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NOVEMBER 2019

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Linemen train for live wire work



Iowans bring electricity to Guatemala

Iowa co-ops receive economic development funds

Savory Thanksgiving side dishes

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Features

6 Iowa linemen help to power Guatemala

In October, four Iowa linemen were part of a team of 12 who brought electricity to a region of Guatemala for the first time.



8 Thanksgiving side dishes

With the big holiday around the corner, discover some of our readers' favorite recipes. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



10 Six efficient holiday gifts to give (or keep!)

This holiday season think outside the box and consider energy efficient gifts. These gifts are sure to bring joy as they keep giving all year long.



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ON THE COVER

As part of an Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' safety training program, Drew Hardisty – a line foreman with Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) – practices rubber glove training on power equipment. Read more about the training on Page 14. Photo taken by Donna Griebel, communications and photography coordinator, CIPCO. ⚡



It's time to stop a taxing problem for rural Iowa

BY CHUCK SODERBERG

The gap between rural and urban Iowa continues to widen as population, earnings and net farm income are declining in several rural areas.

Unfortunately, an unintended consequence of federal tax law changes now threatens to impose an additional financial burden on rural communities.

Under the new tax law, electric cooperatives that receive federal, state or local government grants are at risk of losing their tax-exempt status. This undermines a successful business model that has served America's rural communities well for decades. It doesn't matter what the grant is for – storm recovery, broadband deployment or economic development. If grant funding causes a co-op's non-member income to exceed 15%, its tax-exempt status is gone.

Congress inadvertently created this problem, and now co-ops are urging Congress to fix this mistake this year. Such a correction will protect the tax-exempt status of electric co-ops and avoid needless rate increases for many American families and businesses that could result due to the changes being carried out by the IRS. Pending bipartisan legislation, known as the RURAL Act (H.R. 2147 and S.1032), clarifies that government grants should not jeopardize the tax-exempt status of electric co-ops.

The bipartisan RURAL Act has been co-sponsored by nearly all of Iowa's Congressional Delegation, including Sen. Ernst and Reps. Axne, Finkenauer, King and Loeb sack. We thank them for their support. Sen. Grassley currently chairs the Finance Committee in the U.S. Senate, which has jurisdiction over this proposed bill because it deals with the tax code. Iowa's electric cooperatives are depending on Sen. Grassley to help restore certainty and common sense to our tax treatment. His leadership can help ensure that co-ops won't jeopardize their tax-exempt status by

accepting government grants.

Lawmakers acknowledge that the threat to electric co-ops is an unintended consequence. Co-ops are locally owned, not-for-profit businesses created to supply electricity to their member-consumers. Among the 45 member cooperatives of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, there are roughly 650,000 Iowans in all 99 counties who will feel the impacts of this tax increase.

Iowa's weather can be unpredictable and unrelenting. When disaster strikes and the lights go out, electric co-ops frequently rely on government assistance to recover from the damage and restore power quickly. If the damage is severe enough, the co-op may also seek assistance to help mitigate future threats by using grants to help "storm harden" the grid. But if the assistance pushes a co-op's income

over the 15% non-member income level, the co-op will have to choose between losing its tax-exempt status or walking away from needed funds.

If the new tax law changes had been in place over the past decade, several electric cooperatives across Iowa would have been in danger of losing their tax-exempt status for accepting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance following natural disasters like flooding or ice storms.

Locally owned electric co-ops and the Iowans they serve should not receive a tax bill for stepping up to restore power after a natural disaster.

It's time to stop a taxing problem for rural Iowa by passing the RURAL Act this year. As Iowa's electric co-ops prepare for a potentially harsh winter, relief can't come soon enough. For more information, visit action.coop.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

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Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than Nov. 30, 2019. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Roomba® from the September issue was Angie Princehouse from Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative.

Be prepared

When Daylight Saving Time ended on Nov. 3 and you set your clocks back, did you also check the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors? If the answer is no, do it today.

