

heartland LINK

A publication of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative



2023 MID-YEAR OPERATIONS UPDATE

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CIPCO summarizes 2022.



CLOSED

Tuesday, July 4 for
Independence Day

Monday,
September 4
for Labor Day

Contact ECI REC**EMAILS**

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ecirec.coop
(rebates, product sales)

csr@ecirec.coop
(billing, new customers)

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4:00 p.m.

(closed Saturdays,
Sundays, and holidays)

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Before casting your line,
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power lines.

Safe
Electricity.org®

take the member challenge

1. ENERGY WISE: _____ energy is important no matter where you are.

2. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: Our commitment to _____ is ongoing.

3. CEO MESSAGE: Cooperatives must strike a balance between distributing _____ to their members and ensuring the long-term viability and growth of the organization.

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 August 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 May/June 2023 *Heartland Link* entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Doris M. Macke
Janet K. Merta
Matt J. Althoff
Ted J. Wienhold
Sandra J. Johnston
Anita I. Arnold
Donald W. Beier
Leonard R. Davis

Wilda M. Ingamells
Ronald Melick
Ronald Albright
John H. Gahring
Derek J. Vopelak
Julie A. Mather
Ramona Hanson
Bradley Osborn

Stay connected! We post operations news and outage updates at facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec.

Recapping the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Members

a Cooperative Difference article

THE 28TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS of East-Central Iowa REC was held virtually via Zoom on June 28! Members can view the recording of the meeting by going to ECI REC's website and clicking on the link located in the 2023 Annual Meeting story found in the News and Events section.

One primary piece of the Annual Meeting is the Board election. Jeff Elliott (District 1) and Steve Rau (District 9) were re-elected to serve three-year terms on the Board of Directors. This year, members could vote by mail-in ballot, online through our website and SmartHub, or by using the voting link included in the Annual Meeting notice mailed out to membership.

Following the meeting, a Board reorganization meeting was held. Re-elected to office were Steve Rau, president; Jeff Elliott, vice president; Ryan Kress, secretary/treasurer; and Julie Kester, assistant secretary/treasurer.

This year's theme—Resilient Roots, Sustained Commitment—couldn't be truer. The core purpose and mission of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative is to provide our members with safe, reliable, and environmentally friendly electricity. We rely on our resilience and the commitment of our team to fulfill this goal, no matter what challenges arise. Above all, we are dedicated to putting our membership first, and we remain motivated to serve our communities.

Click the QR code to the right to view and download the 2022 Annual Report.



Steve Rau
President
Director since 2005
Board District 9



Jeff Elliott
Vice President
Director since 1990
Board District 1



Ryan Kress
Secretary/Treasurer
Director since 2009
Board District 10



Julie Kester
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
Director since 2019
Board District 2



The Annual Meeting was broadcast virtually via Zoom.



The Annual Report can be downloaded from ecirec.coop.



Prize Winners

Members who cast a mail-in ballot in this year's election were entered to win one of twelve \$50 bill credits. Two grand prize winners were selected, one from the group of members who joined the virtual meeting, and a second from members who voted electronically. Each will receive a \$100 bill credit. Winners were electronically and randomly selected.

These members will see a \$50 credit on their July billing statement:

Scott Ledvina
Jennifer Davis
Kaleb Holsinger
Jan Boleyn

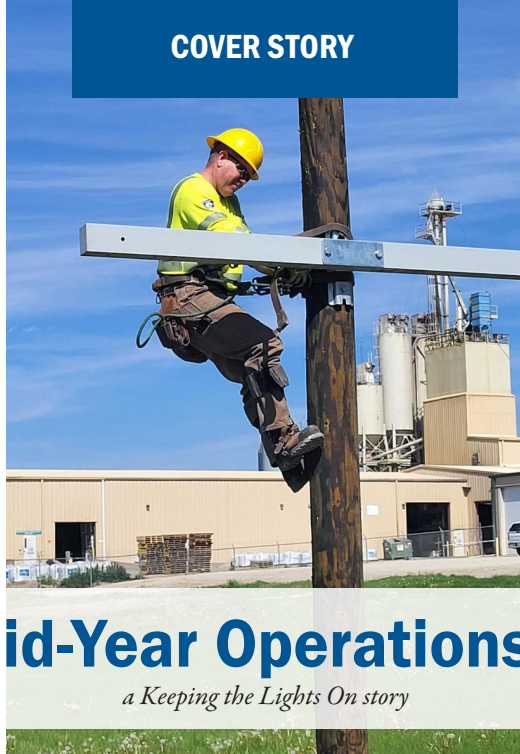
Gary Butterfield
Chris Fehr
David Kelchen
Deb Miculinich

