




# LIVE LINES

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

January 2025

## Save Some Green on Energy Bills This Winter

### How can you save on heating costs this winter?

Some answers to that question are basic: turn down the thermostat a few degrees from where you would normally keep it and dress in layers. Keep your feet warm and have plenty of extra blankets around.

Most people like to pull up the covers at night when it's cold outside. Add extra blankets, use flannel sheets and a thick comforter so that you can turn down your thermostat while you sleep. It also helps to use insulated or lined curtains to keep the cold air out; not only in your bedroom, but throughout your home.

### Other energy-saving tips include:

- Get your heating system regularly maintained and serviced by a HVAC professional so that it is working at peak efficiency. Keep your furnace clean, and change the filter monthly.
- Regularly vacuum or clean vents.
- If you have a fireplace, keep the damper closed when not in use. If you do not use your fireplace, plug and seal the flume.
- A programmable or smart thermostat can help automate energy savings. According to the Department of Energy, lowering the temperature by 7 to 10 degrees for 8 hours a day can reduce energy costs by up to 10 percent.
- A leaky house is expensive to heat. According to Energy.gov, sealing uncontrolled air leaks can save from \$83 to \$166 a year. Weather stripping double-hung windows can save \$42 to \$86 annually. Windows, doors, attics, attic access, outlets, walls and chimneys, as well as pipes entering or exiting your home are common sources of air leaks.
- Let the sun shine in your home during the day to use Mother Nature's warmth. Close window coverings after dusk, however, to reduce heat loss.
- Run your ceiling fans in a clockwise direction. Doing so will push down and redistribute warm air that naturally rises.
- Consider turning down your water heater to 120 or 125°F. Also install a water heater blanket to help insulate it to give it a step up in warming your water.
- When it comes time to replace your furnace or any part of your HVAC system, consider replacing it with an energy efficient version by looking for the EnergyStar designation.
- Decrease the use of the built-in ventilation fans in your kitchen and bathrooms. In the colder months, they do a good job of transferring heat from inside your home to the backyard. Use the fans only when needed and turn them off as soon as you can.
- Bring in the moisture with a humidifier or research other ways to do that (e.g. well-watered plants, containers of water throughout the home). Dry air makes the air feel colder and increasing moisture in the air causes indoor air to retain more heat.



# The Recipe Corner

## Crock Pot Crack Chicken

- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 2 ounces ranch dressing mix (powdered)
- 16 ounces cream cheese
- 8 ounces bacon cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup cheddar cheese shredded (or colby jack)
- ½ cup green onion thinly sliced

1. Add chicken breasts to crock pot.
2. Add chicken broth, cream cheese, and ranch seasoning over chicken. Turn crock pot to HIGH and cook for 3 hours, or cook on LOW for 6 hours.
3. Once chicken is cooked, pull out the breasts and shred with two forks. (You should shred the chicken right in your slow cooker if you prefer.)
4. Stir sauce in the crock pot and add chicken back in.
5. Add shredded cheese, bacon, and green onions to chicken. Mix well and serve warm on buns or in bowls.

# 2025 Energy Efficiency Rebates

Description	New Rebate	Replacement Rebates	Maximum Limits
<b>Geothermal Heat Pump</b>	\$1,400/Ton	\$750/Ton	<=30% Cost/Unit Installed No more than \$10K/Home
<b>Air-to-Air Heat Pump</b> If no back-up heat or propane or natural gas If back-up heat is electric	\$500/Ton \$700/Ton	\$500/Ton \$700/Ton	<30% Cost/Unit Installed <=30% Cost/Unit Installed No more than \$10k/Home
<b>Ductless Mini-Split Heat Pump</b> Any type of Ductless Mini Split Heat pump Must be Energy Star Certified If no back-up heat or propane or natural gas If back-up heat is electric	\$500/Ton \$700/Ton	\$500/Ton \$700/Ton	15% Cost 15% Cost No more than &5K/Home
<b>Controlled Water Heaters</b> Energy Factor >=90%			Lump Sum of 30% of cost, apply lessor of two Must be for hot water use only (not space heating). Storage-only units with no operating electric elements do not qualify for this rebate.
50 Gallons >50 Gallons <=75 Gallons >75 Gallons <=85 Gallons >85 Gallons = 105+ Gallons Load Control Switch Required	\$300/Unit \$350/Unit \$400/Unit \$500/Unit	\$300/Unit \$350/Unit \$400/Unit \$500/Unit	
<b>Building Insulation</b> Primary Electric Heat Must be professionally installed: Blown-in, Spray Foam, Insulating Concrete Forms, Rigid Styrofoam Panels and /or Structural Panels	20% of Cost	20% of	\$ 800/Bldg/Yr
<b>Electric Vehicle Chargers</b> Level 2 Chargers: 208-240V Must be hardwired and installed to meet all codes Member required to provide charger make, model, S/N, specifications Cannot back-feed into the system Load Control Switch Required Must have built-in accessible meter or REC/Muni meter installed	50% cost, max of \$750 per charger	N/A	None

## \$2,500 In College Scholarships To Be Awarded

Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, North Dakota, and Woodbury County REC in Merville, jointly announce a Scholarship program for 2025. Basin Electric will award one - \$1,000 scholarship and Woodbury County REC will award three - \$500 scholarships.