Also, replace any alarm that fails to sound now or during monthly follow-up tests – or units that are 7-10 years old, depending on the manufacturers' instructions. This also is a good time to evaluate the batteries in your emergency radio, flashlights and other equipment, so you'll be prepared if a severe winter storm causes a power outage in your area. ⚡



Co-op employee takes national stage in fight against opioid addiction

BY SARAH HEGGEN



On Sept. 18, Rex Butler, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) manager of environmental and safety, was sitting in front of a national press audience at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. He was in good company. Sitting to his right was the CEO of the National Safety Council (NSC), the Surgeon General of the U.S., the Deputy Secretary of Labor, the assistant director of the office of National Drug Control Policy, the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and the CEO of Stericycle, a compliance company that specializes in collecting and disposing regulated substances, such as medical waste and sharps.

The event was a press conference to announce the launch of a new toolkit to help employers address the opioid

crisis in the U.S. The free Opioids at Work Employer Toolkit contains fact sheets, presentations, five-minute safety talks, posters, reports, videos and more for supervisors, human resource and safety professionals as well as employees.

“Two-thirds of American adults with opioid use disorders are in the workforce,” said Lorraine M. Martin, president and CEO of NSC.

Butler has received national attention in the past for his advocacy of stricter regulations regarding opioids. His comments during the press conference were drawn from his personal experience of losing his brother, Bill, in 2006 due to an accidental methadone overdose. He has taken his tragedy and turned it into a way to educate and help others.

Visit www.nsc.org to learn more. ⚡

COMING SOON!

T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative will be featured in an upcoming national commercial for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives promoting electric vehicles. The Iowa co-op is based in Brooklyn and serves members in Benton, Iowa, Keokuk, Johnson, Jefferson, Mahaska, Poweshiek, Tama, Wapello and Washington counties. Watch for the commercial in 2020! ⚡



Iowans advocate for electric co-ops in D.C.

Earlier this fall, representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives went to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives annual Fall Legislative Fly-In.

Iowa managers, directors and employees lobbied members of the Iowa Congressional Delegation and their staff on issues impacting electric cooperatives in Iowa and across the nation. The top legislative priority discussed was the Revitalizing Underdeveloped Rural Areas and Lands Act, also known as the RURAL Act. This bill would ensure that co-ops don't lose their tax-exempt status if they accept government grants to restore power after natural disasters or promote economic development projects in their communities. Five members of Iowa's congressional delegation have co-sponsored this bipartisan



bill. (Read more about the bill on Page 3 in this issue). In addition to the RURAL Act, advocates discussed legislation relating to cooperative pension plans, energy storage, rural broadband, electrification of the U.S. economy and the Renewable Fuel Standard.

The group was well received in

every meeting, underscoring the continuing success of Iowa's electric cooperatives' advocacy efforts. Meetings like this are essential in helping policymakers to understand how legislation could impact Iowans. They are also critical in building and maintaining relationships with elected officials. ⚡

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

USDA Rural Development staff tour Iowa projects

Ten staff from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Deputy Chief Finance Office in Washington, D.C., recently joined State Director Grant Menke on a four-day tour of rural Iowa. The delegation visited 20 USDA Rural Development-funded projects in 14 rural Iowa communities.

The Deputy Chief Finance Office develops and estimates budgetary requirements for USDA Rural Development loan and grant programs and administrative expenses. Staff in the office also play a key role in setting subsidy rates for many USDA Rural Development programs.

The tour included numerous stops at Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) projects assisted by Iowa's rural electric and telephone cooperatives. Project visits included the John



Wayne Birthplace & Museum in Winterset and downtown Winterset (**Farmers Electric Cooperative Inc.**); the Stanton Viking Center and downtown Stanton (Farmers Mutual Telephone Company); Monroe County Hospital, RELCO Locomotives, Inspire U Bake Shoppe – all in Albia (**Chariton**

Valley Electric Cooperative); RMA Armament in Centerville (**Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative**); Sully Locker and Market in Sully (**Pella Cooperative Electric Association** and **Central Iowa Power Cooperative**); and the Perry Police Department (Minburn Telephone Company). ⚡

Iowa linemen bring electricity to Guatemala

It takes a village to electrify a village

BY ANN THELEN

It's nearly impossible for most Iowans to imagine what life would be like without electricity. However, millions of people across the world must navigate every day without the convenience of lights, air conditioning, refrigeration, electric ovens, clothes dryers and many other items we've come to take for granted.

On Sept. 30, 12 linemen – including four from Iowa – embarked on a mission to bring electricity to a region of north-central Guatemala. Approximately 1 out of 5 Guatemalans do not have power. The mission was the first international project for Iowa's electric cooperatives and one that was met with excitement and eagerness to make a difference in the lives of those living in the rural village.

