

heartland LINK

A publication of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

AG REBATES page 4

March is National Ag Month. Celebrate by saving with a rebate!



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NOMINATING COMMITTEE

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Work begins to finalize ballot for 2018 elections.



BUDGET BREAKDOWN

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AMI Antenna Installed and More Ops News

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our members say thank you

“We appreciate the way you take care of your customers!”

BILL AND PAT LUDWIG

“I am very happy with my service. I especially appreciate the linemen for their quick work in restoring power!”

MATT CHERVENY



take the member challenge

1. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: Employees were shown the various _____ components, devices like routers and meters, as well as the communications network and equipment.

2. COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE: _____ allows members to access account information as well as ECI REC's other helpful online tools.

3. COMMUNITY CONNECTED: Through the support of members like you, ECI REC's _____ program distributes funds via community action agencies to low-income consumers within Benton and Buchanan County.

Find the answers within the stories, features, and content of this newsletter and you could win a prize. Send your answers to memberchallenge@ecirec.coop. Or, print the word(s) at the top of the back page, cut it out, and send it to: ECI REC, 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 April 1. Sixteen names will be drawn from all correct entries. Members will not be allowed to win more than once per calendar year.

last issue's challenge winners

The following names were drawn from the January/February 2018 *Heartland Link* entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Robert Bellmer

Phil & Shelley Bishop

Matt Dulin

Steven Francois

Carroll Halva

Elmer Hettinger

Eldon Ingamells

Judy Irish

Tom Kavalier

Henry Mantz

Robert & Sara McInerney

Brent & Connie Sharff

Wayne Swarts

Glenda Westphal

Michael & Lisa Wojcik

Loren Wood

Calendar Notes

3/25 – Palm Sunday

3/30 – Good Friday

4/1 – Easter

Contact ECI REC

EMAILS

memberservices@ecirec.coop
(rebates, product sales)

csr@ecirec.coop
(billing, new customers)

WEB SITE
www.ecirec.coop

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HOURS

Monday-Friday
Office: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

(closed Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays)

**OPERATIONS NEWS
OUTAGE UPDATES**

facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec

COVER STORY: Operations Update

a Keeping the Lights On feature



NOVEMBER – ECI REC's AMI team conducted successful preliminary communications testing between the routers and meter equipment and software—a critical step prior to deployment of the pilot smart meters. This pilot meter data was collected, reviewed, and verified before full deployment of the remaining smart meters began.



DECEMBER – For ECI REC's monthly safety meeting, Operations Manager Gary Marlow worked with materials supplier RESCO to bring in Mike Berger from Prysmian Cable to talk about primary underground cable and terminations of underground utilities. Berger gave a live demonstration on a new type of underground cable splicing kit.

Vendor demonstrations of new products and tools help ECI REC get hands-on experience with new technology and techniques. When possible, line personnel are involved since they will work with these in the field. Product demonstrations are a valuable consideration in the Cooperative's road map to efficiently maintaining a reliable distribution system.



DECEMBER (left) – ECI REC Line Foreman Kevin Walton worked to repair an antenna in the Shellsburg substation. The antenna transmits communications to ECI REC's supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system. The SCADA system monitors our electric distribution utilities/system, including substations, transformers, and

other electrical assets.


JANUARY – Chapman Metering began installing smart meters for some accounts served by the Shellsburg (#55) and Lindahl (#62) substations the last week of January, and all pilot meters were installed by January 30. Reminder postcards were sent out to affected members living in these areas—postcards will be sent to all members as their installation approaches.

JANUARY (above) – Member Service Technician John Tegler updated the electric service panel located on a transformer pole for an ECI REC commercial member in the BECCA Industrial Park. Service upgrades such as this are needed in some cases in preparation for smart meter installation. Line Foreman Kevin Walton also helped.

JANUARY – ECI REC's contractor, Midwest Spray Team and Sales, began vegetation control work at the Garrison and Winthrop substation circuits. The 2018 vegetation maintenance schedule will include 175 miles in our distribution system.

FEBRUARY (cover image) – ECI REC Apprentice Linemen Cole Berger and Shawn Kelly and SCADA Technician Doug Appelgate installed cabling to one of the AMI antennas attached to ECI REC's communications tower located in the BECCA Industrial Park.

