

# heartland LINK

A publication of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

## Your Board Is Working Hard for You!

STORIES ON PAGE 3

## Mid-Year Updates From Your Ops Team

STORY ON PAGE 7

### ANNUAL MEETING

page 5

Read the election results and get a link to the Annual Report.



### CIPCO REPORT

page 6

Plans for a balanced and diverse portfolio.

### HELPING YOU SAVE THIS SUMMER

page 8

Tips to help you manage summer energy bills.



### GET SMART HUB

page 9

Steps to complete registration with our online portal.



No. 102304

May 28, 2025

Pay To The  
Order Of

*Members of East-Central Iowa REC*

\$ *601,038.00*

*Six-hundred one thousand and thirty-eight dollars and 00/100* DOLLARS

FOR *Deferred Patronage Dividends*

*Board of Directors*

Photo credits: Pat Hyland & Lisa Franck



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 03 STRATEGIC PLANNING**  
Board and staff complete session.
- 03 BOARD RETURNS PATRONAGE**
- 04 MEET YOUR DIRECTORS**
- 04 SUMMER SAVINGS WITH CO-OP CONNECTIONS®**
- 05 ANNUAL MEETING RECAP**  
Read the election results and get a link to the Annual Report.
- 05 ANNUAL MEETING PRIZE WINNERS**
- 05 SEE YOU AT THE FAIR!**
- 06 CIPCO REPORT**  
Plans for a balanced and diverse portfolio.
- 06 FIRE UP THE GRILL**
- 07 MID-YEAR OPS UPDATE**
- 08 HELPING YOU SAVE THIS SUMMER**  
Tips to help you manage summer energy bills.
- 09 GET ON SMART HUB**  
Steps to complete registration with our online portal.
- 09 PAYMENT DROP BOX REMOVAL**
- 09 NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING DAY**
- 11 DECORATIVE LIGHTING SAFETY TIPS**
- 11 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD**

## IN EACH ISSUE

- 08 YEARS OF SERVICE AWARDS**
- 11 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
- 12 MESSAGE FROM CEO TERESA FLOYD**



we want to hear from you!



There are three places to find the ECI REC member survey:

1. Popup at [ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop)
2. SmartHub account sidebar
3. QR code to SurveyMonkey page

## take the member challenge

1. COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE: As owners of the Cooperative, members provide \_\_\_\_\_ by allowing ECI REC to hold on to these margins for a certain length of time.
2. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: ECI REC crews continue to work on \_\_\_\_\_ maintenance.
3. SAFETY: Do not use \_\_\_\_\_ or nails to drape or attach string lights.

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](mailto: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 2025 *Heartland Link* entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Baughman Farms, LLC	Joel Wichgers
Bridget M. Seiler	Judy K. Chase
Derek J. Vopelak	Kathryn M. Bossler
Donna D. Lein	Leonard R. Davis
Dorothy Blocker	Mary J. Sotelo
Douglas A. Smith	Randy Merkel
Hailey R. Foster	Richard J. Goedken
Jimmy Crumes	Roger L. Fox

## Calendar Notes

**CLOSED:**  
Friday, July 4 for  
Independence Day

**CLOSED:**  
Monday,  
September 1  
for Labor Day

## Contact ECI REC

### EMAILS

[memberservices@ecirec.coop](mailto:memberservices@ecirec.coop)  
(rebates, product sales)

[csr@ecirec.coop](mailto:csr@ecirec.coop)  
(billing, new customers)

**WEBSITE**  
[www.ecirec.coop](http://www.ecirec.coop)

### MANAGEMENT TEAM

Teresa Floyd  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ext. 450  
[teresa.floyd@ecirec.coop](mailto:teresa.floyd@ecirec.coop)

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Ext. 427  
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Adam Albertsen  
Manager of Member Service  
Ext. 503  
[adam.albertsen@ecirec.coop](mailto:adam.albertsen@ecirec.coop)

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[nathan.groom@ecirec.coop](mailto:nathan.groom@ecirec.coop)

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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)

Stay connected! We post operations news and outage updates at [facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec](https://facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec).





Photo credit: Lisa Franck

## ECI REC Completes 2026 Strategic Planning Session *a Cooperative Difference update*

**YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS** approved a three-day, Cooperative-wide strategic planning session, which was held in late June and conducted by a professional facilitator familiar with the industry. There were two employee sessions in addition to the Board and management session.

