

WITH MEMBERS OF PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE



Patrick Reiland

Reiland earns power line design and staking certification

Congratulations to Patrick Reiland, serviceman, on his completion of the Utility Training Services (UTS) Power Line Design & Staking Certification. Reiland received notice in December that he successfully completed the training program. He was honored with a diploma and logo jacket from UTS.

REMINDER: Sign up for auto pay and win a prize!

Sign up for auto payment between now and March 31, 2017, and we'll enter your name in a drawing for a \$50 bill credit.

To sign up, contact us or see the January newsletter for a participation form.



Christensen Farms & Feedlots, Inc., Garner, received the 2016 Venture Award, recognizing the company for the addition of a bio-security wash complex to its facility. From left are Rand Fisher, IADG; Todd Foss, Prairie Energy; Jill Kramer, Hancock County Economic Development; Bo Wright and Kirk Brincks, Christensen Farms; Bill Northey, Iowa secretary of agriculture; Becky Bradburn, Prairie Energy; and Jim Vermeer, Corn Belt Power.

Christensen Farms & Feedlots, Inc. honored with Iowa Venture Award

The Iowa Area Development Group (IADG), on behalf of Iowa's rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and independent telecommunication companies, recently honored several distinguished Iowa companies with the Iowa Venture Award.

Christensen Farms was recognized for their most recent facility addition of a bio-security wash complex in the Touchstone Energy Park in Garner, Iowa. The facility is the company's sixth, and was built to ensure all trucks and trailers are washed in a timely manner in accordance with all bio-security procedures and guidelines. The facility consists of three buildings: a truck wash, a wood chip storage building, and a bio-dry building. The purpose is to stop the spread of disease and help manage the health of the company's animals. Christensen Farms operates in six states and has approximately 1,000 employees, operating four feed mills, and managing 145,000 sows on 44 farms. They also oversee more than 250 nurseries and grow-finish sites.

"The Iowa Venture Awards provides a forum to celebrate the courage, contribution, innovation responsibility and vision of Iowa entrepreneurs," said IADG President Rand Fisher. "IADG is proud to recognize these outstanding companies for their contribution to their community, region and state."

Five additional businesses were recognized with an Iowa Venture Award for their significant contributions in diversifying and strengthening Iowa's economy. The recipients include: Bratney Companies of Marshalltown; Concrete Machinery Inc. of Iowa in Paton; Great Lakes Communication Corp. of Spencer; Maassen Dairy Farms of Maurice; and Mogler Farms/Pig Hill West of Alford. Bill Northey, Iowa secretary of agriculture, assisted in presenting the Iowa Venture Awards and honoring the Iowa companies and their leaders.

Paying for a system that works around the clock



Corn Belt Power Cooperative, wholesale power supplier for your cooperative, recently upgraded its Hope Switching Station near Humboldt. The upgrade improves system reliability and provides backup should future line trips occur.

Electric cooperatives have been around for a long time, many for over 75 years, and a lot has changed since we first turned the lights on for rural Iowa. Today, almost everything we do is impacted by the ease of electricity.

Some of our member-owners ask why they still need to pay for a system that should have been paid for by now. The truth is, most – if not all – of the original system was paid

for many years ago and has likely been replaced. When you have a system that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, equipment needs to be replaced at regular intervals. While poles and wires generally have a life span of 30-40 years, some may not last as long due to a variety of conditions.

Paying for an electric system can be compared to paying for your home. Over many years the original tract of land and the physical property are paid in full. But infrastructure updates such as a new furnace, air conditioner, windows, and roof are required, not to mention updates to appliances, flooring, and paint.

Consider how inefficient it would be to heat your home with a 75-year-old furnace. Think of the additional money you'd spend each month due to its inefficiency instead of replacing it with a new model. The same logic applies to your co-op as we need to replace vehicles and equipment over the years to serve you best.

The original co-op infrastructure fulfilled the expectations of that time in terms of reliability and affordability. What's in place today is an improved distribution system that allows us to meet increasing demands for kilowatt-hours in an efficient manner.

To balance reliability with affordability, we upgrade our system when and where it makes sense to do so. We balance financing upgrades and replacements with debt and equity so that we can keep your rates affordable while providing power that you can count on for your home or business.

Keep your heat inside

A home's heating and cooling, water heating, and lighting typically account for 40 percent of its energy usage. The Energy Education Council shares the following tips to help consumers be more efficient in their winter energy use to reduce energy waste and save money while staying warm.

Be sure that your heating system is maintained regularly and serviced by a professional. Also, regularly unblock and clean radiators, baseboards, and vents so that they work at peak efficiency.

If you have a fireplace, you may need to add caulking around the hearth so that heat is not lost. If you do not use your fireplace, plug and seal the flue.

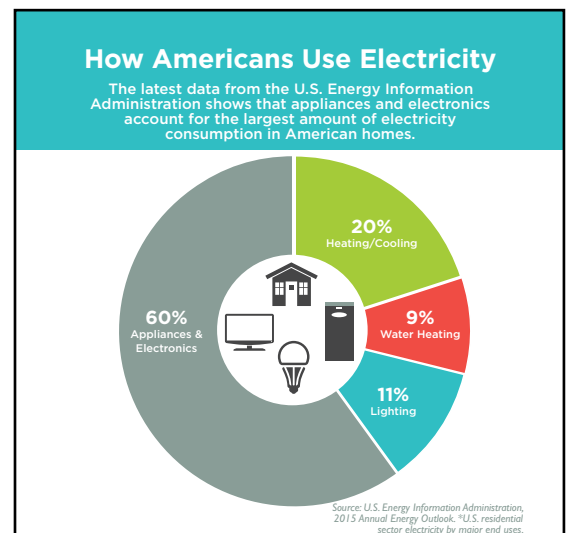
Make sure walls, attics, and flooring – especially above unheated areas such as crawl spaces and garages – are properly insulated.

