



NEWS *Lines*

PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR THE MEMBER-OWNERS OF NORTH WEST RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

JUNE 2020

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COVID-19 UPDATES

2020 Energy Trail Tour Cancelled

Out of an abundance of caution and with the health and safety of member-owners in mind, the 2020 Energy Trail Tours have been cancelled. North West REC offers two tour opportunities, each summer, in partnership with our wholesale power provider, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO).

"NIPCO's electric generation facility partners have closed their facilities to mitigate operational impacts resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic. Plans to re-open those facilities remain uncertain for the foreseeable future," stated tour coordinator Angela Catton. "The decision to cancel the July tours ensures the health and safety of tour participants as well as employees of the power plants that interact with them."

Energy Trail Tours give cooperative member-owners a first-hand opportunity to learn from those directly involved with the process of power generation and delivery. Catton added, "What makes the tour experience so compelling is that participants learn and laugh, together. Tour groups build lasting friendships with other members of our cooperative family through shared experiences and personal interaction. While difficult to make, the decision to cancel the tours was the prudent thing to do in response to state and federal public health officials' recommendations surrounding social distancing guidelines and interstate travel in slowing the spread of the virus."

Plans are underway for 2021 with more information being shared with our membership in January. Energy Trail Tours remain a popular, member-engagement activity for North West REC. If you have any questions, feel free to call our office.

2020 Youth Tour Cancelled

NRECA officially announced its decision to cancel all in-person programs through June 24, including the 2020 Youth Tour. While we are saddened by this development, the health and safety of everyone involved with Youth Tour is always our top priority. Our focus now is to make Iowa Youth Tour 2021 the best ever. Due to the cancellation of the youth tour this year North West REC's board has decided we will be sending three students next year on the 2021 Youth Tour instead two as we normally would.



**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
OF IOWA**

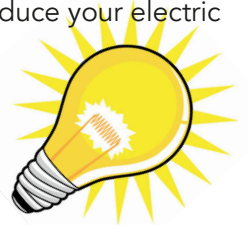
Facing financial hardships? *Contact us* to discuss payment options

For many families, the COVID-19 pandemic isn't just a public health crisis – it's also a financial crisis. To ease the financial burden on those who are experiencing decreased or lost income, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have temporarily suspended disconnections for nonpayment during the health emergency. It's important to note that the disconnect suspension is not a bill waiver or bill forgiveness. If you're unable to pay your bill on time and/or in full, please contact North West REC as soon as possible to make payment arrangements. Customers who are able to pay should pay their utility bills, or even if just a portion. That will prevent large unpaid balances and reduce the potential for service disconnection once the public health emergency has passed.

Not-for-profit electric cooperatives are locally owned by the consumers they serve. Through this business model, each consumer shares in the operational costs. It is the goal of each electric cooperative to deliver quality service without profit – service at cost, shared by its member-consumers. This means electric cooperatives have limited reserves to sustain high levels of unpaid bills. It's important every member-consumer has a plan in place to pay their energy bill. Although it hasn't been business as usual, the focus of each electric cooperative remains keeping your life as normal as possible. If you need assistance or would like to establish a payment plan, please contact North West REC as soon as possible. Your co-op can also help you identify simple ways to reduce your electric use which will lower your bill. We're here for you.

Tips for managing home energy use

Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage our member-consumers to use energy wisely. As you spend more time at home during the pandemic, you'll likely see an increase in home energy use and bill amounts. Here are some ways to help lower your energy bill during the spring and summer months:



Ask us about budget billing or levelized billing, which will give you a predictable electric bill each month and level out seasonal cost fluctuations.

If you have signed up for Smart Hub and can track your energy consumption, use it to see if your energy efficiency efforts are working.

Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use. Small appliances and electronics use energy even when not in use. When powered on, game consoles, televisions and similar electronics are responsible for up to 12% of energy use.

Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs in frequently used fixtures. Lighting can amount to up to 12% of monthly energy use. LED bulbs can cut lighting costs by 75%.

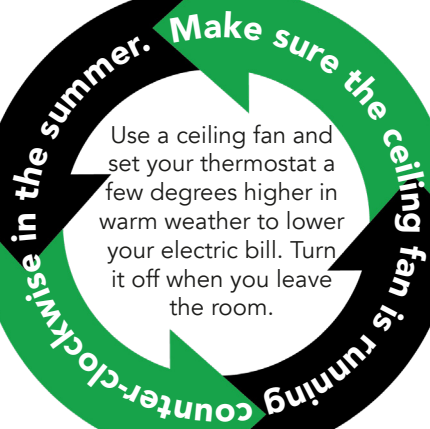
Wash only full loads of laundry and use warm or cold water. Using warm water instead of hot can cut a load's energy use in half, and cold water can save even more.

