

living with energy

IN IOWA



Guthrie County REC
A Tractor Energy Cooperative

AUGUST 2016

Win a security camera to watch your home when you're not there! ▶ See page 5

Electrical overloads are a major source of **home fires**

Try a new **fresh from the garden** recipe

Membership: **You get what you put in**

Ducts offer a hidden opportunity to **boost energy efficiency**



Membership: You get what you put in

BY COZY NELSEN

When you set up your electric service account with Guthrie County REC, you probably thought to yourself, “That’s done. Now I just have to pay my monthly bill.”

The truth is, Guthrie County REC is more than just a utility provider that you pay each month for electricity. We have more to offer, and we want you, our members, to know about these benefits.



Guthrie County REC is in the ranks of 900 electric cooperatives in the United States that serve an estimated 42 million members. As your local cooperative, Guthrie County REC provides service to 4,767 meters in parts of Adair, Audubon, Cass, Dallas, Greene

and Guthrie counties. Our system stretches across 1,395 miles of line. If those miles were stretched end to end, they would reach from Guthrie Center to Mexico City!

It’s important that you, as a member, remember that we’re all in this together. You have a voice when it comes to the way we do business. And you have a vote when it comes to selecting board members to represent your interests.

We’re also local. REC employees like Lori Hix are often in the community working as volunteers. Our linemen share the same concerns for our communities that you do.

We’re not-for-profit. As a membership organization, Guthrie County

REC returns money over and above our operating costs to you, based on our financial position and your electricity consumption.

We’re here for you. Every day we live our mission to provide you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. We care about your quality of life and are always looking for ways we can improve our service to you.

So don’t make your monthly bill payment the only time you have contact with your cooperative. We’re here 24/7, and we’re not going anywhere anytime soon. Learn more about what we have to offer by visiting our website: www.guthrie-rec.coop. I think you’ll be surprised! ⚡

Cozy Nelsen is the CEO of Guthrie County REC.

Office Closing

The Guthrie County REC office will be closed Monday, Sept. 5 for Labor Day. Have a fun and safe holiday weekend!



Guthrie County REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Office

1406 State Street • P.O. Box 7
Guthrie Center, IA 50115-0007

Office Hours

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Telephone Number

641-747-2206 or 888-747-2206
Calls answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Website

www.guthrie-rec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ABCs of Electricity

What's on that pole?

Did you ever look up at a utility pole and wonder, “What is all that stuff?”

With a little information, you can understand a lot more about the utility lines you see every day. For example, there’s a difference between transmission poles that carry electricity at high voltages over long distances and distribution poles you typically see in your own neighborhood. Transmission poles are much larger, some using steel poles and tower structures. When a pole carries both transmission and distribution lines, the transmission lines will run above the distribution lines. An easy rule to follow is the lower the voltage of the line, the lower it is on the pole.

Here are some other things you may see on a pole:

■ **Transformers** – the metal cylinders on the pole – step down the voltage to match what you need in your house, generally 120 volts for outlets and 240 volts for air



conditioners and dryers.

- **Capacitors** are flat, rectangular casings that prevent power from being wasted and help boost the voltage on long rural distribution lines.
- **Reclosers** protect lines and members from short circuits, such as when a tree branch touches a line. When circuit breakers open the circuit, they cut off the power. In a few seconds, the system resets itself, and the recloser closes the circuit again so that power can be restored.
- **Fuses** protect lines and homes from short circuits, but they’re one-shot devices. If they burn out due to contact with a tree branch, linemen must replace them. ⚡

His grandfather's farm was the first to use a yard light

Guthrie County REC member Don Phelps stopped by the REC office recently to get parts for his electric water heater. That's when he saw a familiar name on a plaque in the lobby.

Don's grandfather, Earl Phelps, served on the Guthrie County REC Board of Directors from 1952 to 1962 and was a member of the board when the new and current office was built in 1954. When Don saw his grandfather's name on the plaque, he mentioned that Earl not only was one of the first to get electricity to the farm when Guthrie County REC was founded in 1938, but also he was the first to have a yard light installed by the cooperative.

"He was always innovative and wanting to be in on the new 'stuff,'" Don said. "As soon as the thought of an actual yard light to light the cattle working area came about, he was the first one to try it."

The yard lights weren't what you see today – they were much more primitive and not as bright as the high-pressure sodium lights of today. Still, they did the trick, but it was more about the work than it was about security. "It enabled him to see late at night and early in the morning when he would feed the cattle," Don said.

Don still lives on the same farm, and



in the same house, where Earl Phelps settled the farmstead in 1909 southwest of Bayard. Don doesn't recall many stories from his grandfather about "when the lights came on," but he knows his grandfather used as many lanterns as he could to get the job done.

"He had hundreds of lanterns hung around," Don said. "The house was lit with them and he carried them with him and hung them all over, in the buildings and in the trees and what-not. He was happy to get electricity because flipping a switch is sure better than messing with the wick on a lantern, you know, cutting it, trimming it, cleaning the glass. And there was always the risk of fire, there was always something burning down. Much more so than today."