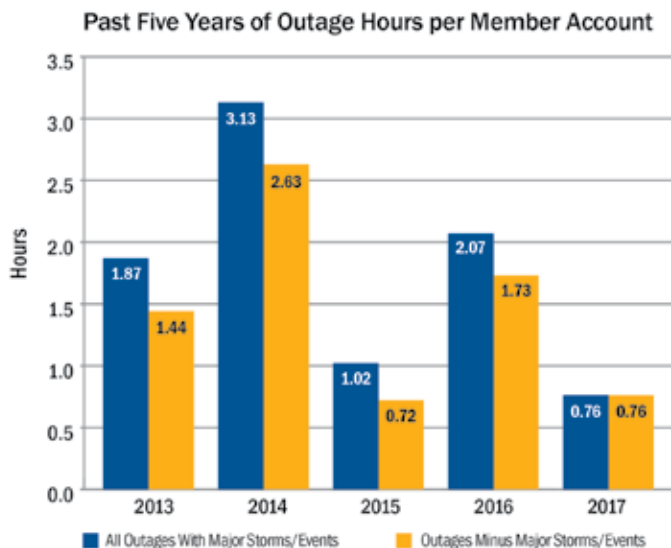


FEBRUARY (above) – A Honeywell/Elster representative conducted a five-day AMI system training session with employees from the ECI REC Operations and IT departments. The training included several hands-on exercises. Employees were shown the various AMI software components, meters, and the communications network and its equipment. Integration with SmartHub was also covered. 

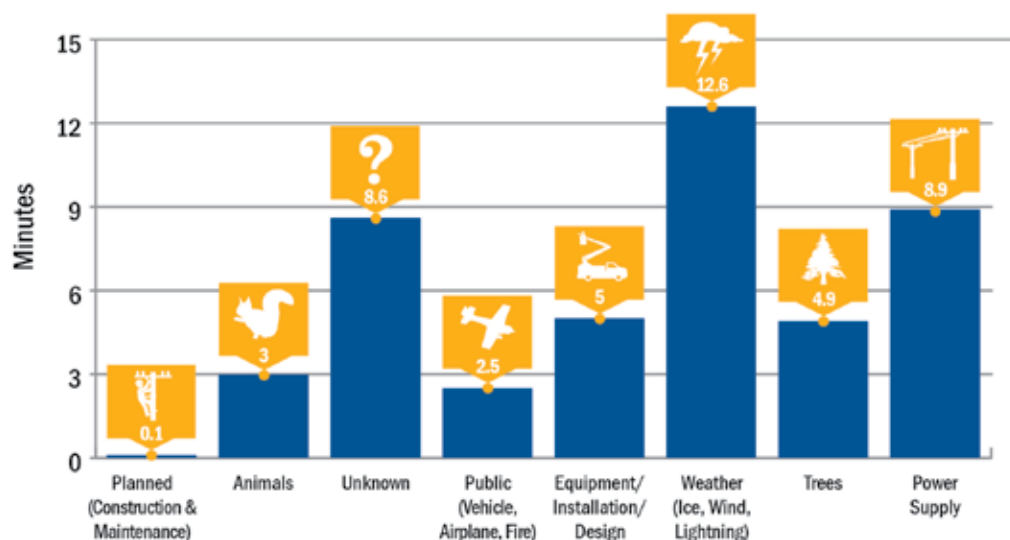
2017 Outage Reports Released

a Keeping the Lights On feature

ECI REC is pleased to report that 2017 was a record year, tallying the fewest outage minutes per member in the history of East-Central Iowa REC. The fact that there were no major weather events last year contributed to this success, but our continuing efforts to execute our Construction Work Plan and maintenance program are another very critical reason outage minutes were minimal. In 2017, 77 miles of distribution line were replaced; another 71 miles will be replaced in 2018.



2017 Average Outage Minutes per Member Account by Outage Cause



AG MEMBERS: Energy-Efficient Upgrades Earn YOU Cash!

In honor of National Ag Month in March, ECI REC would like to remind our producers to take advantage of our ag energy-efficiency incentives. You can find even more lighting incentives at ecirec.coop!

LIVESTOCK/DAIRY EQUIPMENT

- » Ventilation fans (BESS lab rated): \$3/in. (fan blade diameter)
- » Ventilation thermostat controller with humidistat: \$25 each
- » Circulation fans (BESS lab rated): \$1/in. (fan blade diameter)
- » High-volume, low-speed fans (minimum 10' diameter): \$35/ft. (fan blade diameter)
- » Dairy heat reclaimers: \$5 per milking cow
- » Dairy milk pre-coolers: \$4 per milking cow
- » VSD vacuum pumps: \$40/horsepower
- » Scroll compressors: \$250 each (must replace reciprocating compressor)
- » Electric heated livestock waterers: \$50 each (\leq 175W per trough opening)
- » Heat lamps: \$3/lamp (\leq 175W)
- » Single-crate heating pads: \$25/single pad (\leq 85W)
- » Double-crate heating pads: \$50/double pad (\leq 170W)
- » Heat lamp or pad controller: \$50/controller