Linemen line up to help

There was a surplus of support for the Guatemala program from the start; 11 Iowa electric co-ops volunteered to send a lineman to be part of the project team. With four positions available, Mike Berkenpas (team leader) of North West Rural Electric Cooperative, Bob Ruby of Access Energy Cooperative, Mat Kilgore of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative and Quentin Fisher of Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative were randomly selected for the project. They joined eight other linemen from Illinois and Wisconsin as part of the 16-day **Partners for a Brighter Tomorrow** National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International project.

"It's hard to comprehend there are still millions of people in the world who don't have electricity," says Chuck Soderberg, executive vice president and general manager for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives



A ribbon cutting was held during the lighting ceremony. The group is standing in front of the school in the village.

(IAEC). "Rural Iowa was at a similar point back in the 1930s. Thanks to the rural electrification movement, we've been blessed with safe, affordable and reliable electricity ever since. It will be a life-changing experience for the people in this region of Guatemala to have electricity for the first time in their lives."

Conversations to work on an international project started a couple of years ago for IAEC and its member electric cooperatives.

"Part of the challenge for any state wanting to be involved in an international project is a significant



Mat Kilgore, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, with one of the village's young children.

commitment – both from a personnel and financial standpoint," Soderberg says. "Whoever sponsors the event also picks up the cost of the equipment."

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives was also considering an international project, but the cost to be a sole sponsor was steep. In conversations with Iowa, a partnership developed and also brought Wisconsin into the fold. With a three-state coalition, instead of one state footing the entire project cost, three states would share the costs.

"The poles are donated by a utility in Guatemala; however, the costs for the wires, equipment, airfare and other items necessary to bring the project to completion are the responsibility of sponsoring states," Soderberg adds.

Cooperation among cooperatives

When an electric cooperative needs assistance, other cooperatives step up to the plate. Cooperation among cooperatives is one of the seven guiding principles for the locally owned and governed business



entities, but it's also the bedrock of the organizations. Finding the funding for the Partners for a Brighter Tomorrow project was no exception.

The National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) was one organization that provided the trio of states with funding for the project. The total project cost was estimated to be approximately \$165,000. The organization – created 50 years ago by electric cooperatives – provided a generous \$70,000 for the project, plus \$25,000 each for Iowa and Wisconsin because they were first-time participants of an international project. Several Iowa cooperatives contributed to the effort, and CoBank, a national cooperative bank, matched the electric



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cooperative donations. Thanks to these contributions, Iowa's share of the project was fully funded.

Sheldon Petersen, CEO of CFC, is a native Iowan and understands firsthand the long-term value of the international projects. By funneling contributions through NRECA International's matching grants program, the funds create exponential benefits. Since becoming involved with NRECA International in 2012, CFC has contributed \$1.25 million to projects that bring electricity to underserved regions of the world.

"I have been with CFC for 37 years, and my first job was working for Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative in Harlan," he says. "Working for a distribution co-op, you see the impact electricity has on people's lives – even those who have

had electricity for years and years. These projects are an opportunity to give back and to people who have so little.

"Electric cooperatives remember what it was like to bring electricity to rural areas. If we can be of assistance in helping to further the mission of electrification globally, we want to be a part of the solution. When you consider the modest amount of money that can be leveraged with on-the-ground volunteer personnel, the result is incredible."

Editor's Note: This is the first in a two-part series of Iowa's role in bringing electricity to this region of Guatemala. In Part II of our series in December, we'll introduce you to the Iowa linemen who worked on the project and learn about their experiences. Plus, Chuck Soderberg will describe what it was like to be at the lighting ceremony in Guatemala. 🌟

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.



Pictured from left to right: Mat Kilgore, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative; Bob Ruby, Access Energy Cooperative; Chuck Soderberg, IAEC; Mike Berkenpas, North West Rural Electric Cooperative; and Quentin Fisher, Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, gather for a group photo in Guatemala.

Thanksgiving

• SIDE DISHES •



Cranberry Pecan Pie

- 6 tablespoons shortening
- 1½ teaspoons buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons hot water
- 1 cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup corn syrup
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Cream shortening and buttermilk until smooth. Gradually add water, beating until light and fluffy. Beat in flour and salt. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for four hours or overnight. Roll out pastry to fit 9-inch pie plate. Trim pastry to ½ inch beyond edge of plate; flute edges. Combine eggs, corn syrup, sugar, butter and vanilla until blended. Stir in cranberries and pecans. Pour into crust. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees F and bake 35-40 minutes longer or until filling is almost set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Cover and refrigerate overnight before slicing.