Air dry dishes in your dishwasher. This step can cut your dishwasher's energy use by up to 50%.

Dial down the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees or lower. This will also help prevent scalding.

Use a ceiling fan and set your thermostat a few degrees higher in warm weather to lower your electric bill. Turn it off when you leave the room.

Program your thermostat to maximize energy savings. Setting your thermostat even one degree lower when heating or one degree higher when cooling can reduce energy use by up to 5%.



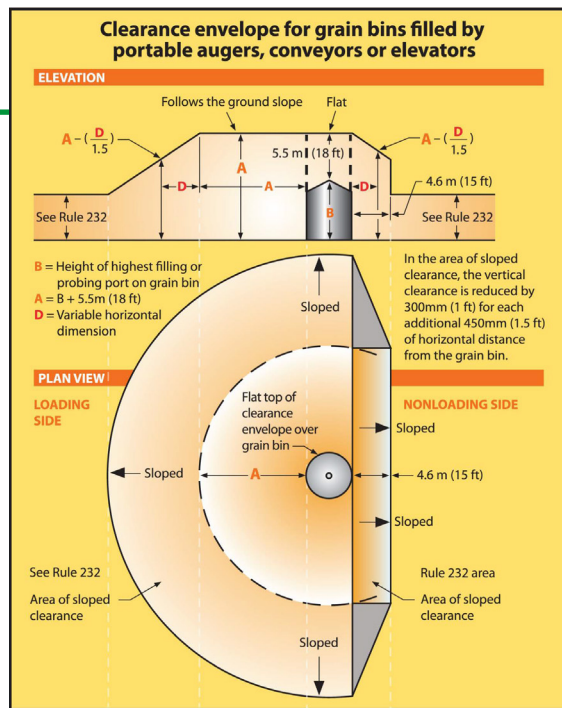
Farm Safety & GRAIN BINS

Safety is an important part of living and working on a farm. One important aspect for creating a safe environment on your farm is proper clearances for electric lines around grain bins.

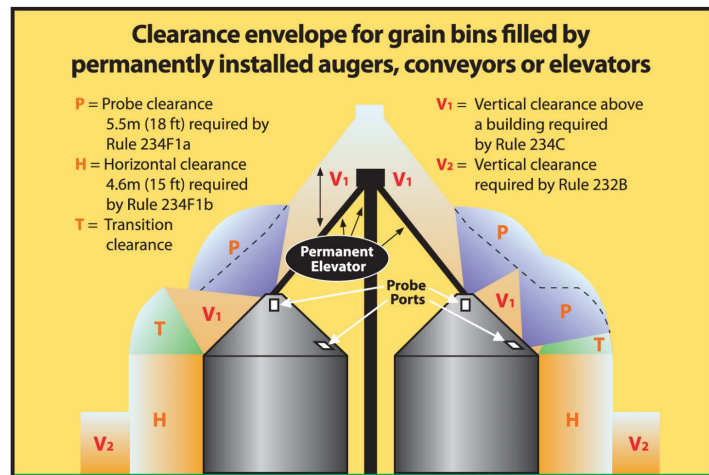
When starting to plan for a new grain bin or moving an existing bin, please contact North West REC at 712-707-4935 or 800-766-2099 and Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative at 712-546-4141 to ensure you are meeting the National Electric Safety Code requirements. We will provide assistance in planning for a safe environment for everyone working and living around grain bins.

According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b. An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after September 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors or elevator systems installed after December 24, 1997. (As adopted by the Iowa Utilities Board.)

If you have any questions concerning clearance regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call our office at 712-707-4935 or 800-766-2099 for the safety of everyone involved.



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Disclaimer: These drawings are provided as part of Iowa electric cooperatives' annual public information campaign and are based on the 2017 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication. Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or for damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

Resources to help Iowans with utility bills

Iowa 211: Calling 2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that provides Iowans with help and answers from thousands of health and human service agencies and resources in their local communities. Resources for utility bill assistance can be found by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting www.211iowa.org.

