



OCTOBER 2026



Guthrie County REC
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

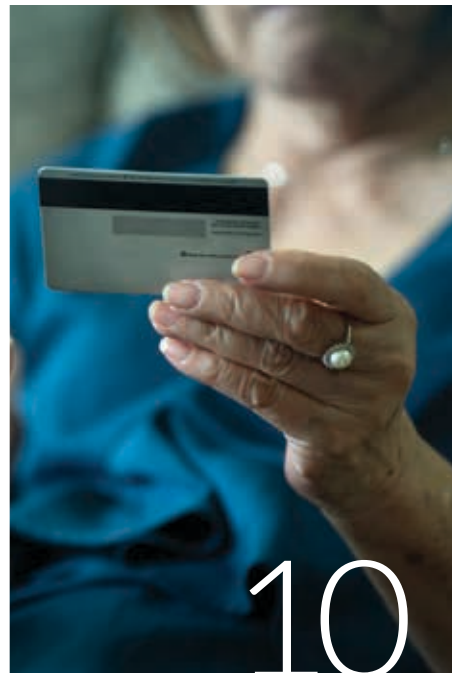
**Remembering the 1991
Halloween ice storm**

**Protect yourself from
AI-powered scams**

Comfort food classics

Building reliability, mile by mile ► See Page 5

CONTENTS



VOLUME 79 • ISSUE 10

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Protecting members in
the energy transition

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Crock-Pot
Multicooker & Slow Cooker

14

ENERGY MATTERS

Iowa Home Energy
Assistance Program

15

OUT BACK

Dolly Parton:
The grass is blue

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Katie Nichols, a Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

IOWA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE PROTECTING MEMBERS WHILE MANAGING THE ENERGY TRANSITION

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



Drive through rural Iowa and you'll pass through the service territory of an electric cooperative, one of dozens across the state quietly keeping the lights

on for farms, homes, schools, hospitals and communities. These co-ops aren't just another utility; they're structured differently, and that structure makes them uniquely suited to navigate the energy transition ahead.

Member ownership puts consumers first

The key distinction is ownership. Iowa's electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, member-owned utilities. The farmers, homeowners and small businesses who receive power also own and govern the company that delivers it. This stands in contrast to investor-owned utilities, which generate returns for shareholders who may not live anywhere close to the lines they profit from.

That difference matters enormously as we encounter an energy transition that involves many facets, including managing new demand from large loads, increased electrification and building resilience against extreme weather. These are long-horizon, capital-intensive challenges. A cooperative, as a not-for-profit organization, can make patient, prudent and consumer-focused investments while maintaining safe, reliable and affordable electric service.

Investments in new electric generation help ensure there is enough power available when consumers need it most. Many older generating units are aging, facing higher maintenance costs or nearing retirement. New generation gives co-ops the ability to meet peak demand, maintain adequate reserves, respond to emergencies and manage fuel and market volatility.

Investments in transmission are equally important and can improve reliability and affordability. As the backbone of the electric system, transmission lines move electricity across regions, connect new resources, relieve congestion, support stability and allow utilities to share power during emergencies. Well-planned transmission investments can reduce bottlenecks, improve access to diverse generation resources, lower congestion costs, and strengthen the grid against severe weather and equipment outages.

Responsible growth with fair cost allocations

Iowa's electric cooperatives work to build what is needed, when it is needed, and at a reasonable cost, with costs assigned fairly. Existing consumers should pay their fair share of investments that maintain and improve the system that serves them. But if a new, large consumer creates the need for new facilities, then that large consumer should pay the entire cost of the facilities needed to meet its energy needs.

This approach allows electric co-ops to accomplish two things at the same time. First, we welcome economic development and new energy-intensive consumers when they bring jobs, investment and opportunities. Second, co-ops will not ask existing member-consumers to subsidize facilities that are needed solely to serve those new large loads. Fair cost allocation is what makes responsible growth possible.

Maintaining safe, affordable and reliable electric service is a long-term obligation. By making prudent investments in generation and transmission, and by ensuring that large future consumers pay for the facilities needed to serve them, Iowa's electric cooperatives can protect existing co-op member-consumers and support economic growth while maintaining safe, affordable and reliable electric service.