The purpose of annual strategic planning is to identify and align ECI REC's organizational direction. While keeping our vision and mission statements before us, we assessed what we have accomplished this year and what we may need to consider for the next year or two. In the next issue of the *Heartland Link*, CEO Teresa Floyd will share some of the goals and initiatives that shook out for the Board during these planning sessions. 🌱

## Board Returns \$601,038 to Members Through Patronage Dividends *a Cooperative Difference announcement*

**AT ITS MAY MEETING**, the ECI REC Board of Directors approved the retirement of \$601,038—100% of ECI REC's 2010 margins and 8.4% of its 2016 margins—to members of the Cooperative. In June, 7,478 member-accounts that received electricity from East-Central Iowa REC in these years received money back. These dollars represent your share of the deferred patronage dividends (profits) the Cooperative earned during these years. In the past 10 years, ECI REC has returned \$5,443,390 to its membership.

Over sixty-six percent (66.1%) of the 7,478 member-accounts who received money back are active member-accounts currently receiving electricity from ECI REC. These active member-accounts saw a credit on their June bills. The remaining 2,535 member-accounts that are no longer active (not currently receiving electricity from ECI REC) received their credits in the form of a check in the mail. If you did not receive a credit on your June bill, you did not receive electric service from ECI REC in 2010 or

2016. Email the Urbana office at [csr@ecirec.coop](mailto:csr@ecirec.coop) or call 877-850-4343 if you have any questions.

Since ECI REC is a nonprofit organization, members pay for their electricity at cost, and any margins left over at the end of the year after all expenses are covered are allocated in the form of patronage dividends. These margins include operating margins, which are generated directly by the sale of electricity to you. They also include non-operating margins, which consist of interest from our investment of spare cash and patronage dividend allocations. ECI REC receives these allocations through memberships with other cooperatives from which we purchase goods and services.

As owners of the Cooperative, members 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, to cover the cost of maintaining the electric distribution system, and more. 🌱

### FROM CEO TERESA FLOYD

**Thank you to our Board of Directors, which is working for you and your future!**

June was a busy and productive month for your ECI REC Board of Directors, demonstrating each director's strong commitment to serving you and our Cooperative community. These dedicated individuals took meaningful action to ensure our Cooperative remains member-focused and future-ready. In addition to retiring patronage dividends back to the membership, their work included:

- Holding a virtual Annual Meeting of the Members to maintain transparency and engagement.
- Participating in a strategic planning event to shape the future of the Cooperative.
- Conducting their regular monthly Board meeting to stay on top of ongoing responsibilities.

# MEET YOUR DIRECTORS



## BOARD DISTRICT 1

**Jeff Elliott, Vice President – Director since 1990**

Jeff graduated from Drake University in 1975 with a B.S. in business and a major in finance. He has been a farmer since 1976 and manages 500 acres of corn, soybeans, and hay, as well as a cow-calf herd. Jeff and his wife, LuAnn, have three daughters and five grandchildren.



## BOARD DISTRICT 6

**Pete Burmeister, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer – Director since 2024**

A relationship officer at Farm Credit Services of America, Pete has a B.S. in ag studies/farm business management from Iowa State University and an M.S. in animal science from Western Kentucky University. Pete also manages his family's farm operation. He is married to Erin; they have three daughters.



## BOARD DISTRICT 2

**Julie Kester, Secretary/Treasurer – Director since 2019**

Julie is a longtime Benton County resident and farms with her husband, Bill. They have six daughters and eleven grandchildren. After 35 years, Julie retired from the Linn County Assessor's Office. For nearly 10 of those years, she served as the assessor. Julie sat on several committees during her tenure.



## BOARD DISTRICT 8

**Nick Donlea – Director since 2018**

Nick graduated from Waldorf College with an A.A. and has been in the building industry his entire career. In addition to the ECI REC Board, he has served on his local planning and zoning commission and school board. Nick and his wife, Terri, raised three children—Cameron, Haley, and Taylor.



## BOARD DISTRICT 3

**Brian McNulty – Director since 2021**

Brian is a lifelong farmer and resident of Benton County. He graduated from Benton Community High School and has a bachelor's degree in ag business. In addition to farming, he has worked part-time as the city clerk for Blainstown since 2004.



