

heartland LINK



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

JULY/AUGUST 2026

a publication of
East-Central Iowa Rural
Electric Cooperative

EXPLORE ECI REC'S NEW WEBSITE!

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CALENDAR NOTES

Friday, July 3
Closed for Independence Day

Monday, Sept. 7
Closed for Labor Day



STORY ON PAGE 4



MESSAGE FROM CEO TERESA FLOYD

Technology Shapes Our Lives ... and Your Cooperative!

Technology You Use Every Day



Pay your bill online or through the mobile app



Track your energy use with SmartHub



Receive updates and alerts



Access your account anytime

Technology isn't something on the horizon—it's part of our everyday lives. It's also playing an increasingly important role in how your Cooperative serves you.

In this issue of the *Heartland Link*, we're highlighting how "Technology in Motion" is shaping the way we deliver safe, reliable, and efficient service to our members.

Some of these advancements are easy to see and use. From paying your bill through our automated phone system or mobile app to accessing your account information and updates online, technology makes it more convenient than ever to stay connected with us.

We're also excited to announce the launch of our new website! We hope you'll take a moment to visit and explore its improved features and easy-to-use design. Our goal was to reduce the number of clicks needed to find information, make it easier to contact us, and provide quick access to the resources you use most.

Other innovations work behind the scenes. Advanced systems help us detect outages sooner, respond more quickly, and even reroute power between substations to minimize disruptions and keep the lights on. These tools allow us to operate more efficiently while maintaining the high level of service you expect.

While technology continues to evolve, one thing remains constant: our commitment to you. No matter how we deliver our services, your Cooperative is here to serve, and we're always just a phone call away. 📞



Photo credit: ECI REC Library

What Is Technology in Motion?

"Technology in Motion" refers to the systems working together behind the scenes to monitor, manage, and restore power across our service territory. Here's how our technology and people work together in an outage scenario:

1. SCADA and AMI help monitor the system.
2. Members report outages.
3. OMS identifies the problem area.
4. Crews are dispatched to make repairs.
5. Power is restored and service is confirmed.

CONNECT WITH ECI REC

Emails

memberservices@ecirec.coop
(rebates)

csr@ecirec.coop
(billing, new customers)

Address

2400 Bing Miller Lane
PO Box 248
Urbana, IA
52345-0248

Phone

319-443-4343

Toll Free

877-850-4343

Fax

319-443-4359

Hours

Monday–Friday
Office: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
(closed Saturdays,
Sundays, and holidays)

Website

ecirec.coop

Facebook

facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec
(operations news and general updates)



Photos by Katie Stadheim



Whether in the Operations Center, at a substation, or in the field, technology helps ECI REC employees monitor the electric system, respond to outages, and provide safe, reliable service to our members.

How Technology Keeps Your Power Flowing

by Nathan Groom, Information Services Manager | a Keeping the Lights On feature

TECHNOLOGY PLAYS A KEY ROLE in how ECI REC works to fulfill our mission: improving the lives of those we serve. With strategic investments in technology, we can operate more efficiently and respond more quickly to member needs.

Nearly 30 years ago, we installed our first substation monitoring and control system, known as Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA). This system gives us real-time visibility into our substations. Over the years, we've expanded this system to include strategic tie points between substations, which helps us respond to outages more quickly and restore power as safely and efficiently as possible.

By combining SCADA data with member phone calls, we use an Outage Management System (OMS) to pinpoint outages and coordinate response efforts. OMS also powers the outage map available on our website, giving members visibility into what's happening across our system.

Another important advancement is the meter at your home or business. Through Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), we've expanded our ability to monitor the system from substations all the way to individual meters. This allows us to provide members with detailed usage information through SmartHub, our online account management and bill payment tool. With SmartHub, members can view bills, track energy usage, and manage their account anytime.

The 2020 derecho is a strong example of how these technologies work together. While the storm caused widespread

outages, our system allowed us to assess damage quickly and make informed decisions about restoration. By monitoring system load and verifying service through AMI, we were able to safely restore power and expand service as transmission lines came back online.

This year, our focus is improving operational efficiency and strengthening our system's resilience. We are working to digitize workflows to reduce delays and improve communication from start to finish. We also received a grant through the Department of Energy and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to enhance communication reliability and strengthen our cybersecurity.

While many of these systems work quietly behind the scenes, they play an important role in helping us provide reliable service and better support our members every day. We will continue to invest in technology that helps us fulfill our mission of improving the lives of those we serve. 🌱

Did You Know?

- ✓ **We can monitor substations in real time.**
- ✓ **Our outage map is powered by live system data.**
- ✓ **Smart meters help confirm when power is restored.**

Explore Our New Website

a Keeping the Lights On update

We're so excited to introduce ECI REC's redesigned website!

