




LIVE LINES

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative

March 2025

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Energy Issues at the Forefront of the 2025 Legislative Session

By Haley Moon, senior manager of policy & advocacy at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

Energy policy remains a top priority for Iowa lawmakers in the current state legislative session. Since the 91st General Assembly began on January 13, legislative leaders and Governor Reynolds have emphasized key issues that could impact how electricity reaches Iowans in their homes and businesses. As always, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged in these discussions to ensure the voices of co-op member-consumers are heard and that the best interests of rural Iowa are considered.

The following are key legislative issues under discussion and their potential impact on your local electric cooperative:

Service Territory Protections

Protecting the state's defined electric service areas remains the top priority for Iowa's electric cooperatives. This law, established nearly 50 years ago, is essential for cooperatives to invest in local economic development, maintain affordable rates and ensure reliable service. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) remains vigilant in safeguarding these protections from legislative proposals that could undermine them. Learn more at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com.

Third-Party Solar Developments

Proposals in the legislature aim to establish third-party community solar programs in Iowa. These arrangements are different from the community solar programs available from some Iowa electric co-ops. You may have received information at your home or heard of neighbors being approached about subscribing to or leasing land for non co-op community solar projects. While electric cooperatives support a diverse energy generation mix, there are concerns that these entities do not adhere to the same consumer protection standards required of public utilities. Additionally, these projects could disrupt assigned service territories that are crucial for co-ops. If you have questions about solar energy or are approached by one of these third-party entities, please contact your local cooperative for more information.

Governor's Energy Priorities

Governor Reynolds has outlined several energy-related priorities aimed at shaping Iowa's future in energy generation, transmission and distribution. These initiatives cover a wide range of topics, including how investor-owned utilities plan for and set rates and invest in new energy projects, ways the state of Iowa can examine the potential of nuclear energy, and making funds available for water infrastructure projects.

One issue of particular importance to electric cooperatives is the Right of First Refusal (ROFR). ROFR grants Iowa-based electric utilities the first opportunity to construct and maintain regional transmission projects within the state. Electric cooperatives support ROFR, as it enables Iowa's utilities to continue working together on critical infrastructure projects that help maintain reliable electricity service.



The Recipe Corner

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Burrito Casserole

Meat mixture:

1 1/2 to 2 lbs. hamburger fry and crumble with ...
1 med. Onion, chopped

Add and then simmer:

1 envelope Taco Seasoning
1 can bean dip
1 jar taco sauce (mild)

Roll mixture up in large flour tortillas (10 large.) Cover with cheese sauce and bake until hot and bubbly. (Glass baking dish works best.)

Cheese sauce:

1 jar hot taco sauce
Grated cheese (enough to make thick)
1/3 cup catsup
2/3 cup water

Mix all the above together and heat. You may want to add sliced black olives, fresh, chopped tomatoes and/or cheese to the top. Bake at 350 degrees or until heated through for about 30 minutes.

Iowa's utilities employ thousands of Iowans to design, maintain and repair power lines in the state to ensure power continues to flow during our most extreme weather conditions. They invest in our communities and utilize Iowa companies as suppliers while working with landowners to protect Iowans' interests.

Staying Engaged in the Legislative Process

As the legislative session progresses, your local electric cooperative directors and staff are actively engaging with lawmakers to advocate for policies that protect and strengthen rural Iowa's energy future.