## BOARD DISTRICT 9

**Steve Rau, President – Director since 2005**

Steve has been farming since 1985 and currently manages 900 acres of corn, soybeans, and hay. He is also a Hereford cow and calf operator. Steve has held leadership positions with the Stanley Fire Department, the Fayette County Corn and Soybean Growers, and the Iowa Hereford Breeders Association. Steve and his wife, Missy, have three boys.



## BOARD DISTRICT 4

**Gary McKenna – Director since 2016**

Gary represents ECI REC on the CIPCO Board of Directors. He owns Van Eschen-Strong Insurance and has been at Eden Mutual Insurance since 1997.

For 32 years, he was a member of the Vinton Fire Department and served as fire chief. Gary and his wife, Teresa, have two children.



## BOARD DISTRICT 10

**Gary Cook – Director since 2024**

Gary is a graduate of East Buchanan Community Schools and has been an ECI REC member for over 30 years. He has worked as a grain farmer and certified crop insurance adjuster and has served many local organizations. Gary is married to Missy; they have two sons and a beloved granddaughter.

# On the Go This Summer?

## DON'T FORGET

Your Co-op Connections® Card gets you discounts on everything from hotel stays and garden supplies to auto repairs and prescription drugs.



Misplaced your card?  
Call us toll-free at 877-850-4343  
or email [ecirec@ecirec.coop](mailto:ecirec@ecirec.coop)



Download the app  
and save without  
your card.



[connections.coop](https://connections.coop)




# ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS: RESULTS & RECAP

**THE 30TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS** of East-Central Iowa REC was held virtually via Zoom on June 25! Members can view the recording of the meeting by going to ECI REC's website and clicking on the link located in the 2025 Annual Meeting story found in the News and Events section.

One primary piece of the Annual Meeting is the Board election. Re-elected to serve three-year terms on the Board of Directors were Julie Kester (District 2), Brian McNulty (District 3), and Gary McKenna (District 4). Members voted by mail-in ballot or online through our website and SmartHub.

Following the business meeting, a Board reorganization meeting was held. All officers were retained by those who held positions last year. Re-elected were Steve Rau, president; Jeff Elliott, vice president; Julie Kester, secretary/treasurer; and Pete Burmeister assistant secretary/treasurer.

This year's theme was "Building on the Past to Grow the Future," which reflects our deep roots in community, commitment, and progress. For decades, the dedication of our founding members and the strength of cooperative values have powered our success. Today, we honor that legacy while

embracing innovation, enhancing reliability through advanced technology, and investing in member service. By building on the solid foundation of the past, we are shaping a smarter, stronger energy future for the communities we proudly serve. 

**Scan the QR code to view and download the 2024 Annual Report.**



## PRIZE WINNERS

Members who voted in this year's election were entered to win one of twelve \$50 bill credits. Two grand prize winners were also selected, one from the group of members who joined the virtual meeting and a second from members who voted online. 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:**

Denare Renken-Armstrong  
John McMillan  
Leon Goedken  
Kirk Baumgartner

Greg Svoboda  
Roy Schulze  
Tayten Mullinex  
Alecia Schoonover

Dennis Rottinghaus  
Eldon Arnold  
Jon Roseberry  
Jaqueline Jones

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

Mike Stallman  
Michele Murphy

IowaStateFair

OFFICIAL  
SPONSOR



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa



**Visit the Iowa State Fair August 7-17 and stop by to see Iowa's Touchstone Energy Electric Cooperatives in the air-conditioned 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds.**

- Get plastic hard hats and suckers for kids while supplies last.
- Try on lineworker safety gear, then take selfies in the safety selfie station.

# 2024 CIPCO POWER SUPPLY REPORT: MEMBER DRIVEN. RELIABILITY FOCUSED

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



**THE RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE** power we benefit from today is the result of careful planning and prudent investments that occurred decades ago. To be sure, when East-Central Iowa REC was founded 30

years ago, the energy landscape looked quite different than it does today. Once in its infancy, our bulk electric system has now matured with the assistance of diversified power generation sources and improved technology.

As your representative on the Central Iowa Power Cooperative Board of Directors, I am committed to the critical work of continuing the stewardship of your electric service that began all those years ago. Decisions made then, and decisions made now, will determine our future path to success. To get there, we need to keep our eyes focused on the horizon.