Lori Miller • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

NUTRITIOUS & VERSATILE

Delicious, versatile and available in a variety of cuts, turkey is naturally low in fat and provides immune-boosting nutrients like iron, zinc and potassium. It's also packed with lean protein!

TURKEY TIPS

Stuffed Mushrooms

- 1 pound fresh, whole mushrooms
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3-4 bread slices, torn in pieces
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- milk, if needed

Remove mushroom stems and dice. Mix diced stems with butter and onions, then microwave for two minutes. Stir in bread, cheese, egg and seasonings. Add milk if needed to moisten and set aside. Lay mushroom caps upside down in a greased pie pan. Sprinkle with additional salt then spoon stuffing mixture over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Easy Delicious Carrots

- 1 pound full-sized carrots, cleaned and sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup water
- salt, to taste

Put all ingredients into saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for 25 minutes or until carrots are tender and most of the liquid has evaporated.

Karen Crossland • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

Fresh Apple Cake

- 1½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup butter
- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 3 cups peeled apples

Mix sugar, eggs, cinnamon, vanilla, salt and butter. Then add flour, soda, and apples. Bake in a greased 9x13-inch pan at 350 degrees F for one hour.

Rebecca Hancox • Seymour
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Sweet Potato Apple Dish

- 6 sweet potatoes
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 tart apples, sliced

Cook sweet potatoes until tender, cool and then slice. Combine water, sugar, butter, salt and cornstarch. Cook until thick. Place sliced sweet potatoes in the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch dish. Cover sweet potatoes with a layer of raw apples. Pour thickened sauce over the top. Bake at 300 degrees F for one hour.

Nancy Bruns • Jolley
Calhoun County Rural Electric Cooperative
Association

Easy Cranberry Sauce

- 4 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- ½ cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, optional

Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan, bring to a boil. Boil until the berries start to pop, stirring occasionally. Start to mash the berries with a wooden spoon, continue boiling until they completely break down. Remove from heat. Serve warm as a sauce or cool to make a jelly. Makes two cups.

Shirley DeSmet • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Rice Casserole

- 1 can French onion soup
- 1 can water
- 1 can mushrooms
- 1 cup of raw rice
- 1 stick of margarine or butter

Mix all ingredients together in a casserole dish. Cover and bake at 325 degrees F for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Stir once or twice.

Betty Goodman • North English
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Party Potatoes

- 8-10 medium potatoes
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1 cup dairy sour cream milk, if needed
- garlic salt
- chives
- butter
- paprika

Peel potatoes and cook until tender, drain. Beat softened cream cheese and sour cream at medium speed until well blended. Add hot potatoes gradually, beating constantly until light and fluffy. If too stiff, thin with milk. Season to taste with garlic salt. Add chives to your preference. Spoon into a buttered 2-quart casserole. Brush with softened butter and sprinkle with paprika. Brown at 350 degrees F for about 30 minutes. Serves 8. May be refrigerated overnight and then baked for 1 to 1½ hours.

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

POUND PER PERSON

Allow 1 pound of uncooked turkey per person from an 8- to 12-pound turkey. Larger birds have a larger proportion of meat to bones, so ¾ pound per person should be sufficient and still have leftovers.

TURKEY TIPS

THAW IT RIGHT

Frozen turkey, like all meat and poultry, should be thawed in the refrigerator, never at room temperature. Whole turkeys thaw at a rate of 4 to 5 pounds per 24 hours.

TURKEY TIPS

IS IT DONE?

For a whole turkey, use your food thermometer to check the internal temperature in three places: the innermost part of the thigh, the thickest part of the breast and the innermost part of the wing. The internal temperature of the turkey should measure 165 degrees F.

TURKEY TIPS

Wanted: "Pass the Pasta" Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Whether it's spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna or macaroni and cheese, pasta is a crowd pleaser! Share your pasta recipes that are family favorites. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is Nov. 30, 2019. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:
recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:
Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
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6 Efficient Holiday Gifts

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

With the holidays approaching, you may be starting to think about unique gifts for family and friends. We encourage you to think outside the box and consider energy efficient gifts. These gifts are sure to bring joy as they keep giving all year long.