We approached this redesign with our members in mind. Our goal was to make it easier to find information, access services, and connect you with your Cooperative. By improving navigation and highlighting frequently used resources, the new site helps you get where you need to go—faster.

What can you expect?

It's easier to use on any device.

The new website is designed to provide a consistent user experience, whether you're on a phone, tablet, or computer.

You can find information faster.

The Quick Links at the top of the page help you reach the resources our members use most, including the SmartHub portal, our outage map, pay by phone, and ECI REC's contact information. Fewer clicks and less searching!

SmartHub is quickly accessible from several spots.

Your account is never far away. Beyond the Quick Links, you'll find SmartHub access prominently displayed throughout the site for easy account management.

There's an extensive section dedicated to rebates.

Under the My Cooperative > Member Services menu, you'll find our Energy Efficiency Rebates page. Discover the incentives available for residential, ag, and commercial members!

The online forms have been simplified.

Submit requests and share information with ECI REC through streamlined forms that work on any device.

It's safe and secure.

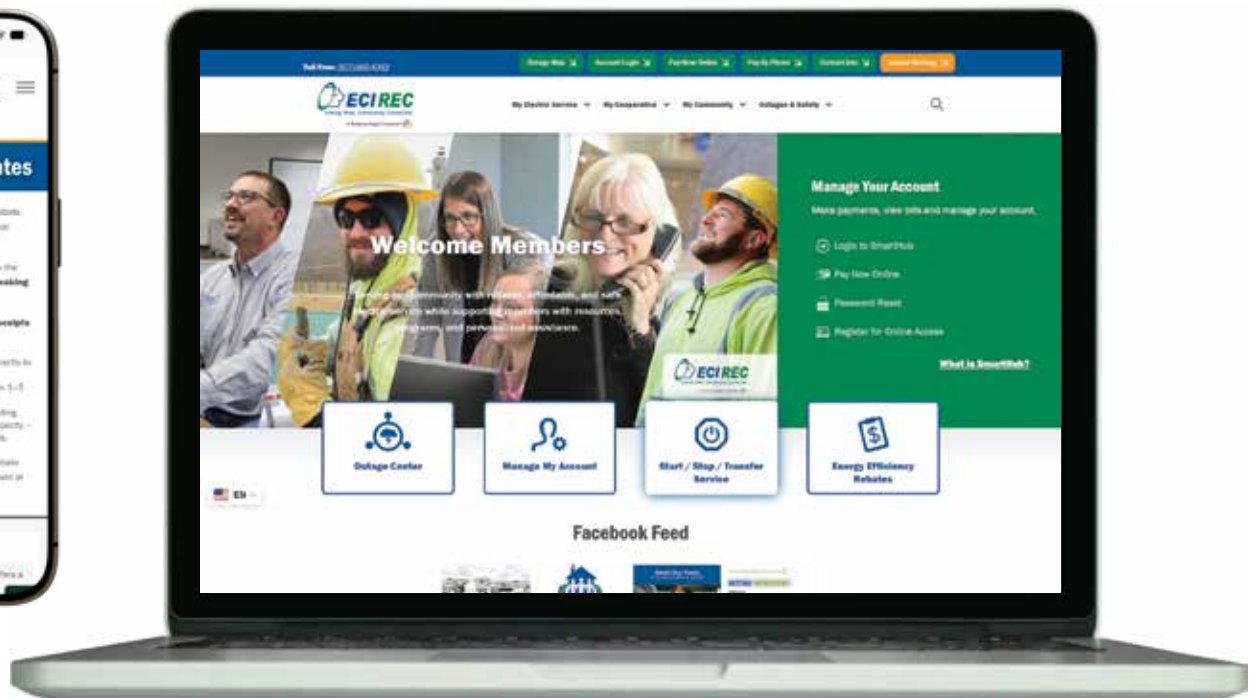
The new website includes enhanced security features and regular updates to help provide a safe, reliable online experience.

The resources and information are up to date.

From rebates and energy-saving tips to scholarships and Cooperative programs, we've refreshed and reorganized content to make important member resources easier to discover.



Try it out for yourself—visit the new site today!



SMARTHUB:

YOUR ACCOUNT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

an Energy Wise feature



SmartHub gives our members convenient access to their account anytime, anywhere. With SmartHub, you can view account information, monitor energy usage, make payments, and manage your account from a computer or mobile device.



