on-the-job training in the field, recorded and submitted by the apprentice. In addition, they must also record 1,000 hours of energized work. This training is under the supervision of experienced cooperative staff.

Once the requirements are met, the now journeyman, receives a certificate of completion from the Department of Labor.

According to Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives safety trainer Jim Wolfe, “The goal of this and every apprenticeship program is to fill any training gaps present and ensure that employees are ready for each day at their cooperative.”

Congratulations, Lee—your hard work paid off!



(L to R) Lee Frerichs, Butler County REC journeyman lineman, shakes hands with Jim Wolfe, IAEC safety trainer.



Meter deployment completed

After numerous meetings in the office and hours in the field, the Butler County REC meter deployment was completed in June—one month earlier than our July 2023 goal.

With the help of Van Wert of Grundy Center, our employees were able to set over 5,000 meters since July of 2022. This includes residential, irrigation, and commercial and industrial members' meters.

To receive the full benefit of your meter, be sure to download the SmartHub app to view your usage, pay your bill, or contact us. Call us at 888-267-2726 if you have questions on how to access or use SmartHub.

Join us next month for our Member Appreciation Events

Let us fix supper for you and your family!

Tuesday, Aug. 1: Maple Hills Country Club—2586 170th St., Tripoli

Thursday, Aug. 3: Big 4 Fairgrounds—499 Greenwood Ave., Nashua

Monday, Aug. 14: Butler County REC Warehouse—619 N. Railroad St., Allison

From 5 to 7 p.m. we will be serving grilled burgers, beans, potato chips, Chocolate Shoppe ice cream, cookies, lemonade, and water. If you don't have time to stay, swing by for a drive-thru meal—we'll even give your pup a pup cup with whipped cream and a dog treat!

Members will receive a Bluetooth speaker and first-aid kit, can register for prizes (bill credits and a Ryobi power washer), watch a safety demonstration, check out the gear our crews wear, and catch up with neighbors. We'll have activities and drawings (scooters and helmets and a cornhole game) for the kids, too.

Golf cart rides will be available for our members needing assistance to the venues from their vehicles.

See you there!

\$2,881,026.60 allocated by Butler County REC board

As a member-owner of Butler County REC, you share in the excess margins of the cooperative in the form of patronage dividends. This is part of the cooperative difference. Investor-owned utilities pay their excess margins to their investors, not those who use their services.

After reviewing the operating revenues for 2022, your board of directors approved to set aside \$2,881,026.60 in excess margins. These margins – retained as patronage capital – will be used to help keep your electric cooperative financially sound and the quality of service as high as possible.

Allocation

Your share of the 2022 margin – your patronage allocation – was listed in the box directly below your name on the June 2023 electric bill for May's usage. The total unretired patronage for all of your accounts was included.

The amount you earn in a given year is based upon the amount of electricity you use. The sum of your bills for the year is multiplied by a percentage to determine your allocation.

Payment

Butler County REC is currently on a 19-year payback schedule, so this patronage allocation will likely be paid in 2041. The latest distribution of patronage was in February 2023, when \$1,151,463.21 was returned. This distribution included a portion of 2004 and 2005, in addition to a portion from Corn Belt Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier.

Address

If you move out of our service territory and will no longer receive electrical service from Butler County REC, it is important to keep your address current with us. We rely on former co-op members to send us their new address for patronage disbursement mailings.



Play it safe near grain bins.

When moving equipment, be aware of power lines and maintain at least a 10-foot clearance to ensure safety. Follow all guidelines set by the National Electrical Safety Code.

Equipment vs. infrastructure on the rise

Recently, Butler County REC and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier, have seen several instances of farm equipment encountering overhead wires and power poles.

These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when moving and operating large equipment.

Be sure to:

- **Maintain a 10-foot clearance in all directions**
- **Use a spotter**
- **Contact 911 if your equipment makes contact, and remain in the vehicle**

If you come into contact with our poles or wires and there is damage to our equipment, you will be billed for any repairs.

More importantly, we want you to go home safe. **PLEASE look up and look out.**

We're Here to Serve You By Anne Prince

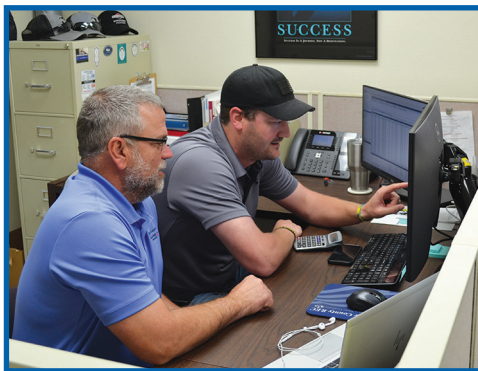
"We're here to serve you" may sound generic, but to Butler County REC employees and directors it means everything.

As your local electric cooperative, we were created to serve members. Neighbors banded together and formed our co-op for the common good. It was the only way the community could bring electricity where there was none.

While our focus has remained steady on providing reliable energy to our members, the energy landscape and consumer expectations are far different than they were decades ago. That's why we're adapting, to keep pace with changing technology, evolving needs, and new expectations.