Ready to Hit the Road, Energy Trail Tours 2025

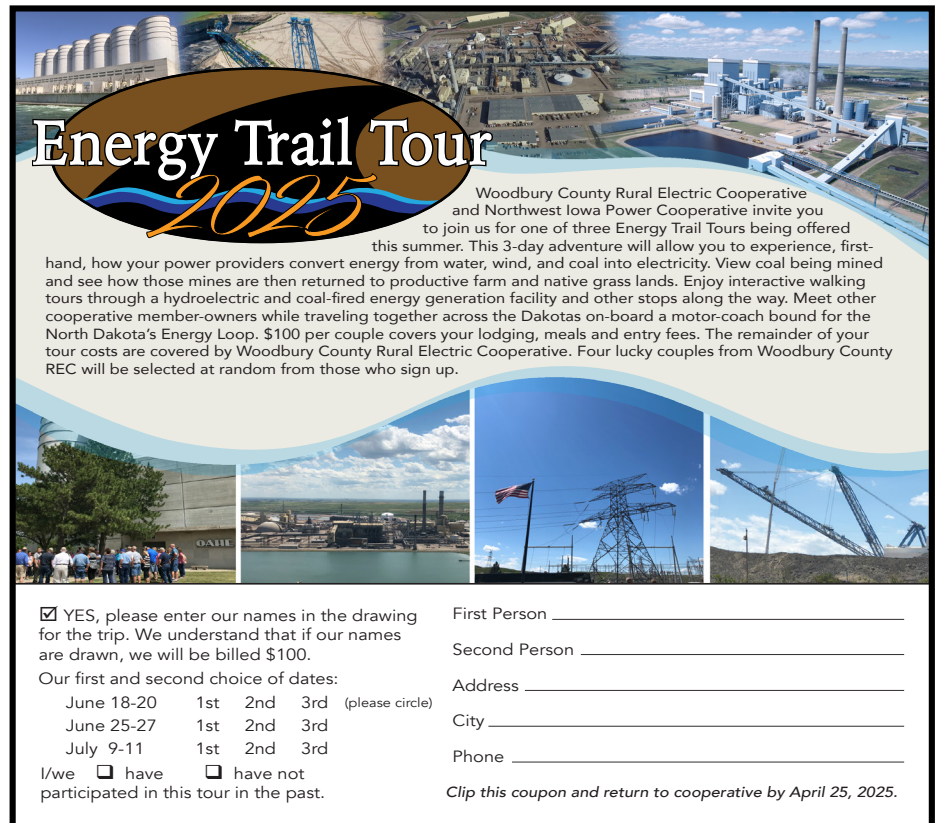
Flip a switch, and the lights come on. Behind this simple action lies a complex network of people, power plants, and transmission lines working around the clock. Their mission is to ensure safe, affordable, and reliable electricity flows to more than 140 member cooperatives in nine states.

This summer, Woodbury REC members will join members from thirteen other Western and North Central Iowa electric cooperatives on a three-day excursion through the Dakotas to learn about where their electricity comes from and have some fun along the journey. The tours are part of Woodbury REC commitment to providing education for directors, employees, and members.

If you would like to be a part of this experience this year, please find more information below.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.



Energy Trail Tour 2025

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative and Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative invite you to join us for one of three Energy Trail Tours being offered this summer. This 3-day adventure will allow you to experience, firsthand, how your power providers convert energy from water, wind, and coal into electricity. View coal being mined and see how those mines are then returned to productive farm and native grass lands. Enjoy interactive walking tours through a hydroelectric and coal-fired energy generation facility and other stops along the way. Meet other cooperative member-owners while traveling together across the Dakotas on-board a motor-coach bound for the North Dakota's Energy Loop. \$100 per couple covers your lodging, meals and entry fees. The remainder of your tour costs are covered by Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative. Four lucky couples from Woodbury County REC will be selected at random from those who sign up.

YES, please enter our names in the drawing for the trip. We understand that if our names are drawn, we will be billed \$100.

Our first and second choice of dates:

June 18-20	1st	2nd	3rd	(please circle)
June 25-27	1st	2nd	3rd	
July 9-11	1st	2nd	3rd	

I/we have have not participated in this tour in the past.

First Person _____
Second Person _____
Address _____
City _____
Phone _____

Clip this coupon and return to cooperative by April 25, 2025.

Cooperative Update: Navigating Change Together

By Kent Amundson

As your local electric cooperative, we value transparent communication about the factors that affect your electric service. Woodbury County REC will be adjusting rates this spring, as a result of increased cost pressures. We have experienced significant inflationary increases in costs with one of them being our wholesale power cost. Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO), our wholesale provider implemented a 10.2% rate adjustment on Jan. 1, 2025 to the energy we purchase. We continue to work with our cost of service and rate consultants to determine the specific rates changes and we will provide a notice of rate change in the next month or two.

We know rate changes may be challenging, and that's why we've worked hard to hold off on any increases. While the costs of nearly everything in life have significantly risen in recent years, we're proud of our track record in keeping rates stable. Our last rate increase was in 2018. As a not-for-profit cooperative, we only charge what's necessary to provide you with safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy. We are not in business to generate profits.

Why the Change?

Electricity rates are shaped by a variety of factors. As much as we wish we could keep everything steady, rising fuel costs, the need to maintain aging infrastructure, compliance with regulatory standards and ongoing investments in modern technology all contribute to the need for rate adjustments. These changes allow Woodbury County REC to uphold its promise to provide fair and equitable rates while ensuring financial stability for the cooperative and its members.