During cold winter months make sure you are running your ceiling fans in a clockwise direction. This will push down and redistribute hot air that naturally rises close to the ceiling.

Turn down the temperature of the water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This saves money on heating costs and is still warm enough to fit your hot water needs.

EnergyStar recommends having your heating system evaluated if it is over 10 years old or if it is not keeping your home comfortable. If your system needs to be replaced, talk to your installer about getting the most efficient unit you can afford.

For more information on energy efficiency, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.



Look out for galloping lines

High winds and ice can affect power lines in a way that makes them gallop. Strong winter winds can cause ice to build up on one side of a power line. When this disproportionate buildup occurs, it changes the flow of air around the line, which can then cause it to start bouncing – potentially damaging the lines, causing power outages, and even making the lines fall to the ground.

Once galloping starts, there is not much a power company can do to alleviate it until winds die down. This is why many power lines have objects, like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to the line. These devices are placed on power lines to help reduce the galloping of lines and prevent potential danger.

It is important to keep your distance from downed power lines, as it is impossible to visually assess if the line is energized.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage.

This kit includes: bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, first aid kit/medicine, flashlight, radio, extra batteries, and toiletries.

Safe Electricity offers additional tips on how to stay warm during a winter power outage:

- Stay inside, and dress warm.
- Close off unneeded rooms and place draft blocks at the bottom of doors to minimize cold air entering the house.
- Cover windows at night.
- Be aware of the temperature in your home. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you cannot keep your home warm.
- When the power is restored, there will be a power surge. To protect your circuits and appliances, switch off lights and unplug appliances when the power goes out. Leave one light switched on as a quick reminder that the power is restored. For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



If you see galloping or downed lines, contact your utility as soon as possible, and stay away.

Protecting members from utility scammers

Gas and electric utility companies across the United States and Canada have joined forces as Utilities United Against Scams to protect patrons from the long-running scam targeting consumers of utility service providers.

Information for cooperative members

A member receives a phone call from a scammer warning that the utility will disconnect the member's electric service if the member fails to make a payment – usually within a short timeframe.

Red flags for scam activity

- The thief becomes angry and tells the member his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment isn't made – usually within less than an hour.
- The thief instructs the member to purchase a pre-paid debit or credit card – widely available at retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment to the utility.
- The scammer asks the member for the prepaid card's receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the card's funds.

How to protect yourself

- Your co-op never asks or requires a member with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Members can make payments in a variety of ways.
- Members with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.
- Members who suspect or experience fraud, or feel threatened during contact with one of these thieves, should contact local authorities, and then the co-op's at the phone number listed on their bill. Never dial the phone number the scammers provide.



Seeking candidates for two board positions

At the June 7, 2017, annual meeting of members, director terms in Districts 2 and 5 will expire. Directors Jim Wellik (District 2) and Marion Denger (District 5) will seek re-election.

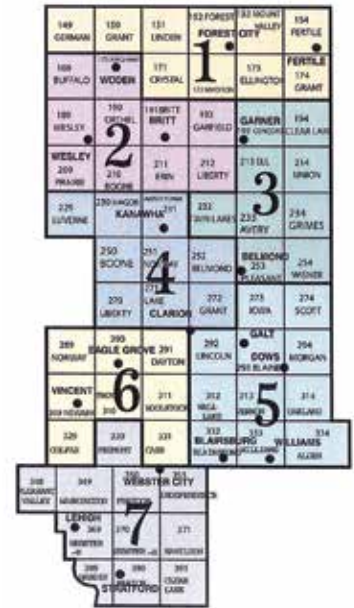
To be considered eligible for election, members must reside or receive electric service from Prairie Energy at a location within the district in which they are seeking election. If you are interested in serving on the board of directors, please contact or send information to one of the nominating committee members listed.

District 2: Bradley Buns
670 330th St
Woden IA 50484
641-565-3347

James Post
3301 250th Ave
Titonka IA 50480
515-928-2329

District 5: Ronald Lentz
3112 Washington Ave
Dows IA 50071
515-852-3302

Jerry Norris
PO Box 307
Dows IA 50071
515-852-4499



From left, Prairie Energy Directors Josh Amonson and Donald Christopherson visited with Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds at the legislative reception in Des Moines.

Electric cooperatives discuss important issues at reception

Over 150 directors, managers, and staff members from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with 100 state legislators on January 10 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception at the State Historical Building in Des Moines. Guests of honor included: Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, Secretary of State Paul Pate, 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.



High school sophomores and juniors whose parents are members of Prairie Energy Cooperative are invited to apply for the 2017 Youth Tour to Washington D.C., held June 9-15.

The deadline to request an application is March 10.

The application includes completing open-book quizzes and answering the question: *What moment in American history do you wish you had taken part of and what would you have contributed?*

Contact Prairie Energy today for an application form.

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