Leslie Kaufman is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A CROCK-POT MULTICOOKER AND SLOW COOKER

The Crock-Pot MultiMeal Multicooker and Programmable Slow Cooker lets you prepare two dishes at once using different cooking temperatures and methods, with both ready to serve at the same time. Multiple functions, including slow cook, sear/sauté, bake, rice/steam and keep warm, make it easy to prepare complete meals in one appliance. Designed to replace more than 30 cooking tools and appliances, it reduces the need for separate stockpots, sauté pans, frying pans, food warmers and more.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 31. 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 Westinghouse pressure washer from the August issue was **Mitchel Hershey**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH: YOUR VOICE SHAPES OUR SOLUTIONS

BY COZY NELSEN



Cooperatives come in all shapes and sizes, each created to meet a specific need. Credit unions like Veridian help members save and

borrow money. Consumer food co-ops like the Iowa Food Cooperative are member-owned grocery stores and retail networks focused on natural foods, local farms and sustainable retail. Housing cooperatives, retail cooperatives and others all give their members a voice in their success.

Our purpose is the same: to provide value, meet local needs, and strengthen the communities we call home without answering to outside investors or shareholders. We were built by people who saw a need and banded together to find a solution.

Being locally owned means we have the flexibility to focus on what matters most to the communities we serve.



Because we live here, too. And just like us, every community also has different needs, and every cooperative reflects those priorities. The co-op difference isn't just about providing your electric service but also seeing our team members volunteer at community or school events, electing board members who are also neighbors you know and trust, and hearing a friendly greeting when you call with a question, not a robotic phone tree system.

So, for National Co-op Month this month, we invite you to join us in celebrating all the different ways co-ops make our lives better. Whether it's Guthrie County REC, your local credit union or ag co-op, cooperatives prove that when people work together, everyone benefits. Your membership is what makes our mission possible – and keeps us focused on serving the people and communities that matter most.

Cozy Nelsen is the CEO of Guthrie County REC.



Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Website

www.guthrie-rec.coop

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Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**Iowa Pork Producers Association*

BACON PORK BURGER SLOPPY JOES*

4 slices bacon, chopped
1 pound ground pork
1/2 cup ketchup
1 tablespoon yellow mustard
1 tablespoon brown sugar
2 tablespoons chopped dill pickle slices
1/4 cup water
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 ounces cheddar cheese
4 hamburger buns

Add bacon and ground pork to a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally until the pork is no longer pink. Add rest of ingredients except buns. Stir and simmer 5 minutes. Spoon onto buns and enjoy.

BUILDING RELIABILITY, MILE BY MILE

BY JOSH OLTMANN



Guthrie County REC's line crew team continues to make steady progress on projects designed to strengthen our local electric system, improve reliability and prepare for the needs of our members in the years ahead.

A major focus in 2026 has been rebuilding 20.1 miles of electric line across our service territory. Crews have already completed 10.6 miles, putting the project past the halfway point. Rebuilding aging sections of line allows the co-op to replace older infrastructure and make improvements that can reduce the likelihood of outages and improve the system's ability to withstand severe weather.

Crews have also replaced deteriorated poles identified through Guthrie County REC's annual pole inspection program. Regular inspections help us find potential problems before they result in outages or safety concerns.

Replacing poles proactively is an important part of maintaining a safe and dependable distribution system.

In Dallas County, crews completed two miles of new three-phase line to serve a member. Three-phase service can accommodate larger electrical loads and is often necessary for commercial, agricultural or other high-demand applications. Projects like this allow Guthrie County REC to meet the changing energy needs of our members while supporting growth throughout the service territory.

The line crew has also kept busy installing numerous new electric services and completing service upgrades for existing members.

Work plans for the remainder of 2026

Work will continue throughout the remainder of the year. Crews plan to finish the remaining 2026 line rebuilds and to rebuild the Bear Grove substation with new equipment and voltage regulators. Regulators help maintain consistent voltage

as electrical demand and system conditions change, contributing to better power quality for members.

Additional work includes rebuilding sections of existing line associated with the new Jaybird substation near Perry and removing outdated metering equipment and poles from substations.

As colder weather arrives, crews will also begin the cooperative's winter line inspection, covering the entire system. Inspecting lines, poles and other equipment allows crews to identify maintenance needs and potential trouble spots.

From rebuilding lines to upgrading substations, each project is part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe, reliable electric system. Proactive investments today help reduce problems tomorrow while ensuring we are prepared to serve our member-owners well into the future.

Josh Oltmann is the line superintendent for Guthrie County REC.

FLY SMART, FLY SAFE AROUND ELECTRICITY

Recreational drone use can be a fun way to explore the outdoors, and capture photos from a new perspective. But when drones and power lines share the same airspace, a flight can quickly become dangerous.

