

Southwest Lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

Corning | Mount Ayr | Stanton

November 2024

CRC Provides After-Hours Outage Call Support for Southwest Iowa REC

If you experience an outage or other electrical emergency you call Southwest Iowa REC for assistance during normal business hours. When our offices are closed, you still call Southwest Iowa REC's main phone number but your call is processed by the Cooperative Response Center (CRC).

CRC is a nationwide, cooperatively owned and operated, 24/7 contact center, alarm monitoring center, and software provider. Founded in 1992, CRC has steadily increased the size and scope of its operation with offices in Austin, MN, Dunlap, TN, Abilene, TX, and Kirksville, MO. They provide services to electric utilities, including round-the-clock dispatch and customer care, and monitoring of security and medical alarms. CRC currently serves over 535 members and associate members in 47 states, representing over 12 million consumers. CRC provides a greater capacity to handle after-hours outage calls and provides an enhanced level of service to our member-consumers.

When you call CRC, they have access to our member database so they will request various account information to identify you and your outage location so a Southwest Iowa REC crew can be dispatched to restore your power. At times, CRC may be experiencing a large call volume due to outage events in other areas that they cover which can increase your on-hold time to speak to a representative. You also have the option to report your outage information in their automated menu. In the automated menu, your phone number will be used to locate and verify your account to log the outage.

CRC will ask you a series of questions like, "Do you know if any of your neighbors are without power?" "Have you checked your breakers?" "Did you check to see if there is a display on your meter?" These and other similar questions are designed to assist in determining if the outage is due to a problem with Southwest Iowa REC facilities or possibly the member's own equipment. If the electrical issue is caused by the member's equipment, and Southwest Iowa REC personnel respond to your location you may be charged for the trip which can cost several hundred dollars. When you have an outage, we know it is frustrating and inconvenient. Our goal at Southwest Iowa REC is to respond as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. After-hours, CRC helps us accomplish that goal and provides a valuable service.

We're Grateful for Your Membership.

Our offices will be closed
Thursday, November 28,
and Friday, November 29,
in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.
We are incredibly grateful for your
membership as our team spends this
special time with loved ones.

From our co-op family to yours,
we hope you have a wonderful
Thanksgiving!



Take Survey for Chance to Win one of 2 - \$100 Bill Credits!

We want to hear your voice – visit this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H2PXSJY> or scan this QR code to participate in our member feedback survey. The survey will only be available through the month of November. If you don't have internet access, stop by one of our three offices to fill out a paper survey or request to have one sent to you. Two lucky members will have their names randomly drawn to win a \$100 bill credit!



Clearing the Path to Reliability

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Southwest Iowa REC strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Southwest Iowa REC crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews utilize the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events. Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Affordability

As a co-op, Southwest Iowa REC always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting us at 888-220-4869.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

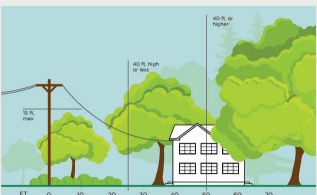


Phil Kinser

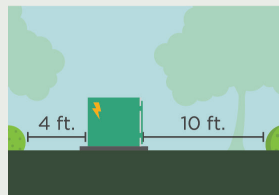
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



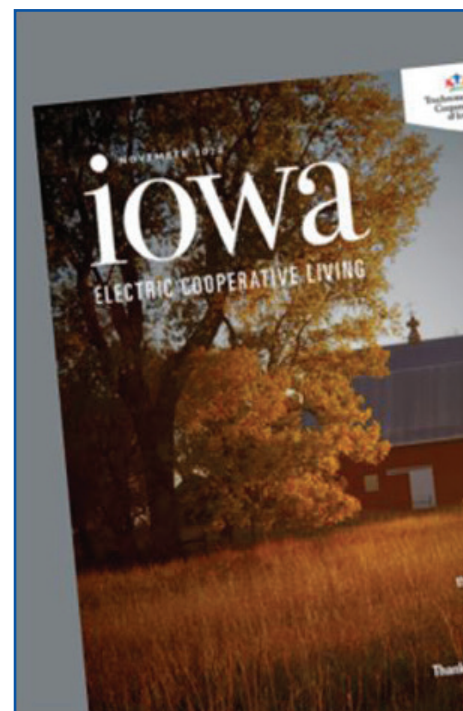
2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



**Trimming improves safety for all.
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**



Advocacy in action: Iowa electric co-ops discuss priorities with legislators in D.C.