### Who Is Eligible To Receive The Scholarships?

1. The applicant must be a student who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited college, university or vocational/technical school in the fall of 2025.
2. Either the applicant, or the applicant's parents or guardian, must be a member of Woodbury County REC, reside on REC lines and currently receiving electric service. Children of members of the REC Board of Directors or children of Woodbury County REC employees are not eligible.
3. The applicant must be a United States citizen.
4. Past Basin Electric and Woodbury County REC scholarship winners are not eligible.

### How To Apply?

Call the REC office at (800)469-3125 or 873-3125 and request an application and complete rules to be mailed to you.

Application is also available at [www.woodbuyrec.com](http://www.woodbuyrec.com). Scholarship applications may also be picked up at the Woodbury County REC office in Merville. The completed application, and all required information, must be returned to the Woodbury County REC office on or before February 7, 2025.



### How Are The Scholarship Recipients Selected?

All applications will be reviewed by a panel of judges to determine the winner. Scholarships will be awarded based on academic excellence, community service and the applicant's educational and career goals.

# Shaping Energy Policy to Protect Rural Iowa

By Kent Amundson

As your local electric cooperative, Woodbury County REC is deeply committed to delivering reliable, affordable power while ensuring the long-term well-being of our rural communities. With energy policy decisions taking center stage at both the national and state levels, our ability to fulfill this mission hinges on advocating for balanced, thoughtful policies.

## National Energy Policy: Prioritizing Reliability and Affordability

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), led by CEO Jim Matheson, recently called on federal leaders to focus on actions that prioritize affordability and affordability to ensure rural America's energy future remains secure and sustainable. Matheson emphasized that our nation is at an energy crossroads, with increasing risks of rolling blackouts due to flawed public policies forcing premature closure of existing power plants, which is compounded by rising demand for energy.

Among the priorities to address these challenges, the nation's electric cooperatives are urging policymakers to:

1. Repeal Environmental Protection Agency regulations that undermine electric reliability.
2. Streamline federal permitting processes to ensure timely development of essential infrastructure.
3. Support implementation of direct pay (or elective) pay tax credits, allowing co-ops to utilize tax credits for energy technologies that benefit local communities.

These priorities align closely with our goals at Woodbury County REC: maintaining a reliable energy supply, keeping costs affordable and investing in the infrastructure needed to serve you better.

## The Importance of Fuel Diversity

One critical area of focus is ensuring a diverse energy mix. The “disorderly” retirement of traditional baseload generation, like coal and nuclear plants, has created gaps in grid reliability. Many of these retired plants are being replaced by intermittent energy sources that don't always provide power when it's needed most. As cooperatives, we support a mix of energy resources to ensure power is available whenever and wherever you need it.

Additionally, supply chain disruptions and the slow permitting process for new transmission lines present obstacles to meeting future demand. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts at all levels of government to build a more resilient and adaptable grid.

## State-Level Priorities: Protecting Defined Service Areas

Here in Iowa, a priority for electric cooperatives is preserving the defined service territory law. Established nearly 50 years ago, this regulation ensures every Iowan has access to a dedicated electric utility responsible for providing reliable service.

Defined service areas are essential for:

- **Affordability:** The certainty provided by these boundaries allows co-ops to invest in infrastructure and maintain competitive rates without unnecessary duplication of services.
- **Reliability:** Defined territories enable us to focus on grid upgrades, vegetation management and proactive maintenance to keep the lights on during storms or other disruptions.
- **Economic Development:** By fostering stable and predictable energy access, co-ops can support local businesses, attract new industries, and create jobs in our communities.



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Efforts to deregulate or weaken these protections could lead to higher electric bills, reduced reliability and fragmented service. States that have deregulated their electric utilities have often seen significant price increases without the promised improvements in service quality. This issue is critical for Iowa's electric cooperatives, which are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities by providing electricity that is safe, reliable and affordable.

### **Carrying The Message**

Energy policy affects us all, and your involvement is crucial in shaping the conversation. Woodbury County REC board and staff will continue to advocate for policies that protect the interests of the members we serve.

Kent Amundson is the general manager/CEO of Woodbury County REC.

## **Stay Protected: 2 FA is Now Available for your Smart Hub Account**

### **Woodbury County REC Responds to Phishing Attacks with Enhanced Security Measures.**

In response to the growing threat of phishing attacks targeting (end users) in the utility and broadband industries, Woodbury County REC is taking proactive steps to enhance the security of its SmartHub billing and payment system. Today, the company announced the implementation of two-factor authentication (2FA) as an added layer of protection for your account.

Phishing attacks are a common tactic used by cybercriminals to get you into revealing your personal information, such as login credentials or financial details. These attacks often involve fraudulent emails or text messages that appear to be from a legitimate organization, enticing you to click on a malicious link or provide sensitive information.

Recognizing the importance of safeguarding your account information, Woodbury County REC is committed to providing a secure online experience. Implementing 2FA adds an extra layer of security to help prevent unauthorized access to your SmartHub account.

With 2FA, you must provide two forms of identification before gaining access to your account. This typically involves entering a unique code sent to your mobile device or email address and your username and password. This added security measure makes it significantly more difficult for cybercriminals to compromise your account, even if they have obtained login credentials through phishing or other means.

Woodbury County REC encourages all its customers to enroll in 2FA to further protect their accounts from unauthorized access. This will allow us to satisfy our commitment to protecting your account while giving you the trusted confidence of secure transactions.

Customers with questions or concerns about phishing attacks or 2FA are encouraged to contact Woodbury County REC helpdesk@woodburyrec.com or call 712-873-3125 to speak to a customer support representative for assistance.