Here's a closer look at the key drivers for this increase:

- **Wholesale Power Costs:** Most of the power we deliver comes from NIPCO, which sources electricity from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). Both of these suppliers are increasing rates in 2025 due to inflation, growing demand and investments in critical infrastructure.
- **Maintaining and Upgrading Infrastructure:** Rising material costs and supply chain challenges have made these improvements more expensive at Basin Electric, WAPA, NIPCO and Woodbury REC. Maintaining and upgrading infrastructure is essential for all utilities and is an important cornerstone of reliability. These upgrades improve the transmission grid's security and power reliability, enhancing resilience against storm outages and expediting restoration efforts by moving transmission lines for ease of access.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** New Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations are also impacting electricity rates. These regulations require significant reductions in emissions from power plants, which could lead to major investments in unproven technologies like carbon capture and storage. Retrofitting existing coal plants or replacing lost capacity with alternative energy sources creates added costs. These new regulations in addition to the tightening of existing regulations present significant operational and financial hurdles for utilities nationwide.
- **Operational Costs:** Like many industries, utilities are feeling the impact of inflation, from everyday maintenance to retaining skilled workers. Programs like vegetation management and energy-efficiency initiatives ensure reliable service but come at a cost. Skimping on these efforts can have detrimental short and long-term impacts, which is why they must always remain a priority.

EFFECTIVE WAYS To Lower Home Energy Use

Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.



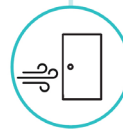
Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Dept. of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



Utilize Off-Peak Energy Times

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours, when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



Seal Your Home

According to ENERGY STAR®, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.



Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.

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Looking Ahead

This rate adjustment reflects the real costs of delivering electricity to your homes and businesses. As a not-for-profit cooperative, Woodbury County REC doesn't aim to generate profits – every dollar you pay goes toward maintaining reliable service, covering operating expenses and keeping the cooperative financially healthy.

As always, Woodbury County REC is here to help you find ways to manage your energy use and save money. Our energy-efficiency programs and free consultations can help you identify steps to reduce your electricity bills. Whether it's upgrading to energy-efficient appliances, implementing weatherization improvements, or taking advantage of rebates or our Switch-Makes-Cents load management program, there are tools and resources available to help you make the most of your energy dollars.

Our Commitment to You

At Woodbury County REC, we're here to serve you. We remain committed to transparency, reliability and keeping costs as low as possible. Thank you for your understanding and trust as we navigate these changes together.

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

Padmount Transformers not a Blank Canvas

Do you have a metal, box-shaped transformer near your yard?

While it may be tempting to paint it to match your home or to enhance it with artistic flair, do not decorate, paint or landscape near the box, called a padmount transformer or pad-mounted transformer.

The neighborhood metal transformer covers are assigned a specific color usually green, sometimes grey so that utility workers can easily identify them. Also, hampering with the box by painting it could impair the lock, the equipment itself or cover the warning signs. For safety, the padmount transformer should always be locked and the warning signs visible.



Padmount transformers, which are typically installed on easements, are an essential part of the supply chain that provides power to neighborhoods with underground utilities. Their purpose is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires that supply power to the lights and appliances in homes. Woodbury County REC must be able to access them at all times in case of a power outage or to perform routine maintenance. In other words, they are very important and due to their high voltage and function, they should be revered.

By respecting all utility equipment, including neighborhood transformers, you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe. Also alert children that they should not sit on, open, or play around the green boxes.

“Operation Round-Up” A Community Helping Hand

As the economy continues to struggle, so do local charities and volunteer organizations. If you feel fortunate and would like to help your local community for no more than 99 cents per month, Woodbury County REC has a wonderful program available.

This program, called “Operation Roundup”, enables REC members to voluntarily have their monthly electric bill rounded-up to the next highest dollar. Those funds are available to help support local community organizations such as ambulance squads, fire departments, the county fair, food banks, etc. No funds are given to political campaigns or to “for profit” businesses.

Your small monthly contribution, no more than 99 cents or as little as one penny, could make a big difference in your local community. If you would want to participate in this very worthwhile voluntary program, give the Woodbury County REC office a call and we will help you sign up. Call (800)469-3125 or (712)873-3125.