As part of our cooperative commitment to advocacy, Iowa's electric cooperatives regularly coordinate meetings with state and federal legislators through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC). The week of September 23, approximately 20 electric co-op representatives traveled to Washington, D.C., to talk with federal legislators face to face.

"Going to our nation's capital is a valuable opportunity for our Iowa Rural Power grassroots efforts to shine. Iowa's electric cooperatives care deeply about the member-owners and communities we serve and it's important to meet with elected officials to discuss issues that affect our ability to provide reliable and affordable power," remarked Leslie Kaufman, executive vice president of IAEC.

Iowa electric co-op advocates met with almost every member of the Iowa Congressional Delegation, including Congressman Feenstra, Senator Grassley, Congresswoman Hinson, Congresswoman Miller-Meeks, and Congressman Nunn. Specifically, co-op representatives expressed concerns about recent cuts to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDLG) program. Through REDLG, USDA provides grant funds to local utility organizations, often including local electric cooperatives, which use the funding to establish revolving loan funds. Loans are made from the revolving loan funds to local businesses and projects that will create or retain rural jobs. Iowa co-op advocates urged the Iowa Congressional Delegation to support the House version of the REDLG markups, which would partially restore REDLG funding for FY25, with intentions to return to optimal REDLG funding levels in FY26.

During the legislative visits, Iowa electric co-op advocates also highlighted continued threats to the reliability and affordability of power in the wake of the Environmental Protection Agency's recent mandates on power plants. America's electric cooperatives oppose the EPA's power plant rules on the grounds that they are unlawful, unrealistic, and unachievable.

Additionally, IAEC coordinated briefings from the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the USDA, and CoBank and to learn more about emerging trends and issues impacting Iowa co-op member-consumers.

We appreciate the service of Iowa's elected officials and the tireless work of their staff who help look out for Iowans in the Halls of Congress. The next planned trip for Iowa Rural Power advocates will come in the spring of 2025. Learn more about Iowa Rural Power grassroots advocacy at IARuralPower.org.



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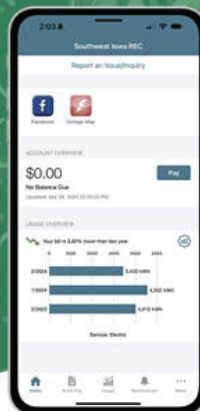
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Safety is always our first concern. Twice a year, our linemen practice pole top rescue and climbing competency. They train to rescue a lineman that could be injured while performing maintenance or construction activities on our power lines. Their goal is to get the linemen to the ground safely within 4 minutes in order to conduct the proper medical procedures.

Pictured is Lucas Brockshus, lineman from the Stanton Office.

Crowd-Pleasing Sweet Potato Casserole

Ingredients

For the casserole:

- 4 large sweet potatoes
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

For the Toppings:

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons butter, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup pecans (or more, depending on preference), chopped
- 1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Pierce the potatoes all over with a fork and place on a foil or parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Bake until they are tender on the inside, about 45 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Let the potatoes cool slightly, then slice open and scoop the flesh into a large bowl, discarding the skins. Mash with a potato masher, being careful not to over-mash. Add the milk, maple syrup, eggs, vanilla, salt, and nutmeg and stir until just combined.
2. In a small bowl, combine the flour and butter, cutting the butter into the flour with the back of a fork. Add the brown sugar and pecans and stir until combined.
3. Spread the potato mixture into a 13 by 9-inch or similarly sized baking dish. Sprinkle the pecan mixture in diagonal rows over the sweet potatoes, leaving a 1 1/2-inch gap between rows. Bake at 350°F until golden brown on top, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and gently place the marshmallows between the rows of the pecan mixture. Bake for an additional 10 minutes, or until the marshmallows are just golden brown. Serve.



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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you're heading out of town during the holiday season, remember to set your home to vacation mode. You can save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help you save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually.

Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, toothbrush chargers, TVs and gaming consoles.

Tips for a Safe and Efficient Holiday Season

This holiday season, keep energy savings and electrical safety in mind.

SAVE ENERGY

- Use smaller appliances like slow cookers instead of the oven.
- Lower the thermostat when hosting friends and family.
- Decorate with energy-saving LED lights.

PRIORITIZE SAFETY

- Never leave unattended candles burning.
- Ensure all smoke alarms are working.
- When decorating, inspect all light strands and cords for damage.



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