Carol Elliott
Donna Lein
Lisa Delong
Mark Kleitsch

These members will see a \$100 credit on their July billing statement:

Lisa Preuss

Carol Mallory



2023 Mid-Year Operations Update

a Keeping the Lights On story

WHERE HAS THE YEAR GONE? The leaves will be turning before we know it! ECI REC has had a productive and safe start to 2023. Outage times have been kept to a minimum due to our ongoing commitment to upgrading our distribution system. Your Cooperative has been replacing aged conductor, changing out deteriorated poles, and upgrading line protection devices to new technology electronic reclosers.

Preventative and Ongoing Maintenance Projects

ECI REC has contracted with Badgerland Utility Solutions, LLC, of Wisconsin again this year to inspect 5,683 poles and 840 pieces of underground equipment. In late spring, the Badgerland team completed work on the Rowley and Walker substation areas. They'll be returning later this year to finish up with the BECCA substation. ECI REC has been busy this summer replacing and repairing deficient poles and equipment identified during these inspections.

Maurer Tree Service has completed tree trimming on the Rowley and Spring Creek substation areas and is currently working on the Shellsburg and Harrison substations.

Work Plan Projects

Highline Construction, Inc., continues to work on ECI REC's overhead Work Plan projects. They have completed work in the Shellsburg and Watkins substation areas and are currently working in the Jefferson substation area, which is near Oelwein. The weather has been cooperating, and they have been making great progress. CRC Trenching has been contracted again this year for

our underground construction and is working in the Independence area.

Safety

Our commitment to employee safety is ongoing. Recently, our employees completed Mayday emergency training, a climbing competency review, and bucket rescue training. For the climbing competency review, our lineworkers demonstrated they could complete tasks safely and efficiently, including climbing wood poles and maneuvering over a crossarm while using a fall arrest system.

First Aid and CPR training were completed earlier this spring. Employees also attended other training classes so they could expand their knowledge to serve our membership's needs.