Before taking off, survey the entire area for power lines, poles, substations, guy wires, trees and other obstacles. Your drone's camera may not show every wire, so keep your drone within sight and maintain plenty of distance from electrical equipment. Avoid flying when conditions could make it harder to keep your drone safely away from electrical facilities.

A drone that contacts electrical equipment could cause an outage, damage utility equipment or create an electrical hazard.

While some drones have technology to avoid obstacles, do not assume it will detect or avoid power lines. If a drone becomes caught in electrical equipment, do not attempt to retrieve it. Never climb a utility pole or nearby tree, use a ladder or try to knock the drone down with another object.

Instead, stay a safe distance away and contact Guthrie County REC. If the crash results in a downed power line or damaged electrical equipment, keep everyone away from the area and report it immediately. Always assume a downed power line is energized and dangerous.

Recreational drone operators should also know the rules before taking flight. All drone pilots must follow FAA requirements as well as applicable



state and local laws, including Iowa laws concerning privacy and the use of drones around certain homesteads and farmsteads.

Look up before you fly. Keeping a safe distance from power lines protects you, your equipment, co-op employees and the reliable electric service your neighbors depend on.

REMEMBERING THE HALLOWEEN ICE STORM OF 1991

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Photo Sources:
Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
and Corn Belt Power Cooperative.

Thirty-five years ago, a powerful fall storm coated much of Iowa in ice, bringing down power lines and poles and leaving tens of thousands of Iowans without electricity. For many electric cooperative members and employees who lived through it, the Halloween Ice Storm of 1991 is difficult to forget.

According to the National Weather Service, the storm began as snow across southern Iowa on Oct. 30 before spreading north. By Halloween

morning, precipitation changed to a mixture of snow, sleet and freezing rain across much of eastern Iowa. The wintry mix continued into Nov. 1, with 1 to 2 inches of ice accumulating from southwest Iowa into north-central Iowa.

The ice caused widespread damage to Iowa's electric system. Fallen power lines closed Interstate 35. About 80,000 homes across Iowa lost electricity and utility damage totaled an estimated \$63 million. Gov. Terry Branstad ultimately declared 52 counties disaster areas.

A devastating blow to rural Iowa

The December 1991 issue of *Iowa REC News*, a predecessor to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*, called the storm an "icy nightmare." About half of Iowa's 48 rural electric cooperatives were affected, with damage estimates reaching \$38 million to \$40 million.

At the height of the storm, 40,000 cooperative households and businesses were

without power. Some members waited nearly two weeks for electricity to be restored as temperatures plunged below zero.

Ice measuring as much as 3 inches in diameter encased some lines. Dennis Corcoran, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) safety and loss control director at the time, said it had been years, "if ever," since Iowa had experienced such devastation over such a widespread area.

Pole after pole broke under the weight. Pioneer Lumber in Ankeny delivered 4,200 poles to Iowa's electric cooperatives, with another 900 needed by generation and transmission cooperatives.

Wright County REC, now known as Prairie Energy Cooperative, was among the hardest hit. Nearly its entire system was wiped out and, at one point, every member was without electricity.

"When we started, we didn't have any idea what we were getting into," recalled Tom Stewart, the co-op's



member service manager at the time. It took approximately 13 days to completely restore service, with help from 13 Iowa electric cooperatives and a Missouri cooperative crew.

Glidden REC, now Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, also suffered extensive damage. Former Manager Bruce Bailey estimated more than 250 poles were lost and more than 90% of the system was without power at some point. In the co-op's November 1991 newsletter, Bailey called it the worst ice storm in its history and thanked members for their patience and support.

Corn Belt system takes a direct hit

George Toyne, general manager of Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Corn Belt Power) at the time, described it as the worst storm he could remember in the area. More than 30 Corn Belt Power substations were out of service on Nov. 1. About 300 transmission poles were



broken and more than 50 others were leaning or pulled from the ground.

The storm also damaged a major 345-kV transmission line crossing Corn Belt Power's service area. An aerial inspection found approximately 90 miles damaged, including 386 support towers. A preliminary estimate placed the cost of replacing the damaged line at \$27 million.

Photos from the aftermath show damaged transmission structures, poles leaning along frozen roads and thick layers of ice coating electric equipment.



Cooperation in the cold

As cooperatives began restoring power, help arrived from across Iowa and neighboring states.

Through a statewide disaster plan coordinated by IAEC, crews came from unaffected Iowa cooperatives as well as Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Illinois. IAEC staff coordinated assistance while line crews worked grueling 18-hour days in bitter conditions.