For that reason, the CIPCO Board of Directors began 2024 by refreshing our strategic plan. Safety and security, reliability, strategic partnerships, and financial strength were the pillars upon which we weighed every action we took on behalf of our member-owner electric cooperatives. We mindfully and conservatively deliberated plans for much-needed new power generation, fortified by the findings of an updated Integrated Resource Plan, which clearly asserted the demand for electricity shows no signs of slowing down. Basically, the sooner we can have new generation up and running, the better.

Rising demand for electricity across our region stems from the industrial expansion of manufacturing facilities, data centers, cryptocurrency mining, small businesses, and ongoing residential growth and general electrification. While it certainly presents an opportunity, it is not risk-free. Today's complex regulatory environment complicates our business and has threatened the affordability and reliability of the generation we need to serve these large loads. Our ongoing partnership with fellow CIPCO member-owners to mitigate some of these risks through innovative rates and contract structures has prepared us to welcome new businesses and industries and expand existing ones.


As a CIPCO Board member, I am excited about what the future holds for CIPCO and ECI REC as we pursue opportunities to bolster our balanced and diverse portfolio with reliable energy and capacity that will consistently serve us

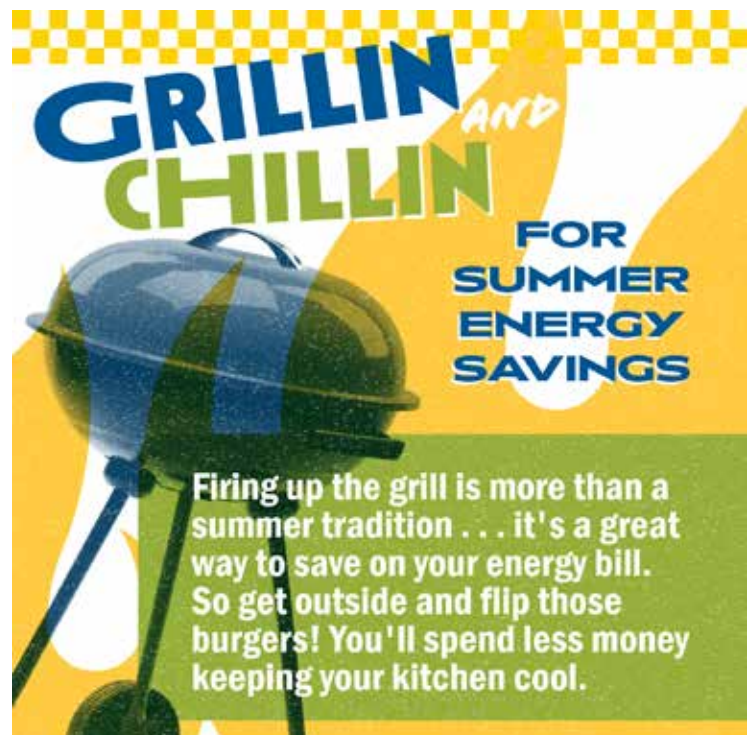
for decades to come. The planning for the development and construction of new generation assets in 2024 will be remembered as the launch of the latest capacity expansion for CIPCO.

CIPCO's positive financial standing is due to the long-term support of member-owners like ECI REC. For 2024, CIPCO realized a net margin of \$30.4 million, well ahead of budget. Throughout the year, CIPCO maintained stable rates, returned patronage capital, and strengthened the balance sheet as we planned for major capital additions.

Despite the May 2024 tornado outbreak that caused widespread damage across the CIPCO system, CIPCO maintained an overall outage rate of 0.84 hours per consumer, still under the target of 1.00 hour per consumer. For 2024, ECI REC's outage rate was 0.0 hours per member-consumer.

On the financial side, in 2024, both Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings once again maintained CIPCO's A rating, which confirms CIPCO's financial strength. This was echoed in the sound financial practices that allowed margins to be returned to CIPCO member-owners in the form of patronage, a key component of the cooperative business model. In 2024, CIPCO returned patronage totaling \$850,081 to ECI REC.

CIPCO was created for one reason: to serve its member-owner cooperatives. Its transmission system remains reliable, and its growing power supply resources enhance the value of membership. We are proud of our accomplishments and remain confident that the path ahead will bring continued reliability and opportunities for ECI REC. 





# 2025 Mid-Year Operations Update

*a Keeping the Lights On story*

**GREETINGS** from the Operations team at East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative! We hope 2025 has been safe and prosperous for all our members.