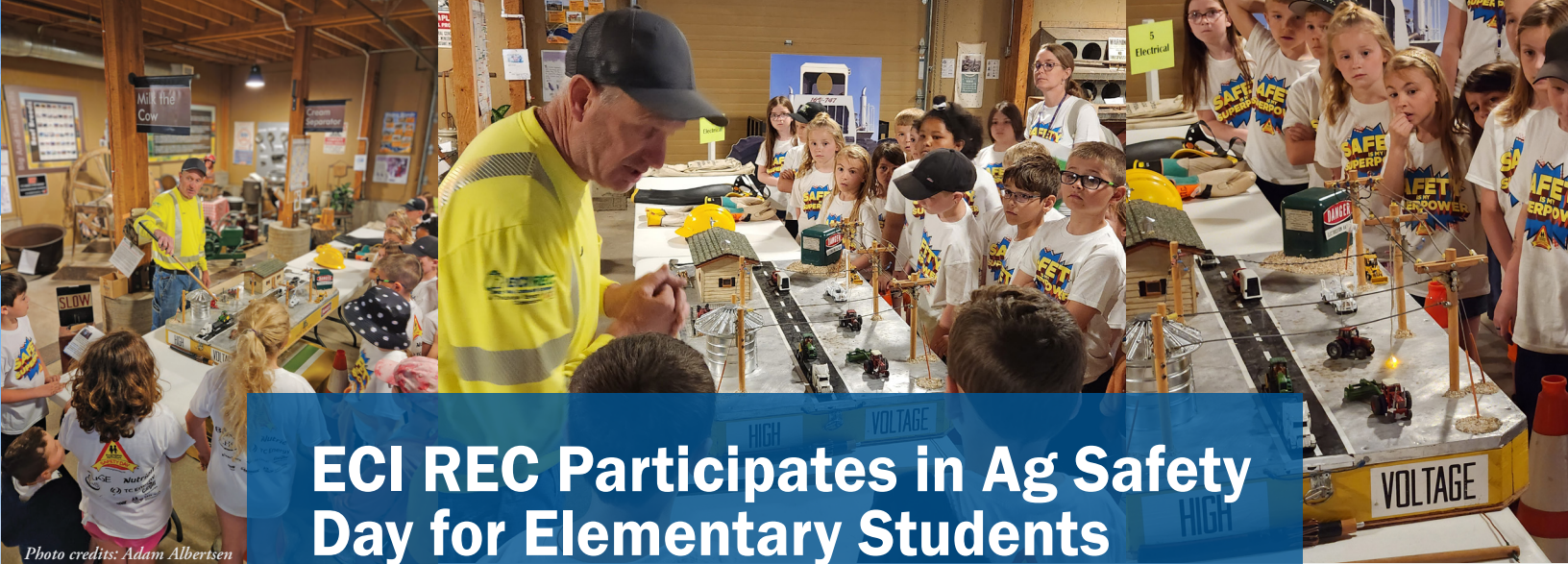
Material Availability

Global supply chain issues are improving, but ECI REC still recommends contacting us as soon as possible if you anticipate any changes to electrical service so we can make sure we have the equipment to meet your needs.

Welcome to a New Team Member

Nikolas Stahr started in June as summer help for the Independence operations center. Nikolas graduated this spring from East Buchanan High School and is planning to attend Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon. He will be enrolled in the Powerline Technology program. 🌱





ECI REC Participates in Ag Safety Day for Elementary Students

a Safety highlight

Photo credits: Adam Albertsen

THIS MAY, we were proud to be part of Ag Safety Day! Elementary kids learned about different hazards that come with living and working on a farm or in the country, including animals and electricity. Member Service Technician John Tegler presented to nearly 250 kids throughout the course of the day. 🌱



**4 GRAND
KIDS
2 YEARS
FROM
RETIREMENT
35 FEET
IN THE
AIR**

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

HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH.
When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**

**HAPPY
NATIONAL
811 DAY!**

**AUGUST
11**

Contacting Iowa One Call before digging is the easiest way to avoid damaging buried utilities. For every project, every time, call 811 a few days in advance – it's the law!

**CALL 811
BEFORE YOU DIG**

For projects big or small, call at least two to three days prior to digging.

**Safe
Electricity.org®**

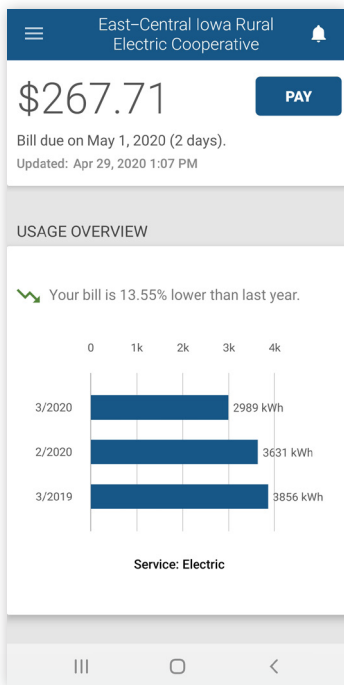
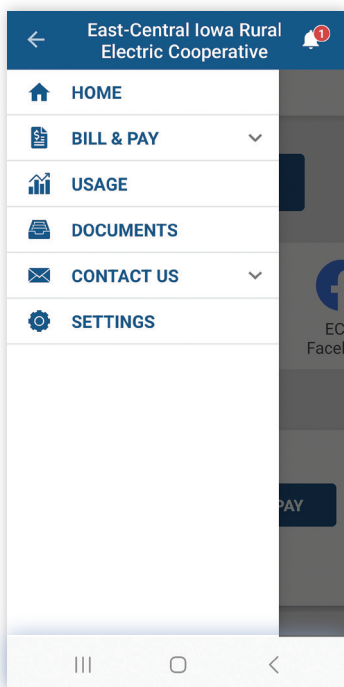
Stay in the Know with SmartHub

a Keeping the Lights On article

WITH A SMARTHUB ACCOUNT, you can quickly view and file bills, enroll in budget billing, monitor your energy usage, check ECI REC's online outage map, and much more.