LIGHTING - All lamps & fixtures must be ENERGY STAR® or DesignLights Consortium® qualified

EXISTING BUILDINGS

- » LED tubes replacing T12/T8: \$3/lamp
- » LED lamps \geq 6W: \$2/lamp
- » Indoor LED fixtures (non-troffer): 8-14W \$10/fixture; 15-49W \$15/fixture; 50-99W \$25/fixture; \geq 100W \$40/fixture
- » High bay fluorescent fixtures (4' T8/T5, 15' mount height) replacing HID fixtures: \$6/lamp

ALL BUILDINGS

- » Occupancy sensors: \$15 each
- » LED high bay/troffer fixtures: Contact ECI REC
- » Outdoor security lighting: 20-34W \$15/fixture; 35-49W \$20/fixture; 50-74W \$40/fixture; 75-124W \$50/fixture; \geq 125W \$60/fixture

NEW BUILDINGS OR ADDITIONS

- » Indoor LED fixtures (non-troffer): 8-14W \$5/fixture; 15-49W \$10/fixture; 50-99W \$20/fixture; \geq 100W \$30/fixture

Some conditions apply.

For equipment qualifications and detailed requirements for these rebates, log on to www.ecirec.coop or contact us toll-free at 877-850-4343.



HERE FOR YOU,
24/7, 365 DAYS A YEAR

ECI REC Celebrates
National Lineman
Appreciation Day
APRIL 18, 2018

Visit facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec
and use #thankalinenman to show your
appreciation for a job well done!

WORK ZONE SAFETY: EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY

From April 9-13, National Work Zone Awareness Week will bring national attention to motorist and worker safety and mobility issues in work zones. Do your part all year long to make smart, safe choices and protect yourself, your families, and those doing their jobs.



MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN



**BAD TIME
TO TEXT CHRIS
ABOUT FRIDAY
NIGHT**

WHAT THE SIGN REALLY SAYS IS – MOVE OVER OR SLOW DOWN. Iowa law requires motorists to change lanes or slow down when approaching a stationary utility vehicle that has its flashing lights activated. Failure to do so can result in hefty fines or the loss of your driver's license.

Take the Pledge. Join your fellow Iowans who have pledged to move over or slow down for Iowa's utility workers at moveover.com.

**PLEASE JOIN
US FOR AN**

**OPEN
HOUSE**

**NEW Independence
Operations Center**

**1707 1st Street East
Wednesday, April 25th
3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

Coffee, pop, water, and cookies will be available.

REGISTER FOR SMART HUB TODAY

SmartHub allows members to access account information as well as ECI REC's other helpful online tools. After registering, download the SmartHub app on your smartphone to access your information when and where it's convenient.

When you're registered for SmartHub, you can:

- ✓ Pay bills online for free
- ✓ Inquire about Budget Billing
- ✓ Access bill inserts
- ✓ Check the ECI REC Outage Map for updates during an outage
- ✓ Find tools to analyze past and current energy usage
- ✓ Set markers to monitor changes in your usage
- ✓ Get energy-saving tips
- ✓ Perform a free self-energy audit in the EnergyResourceCenter

TO SIGN UP OR
LOG IN, GO TO:

**ecirec.
smarthub.
coop**



SUPPORT RENEWABLES IN IOWA > You can volunteer to support the development of renewable energy production facilities in Iowa via your monthly bill. In 2017, an average of 89 ECI REC members contributed an average of \$3.94/month each to support the production of renewable energy in Iowa. Member support for the year totaled \$4,212.60.

- Cost is \$2.10 for each 100 kWh. Purchase only 100 kWh or any multiple of 100 kWh.
- All voluntary contributions from members to this fund will be used for the development of alternative energy production facilities in Iowa. Alternative energy production facilities may include wind energy, biomass, solar, and other nontraditional generation technologies.
- Once you have signed up, your participation continues until you notify us that you wish to make a change.

IOWA RENEWABLE CONTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Name: _____

ECI REC Account #: _____

Email: _____

Daytime phone #: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I wish to support the purchase of:

☐ 100 kWh for an extra \$2.10 per month

☐ 200 kWh for an extra \$4.20 per month

☐ 300 kWh for an extra \$6.30 per month

_____ kWh at \$2.10 per 100 kWh per month

Please return to: East-Central Iowa REC
PO Box 248 | Urbana, Iowa 52345

Electric Cooperatives Discuss Key Legislative Issues at Annual Reception

a Looking Out for You feature



OVER 150 directors, managers, and staff members from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with state legislators and policymakers on January 9 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception at the State Historical Building in downtown Des Moines.