To help you get into the gift-giving spirit, we've compiled some ideas based on a range of prices. Because these gifts are far from ho, ho, hum, you might even want to play Santa and buy one or two of these for yourself!



1

Smart power strip.

Price: \$15 to \$100:

Smart power strips are the perfect gift for your tech-savvy family members and friends because they'll likely need the extra outlets for their many devices. Smart power strips give more control than traditional ones. By plugging the main hardware item, such as a computer or monitor, into the master outlet, you can easily control the rest of the devices. When that main device is turned off, everything else plugged into the strip also powers off. Some smart power strips can also be operated through a remote control or smartphone app, and some include programmable timers.

Smart thermostats like the Ecobee (pictured here) adapt to your energy use habits, which ultimately helps you save energy and money in the long run.

Photo Source: Ecobee



2

Smart thermostat.

Price: \$30 to \$600:

A smart thermostat can adjust the temperature by learning your energy use habits over time, which saves you money and keeps you more comfortable. It can also be controlled through a smartphone app. Just make sure you're going to use all of its functionality before taking the leap.

3

Solar backpack.

Price: \$30 to \$325:

Walking or biking to the office, the field or one of Iowa's many trails? It may sound crazy, but you can actually make the most of the sun's energy with a solar backpack. These handy devices collect and store enough electricity to power a phone, tablet or even a laptop. The solar panels stitched onto the back of the packs are flexible and waterproof. Best of all, they have all the features and functionality of their traditional non-solar cousins.

A solar backpack is an easy way to bring portable energy for your small electronic devices.

Photo Source: Hannu Makarainen



to Give (or Keep!)

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on energy efficiency, please visit www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips

Looking for an efficient gift that costs practically nothing? Enjoy a good book and a cozy evening at home. Don't forget to put on your favorite sweater and pair of fuzzy slippers so you can lower the thermostat a couple of degrees. Now that's an energy efficient evening worth repeating! ⚡

An e-bike can make cycling easier if you face challenging terrain, bike to work or find regular cycling too physically challenging

Photo Source: Willie Markkanen



5

Electric scooter.

Price: \$80 to \$3,000:

The \$49 foldable, foot-powered scooter that exploded onto the scene a decade ago has grown up in a big way. In some cities, electric scooters are now available to rent at various locations, found and paid for via app. Or you can buy one to use for your daily commute or as a fun way to simply scoot around the neighborhood. Higher-quality versions will have longer range, larger tires and better suspension – along with a higher cost, of course. The catch is that they're still largely confined to paved surfaces.

4

E-bike.

Price: \$250 to \$9,000:

Electric bikes, or e-bikes, are regular bicycles with an electric motor that can be engaged as needed. E-bikes are becoming increasingly popular with people who face challenging terrain, bike to work and don't want to work up a sweat, or perhaps find regular cycling too physically challenging. Studies also show that e-biking can bring many of the same physical benefits as non-assisted pedaling. They even come in foldable versions. One downside is they are heavier than regular bicycles.



Electric scooters are perfect to use if you have a quick daily commute, or they can simply be used as a fun way scoot around the neighborhood.

Photo Source: Miki Yoshihito

6

Energy efficient tablets.

Price: \$40 to \$4,000:

You may already have at least one tablet in your home, but have you considered how energy efficient it is? Try this: Instead of using your TV to binge that new show, consider an ENERGY STAR®-rated tablet, and you can use seven times less power! Simply look for the ENERGY STAR label when you're shopping for new tablets.



Decorate safely this holiday season

BY DERRILL HOLLY

The holiday season offers wonderful moments for building memories, but when it comes to decorating, it's also the perfect time to think about safety.

"There are about 200 decorating-related injuries each day during the busy holiday season," says Ann Marie Buerkle, acting chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). "Make safety a part of your family's holiday decorating this year."

Nationwide, holiday decorating injuries resulted in 18,400 emergency room visits between November 2016 and January 2017. Local fire departments look to the holiday season as a time of increased vigilance, often tied to many of the activities that have become family traditions.