Not sure how to register for SmartHub? We've got you covered!

1. Go to www.ecirec.coop. Near the top of the page, you'll see an Account Login section. Click on the link that says, "New User? Register to use SmartHub!"
2. The User Registration screen will appear. Enter your ECI REC account number as printed on your bill. Also enter your last name or the business name associated with your account. Enter your email address (this will become your username). Click the Submit button. A secondary account-related registration screen will appear.
3. Enter the last four digits of your Social Security or business ID number and your billing zip code. Check to confirm you are not a robot. Agree to the terms and conditions. Click Submit.
4. Check your email for a message with a temporary password from ecirec@smarthub.coop.
5. Clicking the login link takes you to the Change Your Password screen. Create a new password and click Submit.
6. The Security Phrase screen will appear. This is a second way to protect your information once you've logged in with your password. You need your security phrase to change payment or other account-related information. Enter at least a five-character word or phrase and click Save.



Quick Ways to Pay Your Electric Bill

Did you know you can make quick automated payments through SmartHub ... without creating an online account?

Here's how:

- » Call SmartHub's automated system toll-free number: 888-223-2048.
- » Use the Pay Now application. Go to www.ecirec.coop. In the Account Login section of the home page, click the Pay Now button. Then enter your account number and last name or business name to access your account and pay your bill.

YOU CAN PAY ONLINE OR BY PHONE

ECIREC Energy Wise. Community Connected. A Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

Welcome to East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative's online account portal.

Welcome to Pay Now!
Welcome to the Pay Now Site

Account Number:

Last Name Or Business Name:

Submit Reset

• Easy Bill Pay with no registration required!
• Use your account number and last name/business name to access your account for payment.

smart hub

888.223.2048

Take SmartHub Mobile!

You can also register using the SmartHub app! To get the app, scan the QR codes or use the Download the App button in the Account Login section of our home page.



Apple Users



Android Users

Connect With Your Cooperative at the Iowa State Fair!

a Community Connected invitation

THE TOUCHSTONE ENERGY® COOPERATIVES OF IOWA are pleased to sponsor the 4-H Exhibits Building at the 2023 Iowa State Fair!

ECI REC is proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned cooperatives that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help members use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair August 10-20, make sure to stop by and see us in the air-condi-

tioned 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. Electric cooperative staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats and suckers to kids while supplies last. Kids can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our cooperative safety selfie station.

We look forward to connecting with our members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!



august 10-20 2023

lowaStateFair NOTHING COMPARES

OFFICIAL SPONSOR

Going on Vacation? Give Your Energy Bill a Break Too!

an Energy Wise article

A VACATION IS A GREAT WAY to get away from it all. Did you know your appliances and electronic devices could use a little time off as well? If you make a few simple adjustments before you leave, you'll come home to a lower energy bill.

Water Heater

If you have a tank unit, your water heater will continue heating water while you are away. Adjust the temperature setting as low as possible to reduce standby heat loss.

Refrigerator

Your refrigerator is one of the biggest energy users in your home. If you are leaving for a short period, conserve energy by adjusting the thermostats on your refrigerator and freezer to a higher setting. For trips that will last four weeks or more, consider emptying your refrigerator and unplugging it.

Air Conditioner

Why cool an empty house? Turn off your air conditioner or set the thermostat to 85°F or higher. If you have a programmable thermostat, set it to vacation mode. It will conserve energy while you are away and cool your house shortly before you return.


Lights

Install timers on indoor and outdoor lights and set them to turn the lights on for a few hours each night. Doing so will conserve energy and provide added security by creating the illusion that someone is at home.

Electronics

While turning off electronic devices saves energy, digital displays and instant-on features continue to use energy whether you are at home or not. Unplug all electronic devices before you leave or use advanced power strips, which automatically shut off power to plugged-in devices whenever they are not in use.

At Your Destination

Conserving energy is important no matter where you are. If you are staying in a hotel, turn off the lights and adjust the thermostat when you leave your room. To conserve energy and water, reuse bath towels whenever possible and consider walking or taking public transportation instead of using a rental vehicle. 

