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Guthrie County REC  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

APRIL 2018

Guthrie County REC leaders meet with legislators at REC Day on the Hill ▶ See Page 5

## Sprout young gardeners at home

You are there:  
a (careful) day in the  
life of a lineworker

Focus on quality  
when managing a  
renovation contractor

Spring clean your way  
to energy savings

Visit our website at [www.guthrie-rec.coop](http://www.guthrie-rec.coop)

# Guthrie County REC celebrates its linemen

BY DON SCHWARTZ

We're again at the time of the year when grass greens up, leaves fill the trees and new life appears in calving and lambing barns! This is also the time of the year when we recognize our linemen with National Lineman Appreciation Day on April 9.

Did you know that across this great state of Iowa, electric co-ops serve all 99 counties and provide power to 650,000 Iowans? Even more impressive is the fact that electric co-ops have been able to keep the lights on 99.97 percent of the time. This reliability rate is determined from data from ice storms, blizzards, tornadoes, thunderstorms, wind and an occasional varmint or two.

Guthrie County REC linemen manage nearly 1,400 miles of power lines across our service territory and add around 20 to 35 miles of new construction each year. These men have spent many hours on safety training, information and education to perform their daily duties.



Leaders from the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives provide the resources to ensure that our linemen have the proper safety measures in place.

Our linemen also must be tested on the operation of basket trucks and other equipment. In October of each year, the linemen practice a procedure called pole top rescue. Everyone must climb a pole and rescue a 70-pound human replica. Guthrie County REC linemen are tested annually on rescue techniques and are required to pass this course. Time and money invested in this area is very important to the safety of the linemen. I sometimes like to compare these men to Marines: trained to have each other's backs, to keep one another safe and to come home to their families each day.

In addition to being valuable employees, these guys are also a

vital part of our communities by being involved in organizations around town and educating our students in school and 4-H clubs about electrical safety, including teaching students about the electric cooperative business model.

I would also like to recognize and thank our CEO, line superintendent and office staff as they **all** play an important role in delivering power that is safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible. We as a board spend a lot of time on the financials each month keeping track of income and expenses and watching the balance sheet, but I believe our greatest asset is our employees. So, when you see a bright yellow truck or see any of them on the street, give them a friendly wave and a "Thank You" for their dedication to your member-owned rural electric cooperative. ⚡

Don Schwartz is the board president of Guthrie County REC.



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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Guthrie County REC joins electric co-ops across the nation to show appreciation for our linemen during National Lineman Appreciation Day on April 9. Employees pictured are (front row, from left): Jeremy Gruber, Elden Wolfe, Lori Hix, Jalen Spack, Jordan Terwilliger, Rebecca Schwartz and Josh Oltmann; (back row, from left): Curt Knapp, Darwin Marean, Brian Marso, Larry Newbrough, Todd Tinken, Keith Hise and Doug Downing; (on truck, from left): Cozy Nelsen, Dea Kress and Marlene Chalfant.

## Cooperative's leaders meet with legislators at REC Day on the Hill



Gov. Kim Reynolds was among Iowa's elected officials meeting with electric co-op representatives last month.

More than 200 cooperative supporters, including representatives from Guthrie County REC, gathered in Des Moines on March 14 to advocate for electric cooperatives. The co-op directors, executives and staff participated in a briefing to receive updates on state and federal legislative issues and then traveled to the Capitol, where they met with their local elected

officials during a dessert social.

The co-ops focused on educating legislators about these issues important to electric cooperatives:

- Investments in renewable energy.
- Promoting economic development to provide stable careers.
- Uniform standards that give co-ops the authority to trim trees in a private right-of-way where an easement hasn't been recorded.

Many cooperatives developed booth displays that provided information on topics such as community engagement, renewable energy, youth involvement, lineman equipment costs and energy efficiency.

"This annual visit to the Iowa Capitol is an excellent opportunity to personally visit with our elected officials and provide them with a co-op perspective on issues that are important to our business," said Cozy Nelsen, Guthrie County REC CEO. ⚡

## The BuckSqueeze is an essential part of our gear for safety

Keeping Guthrie County REC linemen safe isn't easy or inexpensive. But your cooperative is committed to providing the training and



proper safety equipment necessary keep them safe on the job. It's a responsibility we take very seriously.

By the time a lineman is suited up for the job, he's added 40-50 pounds of additional weight to his body, just by wearing the required personal protective equipment. Hard hats, insulated gloves, climbing gear and tools are all meant to protect linemen from making contact with the live electrical lines they work on and near.

One piece of equipment may have a funny name, but it's actually the most important piece of equipment a lineman must wear to avoid falling. The BuckSqueeze is a wood pole fall restriction device developed for linemen by linemen in the early 2000s. When ascending or descending a pole, it's important that the safety strap or BuckSqueeze be able to support the weight of the lineman and grip the pole if he starts to fall.