Wes Ehrecke, IAEC executive vice president at the time, witnessed the response firsthand. He said it was "rewarding to see the level of cooperation" from unaffected Iowa electric cooperatives

and those in surrounding states.

During a lunch break, Wright County REC lineman Butch Norem was asked what kept him heading back into the cold.

"You know the people are cold," he replied.

Kyle Moore, a lineman from Maquoketa Valley REC who came to help, summed up the mutual aid response: "That's why it's called a cooperative."

Members and cooperative employees also found ways to support the restoration effort. One Wright County REC member donated a hog to feed workers. Members brought food and coffee. Employees opened their homes to visiting crews, washed their clothes and loaned personal

vehicles. Retired cooperative employees returned to help patrol lines and guide visiting crews.

The legacy of the storm

Iowa would endure another catastrophic ice storm in February 2007. According to the National Weather Service, at least 265,000 customers were without power at its peak, significantly more than during the 1991 storm, and damage to utility equipment totaled \$138 million.



The Halloween Ice Storm of 1991 remains one of Iowa's most memorable ice storms 35 years later.

The storm is remembered for the extensive damage and difficult restoration conditions, as well as the employees who worked long hours, members who supported crews and cooperatives that sent help wherever it was needed.

Technology and equipment have advanced considerably since 1991, changing how electric cooperatives monitor their systems, respond to outages and restore power. But the fundamentals remain the same: dedicated employees, support from members and cooperatives helping one another when the need is greatest.

Do you have memories of the Halloween Ice Storm of 1991? Send them to me at editor@ieclmagazine.com.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.



Prepare for winter weather by scanning the QR code to find outage and generator safety tips.

COMFORT FOOD *Classics*

FAVORITE TOMATO SOUP

- baking soda, as needed
- 3 quarts tomato juice
- milk, as needed
- ½ small onion, finely minced
- 1-1½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1-2 teaspoons Bragg liquid aminos
- ¼-½ teaspoon paprika
- 4 medium dried Thai or sweet basil leaves, whole
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary, crushed
- ¼ teaspoon thyme
- ½ rounded teaspoon garlic powder
- 1-2 cups cashew milk
- salt, to taste

Add a pinch of baking soda to tomato juice and stir 2-3 minutes until foam settles. Test acidity by putting some tomato juice mixture into a cup of milk to see if it curdles. Add more baking soda as needed, ¼ teaspoon at a time. Repeat testing procedure until tomato mixture doesn't curdle. Sauté finely minced onions in oil until caramelized, slightly browned, but do not burn. Heat juice in a 5- to 6-quart saucepan until just boiling. Add liquid aminos, paprika, Thai or basil leaves, rosemary, thyme and garlic powder. Simmer for at least 15 minutes. Then add cashew milk and simmer or keep warm until serving. Do not boil! Add salt to taste and adjust seasonings, if needed. Best the next day after marinating in the refrigerator overnight. Serves 6-8

Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

KING RANCH CHICKEN

- 3½ cups plain tortilla chips, crushed
- 2-3 cups chicken, cooked and cubed
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 cup milk
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can Rotel diced tomatoes, drained
- 12 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- 12 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded

Place crushed tortilla chips in 9x13-inch pan. Place chicken on top of chips. Combine chili powder, milk, soups and diced tomatoes. Pour mixture over chicken and top with shredded cheeses. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Let sit for about 10 minutes before cutting and serving. Serves 9-12

Deb Bartholomew • Ollie
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

CHICKEN LASAGNA SOUP

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 32 ounces chicken broth
- 6-8 cups chicken, cooked
- 4 cups bowtie noodles, uncooked

Mix cream cheese, soups and cottage cheese and cook until blended. Mix in broth and chicken. Add uncooked bowtie noodles and cook until tender. Serves 10

Jeffrey and Terri Becker • Wilton
Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative



Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.

CREAM CHICKEN OVER BISCUITS

- ¼ cup oleo or butter
- 2 15.5-ounce cans clear chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon onion, chopped
- 1 small carrot, finely chopped
- ½ stalk celery, finely chopped or celery seed
- dash garlic salt
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- seasoned salt, to taste
- ¾ cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- 3 cups chicken, shredded
- biscuits

Melt oleo or butter in pan, then turn off heat. Add chicken broth. Add vegetables to broth. Add seasonings. If using celery seed, add a few shakes. In a separate bowl, mix flour and milk, then add to broth and vegetables. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally so the mixture doesn't get lumpy. Turn heat down and simmer 25 minutes. Add chicken and simmer 5 minutes longer. Serve over biscuits.