The first half of 2025 has flown by for ECI REC's Operations team. At the time of writing this article, unplanned outages have been relatively low due to nice weather and ongoing improvements to our distribution facilities. Line crews and contractors have been busy with Work Plan projects and other maintenance activities around our service territory. Below are some highlights of the year thus far and a look toward the future. We wish you all a safe remainder of 2025!

The new barrier at the Sumner substation protects equipment from animal damage. Photo credit: Pat Hyland

## Burning Safety Reminder

Earlier this year, several poles were damaged when road ditches and other vegetation were burned. Burning can be dangerous to anyone in the area if poles are damaged and lines get close to the ground. If a structure fails, it could cause an outage, and it is very costly to ECI REC and/or the party responsible for the damage.

If you plan on burning, be very cautious. There are a few things you can do to help prevent pole damage:

- » Cut back vegetation around poles.
- » Water down the area nearby.
- » Check the areas around poles after burning is complete to make sure nothing is smoldering.

If you find damage to any facilities, please call ECI REC at 877-850-4343 so we can inspect to make sure there are no safety issues.

## Work Plan Project Updates

Highline Construction completed the overhead portion of the 2025 Work Plan in March. They rebuilt approximately 10 miles of overhead line. Older conductor and poles were replaced with new aluminum conductor and poles. The span lengths between poles were also shortened to provide added strength.

ECI REC crews have also been working on a portion of Work Plan projects totaling 2.6 miles.

In May, CRC Trenching began work on the underground portion of the 2025 Work Plan. They will be replacing approximately 14 miles of aged line with new underground facilities. They are expected to complete this work by November.

## Safety

ECI REC continues its streak of no lost-time accidents. Your Cooperative is at approximately 465,000 hours without a lost-time accident. Great job, everyone!

At May's safety meeting, line crews went through their annual climbing competency and bucket rescue training.

## Annual Maintenance Programs

Zielies Tree Service is nearing the completion of our annual tree trimming. They trimmed in the Jesup and Walker substation areas this year. Landmark Turf Services completed facility and substation vegetation management.

Badgerland Utility Solutions, LLC, completed pole and underground

facility inspections in the Shady Grove substation area and will be back later this year to finish inspections in the Shellsburg substation area.

Nelson Electric will conduct infrared inspections of our substations later this year to identify any potential issues.

ECI REC crews continue to work on recloser maintenance. The reclosers are replaced and sent to a vendor that services and delivers them back to our operating centers. In addition to this work, ECI REC has purchased an additional 48 electronic reclosers that require less maintenance than the older, oil-filled equipment. The new devices have more options and require less maintenance.

## Substation Protection

In May, an electric fence structure was installed at our Sumner substation to help protect equipment from animal damage. The barrier was supplied and installed by TransGard Solutions. This barrier, combined with the existing fence, will deter animals from climbing on substation equipment, causing costly damage and outages. The fence does not harm the animals. 🐾

## STAY COOL. STAY EFFICIENT.

We're here to help you beat the summer heat. Take advantage of our efficiency programs and energy-saving recommendations designed to help you stay comfortable and cut costs all summer long.

## We're Here to Help You Save

*an Energy Wise feature*

**WHEN SUMMER HEATS UP**, our electric bills tend to increase. Air conditioners are working overtime, driving up home energy consumption. As your local not-for-profit electricity provider, ECI REC is committed to helping you beat the heat without breaking the bank.

As the temperatures get hotter over the next few months, keep these energy-saving strategies in mind. By taking advantage of these programs, services, and tips, you can manage your summer energy consumption and costs.

### Budget Billing

When you sign up for ECI REC's Budget Billing plan, your energy bill is calculated by averaging your previous 12 months of usage. With leveled billing, your monthly energy costs are easier to budget and manage, especially during seasonal fluctuations when bills tend to increase based on the weather. Budget Billing is a great option for anyone on a fixed income or those with highly variable seasonal needs. Some restrictions may apply.

### Rebate Program

You should be rewarded when you make smart upgrades or purchases to reduce your home energy use. ECI REC offers rebates on energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment and

more. Visit our website to learn about our rebate program and how you can receive a bill credit or cash back for making smart energy choices.

### Time-of-Day Rate

When you sign up for ECI REC's Time-of-Day Rate, you can lower your energy bills by shifting electricity use to periods of lower demand (also known as off-peak times). Adjusting your electricity use to off-peak hours helps ECI REC avoid peak demand charges, and those savings can be passed on to you.