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

FREE & EASY ways to save energy

(Spoiler Alert: Your clothes and dishes won't know the difference)

Major home appliances account for approximately 16% of an average home's energy consumption.

16%



1. Run full loads of laundry instead of several smaller ones.
2. Use cold water to wash your clothes.

3. Keep your refrigerator at 35° to 38°F and your freezer at 0°F.
4. Regularly defrost manual-defrost freezers and refrigerators.



5. Skip the heat-dry setting on your dishwasher.
6. Fully load your dishwasher before washing.

7. When buying new appliances, consider Energy Star® versions.
8. Unplug appliances you're not using.



Time to replace that old appliance? Replacing older versions with energy-efficient models can save the average household more than \$500 per year.

 Safe
Electricity.org®

Sources: National Resources Defense Council,
U.S. Energy Information Administration

Bridging the Gap

From Gary McKenna, Representative on the CIPCO Board of Directors
a Cooperative Difference feature

Photo credits: TouchstoneEnergy.com, Adams, E.C., Lisa Franck, Alexey Stopp, Dreamstime.com, Mark Gilliland, MISO, Mark Bolton | Dreamstime.com.



Gary McKenna

IN 2022, the American electric utility industry raised significant concerns about the stability of our electric grid amid rising calls for the early closure of dispatchable generation sources.

Dispatchable generation, namely from fossil fuel resources, can be fired up and dispatched to the grid on demand at the request of power grid operators, according to market needs. In 2022, our power supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), continued to study ways to reduce the risk of purchasing energy in a volatile market and bridge the resource gap left by the early closure of Duane Arnold Energy Center in 2020. CIPCO won't be able to rely on the dwindling dispatchable generation supply across the industry in the next decade, and will seek out additional, intermittent renewable energy assets to meet this need.


The stability of the grid and the ability of regional grid operators to meet power demands were put to the test not once, but twice in 2022, when the Mid-Continent Independent System Operator (MISO) forecasted potential capacity shortfalls during both the summer and winter months. MISO warned of a potential summer peak electricity demand of 124 GW, or 5 GW more than what was projected to be available, prompting CIPCO and its member-owned cooperatives to stress the importance of energy efficient practices among its members like you.

Later in the year as many of us were readying for the holidays, we faced Winter Storm Elliott, a “bomb cyclone” of intense wind, snow, and frigid temperatures that settled in across Iowa over the course of several days.

The skyrocketing demand during those times sent energy market prices soaring. The electric industry's reaction to two instances of extreme weather over the course of one year underscored the value of an “all-of-the-above” strategy that includes coal generation as one of many options during times of intense demand. Using all its available resources—including coal—CIPCO met all capacity requirements set forth by MISO.

CIPCO's commitment to reliability led to a system-wide outage rate of 0.34 hours per consumer. For 2022, East-Central Iowa REC's was 0.20 hours per member.

Despite volatile energy costs in 2022, both Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings maintained CIPCO's 'A' ratings, confirming CIPCO's financial strength. CIPCO remains dedicated to sound financial practices that allow margins to be returned to its members in the form of patronage, a key component of the cooperative business model. In 2022, CIPCO returned patronage totaling \$562,768 to East-Central Iowa REC.

As a CIPCO director, I'm committed to guiding the organization through the industry challenges we anticipate in the coming years. I'm confident CIPCO is well-positioned to navigate these challenges, allowing both CIPCO and East-Central Iowa REC to thrive. As a member, you can rest assured your electricity needs will be met now and in years to come with safe, reliable, and cost-effective power when you need it most. 



Central Iowa Power Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Summer is a prime opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors. To reduce home energy use, avoid using your oven and use a grill instead. Not only will cooking outdoors eliminate the electricity used to power the stove, but it will also avoid raising the temperature inside your home, reducing the need for air conditioning or cooling.

You can also avoid using the oven with tasty no-bake recipes. Get creative in the kitchen (or the backyard) and find new ways to save energy!

Source: Dept. of Energy



What's the fuss about **PEAK ENERGY USAGE?**

Peak energy demand is when energy consumption is at its highest.

In much of the U.S., energy use spikes in summer and winter due to increased energy demands for heating and cooling spaces.

In the summer: Energy use spikes from mid- to late afternoon until evening.

In the winter: Energy use is higher in the early morning and then again in late afternoon/evening.