When a lineman reaches the top of a pole, he can position himself and the BuckSqueeze to allow him to safely work with both hands free. ⚡

SAVING ENERGY

## Spring clean your way to energy savings



1. **Redirect your ceiling fans.** In the summer, fans should circulate counterclockwise to cool a room ... and you.
2. **Change filters.** Keeping your heating and cooling system filters clean not only will improve air quality, but also ensure your system is working efficiently.
3. **Dust electronics and lightbulbs.** Keeping them clean allows air to flow freely and means less work for

- these devices to function properly.
4. **Vacuum refrigerator coils.** Dust that builds up on refrigerator coils can force the fridge to work harder to keep things cold.
5. **Tune up the A/C.** Issues such as a low coolant level may be taxing your air-conditioning system. Getting a professional maintenance check before summer can ensure your system is working efficiently. ⚡

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## Light the night for free if you win!

These Patriot Lighting Solar Path Lights from Menards have a ribbed lens to ensure optimal light diffusion of the bright white LED inside, and the rechargeable battery promises a run time of 8 hours. The lights have a natural gray stone finish and sit less than 8 inches from the ground, so you won't have to worry about the wind or pets knocking them over.

We're also including two solar LED "rock" lights with wireless speakers; use a Bluetooth device to send music to them.

For your chance at winning this \$100 package of 12 solar lights and two speakers, check the rules on the *Living with Energy in Iowa* website at [www.livingwithenergyiowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com) and complete the entry form no later than April 30, 2018. ⚡



OPERATIONS UPDATE

# Plant the right tree in the right place

BY ELDEN WOLFE

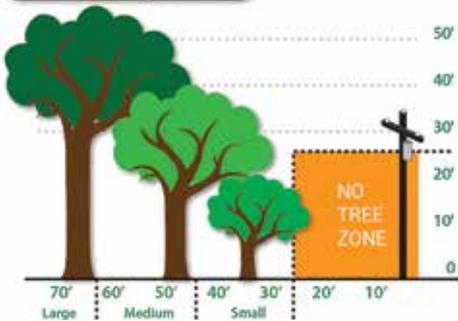
As spring brings life to trees, shrubs and grasses, it's a good time to remind you about the importance of keeping Guthrie County REC's right-of-way clear.



If you're a gardener or spend any time working on your lawn, you already know how invasive weeds can be. It's a never-ending battle, but it's something we need to do to keep our utility lines clear and able to provide reliable electric service. In the warmer-weather months, Guthrie County REC works diligently to tame overgrown weeds and shrubs in the right-of-way with the application of a weed killer spray.

If you want to plant a tree this spring, perhaps as part of Arbor Day on April 27, please keep in mind the height and width of the tree when it matures – and plant it far enough away from all power lines so there's no possibility of contact. You can also ask your tree nursery what to expect as the tree grows.

Tree Planting Guide



The bottom line is we need to keep the right-of-way clear to continue providing you, our member, with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. ⚡

Elden Wolfe is the line superintendent for Guthrie County REC.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

# Here's help for catching up on high winter heating bills

Still feel like you're behind on bills from the holidays, including your electric bill? Join the club. We all feel the pinch from time to time when it comes to our bills.

There are several reasons your electric bill may be higher during the winter months. The best place to start is looking at your usage. Shorter days with less sunlight and more darkness mean your lights were on longer. Darkness also means there's no sun shining in to naturally warm your rooms, so you may have turned on a space heater or an electric blanket at night.

Sometimes it's not that you were using more electricity all at once, but that sustained usage increased over time and impacted your bills. Did you have the flu or other illness this year? If you stayed home sick, you likely had the television on or ran other electronics that aren't normally used during the daytime hours.

A quick way to check your usage before you get your monthly bill is to log onto SmartHub, where you can analyze your past and current usage. You can compare your use and costs and set markers to monitor changes in



your usage over periods of time. It also shows the average temperatures for selected time frames.

Another way to check your usage is to compare the meter reading on your bill to the reading on your electric meter. If your electric meter has advanced past the last reading on your electric bill, chances are you've used the kilowatt-hours.

Finally, your cooperative is here to help! Turn to us for advice on making energy efficient upgrades and taking advantage of our rebates. If you struggle to pay your winter heating bill, you may qualify for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Applications for payment assistance are accepted every year from Oct. 1-April 30. To learn more, visit [www.guthrie-rec.coop](http://www.guthrie-rec.coop) and click on "My Account" – and then "Payment Assistance." ⚡

## Know What's Below!

Whether your spring projects are DIY or require the help of a professional, smart digging means calling 811 before each job. You'll prevent injury to your family, damage to your property, utility service outages and potential fines and repair costs.



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Guthrie County REC Board Member Bob Batschelet

811  
Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.