### You Have the Power

The best way to lower energy use during summer months is to raise the thermostat to the highest setting that's comfortable. Ceiling fans can also help you feel cooler, but remember to turn them off when you leave the room. On warm summer nights, fire up the grill to keep additional heat out of the kitchen. Remember to change air filters often, so your cooling system doesn't have to work harder than necessary.

Don't let energy bills take a toll on your summer fun! ECI REC is here to help you manage your energy use. Contact us to learn more about practical strategies to lower your usage, trim your bills, and make this summer a breeze for both you and your wallet. 🍃

*Photo credit: NRECA/StraightTalk*

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!

### JULY ANNIVERSARIES



#### Scott McLaughlin

Engineering  
Technician  
12 years



#### Dane Peterson

Engineering Design  
Technician  
12 years



#### Bryce Burroughs

Lineworker  
8 years



#### Brooks Erickson

Apprentice  
Lineworker  
2 years



#### Holly Cashman

Member Service  
Representative  
19 years

### AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES



#### Ben Donnelly

Lineworker  
21 years



#### Travis Schellhorn

Lineworker  
23 years





## GET REGISTERED FOR SMARTHUB


Save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere.



Visit [ecirec.smarthub.coop](https://ecirec.smarthub.coop) for more information!

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 [ecirec.coop](https://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 Account 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 Continue button. A secondary account-related registration screen will appear.
3. Enter the last four digits of your Social Security or business ID number. Check to confirm you are not a robot. Agree to the terms and conditions. Click Register.
4. Check your email for a message from [ecirec@smarthub.coop](mailto:ecirec@smarthub.coop) that will include a link to the Verify Account page.
5. Clicking the Verify Account link takes you to the Change Your Password screen. Create a new password and click Save. You can change how you'd like to receive your bill and begin to review your account details. Note: You will also receive an email verifying that you have updated your password.
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. 


## Payment Drop Box Removal in Vinton and Independence

*a Keeping the Lights On notice*

**STARTING SEPTEMBER 10, 2025,**

there will no longer be payment drop boxes at our Vinton and Independence locations.

### Other Ways to Pay Your Electric Bill

1. **ONLINE** by registering your account on the SmartHub member portal via [ecirec.coop](https://ecirec.coop)
2. **ONLINE** using the Pay Now link at [ecirec.smarthub.coop/PayNow](https://ecirec.smarthub.coop/PayNow) (SmartHub registration not required)
3. **BY PHONE** by calling the toll-free number 855-939-3584, then keying in the phone number tied to your account
4. **DIRECT ELECTRONIC PAYMENT** through your bank account or credit card
5. **24-HOUR DROP BOX** at our Urbana Administrative Headquarters (2400 Bing Miller Lane)
6. **BY MAIL** to ECI REC, PO Box 248, Urbana, IA 52345
7. **IN PERSON** at our Urbana Administrative Headquarters, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. 



*Photo credit: Adam Albertsen*

## August 11 is National Safe Digging Day!

**"Shallow digging" is the #1 reason homeowners gave for digging without notifying 811 first.**

Utilities can be buried just a few inches below the surface.



**Contact 811. Every Dig. Every Time.**



\*Based on March 2024 polling



# Message From the CEO

continued from page 12

**Nonprofit Status and Allocation of Members' Share of the Margins:** With a cooperative like ECI REC, any revenue that exceeds the cost of service is returned to members as a **deferred patronage dividend**—also called **patronage dividends**.

- When you pay your electric bill, you're helping fund ECI REC.
- At the end of the year, if there's a margin, it's allocated to you based on how much energy you used.
- Excess revenue is **returned to members** in the form of **deferred patronage dividends**, rather than paid out as shareholder dividends.



## Local Control, Rural Areas, and Community Focus:

Cooperatives were originally formed to bring electricity to rural and underserved areas that investor-owned utilities found unprofitable.

- Decisions are made locally by people who live in and understand the community.
- Cooperatives often reinvest in local development, such as public and community services, education programs, and economic initiatives.



**Service Over Profit:** For-profit utilities often avoid rural areas because they're less profitable. At ECI REC, we exist to serve—not to maximize profits.

- Our mission is to provide reliable, affordable electricity to rural Iowa communities that others may overlook.
- Member satisfaction and long-term sustainability often take precedence over short-term financial gains.



**Guided by Policy and Accountability:** Our Board of Directors takes its fiduciary responsibilities seriously and works diligently to guide ECI REC in the best interests of all members.

