

Southwest lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

February 2024

Legislators Visit REC

Senator Amy Sinclair, Senator Tom Shipley, and Representative Devon Wood met with the Southwest Iowa REC Board of Directors and Management Staff on December 29, 2023, at the cooperative office in Stanton.

This meeting provided a valuable opportunity to meet with our state legislators prior to the beginning of the 2024 Legislative Session to discuss issues that impact rural electric cooperatives and the communities we serve.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including energy-related matters that are central to Iowa's rural economy. Electric co-op directors, managers and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues. Collectively, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives provide affordable, reliable, safe and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties every day.



Pictured left to right – Board Vice-President Mark Herzberg, Board President Marilyn Werner, Senator Amy Sinclair, Representative Devon Wood, Senator Tom Shipley, CEO Phil Kinser, Board Treasurer Jason Smith, and Board Secretary Kay Fast-Deyoe.

Preparing for a Winter Storm

Extreme winter weather can immobilize an entire region. Even areas that normally experience mild winters can suddenly be hit with heavy snowfall or intense cold. Winter storms can result in closed streets and highways, power outages, and flooding. Act now to ensure the safety and comfort of your family in the event of extreme winter weather.

Before a storm

- Have snow removal equipment on hand, as well as rock salt to melt ice, and sand to improve traction.
- Regular heating fuel sources may be cut off, so make sure an alternative is available. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.
- Locate your main water supply and valves and make sure you know how to shut them off in case a freezing pipe bursts.
- Repair roof leaks and keep gutters clear. Trim any tree branches that could fall on your house during a storm.
- Winterize your home by caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, sealing the attic area, and installing storm windows. This will help to keep your family safe and comfortable during a storm.

During a storm

- Listen to your radio, television, or NOAA Weather Radio for weather reports and emergency information.
- Eat regularly and drink ample fluids but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- If it becomes necessary to conserve fuel, keep your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off

heat to some rooms.

- Stay dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent the loss of body heat.
 - Watch for signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
 - Drive only if it is necessary. If you must drive, or travel in the daytime, do not drive alone and keep others informed of your whereabouts. Also, stay on main roads. Avoid back-road shortcuts.
- #### After a storm
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
 - Help neighbors who may require special assistance including infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
 - If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation, and open all faucets; pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold. Do not try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame.
 - Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by extremely cold conditions.

A little forethought and some attention to detail will help to ensure that you and your family stay warm, dry, and safe in your home this winter, no matter what the weather is outside.

Please remember

- Our phones are answered 24/7 at 888-220-4869 and crews are on call all day every day.
- Please do not text, email, or facebook message Southwest Iowa REC or the linemen. These are not monitored 24/7 and we cannot guarantee your power

outage has been reported to our line crews.

- In rain, sleet, or snow, our line crew is equipped to work in all types of weather. They are skilled professionals and can work in a multitude of conditions.
- Call your neighbors! By doing so, you can help us more clearly determine where the issue may be located on the line and speed up power restoration.
- If you do experience an interruption in power, check your meter before calling in (if possible). If the meter is blank, call the REC. If your meter is still reporting numbers, please call your preferred electrician. This saves you money on not having our crews dispatched to a non-outage event for the REC.
- If mass outages do occur, please have patience with us! Our crew works as efficiently and safely as possible. Visit Southwest Iowa REC's website for a local and statewide outage map at www.swiarec.coop. Please stay safe and aware of your surroundings. We are proud to serve our members!



Proactively Providing Safe and Reliable Service



Phil Kinser

When electric cooperative member-owners are asked what they value most about their electric service, two things consistently rank near the top – reliability and affordability. With a 5-year annual average reliability rate of 99.98%, we know reliability doesn't happen by chance. It takes constant effort to maintain systems, improve where necessary, and anticipate our member-owners' increasing needs for electric service.

During the winter months, reliability is under greater scrutiny from our member-owners. Old Man Winter's fury of snow and ice storms, combined with strong winds, can put our systems to the test in a significant way. When outages occur, the most frequent cause is trees or other vegetation coming into contact with power lines. These types of outages are not only inconvenient for our member-owners but also costly to your cooperative's bottom line, which impacts affordability over the long-term.

We know that vegetation – especially trees – are valued parts of our landscape. Beyond enhancing the beauty of an area, they provide important functions like cool shade, noise barriers, supplying vital oxygen to the atmosphere, and providing a habitat for many animals. But trees also grow, which can cause problems with power lines if they are not properly planted or if volunteer trees rise in unintended areas.