Guthrie County REC still offers farm security lights. To learn more, visit www.guthrie-rec.coop. ⚡

Here's a checklist for kids headed to college

Being on your own at college for the first time brings many responsibilities, including keeping yourself safe. An unsafe room can cause an electrical fire and send a whole dormitory up in flames. About 1,800 fires take place in student dorms and Greek housing each year across the nation.



To make sure your room is both comfortable and safe, follow these tips from Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives:

To make sure your room is both comfortable and safe, follow these tips from Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives:

- Don't overload extension cords, power strips or outlets. Remember that just because something is turned off, if it's still plugged in it could be drawing power.
- Be wary of electrical outlets that are warm or hot to the touch. Immediately unplug items and allow them to cool down. Notify dorm authorities about the problem.
- When you're hanging festive lights around your room, don't connect multiple extension cords together. Instead, buy a cord that's the appropriate length for your use.
- Don't place cords under doors or carpets. Stepping on cords repeatedly stresses their insulation and it could wear away. Also, a cord will get hot if the current load is too high, such as when someone puts too big a bulb in a lamp – and it could ignite.
- Don't staple extension cords. Metal and electricity are not a good mix!

Your college checklist should include what is and isn't allowed in your dorm room. Many places prohibit hot plates, halogen light bulbs and candles. If something doesn't look safe, talk to your resident advisor, especially if you're housed in an older dorm with aging wiring that often can't handle all the appliances and gadgets students today try to plug in. ⚡

Mark Your Calendar!

Find us at the Iowa State Fair and you can win!

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa is again hosting a booth in the Bruce L. Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair, Aug. 11-21. You can register to win a Nest Learning Thermostat. You can also take pride in your cooperative by placing a magnetic marker showing where you're from on



Meghan Zach, a member of the Exira Explorers 4-H Club, put a magnet on the map to mark her electric co-op, Guthrie County REC, at the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa display during the 2015 Iowa State Fair.

a large map of Iowa. Energy efficiency information will be on display too. ⚡

Looking for the Editor's Choice Contest? You could win a \$200 Nest home security camera. To enter, go to www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com by Aug. 31, 2016.

In the Community

RECare: One way for members to help members

Guthrie County REC understands that our members are conscientious about their budgets. We also understand that there are members in our communities who struggle with their utility bills during the long, cold winter months.

Contributing to RECare, a program that distributes funds to local community action agencies that are then dispersed to low-income cooperative members, is an easy way to help your neighbors in need. To participate, fill out the form and drop it at our office or mail it with your bill.

"The colder months are fast approaching and there are members in our cooperative system who are worried about making the choice between purchasing electricity to stay warm or purchasing other essentials," said Cozy Nelsen, CEO. "It shouldn't have to be a choice. RECare donations go a long way in making a winter season more manageable for our neighbors in need." ✂

Member Authorization Form

Yes, I want to be part of members helping members through the RECare program.

- Enclosed is a check with a one-time donation.
- I would like to make a monthly donation of \$ _____.

Name _____

Guthrie County REC Account No. _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Please mail to RECare, c/o Guthrie County REC, P.O. Box 7, Guthrie Center, IA 50115, or call 888-747-2206.

Just for Kids

Plugged-in kids: Good energy efficiency habits start early



Generations of children growing up today are facing global environmental challenges like never before. It's important to engage these young people in the fight for our planet, so they can grow up to be responsible, energy-savvy and energy-saving adults.

Instilling your children with the knowledge of how to live in a way that's sustainable saves both resources and money, and it teaches children that they're important members of society who can make a difference – no matter how small.

Talk to kids about how they can save energy and money just by turning off lights, televisions and radios when they leave the room. If they're old enough to do chores, teach them to fill the washer and dryer with a full load of clothes – rather than just throwing in a few items of clothing – and to wash

full loads of dishes in the dishwasher. Showering quickly, keeping the refrigerator door closed, keeping doors and windows shut when the heat or air-conditioning is on and helping plant shade trees and windbreaks are all easy ways for kids to make a big difference in reducing the amount of energy used in the home.

Here are a few good resources with ideas of how to talk to your kids about energy efficiency and activities to reinforce energy-efficient ideas.

- **ENERGY STAR® Kids:** An interactive web site for children filled with facts, ways to save energy, educational games and activities, a vocabulary glossary and reference for parents. (www.energystar.gov)
- **Energy KIDS:** Energy education, energy-saving tips, games, tools and activities. (www.eia.gov/kids)
- **Energy Quest:** Award-winning energy education website of the California Energy Commission. Fun, interactive learning includes movies, games and homework help. (www.energyquest.ca.gov)
- **Energy Hog Kids Game:** Interactive games that teach conserving energy. (www.energyhog.org) ✂

BACK TO School!

SAFETY TIPS

Never put anything into electrical outlets. Only adults should put safety caps and plugs into electrical outlets.

Make sure your hands are dry before you touch anything electrical, even if you think it's turned off. Keep electrical cords away from water.

Never go near downed power lines. They can be live and dangerous. If you see a downed line, stay far away and call 911 immediately.

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