Audra O'Neill • Wall Lake
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

COUNTRY PORK 'N SAUERKRAUT

- 2 pounds country-style pork ribs
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 1 14-ounce can sauerkraut, undrained
- 1 cup applesauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons caraway seed
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon pepper

In a Dutch oven, cook ribs and onion in oil until ribs are browned and onion is tender. Remove from heat. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over ribs. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 1½-2 hours, or until ribs are tender.

Serves 4

Deb Peterson • Albia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

SWEET AND SOUR MEATBALLS

- 1-1½ pounds ground beef or turkey
- 1 cup milk
- ¾ cup oatmeal
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion, minced
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 3 teaspoons vinegar
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup ketchup

Lightly mix beef or turkey, milk, oatmeal, salt, pepper and onion. Form mixture into loosely packed balls. Place meatballs in a single layer in an 8x8-inch cake pan or casserole dish. Mix brown sugar, vinegar, water and ketchup. Pour over meatballs and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, or until done.

Serves 4-6

Susan Rubis • Batavia
Access Energy Cooperative

ONE-PAN CHICKEN SPAGHETTI SUPREME

- 1 pound chicken breasts
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- garlic powder, to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- mushrooms, to taste
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ cup bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ½ pound spaghetti, cooked and drained

Butterfly chicken breasts. If desired, cut into strips or chunks. Season with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Heat a large skillet and add olive oil. Cook chicken until golden on both sides, remove. If using mushrooms, sauté until softened and browned, remove. Melt butter in skillet, then add flour and stir. Cook at least 1 minute. Add broth slowly, stirring until smooth and thickened. Add garlic, onion powder, parsley and paprika, stir well. Add bacon, peas, mushrooms, if using, cheese and sour cream gradually. Stir to keep smooth. Continue until thoroughly heated and just beginning to simmer. Add chicken and pasta, combine gently. Sprinkle with parsley if desired. You can also place cooked pasta into a buttered casserole dish and top with chicken. Then, pour the sauce mixture evenly over top. Cover and keep warm until serving. Serves 4-6

Karla Pals • Belmond
Prairie Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

DATE NIGHT MEALS

**\$25 BILL CREDIT REWARD
FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

Deadline is Oct. 31

Love is in the air! We're looking for your favorite **Valentine's Day recipes** – think everything from dinner for two and restaurant-inspired dishes, to savory steak or seafood entrees to decadent desserts. Selected recipes will be shared in our February issue, just in time to inspire a romantic dinner at home or a special evening with friends. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322





WHEN SCAMS GET SMARTER: PROTECTING YOURSELF IN THE AGE OF AI

BY CATHY CASH

Artificial intelligence (AI) sometimes doesn't seem so artificial and that could be a real problem.

It can create realistic text, voices, images and websites in seconds. Those capabilities make many everyday tools more useful, but they also make it easier for scammers to impersonate family members, banks and even your electric cooperative.

Through friendly chatbots and website agents, AI monitors your selections and online behavior to efficiently make recommendations for entertainment and other online goods and services.

But be vigilant. Scammers are using this amazing invention of computer-learning software for theft and extortion.

When fake looks and sounds real

Scammers are applying AI to mimic familiar voices and change videos and emails to appear authentic in urgent phone or online requests for credit card and bank account numbers, electronic money transfers and personal information.

Maybe you know someone who believed their adult child or grandchild was calling to say they were in legal trouble and

needed a large sum of money wired immediately. That scam has made the rounds.

Then there are investment or get-rich-quick scams, where criminals bully their victims via emails, websites or calls promising a big payout if they pay up now.

Website spoofing is also on the rise. Everything looks genuine on the surface, but when consumers hit "submit" after punching in their credit card number and other personal information, they are basically handing over valuable data to a cybercriminal.

"AI can help scammers produce polished, convincing messages and build fake websites that closely mimic a bank or even an electric co-op," said Carter Manucy, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's senior director for cybersecurity.

Scammers can build sites and communications that resemble an electric co-op and contact members with high-pressure calls or emails demanding instant payment by gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency and threatening shutoff.

So, what should co-op members do in that situation?

Stop and make sure the contact is legitimate. Members should treat any unexpected demand for immediate payment by gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency as a scam and contact their co-op directly using the phone number on their bill.

"Call back using a number you already know, never one the caller provides. For a co-op message, use the number on your bill," said Manucy. "Any message that pressures you to act immediately is the top red flag, no matter how real it sounds. Real family, banks and utilities let you take a breath."