Serving as your trusted energy advisor means we want to help you save energy (and money) and provide advice and information. For example, if you're looking for ways to save energy in your home, check out butlerrec.coop for tips and ideas. Consider scheduling a free energy audit with Matt or Tyler to understand how your home uses energy, determine the best ways to modify energy use, and keep more money in your wallet.

If you're interested in solar installation, we would be happy to give you an unbiased view of the pros and cons. Investing in a solar system is a major decision, and it's important to fully understand the costs, responsibilities, and potential energy savings. We look



(L to R) Matt Mahoney, energy services manager, and Tyler Opperman, energy advisor, are your sources for saving energy and money.

at the total energy picture to help you determine the best options for your home.

We also recognize that many members are considering electric vehicle options. Butler County REC provides information about EV charging so you can make informed decisions about EVs, and we offer an EV charger rebate.

The next time you hear us use the phrase "we're here to serve you," know that we mean it. Service is deeply ingrained into who we are. We continue to evolve with the times, and in return, we've found additional ways to serve you and provide more options for you to power your life.

We're here whenever you need us. Connect with us online, in person, or through our social media channels. Let us know how we can serve you better.



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Get Smart About Lighting By Abby Berry

Smart lighting is energy efficient.

Most smart bulbs use LED technology, which is much more efficient than traditional incandescent lighting. Additionally, smart lighting gives you more control over how and when you light your home.

Smart lighting provides convenience and control.

Most smart bulbs can be controlled from an app on your smartphone or can be paired with your voice assistant, like Amazon Alexa. You can conveniently control lighting settings from anywhere in your home or when you're away.

Smart options empower you to personalize home lighting. Bright, warm, purple, green—whatever mood you want to create, smart lighting can help. For a more traditional look, try dimmable white bulbs. If you want to create the perfect ambiance for movie night, look for bulbs that can be adjusted for a variety of vibrant colors.

While smart lighting offers convenience and control, keep in mind your wall light switch will need to stay "on" for you to control the smart bulb from your phone or via voice command.

If you need additional options to operate the lights, consider a smart light switch. Today's smart switches tend to play nicely with smart bulbs. Many smart light switches include motion detectors as well.

If you're looking to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs to your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit, like the Philips Hue Starter Kit. Most kits include several bulbs and any additional tools you'll need to get started.

Join us at the Iowa State Fair!

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are again sponsoring the Rastetter 4-H Building on the south side of the Iowa State Fairgrounds for the Best Days Ever, Aug. 10-20. Cooperative employees from across the state will be working at a booth in the building.

Read your August InTouch newsletter and watch Facebook for more information, and plan to stop by!



When the weather is extreme, use energy wisely

We hear a lot about peak energy demand, but what is it and how does it impact electricity use? As the name implies, peak energy demand occurs when energy consumption is at its highest.

At Butler County REC, summertime energy demand increases between mid-afternoon to evening when temperatures soar. In the winter, demand increases during the early morning as members are getting ready for their day.

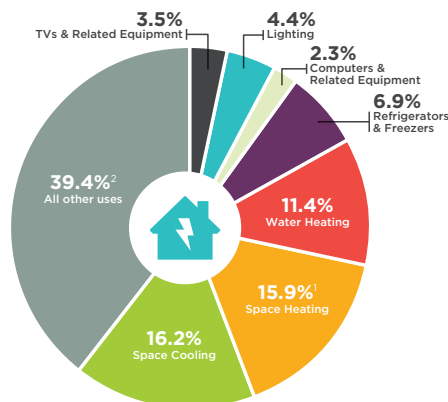
Changing the time of day you use energy can help lower your energy bills and avoid interruptions or service glitches that can occur during peak demand times. In the summer months, help decrease demand by doing the following:

- Turn your thermostat up by two degrees or more, and set your thermostat to a higher temperature when no one is home.
- If you do not have one, consider purchasing a smart thermostat.
- Make sure your HVAC system is in good working order.
- Use bathroom and kitchen fans temporarily to remove heat and humidity.
- Use a countertop toaster/convection oven instead of your oven.
- Use major appliances in the late evening.
- Program smart devices to run appliances at off-peak times.
- Close window coverings during the hottest part of the day.
- Use minimal lighting.
- Turn off and disconnect electronics that are not in use.
- Turn off stand-alone dehumidifiers.

Contact us at 888-267-2726 to learn more about energy efficiency and electrical safety. Or visit our website at butlerrec.coop.

How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" below) accounts for the largest percentage of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: Energy Information Administration 2022

Includes consumption for heat and venting furnace fans and boiler pumps. Excludes miscellaneous electronics, clothes washers and dryers, cooking equipment, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

Making small changes to conserve energy can help even out energy use, save money on your utility bill, and avoid service interruptions caused by high demand.



THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

At your electric co-op, we're proud to be a part of it, bringing people together by providing energy for all the things you love.

Neighbors helping neighbors: The cooperative way

Butler County REC has a set of principles we abide by, and one of them is "cooperatives helping cooperatives."

You can apply that principle to your own neighborhood: neighbors helping neighbors.

When it's extra-hot outside, check on your elderly neighbors.

Make sure your neighbors have working air conditioners or fans and that they're not feeling sick due to the heat.

Be the neighbor who checks in every day and can catch a possible problem-in-the-making.

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