When branches and limbs break off, they often land in roadways or bring the power lines down with them – posing a safety risk to cooperative employees and the public. Because our distribution system connects thousands of people across our service territory, one tree coming in contact with a power line may impact your neighbors near and far. The Iowa Electrical Safety Code requires electric utilities, including cooperatives, to have a schedule and procedures for regular tree trimming and vegetation management, which is critical in minimizing these instances.

Both federal and state policies require that vegetation must be cleared from power lines as a safety measure for member-owners and our employees. These groups also have strict guidelines, including prohibiting trees from being planted certain distances away from power lines.

Under our vegetation management program, maintaining line clearance is our primary objective. We do this while ensuring we trim vegetation in an environmentally responsible manner. The tree trimming process has two purposes – to remove elements that may already be coming into contact with utility equipment, such as wires and conductors and to create a clearance that will provide hazard-free operation of electric service.

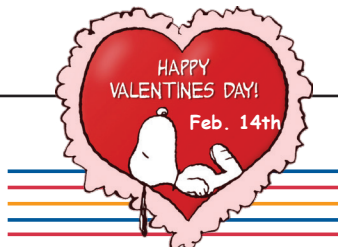
Using the established standards as the guide, we also know that a methodical, proactive approach is important to ensure the safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible delivery of service. Like many things in life, preventative maintenance is a key to health – oil changes are vital to the longevity of a vehicle, regular dental visits are important in cavity prevention, and annual inspections and maintenance will likely extend the life of your furnace. Left to chance – rather than being proactive – your vehicle, teeth or furnace would likely suffer. The same is true with your cooperative's electric system. By proactively clearing vegetation before it reaches power lines, Southwest Iowa REC will be less impacted during severe weather and we'll avoid longer, more costly outages.

The areas we will be performing vegetation management practices in this year are as follows:

- Adair County** – Richland and Washington townships
- Adams County** – Colony, Carl, and Douglas townships
- Montgomery County** – Douglas, Scott, and Washington townships
- Page County** – Fremont township
- Ringgold County** – Benton, Grant, Lincoln, and Washington townships
- Taylor County** – Clayton, Gay, Grant, Marshall, and Platte townships
- Union County** – Spaulding township



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TREES – TOO CLOSE FOR (YOUR) COMFORT

TREES CAUSE MAJORITY OF POWER OUTAGES

SafeElectricity.org

WHY DOES YOUR POWER PROVIDER TRIM TREES?

Although most trees do not present a problem, some of them grow into or crowd power lines, poles or other utility equipment and cause service issues. Unruly and overgrown trees can:

- ⚠️ Cause outages.
- 🔥 Create fire hazards.
- ⚡ Break off and land on power lines.
- ⚡ Cause lights to flicker during high winds.
- ❄️ Get weighed down with ice and cause issues.

Proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health, although sometimes a tree must be removed. This is a last resort, but it can be necessary if there are:

- 🌳 Fast-growing trees directly under power lines.
- 🌳 Trees that are leaning into lines.
- 🌳 Trees that are declining, cracked or split.

Unobstructed power lines make it easier and safer for utility crews to repair or service lines.

✔️ Power companies trim trees to better serve you.

Learn more at SafeElectricity.org

Accepting Applications for High School Leadership Trip to D.C.



Students can apply now for a trip to Washington, D.C., from June 15-21!

Local high school students interested in public service & government are encouraged to apply now! Learn more at IowaYouthTour.com



At Southwest Iowa REC, one way we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders is by participating in the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program. We're looking for high school sophomores, juniors, or seniors with a passion for government and public service to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital in June.

1 student will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2024 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., from June 15-21 along with 40 other student leaders from Iowa. The Iowa Youth Tour group will join hundreds of students from across the country as they learn more about electric cooperatives and American history and come home with a greater understanding of their role as American citizens. Students will also learn about the U.S. government and meet with their members of Congress. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums, and historical landmarks. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

We are accepting Youth Tour applications now through March 15th, 2024. High school students attending a school within our service area are eligible to apply; the

student must be a current sophomore, junior, or senior high school student. The application process consists of completing our application form which includes an essay question. We will conduct in-person interviews with finalists. You can download our form at swiarec.coop/youth-tour or stop by our office for a printed copy. Contact Suzy, Southwest Iowa REC Administrative Assistant, at 888-220-4869 ext. 1 for more information.