Seven members of ECI REC's Board of Directors were in attendance: Jim Alberts, Jim Barz, Jeff Elliott, Ryan Kress, Steve Rau, Chris Sackett, and Don Shonka. Other guests of honor included Governor Kim Reynolds, Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, Auditor of State Mary Mosiman, Attorney General Tom Miller, Iowa Utilities Board Member Nick Wagner, and Iowa Department of Economic Development Director Debi Durham. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives—in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the

Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance, and the Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores of Iowa—hosted the annual reception.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including items central to Iowa's rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, the directors, managers, and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues allowing Iowa's member-owned electric cooperatives to continue providing safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans.

Electric cooperative representatives from all parts of Iowa will come to the State Capitol in the next couple of months to visit their legislators once again. The annual REC Day on the Hill will be held on March 14, 2018, at the Capitol. 🌱

Advocating for safe, affordable, reliable electricity delivered in an environmentally responsible manner. Sign up for Rural Power updates from your electric cooperative at www.iaruralpower.org. Follow them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/iaruralpower.

2018 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Renewable Energy Investment -

Continue to invest in generation that is environmentally responsible. Support state tax credits that promote and incentivize utility-scale renewable energy projects so that all member-owners on the grid can benefit from renewable energy.

Workforce Readiness - Invest in rural economic development to provide stable careers. Support Future Ready Iowa, an initiative to build Iowa's talent pipeline for today's jobs (like linemen and electricians) and careers that require advanced knowledge and/or technical skills (like information technology).

Safety & Reliability - Remain committed to providing safe and reliable power to member-owners. Support the establishment of uniform standards that avoid confusion and provide co-ops the authority to trim trees while in the private right-of-way where an easement hasn't been recorded.



WE PAY YOU TO PULL THE PLUG

Recycle your old appliances through ECI REC's Pull the Plug partnership with CLEAResult out of Marion, Iowa.

- Refrigerators (full size), \$35 each
- Freezers, \$25 each
- Window air conditioners, \$25 each

Call CLEAResult at 855-838-7817 to schedule your pickup today. Limit 3 appliances per year, per address.

the VALUE of ELECTRICITY

Electric co-op households pay

\$5 DAY on average for safe, reliable electricity

That's cheaper than most coffee drinks




Members Help Members by Contributing to RECare

a Community Connected feature

THROUGH THE SUPPORT of members like you, ECI REC's RECare program distributes funds via community action agencies to low-income consumers within Benton and Buchanan County. These funds are used to help pay heating bills or the cost of winterizing the homes of Cooperative members who need assistance. In 2017, 74 members donated \$5,238 to RECare.


Some members choose to donate once a year, while others have the Cooperative add a few dollars to their electric bills each month. No matter the frequency or size of the donation, it does make a difference. The economy is improving very slowly. There are still many people who are having trouble making ends meet. ECI REC is proud that our members are digging into their pockets to help others.

Donations received from our northern district are given to Operation Threshold. Donations from our southern district are given to Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP). The funds are distributed in July. Last year, Operation Threshold received \$2,891 and HACAP received \$2,446.

If you would like to join others in supporting RECare, visit our website, ecirec.coop, and roll over the Your Electric Bill tab. Look down the list for Member Programs, and click on RECare. 

Cooperative's 2017 Donations Support Local Development

a Community Connected update

IN 2017, ECI REC GAVE more than \$38,000 to 38 community organizations, including 12 college scholarships (see graphic). Some of the donations came from the Cooperative's general funds, but much of the money came from our Community Reinvestment Fund, where unclaimed patronage dividends are deposited. Concern for community is one of the seven cooperative principles by which all cooperatives are expected to operate, and commitment to community is also one of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative's core values. 

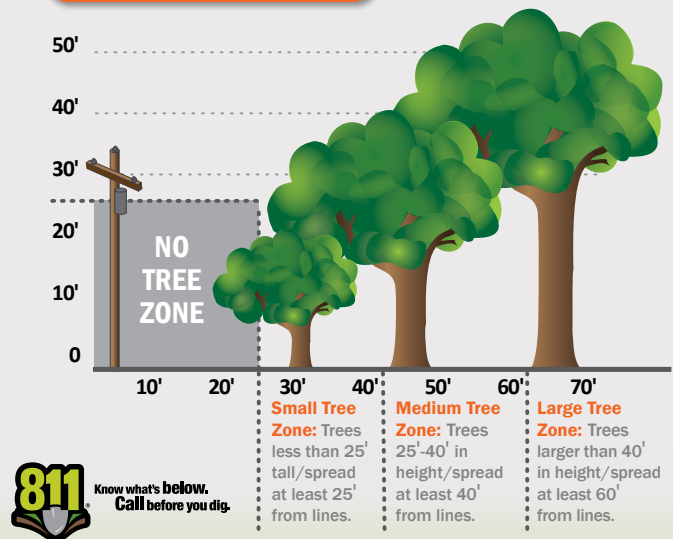


Iowa celebrates Arbor Day on Friday, April 27! Visit www.arborday.org.