Adjusting when you use electricity can help even out energy use and avoid service interruptions caused by high demand.

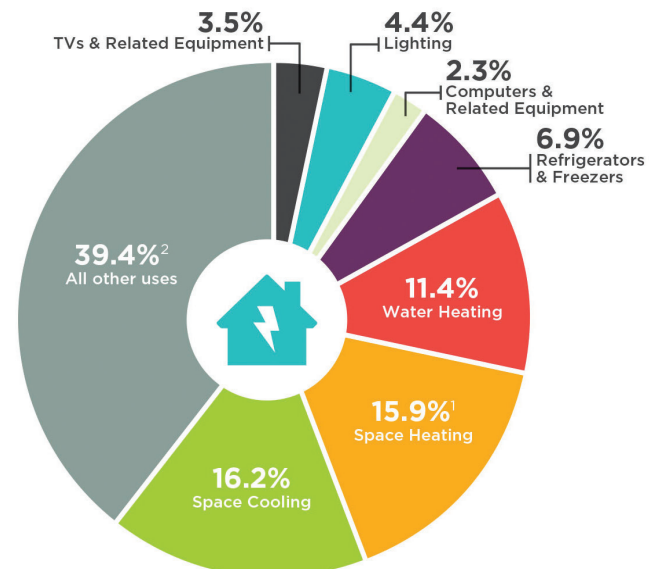
Source:
U.S. Energy Information Administration

Learn more at



How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, small appliances, and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" below) accounts for the largest percentage of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: Energy Information Administration 2022

¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.

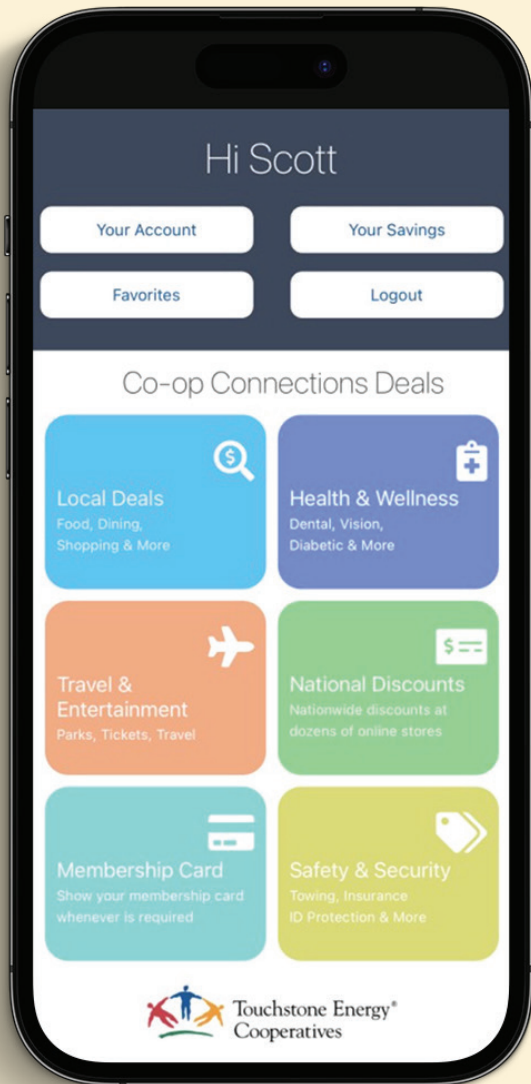
²Includes miscellaneous electronics, clothes washers and dryers, cooking equipment, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

AMAZING SAVINGS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

Visit the new *Connections.coop* member benefits site and download the free app to unlock national and local deals.



VISIT WWW.CONNECTIONS.COOP FOR MORE INFORMATION.



TRAVEL AND DINING DEALS



SHOP LOCAL AND SAVE

» Non-operating margins from our patronage dividend allocations, which ECI REC receives through memberships with other cooperatives from which we purchase goods and services.

As owners of the Cooperative, you provide equity by allowing ECI REC to hold on to these margins for a certain length of time. They are used to finance operations and system improvements, cover the cost of maintaining the electric distribution system, and more.

How does ECI REC decide whether to retire patronage dividends?