Evaluate payment options: Concern for community is a core cooperative principle, and Iowa's electric co-ops are willing to work with member-consumers who may have trouble paying their bills. If you are experiencing financial hardships, please contact your local electric co-op to discuss payment options. Co-op staff can also suggest ways to reduce your energy use to lower your bills. Our top priority is serving our member-consumers, especially in these challenging times.



Lyle D. Korver

MANAGER'S *Report*

"The safety and health of our members and employees will continue to be our number one priority."

COVID-19 Update

As we continue to navigate our way through this uncharted territory caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, we have had to be flexible and adaptable on a daily and weekly basis. While it has been necessary to do some things we really didn't want to do, such as closing our offices to public access, overall our employees have adjusted well and are doing a great job of continuing to serve our members.

We had gone through a time of staggered work schedules for our employees with some of them working from home on a rotating basis, but we returned to regular work schedules on Monday, May 4. This may need to change again in the future, but we will continue to monitor and follow the guidance of the President and Governor. The safety and health of our members and employees will continue to be our number one priority.

Here are a few COVID-19 topics I want to briefly summarize for you:

- Offices - We will be transitioning from the offices being closed to a gradual reopening. In the meantime, please contact us if you would like to schedule an appointment to visit with any of our employees regarding your account, new service requests, rebate information, etc.
- Bill credit - If you were a member in 2019, you should have received a credit on your electric bill that was delivered around May 20. This was your share of the \$1.6 million early patronage retirement, the Board approved to try to provide some assistance to our members who have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. We apologize for any confusion there may have been due to a separate patronage allocation notice that was mailed out in early May. On the bottom of that notice, it stated "Capital credits shown on this statement cannot be applied to your energy bill." Unfortunately, our software provider used the wrong allocation statement for this notice.
- Collections & disconnections – We have waived late fees and temporarily suspended disconnections for non-payment during this health emergency. It is important to note, however, the disconnect suspension is not a bill waiver or bill forgiveness. If you are unable to pay your bill on time and in full, we encourage you to contact us at (800) 766-2099 as soon as possible and we will be happy to work with you on working out a payment arrangement.



By the time you receive this newsletter, I am hopeful that we are seeing more favorable trends relating to COVID-19 and that we are starting to get back to normal. However, it is apparent that it will be a new normal. The big question is: "What is going to be the new normal?" Regardless of what the new normal is, I can assure you that the directors and employees of North West REC are committed to our mission of providing safe, reliable, and affordable electric service for our members. Although it has not been business as usual, the focus of NWREC remains on keeping your life as normal as possible.

We are grateful to our members for your understanding of the operational changes we have had to make and for your ongoing support. Together we will work through these uncertain times and continue to have a strong and successful Cooperative organization that our members and employees are proud of.

Line construction is off to a busy start to the year

During the last couple of springs, we have had very slow starts to the construction season. This year, we have enjoyed great weather so far and despite COVID-19, we have had one of the best starts to a year from an operations and construction standpoint than we have had for a long time.

We are working with two underground contractors this year for the replacement of 40 miles of older overhead line with new underground. The first contractor got an early start to their project and completed a 20-mile project during the month of



April. The second contractor will be starting on the second 20-mile project later this summer.

In addition to the contract work, our employees will be using our underground plow to replace approximately 40 more miles of older overhead line with new underground. This ties in with one of our strategic goals of developing a plan to accelerate the rebuilding of the Cooperative's original electric distribution plant. We are also doing our normal pole testing and treating and other maintenance programs this year.



Primghar Service Center Update

As we have been dealing with the COVID-19 situation, we have been reminded about a major benefit that we enjoy from having more than one facility to operate out of. One example of this is the natural "social distancing" that we enjoy by having our employees working out of four different locations. One of the biggest benefits we continue to enjoy from this operating structure is keeping our response time for outage situations as short as possible, while still providing backup support from other locations if there is the need due to storm situations, sickness on the crew, etc.

We have four districts and a service center in each of the four districts – District 1 (Orange City); District 2 (Primghar); District 3 (Le Mars) and District 4 (Ida Grove). The facilities are very functional and efficient and in good locations, with the exception of our Primghar facilities. We actually have two facilities in Primghar – a garage/warehouse in downtown Primghar and a warehouse and pole yard on the east edge of town. It's not very efficient to have the two locations and the downtown facility is starting to show it's age.

We started looking at the possibility of making an improvement in our Primghar service center operation a couple of years ago. We're pleased that plans have come together whereby we have been able to purchase a lot in the Primghar industrial park that is in close proximity to our warehouse and pole yard facility on the east edge of town.