If you're planning to plant trees this spring, help ensure your tree doesn't get an unwanted haircut down the road:

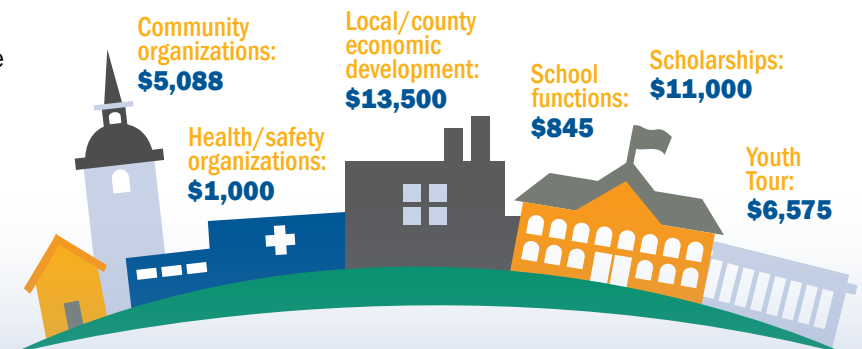
- » Choose the spot based on the tree's full-grown height and spread.
- » Obey the no-tree zone: Don't plant trees within 25 feet of power lines.

Tree Planting Guide



APRIL IS SAFE DIGGING MONTH!

Spring is near, and you may be planning outdoor projects. Whether it's a deck addition, planting a tree, trenching in fields, or a landscaping masterpiece, remember to call Iowa One Call by dialing 8-1-1 before you dig. Although light gardening typically doesn't call for deep digging, other seemingly simple tasks like planting shrubs or installing a new mailbox post can damage utility lines. A severed line can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm the person digging, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.



The Advantages of ENERGY STAR®-Certified Ductless Heat Pumps

an Energy Wise feature

USED FOR DECADES in Europe and Asia, ductless mini-split heat pumps differ from traditional home heating and cooling systems by:

- » Providing both heating and cooling through a single device—a heat pump. Heat pumps have been used for decades, mainly in southern climates.
- » Avoiding ductwork. Instead of difficult-to-install, leaky, and bulky ductwork, ductless mini-split heat pumps use an indoor unit connected to an outdoor unit via refrigerant lines, which only need a three-inch hole in an outdoor wall for installation. Up to eight indoor units can be attached to one outdoor unit.
- » Allowing for different climates in each room. Each indoor unit can provide customized heating and cooling—adjustable through wall consoles, remote controls, and smart phone apps—in each conditioned space.
- » Cutting heating costs in half compared to conventional electric heating systems. Because they transfer instead of generate heat, ENERGY STAR-certified ductless mini-split heat pumps use 60% less energy than standard home electric resistance-based heating systems.
- » Cutting cooling costs by 30% compared to conventional room air conditioners. ENERGY STAR-certified ductless mini-split heat pumps use more sophisticated compressors and fans that can adjust speeds to save energy.

Common Applications of Ductless Heat Pumps

Ductless mini-split heat pumps are increasingly being used in these situations:

- » Homes with electric heat (e.g., baseboard, furnace, wall heaters, electric radiant) that will also benefit from cooling.
- » Older homes with no ductwork (e.g., radiators or baseboard heat) that never had central air conditioning before.
- » Homes with expensive central heating systems due to high fuel costs or low system efficiency.
- » Additions or outbuildings (e.g., shed, barn, garage) where extending ductwork or cooling/heating capacity is not feasible.

DUCTLESS MINI-SPLIT HEAT PUMP




Source: ENERGY STAR website

Utility Incentives Available: ENERGY STAR-certified ductless heating and cooling systems are eligible for rebates from East-Central Iowa REC. Please visit our website, ecirec.coop, or contact the Member Services Department for more information.

- » Rooms that are not regularly occupied (indoor unit can be turned off to save money).
- » Spaces adjacent to unconditioned spaces where ductwork would be exposed to harsher temperatures (e.g., a guest room above a garage).
- » Newly constructed homes in areas with high fuel costs.
- » Older commercial buildings with no existing ductwork for air conditioning or expansions.

Cold Climate Heating and Alternative Indoor Units

In the past, consumers worried whether heat pumps could perform well in cold climates. As temperatures drop, the heat pump must work harder and harder to extract heat from the outdoor air. Some heat pumps now utilize advanced compressors and refrigerants that allow for improved low-temperature performance. If this is a concern, look for ENERGY STAR models with a higher Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF).