Subject to law, ECI REC's Articles of Incorporation, and our bylaws, the Board of Directors has sole discretion over the allocation and retirement of patronage dividends.

At the May meeting, your Board reviews the feasibility of retiring patronage. The Board has a set policy to return a target amount of \$500,000 back to the membership each fiscal year, if it believes ECI REC to be in good balance financially and strategically. In the past five years, the Board has returned over \$2.7 million in patronage to our membership.

While the retirement of patronage is a fundamental principle of cooperatives, there are instances where this practice may be restricted or limited. For instance, ECI REC's poles and wires sustained approximately \$10 million in damage from

a winter ice storm in 2007. That year, the Board decided to use all available funds to help pay for repairs to the distribution system, rather than retire patronage.

Regulatory requirements, the need for financial stability, debt obligations, and strategic reinvestment can all influence the allocation of patronage dividends. Cooperatives must strike a balance between distributing benefits to their members and ensuring the long-term viability and growth of the organization. Understanding the reasons behind these limitations can help members appreciate the complex financial dynamics at play within their organization.

What is changing this year?

Your Cooperative's financial position is strong. Our equity is adequate, and margins have been improving since the March 1 rate increase. We are also meeting all our obligations for debt, the cost of purchased power, and day-to-day expenses. But because we delayed the increase in rates as long as possible, our cash position has significantly lowered. The cost of maintaining and improving a reliable electric grid has also risen greatly over the past three years.

After working diligently to assess all these variables, your Board of Directors has decided to use our cash to fund operations, maintenance, and system improvements, rather than retire patronage dividends this June. This decision ensures that we are not limited as we work to provide reliable, quality service.

Please be assured, this is just a postponement until our cash position has improved. Any new debt will be for capital improvements only. If you have questions, please call us toll-free at 877-850-4343 or email ecirec@ecirec.coop.

YOUR BOARD

Board District 1 - Jeff Elliott
(2022/2023 Vice President)

Board District 2 - Julie Kester
(2022/2023 Asst. Secretary/
Treasurer)

Board District 3 - Brian McNulty

Board District 4 - Gary McKenna

Board District 6 - Don Shonka

Board District 8 - Nick Donlea

Board District 9 - Steve Rau
(2022/2023 President)

Board District 10 - Ryan Kress
(2022/2023 Secretary/
Treasurer)

CLASSIFIEDS: Free to members only

FOR SALE: 2015 Jayco Elite, 32' bumper hitch camper with master bedroom/bathroom, electric fireplace, pull-out grill, outside shower, \$16,000. Ph: 319-350-7501.

FOR SALE: Amana-made solid oak display case, 30" wide x 24" tall x 8.75" deep, glass doors and sides, 3 glass shelves, mirrored back, mint condition, \$400 (comparable piece at Amana stores today \$945). Email zeisf@uiu.edu for pictures or call Rich Zeis at 319-448-4414, Urbana area.

FOR SALE: 1995 Chevy pickup and 2001 four-door S10 Chevy pickup.
Ph: 319-436-2916.

Please email your ad to classifieds@ecirec.coop. Ads for the September/October 2023 Heartland Link must be received by August 1, 2023.

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.



Thank you Missy Rau, wife of Board President Steve Rau, for presenting Brock Steinlage's \$1,000 scholarship on ECI REC's behalf.

Photo credit: Courtesy photo

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Editor: Lisa Franck

East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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.

Find tools for members at www.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 via SmartHub or at outages.ecirec.coop:81.



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.



CEO TERESA FLOYD

Message From the CEO: What Are the Limitations on Retiring Patronage Dividends to the Membership?

BECAUSE ECI REC is a nonprofit organization, our members pay for electricity at cost. Margins left over at the end of the year after all expenses are covered are often allocated to our members in the form of patronage dividends.

Usually, these dividends are distributed as a credit on our members' June electric bills. However, this year patronage retirement will either be delayed until later in 2023 or postponed until next year. In this message, we'll give you a full picture of why this change is occurring by delving more deeply into where patronage dividends come from and the limitations on their retirement.

What are patronage dividends?

Patronage dividends represent any margins left over at the end of the year after your Cooperative has covered all its expenses. This includes:

- » Operating margins generated by the sale of electricity to you.
- » Non-operating margins from interest on our investment of spare cash.