The Board has approved the purchase of a three acre lot in the industrial park, and we will be constructing a new garage and warehouse facility on this site starting this summer. If everything goes well, we should be operating out of the new facility before the end of the year and it should provide some nice efficiencies in our District 2 operation. Our plans are to sell the downtown facility once the new facility is completed.

We hope all of our members have an enjoyable summer and that you stay healthy and safe.



POWERLINE SCHOLARSHIP *Winner*

Joshua Frahm is the son of Larry and Rita Frahm of rural Galva Iowa. He is recipient of \$500 NWREC Powerline Scholarship for 2020.

What high school did you attend and what are your college plans?

I graduated from Ridge View High School in May of 2018 and plan to start in the Powerline Program at Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) in May 2020.

What influenced your decision to get into this field of study?

I have had an interest in the electrical field prior to my decision to enter the powerline program. I have seen the success that my brother has experienced and my god parent, Mark Grell. They have been good mentors to me. I think that it is a job that I can work and serve the area that I have grown up in.

What are your future goals?

My future goals would be to complete the diploma program at Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) and transition into a lineman apprentice position. I'd like to work through the necessary internship process and land a position in our region. I understand the impacts that our REC's make in our rural communities and would like to become part of that team. I also would like to further my education in the future to perhaps pursue a B.A. degree that would allow for future growth within a company.



◀◀ MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN ▶▶

It's that simple, and it's the law in Iowa. By following these two rules of the road, you can help save lives and avoid receiving a traffic ticket – or even losing your driver's license. It's necessary to move over or slow down when approaching stationary emergency, maintenance, and utility vehicles with flashing lights activated.



MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN



Pole Maintenance Program

You probably don't pay much attention to the utility poles found throughout North West REC's service territory, but did you know these tall structures are the backbone of our distribution network?

Strong, sturdy utility poles ensure a reliable electric system, which is why we routinely inspect the thousands of poles found on our lines. Throughout the year, our crews check poles for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for other reasons besides decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and car crashes are potential cause for immediate replacement. When possible, North West REC communicates when and where pole replacements will take place so that you stay informed of where crews will be working.

One of the key ongoing maintenance programs we do annually, in order to try to improve our service reliability, is pole testing and treating. Each year we test and treat approximately 3,000 poles.

Poles that are rejected due to excessive rotting conditions are replaced. The other poles are treated with a pole treatment which significantly extends the life of the pole. The very low 2% or lower rejection rate we typically have each year is a strong indication of the strength of the Cooperative's system.

This spring you will see the contractors working in Ida County. Please contact our office if you have any questions.



SCAM ALERT

North West REC wants its members to be aware of a phone scam that we have just learned about. We have heard from a couple of our members who have received a suspicious phone call from a "customer service agent" informing them that their electric account is past due and payment is needed immediately. They were asked for credit card and other information about their account. One member provided us with a call back 800 number, but when we attempted to call it, we just received a recording that this was "customer support."

We want to alert our members to this scam and remind them that we would never call and ask for credit card or other account information. We are very appreciative that the two members contacted us to make us aware of these scam calls and ask any member who receives one of these calls to end the conversation and call our office directly to make us aware of the situation. Our phone number is (800) 766-2099.

These are certainly challenging times and we are very concerned that imposters may try to take advantage of our members. Stay healthy, safe and alert to these types of scams!

Sincerely,

Lyle Korver, General Manager



THE POWER QUIZ

NORTH WEST RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

1. Name one tip on how to save energy in your home? _____
2. Approximately how many poles do we treat and test every year? _____
3. Who was the winner of the 2020 Powerline Scholarship? _____

Name _____ Acct. # _____

Find the answers within the content of this newsletter, our website or Facebook posts and you could win a prize of \$10 off your electric bill. Send your answers to powerquiz@nwrec.coop or you can send your written answers to North West REC, PO Box 435, Orange City, IA 51041. You may mail your entry along with your electric bill payment, but remember the deadline is July 10. Each month, ten names will be randomly drawn from all correct entries for a \$10 bill credit. Members who answer the questions correctly and participate at least three times throughout the year will be eligible for 2 - \$250 bill credits, through a random drawing, at the end of the year.



North West Rural Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 435 • 1505 Albany Place SE • Orange City, IA 51041-0435

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. till 4:00 p.m.

Orange City office open
during noon hour

Le Mars office
closed 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.

Ida Grove office
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon, Mon-Fri

PHONE:

ORANGE CITY (712) 707-4935
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IDA GROVE (712) 364-3341

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