Another concern may be the aesthetics of the relatively large, indoor floor or wall-mounted units. U.S. consumers, accustomed to having heating and cooling delivered from barely noticeable vents in walls and ceilings, can sometimes find the look of the floor or wall-mounted units unappealing. Ductless system manufacturers offer ceiling-recessed and short-run horizontal duct-based air handlers to provide a look U.S. homeowners are more comfortable with. 

Grain Bins: Farming Safely

a Safety feature

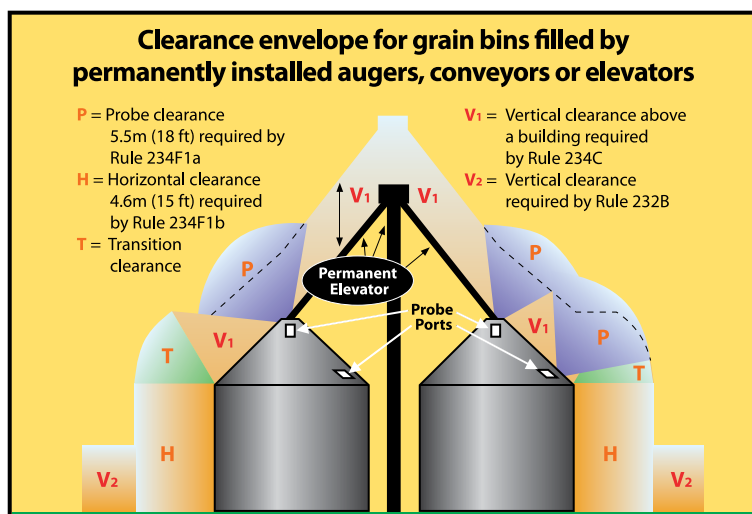
AS REWARDING AS IT MAY BE, farming is an extremely difficult job—and it ranks among the top 10 most dangerous professions in the United States. At ECI REC, safety is top priority for both our employees and our members. That's why our Cooperative provides assistance in planning a safe environment for everyone working and living around grain bins.

Grain bins play an integral role in the efficiency and profitability of farm and ranch operations, and safety regulations should always be considered when working around these structures. Whether you're purchasing new grain bins or remodeling areas with existing bins, proximity to overhead power lines must be considered.

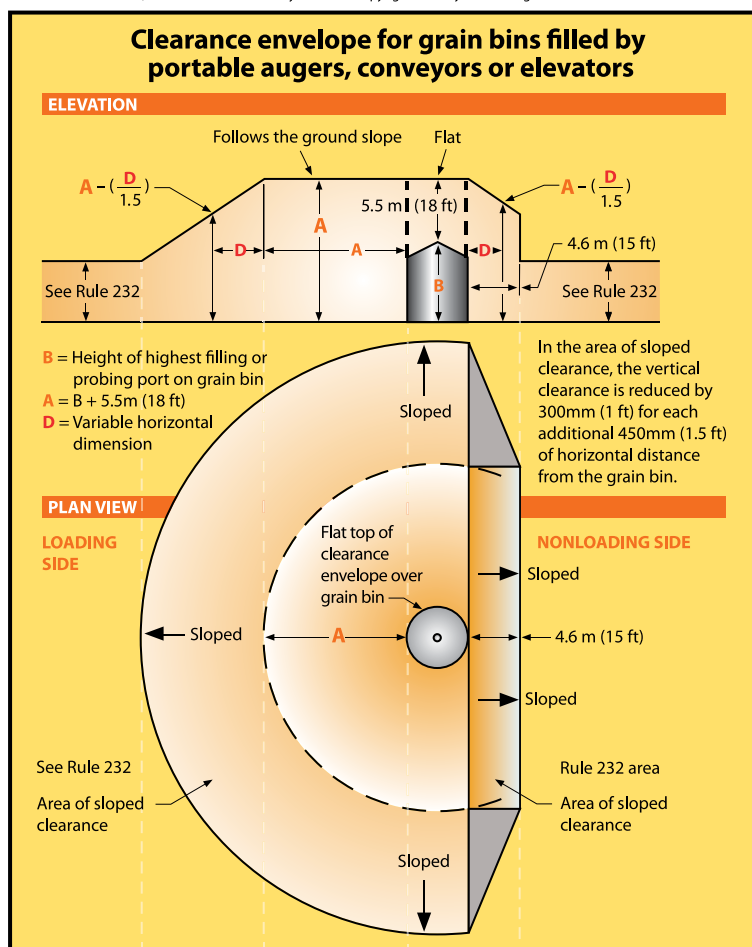
The State of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors, and elevators. The drawings accompanying this article show the specific clearances required for both scenarios. If you have any questions concerning the drawings, please contact your electric cooperative.