- Deferred patronage allocation and retirement are governed by:
  - » State and federal laws.
  - » Our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.
  - » ECI REC's Board and Administrative Policy.
- Our Board of Directors works



hard to ensure this process:

- » Is fair and reasonable to current and former members.
- » Provides ECI REC with sufficient equity to operate effectively.
- » Protects ECI REC's financial stability.

**Deferred Patronage Dividends in 2025:** This year, ECI REC's Board once again retired deferred patronage capital—continuing a tradition we've proudly upheld annually for the past 25 years.

- Members who received electric service in 2010 and/or 2016 saw a line item on their June bill titled **"Deferred Patronage Dividends."**
- Former members received their dividends as mailed checks.



In short, electric cooperatives are unique because they are member-owned, community-focused, and nonprofit, with a strong commitment to serving areas that might otherwise be left behind by for-profit utilities.

Your Board of Directors takes its fiduciary responsibilities seriously and works hard to guide ECI REC in the best interests of all members. These are your neighbors—people who live and work alongside you—making thoughtful decisions with your needs in mind.

If you see a director in your community, take a moment to say thank you. They're not just Board members—they're your fellow members, working for you and your future. 🙌



## COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

1. Open and Voluntary Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community



# Get Your Summer On, But Use Decorative Lighting Safely

a Safety feature

Photo credit: Ronstik, Dreamstime.com

**SUMMER IS HERE**, and that means outdoor social gatherings where outdoor electrical string and sphere lighting, as well as illuminated jars and outdoor fixtures, are often added to for ambiance. East-Central Iowa REC and Safe Electricity offer these safety tips when using decorative lighting outdoors:

- » Only use strands, globes, or other decorative fixtures that are approved for outdoor use and that have been tested by a reputable safety laboratory, such as UL.
- » Only string together the number of strands recommended by the manufacturer.
- » All outdoor outlets should be protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- » Unplug or turn off lights when not in use.
- » Only use extension cords that are rated for outdoor use, and do not overload them.
- » Do not use metal tacks or nails to drape or attach string lights.
- » Use outdoor-rated bulbs.
- » Consider using LED lighting. It gives off less heat and uses less energy than incandescent versions.
- » Planning on adding extra outlets/running electricity to a gazebo or she shed? Hire a qualified electrician to install them.
- » Just like indoor lighting, do not use bulbs that surpass a fixture's maximum wattage.
- » Inspect lights and cords before using them.
- » Make sure that the combined load of everything you are plugging in—such as decorative lighting, outdoor kitchen appliances, and other electrical items—won't overload the circuit.
- » Adding permanent outdoor lighting? It's best to hire a qualified electrician.

Enjoy dining al fresco and entertaining under the stars (and lights). Just select your lighting carefully and use it safely. For more information about electrical safety, visit [safeelectricity.org](https://safeelectricity.org).



**HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH.** The last thing he needs is for you to drive into his utility truck because you ignored the flashing lights, cones and signs. When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.

## YOUR BOARD

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## CLASSIFIEDS: Free to members only

FOR SALE: Nigerian Dwarf goats, three-month-old males and females available. Call 319-215-5486 for more information.

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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.

## ECI REC SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Thank you to Union Community School District staff for presenting graduate Tyler Gates with his \$1,000 scholarship on ECI REC's behalf. Tyler's scholarship was one of twelve scholarships of \$1,000 each that the Cooperative awarded this year.



Photo credit: Courtesy photo

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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.

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CEO TERESA FLOYD

## Message From the CEO: Our Mission Extends Beyond Simply Supplying Electricity

**RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES** like ECI REC play a unique and vital role in the delivery of electric power across the United States, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Unlike investor-owned or municipal utilities, electric cooperatives are built on a foundation of member ownership, democratic governance, and community commitment.

Our mission extends beyond simply supplying electricity—we aim to empower the communities we serve through local control, reinvestment, and a not-for-profit structure. The following points highlight the key features that distinguish ECI REC and other electric cooperatives from other types of electric utilities.

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**Ownership and Governance:** Unlike investor-owned utilities (IOUs), which are controlled by stockholders, and public utilities, which are government-run, cooperatives like ECI REC are guided by the people they serve—you.

- Electric cooperatives are member-owned organizations, meaning the customers who receive electricity are also the cooperative's owners.
- Members elect a Board of Directors from among themselves to make decisions and oversee operations.



continued on page 10