But as AI makes scams much harder to spot, it also equips these rip-off artists with tools to boost their output and victimize thousands of people in

just a few clicks. AI allows criminals to create, personalize and distribute convincing scams at a scale that once required far more time and people.

"Criminals can generate thousands of tailored attacks cheaply, so more scams reach members' phones and inboxes, more often," Manucy said.

As a result, the loot scammers are reaping is unprecedented. Americans reported nearly \$900 million in AI-assisted scam losses in one year, according to the FBI.

"Those figures capture only complaints that were reported and identified as AI-related, so they do not show the full scope of the problem," Manucy said.

Slow down and verify

Here are some tips to help protect yourself against today's scams made more sophisticated thanks to AI:

- Distrust the urgency of a request for money or personal data.
- Verify parties making requests through a trusted channel, such as a phone number on your bill.
- Don't use links in unexpected emails or text messages. Instead, navigate directly to the company's website or use its official app.
- Before you click, carefully check the website address to make sure it's legitimate.

- Set a family code word not shared online and ask for the code word if you receive an emergency call. A cloned voice won't know it.
- Enable multifactor authentication on email, banking and other important accounts for an added layer of security.
- Protect yourself when paying for goods and services online. Reject requirements for gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency as these payments are difficult and sometimes impossible to recover.
- Report scams to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov or the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.IC3.gov.

If you believe you've responded to a scam, contact your bank or credit card company immediately, change any compromised passwords and report the fraud to the appropriate authorities.

"AI has changed the tools scammers use, but not the trick behind them," said Manucy. "Every scam still depends on getting people to act fast, before they stop and think. Pause and verify remains the single best defense."

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Protect Yourself from AI-Powered Scams

Pause before you act.

Be suspicious of urgent requests for money or personal information.

Verify the source.

Contact the person or organization through a trusted phone number or official website – not the contact information in the message.

Look before you click.

Double-check website addresses and email links for misspellings or other red flags.

Create a family code word.

Use a private word or phrase to verify emergency calls.

Use secure payment methods.

Never pay with gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency. Those payment methods are often impossible to recover.

Report scams.

If you think you've been targeted, report it to the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

CONTEST NOMINEE SHINES THROUGH SERVICE

In conjunction with this year's Shine the Light contest, Guthrie County REC recognized nominee Kristi Sutherland with a \$500 donation to her charity of choice.

Kristi, of Adel, was nominated by Thomas Burkgren of Perry for her numerous volunteer and community activities, including her church, Panther Creek Church of the Brethren in Adel.

"I am continually impressed with Kristi's action-oriented empathy for the members of a wide community that is well beyond the walls of Panther Creek Church," Thomas wrote in the nomination.

Through trial and error and about a year of learning how to weave, Kristi began making mats out of plastic bags for unhoused people in central Iowa. A team of church members now assists her in this endeavor. Some of the many other activities Kristi spearheads include repurposing medicine bottles for overseas missions and organizing food donations for her community.

"It gives me great joy to volunteer and serve others," Kristi said. "My grandparents and parents helped those

in need, so it has always been part of my life."

Blessing box makes a positive impact

At the corner of Highway 44 and Dallas Co. P58, also known as Panther Corner, you might see a "Blessing Box" filled with food items.

The food insecurity rate in Dallas County sits at approximately 8.4% to 9.2%, meaning roughly 8,000 to 9,000 residents lack consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Because Perry has a significantly higher poverty rate (11.9%) compared to the rest of wealthy Dallas County (4.9%), the localized hunger and food assistance needs within the city of Perry are disproportionately higher than county-wide averages.

"The box provides food to anyone in need with no questions asked," Thomas wrote. "It has become a vital way for people to supplement their daily food needs."

The \$500 donation will support and expand the offerings in the blessing box.

"I have a Costco membership so it is easy for me to buy in bulk the items



with nutritive value," Kristi said. "And we have a fund set up to reimburse members for their support. It is a constant need!"

"Kristi is always a willing volunteer when called upon," Thomas wrote. "She has a committed spirit that generates action to help where help is needed. She is a bright light in our community."

Guthrie County REC is proud to shine the light on Kristi and the work she is doing to better her community.

The Shine the Light contest is held each year with nominations open throughout the month of June. For more information, visit www.iowashinethelight.com.

MEMBER OWNERSHIP AT WORK

One of the things that makes Guthrie County REC different from other utilities is simple: the people we serve are also the people who own the cooperative.

That difference is reflected in how we handle margins each year.

At its August meeting, the Guthrie County REC board of directors approved the distribution of \$1,850,708.93 in margins from 2025 operations. Of that amount, \$1.3 million will be allocated to deferred patronage dividends, commonly known as capital credits.

The remaining margins will help maintain the cooperative's financial strength. The board designated \$253,378.57 for

the Reserve for Contingency Losses and Expenses and \$297,330.36 for Statutory Surplus. Maintaining these reserves helps protect the cooperative against unexpected risks and expenses, while the statutory surplus meets requirements established by state law and cooperative policy.

The board also approved capital credit allocations totaling \$1,021,834.09 for the years 2009, 2015 (partial), 2016 (partial) and 2025 G&T.

How we distribute margins is an important part of the cooperative business model. Guthrie County REC operates to provide reliable electric service for its members – not to

generate profits for outside investors. By allocating margins to members, maintaining appropriate financial reserves and returning capital credits.

PLEASE NOTE: Guthrie County REC members will receive a notice of their allocation included with their October electric bill. No separate notices will be mailed this year. Patronage checks, which normally arrive in your mailbox in December, will not be distributed. Instead, members will receive their patronage amount as a credit on their December electric bill.

If you have any questions or changes to your account, please let us know by calling 888-747-2206.

TIPS TO SEAL DUCTWORK FOR SAVINGS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

If you live in a home with a forced-air furnace, the biggest energy waster may be out of sight. Improve your home's efficiency and comfort by repairing and sealing ductwork.

Around 20% to 30% of the air you pay to heat or cool is lost through leaks, holes or poorly installed ductwork in the average home, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Properly sealing ducts can reduce wasted energy by delivering conditioned air where you want it inside the home. If you have a room that is cold in winter and hot in summer, the culprit might be a leaky or disconnected duct.

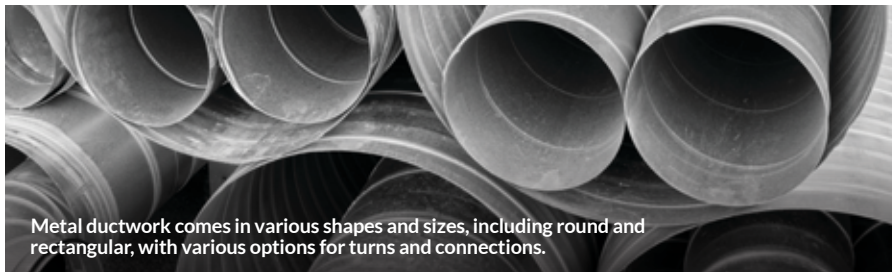
Duct sealing also helps with indoor air quality. Leaking return ducts can pull air, dirt and dust from the spaces they run through, such as attics and crawl spaces. If you have gas appliances, leaking return ducts can inadvertently cause backdraft, introducing combustion gases back into the home instead of outdoors where they belong.

Inspect and improve the ductwork

You can seal ducts yourself or hire a professional. For a do-it-yourself approach, start with a visual inspection to determine the type of duct. Most homes have flexible or metal ducts.

Metal ductwork comes in various shapes and sizes, including round and rectangular, with options for turns and connections. Ducts should be insulated when they run through unconditioned spaces, such as crawl spaces, attics and garages. If your metal ducts are insulated, you must remove the insulation to properly seal them, then reinsulate.

Flexible ducts typically have an inner and outer layer, with insulation between them. The inner layer is made of bendable plastic reinforced with wire, like a stretched-out Slinky covered in plastic. The outer layer



Metal ductwork comes in various shapes and sizes, including round and rectangular, with various options for turns and connections.



A side-by-side comparison shows where to apply mesh tape and sealant to close gaps around metal ducts.



Prep is important. After inspecting your ductwork, gather products designed for the job based on the type of ducts in your home.

holds the insulation in place. The inner liner in flexible ducts can become brittle over time, cracking easily and causing leaks. If your inner liner is in bad shape, replace the flexible duct.

Check for any obvious disconnections, gaps, extra bends or sagging ducts. Improve airflow by using short, straight, taut runs. Avoid sags and excess turns.

Metal ductwork should be fastened at each joint with sheet metal screws. Make sure your ducts are properly supported to keep the joints from separating over time.

For flexible ducts, use Panduit straps. These are heavy-duty nylon zip ties that offer long-term durability and a tensioning tool specifically designed to tighten them.