According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 -- 25.2(3) b, an electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line that does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors, or elevators built after September 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after December 24, 1997. (As adopted by the Iowa Utilities Board.)

The Cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants, and city and county zoning officials. If you have any questions concerning clearance regulations, please call your local electric cooperative.



From IEEE Std. C2-2017, "National Electrical Safety Code." © Copyright 2016 by IEEE. All rights reserved.



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ATTENTION MEMBERS: Use Caution When Burning Ditches This Spring

Burning helps clean things up, but it can also cause extensive damage to Cooperative property, resulting in electric service problems. Members involved in such fires may be invoiced for damage they cause to Cooperative property.

TWO TIPS FOR SAFE BURNING

1 Green, or newer, poles are more susceptible to burning—use extra caution.

2 Always be aware of the locations of poles, anchor guy assemblies, underground cabinets, and other important Cooperative equipment when burning.

Line Foreman Earns Management Essentials Certificate

a Keeping the Lights On spotlight


IN 2017, ECI REC Line Foreman Tom Schmitt completed the last leg of the Management Essentials Certificate (MEC) program from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). At ECI REC's January safety meeting, Schmitt was recognized for his commitment to education and superior level of service. The Management



Essentials Certificate program consists of a series of four online and four live group sessions. "The program helped me develop key people skills and managerial techniques that I've already found to be beneficial in my day-to-day interactions," Schmitt said.

After developing their one-on-one interpersonal skills, graduates of the MEC program can build an

effective team environment, boost job satisfaction, foster better working relationships, and ultimately achieve more productive results through their employees.

The MEC program includes core courses that lay a foundation of essential skills needed by cooperative managers and supervisors. A list of elective courses also enables participants to tailor parts of the program. 

Nominating Committee Confirms Candidates for 2018 Board Elections

a Cooperative Difference notice

Members of the Nominating Committee, which was responsible for collecting the names of 2018 Board of Directors candidates, gathered at Urbana headquarters on January 18 to begin choosing ECI REC members from each Director District to be placed on the ballot.

There are three positions up for election from District 2, Buchanan area. Candidates were confirmed at a February 15 meeting. Voting will take place at the Annual Meeting of the Members in June. Thank you for helping to make one of the benefits of cooperative membership—democratic governance—a reality!



Left-right: David Peck (Director District 27), Brad Jesse (Director District 24), Richard Booth (Director District 21), Travis Kramer (Director District 13), David Inman (Director District 15), Robert Hanson (Director District 11), Tony McKinley (Director District 12), Dan Sperfslage (Director District 26), Tom Sullivan (Director District 23). Absent: Michelle Garoutte (Director District 17).

Statement of Non-Discrimination

East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax to 202-690-7442, or by email to program.intake@usda.gov

Questions or Complaints

ECI REC strives to provide you with the best service at the lowest possible cost. But sometimes you have questions regarding your electrical service or billing, or possibly a complaint. We would like to know. Please contact us! Our office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Local phone: 319-443-4343
Toll free: 877-850-4343
Fax: 319-443-4359
Email: ecirec@ecirec.coop
Mail: 2400 Bing Miller Lane, PO Box 248, Urbana, IA 52345

If you have a complaint related to East-Central Iowa REC's service, rather than its rates, and the complaint is not resolved, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board.

Toll free: 877-565-4450
Fax: 515-725-7399
Email: customer@iub.iowa.gov (in subject area, note customer service)

Mail: Customer Service, Iowa Utilities Board, 1375 Court Avenue, Room 69, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069

The management team worked hard to propose a 2018 budget with expenses comparable to 2017. Our goal is to utilize technology to reduce costs without compromising service or reliability.

As always, keeping your lights on at an affordable rate is our top priority. We are providing a breakdown of the 2018 budget so you can see where your dollars are invested. The budget includes approximately \$6,653,000 in system improvements. Some of the

improvements include, but are not limited to:

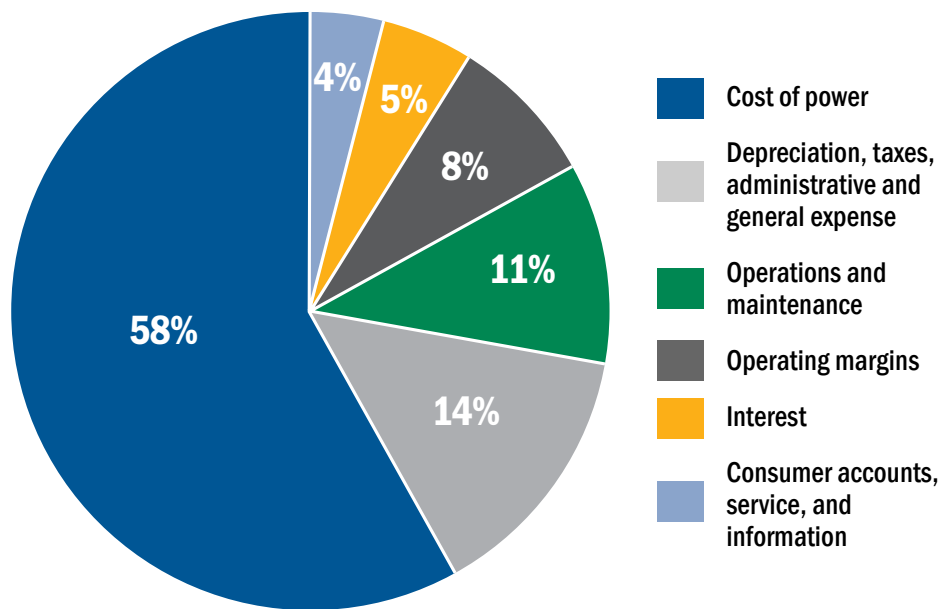
- » New services construction – \$106,523
- » Line replacement – \$3,742,543
- » Substation upgrades – \$144,000
- » New transformers, meters, and special equipment – \$2,000,000
- » Member services upgrades – \$104,000
- » Sectionalizing equipment – \$20,000
- » Pole replacement – \$224,000

These system upgrades are part of ECI REC's 2017–2020 Construction Work Plan, which makes it possible to accommodate new growth while improving the reliability of your electric service.

The budget includes \$700,000 in preventative and ongoing line maintenance programs, including pole testing, meter testing, tree trimming, transformer and breaker maintenance, and additional services that help keep your lights on.

The graph below provides a brief summary of where dollars were spent in 2017. 📊

How Your REC Dollars Were Spent in 2017



Four ECI REC Directors Renew Certificates

a Cooperative Difference update

Four East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative Directors recently renewed their Director Gold Certificates. Director Gold is an NRECA program geared toward Directors who are committed to continuing their education beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC).

After a Director earns those designations, they complete three additional credits to obtain Director Gold. "In renewing this certificate, these directors continue to demonstrate to ECI REC members and other stakeholders their ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability," said ECI REC CEO Steve Marlow. 📸



Don Shonka



Steve Rau



Jeff Elliott



Jim Alberts

YOUR BOARD



Board District 11 - Jeff Elliott
(2017/2018 Vice President)

Board District 12 - Chris Sackett
(2017/2018 Asst. Secretary/Treasurer)

Board District 13 - Allen Albers

Board District 15 - Gary McKenna

Board District 17 - Burt S. Byers

Board District 21 - Don Shonka

Board District 23 - Jim V. Alberts

Board District 24 - Jim Barz

Board District 26 - Steve Rau
(2017/2018 President)

Board District 27 - Ryan Kress
(2017/2018 Secretary/Treasurer)

CLASSIFIEDS: Free to members only

Please email your ad to classifieds@ecirec.coop. Ads for the May/June Heartland Link must be received by April 1, 2018.

East-Central Iowa REC will publish non-commercial advertisements as a service to our members. All ads are free. They may be submitted by any member or employee of East-Central Iowa REC. Ads should contain a phone number, name (if desired), a brief description of items with price if applicable. Each ad is limited to maximum of 50 words; please type or print clearly. Editor reserves the right to edit or reject any ad. No ads will be taken over the telephone—please email, mail, or bring your ad to the office.

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East-Central Iowa REC is an equal opportunity employer.

CLIP AND MAIL

See page 2 for the Member Challenge questions.

Answers: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Please note: NO ANSWERS will be taken over the phone.

Members get connected at www.ecirec.coop



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



Outage Center & Map

View current outages via SmartHub or at outages.ecirec.coop:81.



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



Message From CEO Steve Marlow

Board Approves 2018 Budget

YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS is happy to report that while 2017 realized less than budgeted kilowatt-hour sales, we still achieved all our financial goals.

Kilowatt-hour sales for 2017 were 0.6% below budget, yet 0.4% above sales in 2016. However, because expenses were considerably less than budgeted, margins for the year were \$2,099,848. This was \$762,162 over the budgeted amount of \$1,337,686.

Margins from electricity sales were comprised of \$1,177,945. The remaining \$921,903 came from non-operating sources, such as patronage from Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO)—our generation and transmission cooperative—and other non-profit cooperatives. This means ECI REC was able to operate under budget and maintain fair and affordable rates, even though kilowatt-hour sales were less than expected.

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