Pay Your Bill

- Make one-time payments
- Enroll in Auto Pay
- View and update stored payment methods
- View billing information



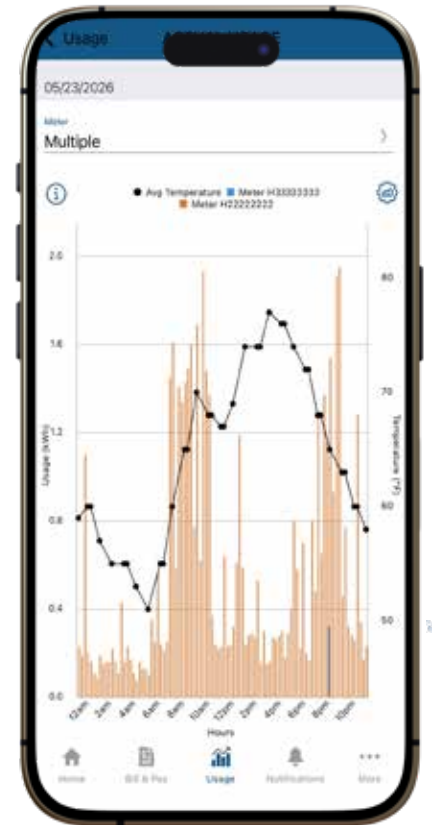
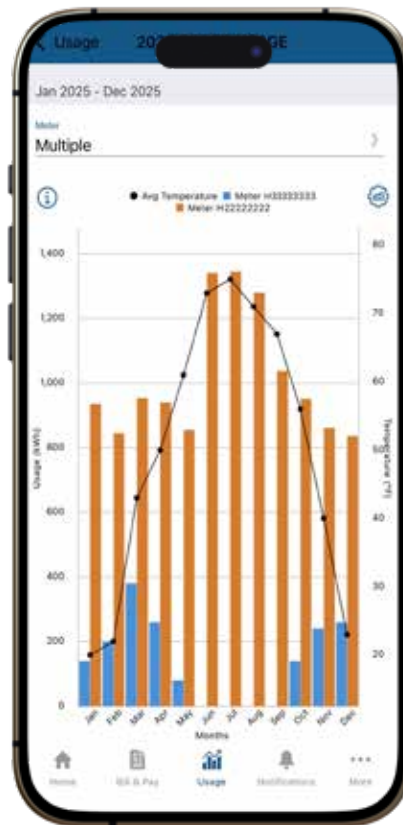
Track Energy Usage

- View daily energy use
- Monitor usage trends
- Compare usage over time



Access Anywhere

- Mobile app
- Desktop
- Account information available 24/7



Ready to Set Up an Account?

Go to ecirec.smarthub.coop.

Or on mobile, download the **SmartHub app** from your app store.

Click or tap on **Don't have an account? Register Now.**

Fill out the registration form, then look for an email to verify your account.

Set up a new password and set communication and paperless billing preferences.

Now, start exploring all your account info!



DOWNLOAD THE APP



Summer Energy Tip

Use SmartHub to monitor daily energy use during hot summer months. Tracking usage trends can help you better understand how weather and household activities impact your electric bill.



Need Help Registering for SmartHub?

Call our office at 877-850-4343—we'd be happy to assist you!



Photo by Katie Stadheim

Meet Our Team

a Keeping the Lights On spotlight

Nathan Groom Information Services Manager

What do you enjoy about your job at ECI REC?

I enjoy the different challenges that are presented daily. I never really know what I'm going to get into one day to the next.

What's something members might not realize about your role or the work you do?

Since joining ECI REC, I've expanded my knowledge well beyond traditional IT to include HVAC systems (to keep our infrastructure cool), long-distance wireless communication, substation breaker settings, cellular networking, and so much more. Technology touches almost every part of the Cooperative.

How does your role help support safe, reliable power for our members?

Our substation monitoring tool (SCADA) has been upgraded over the years to provide better visibility into what's happening across our electric system, while improved field devices help our crews work more safely around energized equipment.

Technology has changed rapidly over the years. What's one advancement that has made the biggest impact at ECI REC?

I believe SmartHub, our online account management application, has been a huge help to the Cooperative and to members in paying their bills and understanding their electric usage. 🙌

Another Annual Meeting in the Books

a Cooperative Difference recap

Thank you to everyone who participated in our virtual 2026 Annual Meeting of the Members. We appreciate your engagement and continued support of your Cooperative.

Congratulations to our prize winners! To find the full list of winners and election results, visit ecirec.coop or follow us on Facebook.



SCAN FOR WEBSITE



SCAN FOR FACEBOOK

THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!