For more than 65 years, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have been sending deserving students to D.C. This program is a great resume builder for student leaders and a wonderful opportunity to kickstart one's passion for government affairs or advocacy. Make sure to apply for Youth Tour 2024 by March 15th!



Scholarships Reminder

Southwest Iowa REC will once again be offering scholarships for the 2023-2024 school year to graduating high school seniors.

We will be awarding fourteen (14) \$500 scholarships. In addition, three (3) \$1,000 scholarships will be available for students planning to attend an Accredited Lineman School or electrical trade program.

Completed applications and a photo must be received at the REC Office by March 1, 2024 to be eligible.



Texas Toast Sloppy Joes

Ingredients

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 (10.75 ounces) can condensed tomato soup
- 2 Tablespoons ketchup
- 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- 8 slices frozen garlic bread
- 1 cup shredded cheese



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven according to the package instructions on the garlic bread.
2. In a medium-sized skillet, brown the ground beef. Drain the fat from the meat and return to the skillet. Meanwhile, bake the garlic bread as directed.
3. Add the condensed tomato soup, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, onion powder, salt, and garlic to the ground beef. Bring to a simmer and allow to simmer for a few minutes.
4. Once the garlic bread is ready, carefully remove from the oven and top each slice of garlic bread with approximately ¼-½ cup of the sloppy joe filling.
5. Then sprinkle each piece with 2 tablespoons of shredded cheese. Return to the oven and heat just long enough to melt the cheese.



Beware of phone scams!!

Every year, thousands of people lose money to telephone scams — from a few dollars to their life savings. Scammers will say anything to cheat people out of money. Some seem very friendly — calling you by your first name, making small talk, and asking about your family. They may claim to work for a company you trust, or they

may send mail or place ads to convince you to call them. Keep these tips in mind when dealing with questionable phone calls.

Fraud prevention tips:

- The REC would never contact a member by phone and ask for their account number. If someone calls you asking for sensitive information including your utility account number, SSN, credit card number or bank account details, please hang up and call the REC directly to verify the call. (Do not use any phone number supplied by the possible scammer; call the REC using one of the phone numbers we have provided to you.)
- Do not accept offers from anyone, including those claiming to be REC employees, to pay your bill or provide any other service for a fee. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- REC members who have delinquent accounts receive multiple notifications over the course of several weeks prior to electric service disconnection – never just a single notification immediately before disconnection.
- If a REC lineman or member service rep comes to your door, they should be wearing REC apparel and have a marked vehicle with proper identification. If something seems suspicious, keep your door shut and call the REC office to verify that someone has been sent to your address.
- If you receive a suspicious call or believe you may be a victim of fraud or attempted fraud, call the REC and local law enforcement right away to report the incident.

You can find some additional resources online through the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information resource site:

<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0076-phone-scams>

Your Privacy is Important

At Southwest Iowa REC, we recognize that a key element of the member-cooperative relationship is the trust that you place with us to respect the privacy and confidentiality of your personal information. We are committed to providing you with the highest quality of electric service. While personal information about you is fundamental to our ability to do this, your privacy is also very important to us.

Therefore, Southwest Iowa REC will not disclose to non-affiliated third parties any information, including personal financial or consumption histories, without the expressed consent of the member/consumer. The Cooperative does reserve the right to use information for purposes relevant to prudent engineering and design practices and power procurement practices, which are consistent with the industry requirements, and for the betterment of the Cooperative and its membership, as a whole.

We restrict access to non-public personal information for all member-consumers to only those employees or affiliates who need to know specific information to provide products and services to the member/consumer. We maintain physical, electronic and procedural safeguards that, to the best of our abilities, provide prudent and sufficient protection for all non-public personal information.

Information shall not be released to any third party until such time as the member/consumer approves, in writing, such authorization. Forms for the release of information may be obtained from the Cooperative office.

Southwest Iowa REC may collect non-public personal information from the following:

- a. Information we receive from you on applications or forms.
- b. Information regarding payment histories, consumption history, demand history or capacity requirements.



Corning
1801 Grove Ave., Corning, IA 50841

Mount Ayr
1502 W. South St., Mount Ayr, IA 50854

Stanton
415 Broad Ave., Stanton, IA 51573

Phone Number: (888) 220-4869

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