"It's important to use common sense when you're dealing with holiday decorating, particularly with lighting, candles and electrical wiring," says Bruce Bouch, a U.S. Fire Administration fire program specialist.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the top three days of the year for candle fires in the U.S. are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. NFPA statistics also indicate that 1 in 4 Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.

The global safety certification company, United Laboratories, classifies holiday lighting as a seasonal product designed for no more than 90 days of use. While the actual holiday season runs about six weeks, weather and busy schedules often mean outdoor holiday lighting displays are up longer.

"It's always important to inspect holiday lights each year before you put them up," says Bouch. "You may find that there are pinches or torn areas on the insulation."

Open, exposed wiring or any signs of fraying or pinching are indications of weakened wiring. Those flaws are



According to the National Fire Prevention Association, burning candles start 2 out of 5 home fires every year. Consider battery-operated LED candles as safer alternatives.



prone to breakage and may raise the potential for heat buildup, which can cause a fire.

Bouch recommends a thorough inspection of your holiday lights to identify potential hotspots and damage to the strings.

"When you're checking everything on the wiring and fixtures, make sure you check for chewing damage from wild animals or your pets," adds Bouch. "Also look for signs that the insulation itself is wearing thin enough to expose wiring."

The U.S. Fire Administration, the CPSC and non-government safety organizations are also focused on reminding consumers that extension cords, whether labeled for indoors or outdoors, are also designed for temporary use.

"Your household wiring is a solid metal wire," says Bouch. "Extension cords are strands of your thin wires that are twisted together. That pliability can allow them to break over

time, increasing the chance that they could fail within so many years."

According to NFPA, about 100 Christmas tree fires occur each holiday season, causing about \$12 million in damage annually.

You can reduce the risks by placing your Christmas tree away from heat sources, like vents or space heaters, and topping off the water reservoir daily.

Iowa's electric cooperatives join our local firefighters, the NFPA and the CPSC in urging you to consider safety as you decorate and enjoy the holiday season with family and friends. ⚡

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

Iowa's electric co-ops secure \$1.79 million in economic development funds

KAY SNYDER

Across Iowa, communities benefit from electric cooperative funding secured through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) program. Recently, \$1.79 million was awarded to fund portions of three projects in Britt, Charles City and Dysart.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Prairie Energy Cooperative both secured REDL&G funds to support a \$7.4 million renovation project to the **Hancock County Health System (HCHS)** at its campus in Britt. The project will allow HCHS to relocate and expand surgical services to house two major operating rooms, two procedure rooms and four same-day surgery rooms. The emergency department will also expand to two trauma rooms, four private exam rooms, a centralized nursing station and decontamination room. Other improvements include the construction of a new front door/canopy, remodeling of the main atrium lobby area and relocation of the Senior Life Solution (outpatient program) to the first floor, allowing for easier access.

Construction is underway with a projected completion date of late 2020. It is expected these improvements will result in the creation of 14 new jobs over the next three years.

Utility: Corn Belt Power Cooperative
REDL: \$640,000
Utility: Prairie Energy Cooperative
REDG: \$300,000 award to enhance the co-op's revolving loan fund (RLF)
Match: \$60,000 from Prairie Energy Cooperative



Hometown Dental, Inc. received support from Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative for the acquisition of an existing dental practice in Charles City. Dr. Reed Faldet purchased the dental practice from Dr. Stephen Earney, who provided dental care to the community for more than 35 years. The practice was renamed and began operation as Hometown Dental on July 1, 2019. Through the addition of another treatment room, additional staff and utilizing the newest technology, Dr. Faldet expects to increase his capacity to serve an estimated 480 additional patient visits per year.

Dr. Faldet is a 2019 graduate of the University of Iowa Dental School. Drs. Faldet and Earney met in the summer of 2018, preceding Reed Faldet's final year of dental school. They mapped out the succession plan to transition the practice to Hometown Dental when Dr. Faldet received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in June 2019.

Utility: Butler County REC
REDG: \$258,333 award to enhance RLF
Match: \$51,667 from Butler County REC

East-Central Iowa REC provided a loan to support the construction of a new dental clinic in Dysart. **Pipho & Gingrich Family Dentistry** is constructing a new facility adjacent to its current dental clinic. This 2,100-square-foot dental clinic will include five treatment rooms, a large patient waiting room, front office space, three restrooms, imaging room, doctor's office and employee lounge. The new location has an on-site parking lot providing much easier access for patients.