JULY ANNIVERSARIES



Scott McLaughlin
Engineering Technician
13 years



Dane Peterson
Engineering Design Technician
13 years



Bryce Burroughs
Lineworker
9 years



Brooks Erickson
Apprentice Lineworker
3 years



Holly Cashman
Member Service Representative
20 years

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES



Ben Donnelly
Lineworker
22 years



Travis Schellhorn
Lineworker
24 years

A Taste of Tradition

Thank you for sharing your garden-fresh dishes!

a Community Connected feature

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we asked you to send in recipes for your favorite salads and side dishes using fresh produce. Thank you to everyone who shared—we so enjoyed reading the stories behind your recipes and canning traditions. Congratulations to our winners, who have received \$25 bill credits! 🍷

Garden-Fresh Recipes

Creamy Cucumber & Onion Salad

Submitted by Barbara Bascom,
Rowley

This recipe is special to me because it was one of my favorite salads that my grandma used to make. She hasn't been around for almost 20 years, but I still think of her every time I make it.

4 large cucumbers
1 onion
1½ cups Miracle Whip
½ cup sugar
3 Tbsp. white vinegar

Wash, peel, and thinly slice four large cucumbers. Thinly slice and cut one onion. Place the sliced cucumbers and onion in a large bowl that has a lid.

In a small bowl, combine Miracle Whip, sugar, and vinegar. Mix until smooth.

Pour the Miracle Whip mixture into the cucumber and onion mixture and combine well. Cover with a lid. Allow to marinate in the refrigerator for a minimum of four hours. Refrigerate leftovers. Makes six servings

Fruity Spinach Salad

Submitted by Tish Frye,
Independence

This is my favorite spinach salad, not only for spring but year-round. It is colorful, and the fruits and spinach blend together beautifully. It is also quick and easy to assemble. I normally do not add the dressing until just before serving.

6 cups fresh garden spinach (or one 10 oz. pkg. of spinach)
1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
½ cup fresh blueberries
One 11 oz. can mandarin oranges, drained
½ cup poppyseed dressing

In a salad bowl, combine spinach leaves and fruit. Toss to mix. Prepare poppyseed dressing and shake well. Drizzle over salad and toss to coat.

POPPYSEED DRESSING

½ cup Hellmann's mayonnaise
2 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. poppyseeds
1 Tbsp. lemon juice

Mix and shake well. If using store-bought dressing, add 1 Tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tsp. sugar and shake well.



Share a
**Taste of
Tradition**

and earn a
\$25 bill credit!



What's Next?

Soup & Comfort Food Recipes!

Do you have a favorite **soup, chili, or comfort food recipe** that's perfect for cooler weather? We'd love to feature it in our September/October issue of the *Heartland Link*.

If your recipe is selected for publication, you'll receive a \$25 bill credit as our thanks. Winning recipes may also be featured on EC REC's Facebook page. We can't wait to see what's simmering in your kitchens this fall!

How to Submit

You can email your recipe to ecirec@ecirec.coop, or you can find a form online at My Cooperative > Member Connections > Submit a Recipe. **Be sure to submit by August 1!**

Make sure to include:

- Your name
- Service address
- Recipe
- A short note about why the recipe is special to you



Family Recipe

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CLIP AND MAIL

See below for Member Challenge questions.

Answers: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Account No. _____ We cannot accept answers by phone.

PERIODICALS

FIND TOOLS FOR MEMBERS AT ECIREC.COOP



24-Hour Bill Pay With SmartHub

See account information at ecirec.smarthub.coop or download the app.



Outage Center & Map

View current outages on our website or in the SmartHub app.



Online Forms

Access rebate, service request, and program sign-up forms.



Call Before You Dig

Notify utilities before you dig at www.iowaonecall.com or call 811.



Co-op Connections®

Get discounts on everyday expenses. Visit www.connections.coop or download the mobile app.



Heartland Link E-Newsletter

Email ecirec@ecirec.coop and ask to receive our newsletter via email.



Iowa Rural Power

Join grassroots advocates for Iowa's electric cooperatives. Visit www.iaruralpower.org.

take the member challenge

1. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: This year, our focus is improving _____ efficiency and strengthening our system's resilience.

2. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: By improving _____ and highlighting frequently used resources, the new site helps you get where you need to go—faster.

3. ENERGY WISE: With _____, you can view account information, monitor energy usage, make payments, and manage your account from a computer or mobile device.

Find the answers within the stories, features, and content of this newsletter and you could win a prize. Send your answers to ecirec@ecirec.coop. Or, print the word(s) at the top of the page, cut it out, and send it to: ECIREC, PO Box 248, Urbana, IA 52345. You may mail your entry along with your electric bill payment, but remember there is a deadline! Entries for this issue must be received by August 1. Ten names will be drawn from all correct entries.

last issue's challenge winners

The following names were drawn from the May/June 2026 Heartland Link entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Larry Haars

Janelle M. Schmitz

Michael J. Doyle

Lorraine E. Vileta

James T. Kavalier

Thomas G. Wiese

Richard A. Griswold

Richard J. Goedken

Orville J. Miller

Steven Francois