Seal gaps with the right materials

When it comes to sealing ducts, use products designed for the job. Seal every joint and seam using duct-sealing mastic, a thick paste that can be applied with a paintbrush or gloved hand. When it dries, mastic creates a flexible, airtight seal, eliminating duct leakage. Use mesh tape to bridge larger gaps before

applying mastic. Remove register covers inside the home to seal the joints and seams there. You also want a good seal where the duct meets drywall or flooring.

In easier-to-reach areas, you can use UL-listed foil-backed tape designed for ductwork. Do not use duct tape. Temperature fluctuations cause the adhesive to fail.

Duct sealing is messy, so protect yourself and your home. Metal tape and the edges of metal ducts are sharp; wear coated work or garden gloves underneath nitrile or latex disposable gloves. To protect your arms, wear a long-sleeved shirt tucked into your gloves or a long sock with the toes cut out.

After air sealing, have an HVAC professional test the airflow during your next annual maintenance visit.

If you don't feel comfortable getting your hands dirty, hire a professional. Most companies that install ductwork or heating and cooling systems can also seal ducts.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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ENERGY MATTERS

DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2026-2027 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. Additional countable income and/or income verification not listed above may be required for eligibility determination.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. The start date is Oct. 1, 2026, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants.

If you're not sure where to apply, visit hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap.

To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$31,920
2	\$43,280
3	\$54,640
4	\$66,000
5	\$77,360
6	\$88,720
7	\$100,080
8	\$111,440

Note: For households with more than eight members, add \$11,360 for each additional member.

THE GRASS IS BLUE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I don't know life without Dolly.

As I write this, Dolly Parton has only been gone two days. The airwaves are filled with "9 to 5" and "I Will Always Love You."

One of the first Dolly songs I remember was "Islands in the Stream," her duet with Kenny Rogers. Even to a grade-school kid's untrained ear, I could tell Dolly was extraordinary. Years later, when she brought her "Backwoods Barbie" tour to the Des Moines Civic Center in 2008, you can bet my family and I were there.

After Dolly died on Aug. 25, it seemed like everyone was talking about her incredible legacy. We've all been inspired by her decades of charity work. We know the uplifting story of her impoverished childhood in the Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee and her improbable rise to country music superstardom. We've seen her hit movies.

But we don't know the half of it.

Hello, Dolly

All the retrospectives about Dolly reminded me of a TV segment I watched a few years ago. Dolly explained how she used lyrical opposites to write "The Grass is Blue."

Those poignant words, which soar above the haunting notes of the acoustic guitar, mandolin, bass and fiddle, still stop me in my tracks:

*"I've had to think up
a way to survive,
Since you said it's over,
told me goodbye.
I just can't make it
one day without you,
Unless I pretend that
the opposite's true."*



And then comes the heartbreaking chorus:

*"Rivers flow backwards.
Valleys are high.
Mountains are level.
Truth is a lie.
I'm perfectly fine,
And I don't miss you.
The sky is green,
And the grass is blue."*

Dolly wrote this song in 1999 in about 30 minutes during a lunch break on the set of *Blue Valley Songbird*, a made-for-TV drama. She started playing with the concept of opposites to convey the intense denial and emotional shock of a painful breakup. She often credited the rapid, effortless flow of the song to divine intervention, because she was so tired, in mind and spirit.

It reminds me of the writing wisdom, "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader."

"The Grass is Blue" can only come from someone who knows hardship. Loss. Pain.

Surely that couldn't be the perpetually joyful, effervescent Dolly, right?

"Ain't Nobody's Fool"

Turns out Dolly wasn't superhuman. Dolly's countless hits, including



"The Grass is Blue," aren't just masterclasses in songwriting. They reflect the soul of a survivor.

The day after Dolly's high school graduation in 1964, she boarded a bus for Nashville. Record executives turned her down. One said her voice sounded like a screech owl. When she finally had an opportunity with Monument Records, they wanted her to be a pop star. She refused.

Dolly's talent and focus would catapult her to the top of country charts. When Hollywood came calling and Dolly became a movie star, many in Nashville accused her of betraying her roots. Dolly made it clear she wasn't leaving Nashville; she was taking Nashville with her.

All that fame came with a price. By the mid-1980s, Dolly struggled with depression and even contemplated suicide, according to her biographer, Martha Ackmann, who wrote "Ain't Nobody's Fool: The Life and Times of Dolly Parton."

Dolly refused to be counted out. Songwriting remained an antidote to her pain and gave her a new sensitivity for those who struggle.

Maybe that's why this American icon's music touched so many of us. Beneath the rhinestones, the blond hair and the larger-than-life personality was a country girl who kept choosing hope. If it seemed like Dolly was one of us, it's because she was.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



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