Dr. Robert Pipho purchased McLaughlin Family Dentistry in Dysart in 2015, and then formed a partnership with Dr. Sarah Gingrich in 2017.

The Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) and its sponsoring utility partners work hard to identify and submit Iowa projects that will score well against program parameters. IADG is proud to have written the applications for these business expansion projects that have been awarded funds through the USDA REDL&G program. ⚡



Utility: East-Central Iowa REC
REDG: \$480,000

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the IADG, which provides business and community support on behalf of nearly 220 Iowa electric and telecommunications utilities.

Line crews train for live wire work

Safety is the foundation of providing members of Iowa's electric cooperatives with affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible power. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) Safety & Loss Control department manages safety training and general work procedures across Iowa.

Recently, IAEC worked with Central Iowa Power Cooperative's (CIPCO) Creston transmission line crew and Rex Butler, CIPCO's manager of environmental and safety, to practice rubber glove training on power equipment.

"Because transmission lines are a higher voltage than the distribution lines delivering power directly to co-op members' properties, this was an excellent opportunity for Creston's linemen to train for live wire work, says John Dvorak, IAEC's director of safety and loss control.

"We had this training so the linemen would know how to apply cover-up material on the lines. The exercise allows them to practice working above the line or stringing wire safely around the energized conductors."

Dvorak and Scott Meinecke, one of IAEC's job training and safety instructors, conducted the training in late August at the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities in Ankeny. ⚡



Pictured from left to right: CIPCO's Creston crew along with IAEC instructors and Butler: Rex Butler, Brad Johnson, John Dvorak (IAEC instructor), Lee Madison (standing), Justin Murphy (bucket), Steve Peterson, Drew Hardisty, Hunter Mc Intosh, Jason Wilkey and Scott Meinecke (IAEC instructor).

Married living

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Three of my high school friends and I got together for coffee recently, and we wandered into reminiscing about the first places we'd lived after we got married. Two of us were students at Iowa State University and had begun our lives of marital bliss in Pammel Court.

For those unfamiliar with this housing situation at ISU, Pammel Court had been thrown up hastily after World War II to accommodate the thousands of GI's flooding into the university. Each Quonset hut housed two families, set up in rows like military barracks. What was initially considered temporary housing stretched to providing inexpensive digs for broke students until the 1990s.

Kent and I moved into 873 Pammel Court in June 1983. I was a full-time student and Kent was working for minimum wage – \$4 an hour – at a local auto garage. We were thrilled with the \$81 a month rent.

The best thing about Pammel Court was that anything you did to it was an improvement. We set about feathering our two-bedroom nest with zeal. My mom “papered” the kitchen walls with blue gingham cloth. My aunt and uncle donated a piece of carpeting they had recently removed from their bedroom. Kent camouflaged the hot water heater that featured prominently in our living room with a wooden front.

Every day was an adventure of sorts. The train rumbled through several times a day on the track about 100 yards from our place. Wall hangings and pictures swayed in rhythm each time. Because we lived on a corner, the giant trash receptacle sat on our front yard – appreciated in winter when a short dash to dump garbage was



required, but the bane of our existence in the summer, when the smell and flies caused one to take a wide berth around it.

The battle against cockroaches was a constant one. Turning on the lights in the middle of the night was truly a horrifying sight as what seemed to be hundreds of them scattered across the ceiling. You had to work with your connected neighbors to spray at the same time; otherwise, they'd simply retreat to one side when the exterminator came.

Our neighborhood was truly multinational: across the street lived a couple from Taiwan, next door to a family from Sri Lanka. Down the street was a family from Nigeria; across from them was a family from Qatar. Walking down the lane, we

could hear several languages calling children home and smell strange spices from a plethora of kitchens.

We were broke, but so were all of our friends. Ordering a pizza was a big event, and evenings at each other's places consisted of popcorn and board games.

There's no trace of Pammel Court today, much to my chagrin. But do a quick internet search and you'll see pictures of a close-knit community that housed thousands of students over the years. Unfortunately, I'll never again see \$81 monthly rent. ⚡

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.

7,200
VOLT LINES
16 YEARS
ON THE
JOB
RESTORING
POWER TO
500
MEMBERS

BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S
YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT.



HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH. The last thing he needs is for you to drive into his utility truck because you ignored the flashing lights, cones and signs. When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.



MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN