

Southwest Lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

Corning | Mount Ayr | Stanton

February 2025

Electric cooperatives advocate for affordable and reliable power as Iowa's 2025 Legislative Session begins

Nearly 170 senior staff and directors from Iowa electric cooperatives, including Southwest Iowa REC, traveled to downtown Des Moines on January 14 to attend our annual reception at the start of the 91st General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature. At the event, co-op advocates were able to discuss concerns and priorities face-to-face with their state legislators. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives hosted the reception in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Communications Alliance, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, and FUEL Iowa.

Representatives from Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives covered several important issues that could impact the affordability and reliability of electricity for the members and communities we serve.

Our top legislative priority this session is protecting the state's defined electric service territories. In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve your home, farm or business. For almost 50 years, these defined electric service areas have provided certainty to electric cooperatives as we work to maintain affordable rates, foster a resilient electric grid and invest in economic development throughout rural Iowa. We strongly oppose any efforts to change or amend the service territory law and you can learn more about this issue at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com.

In the coming months, Iowa's 91st General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including energy-related matters that are central to Iowa's rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, Iowa electric cooperatives will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues as we work to power lives and empower communities. We'll have another opportunity to advocate for our members and communities at our annual Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Day on the Hill event on March 19. Learn more about our advocacy efforts at www.IARuralpower.org.



Pictured left to right: Tim Pfeiffer, SWIAREC Director of Member Services; Phil Kinser, SWIAREC CEO/General Manager; Devon Wood, Iowa State Representative; Tom Shipley, Iowa State Senator; Marilyn Werner, SWIAREC Board President; Terry Barnes, SWIAREC Board Member.



Scholarships Reminder



Southwest Iowa REC will once again be offering scholarships for the 2024-2025 school year to graduating high school seniors. We will be awarding fourteen (14) \$500 scholarships. In addition, three (3) \$1,000 scholarships will be available for students planning to attend an Accredited Lineman School or electrical trade program.

Completed applications and a photo must be received at the REC Office by March 1, 2025 to be eligible.

Proactively Providing Safe and Reliable Service

When electric cooperative member-owners are asked what they value most about their electric service, two things consistently rank near the top – reliability and affordability. With a 5-year annual average reliability rate of 99.98%, we know reliability doesn't happen by chance. It takes constant effort to maintain systems, improve where necessary, and anticipate our member-owners' increasing needs for electric service.

During the winter months, reliability is under greater scrutiny from our member-owners. Old Man Winter's fury of snow and ice storms, combined with strong winds, can put our systems to the test in a significant way. When outages occur, a frequent cause is trees or other vegetation contacting power lines. These types of outages are not only inconvenient for our member-owners but also costly to your cooperative's bottom line, which impacts affordability over the long-term.

If not properly planted or if volunteer trees rise in unintended areas, trees can cause problems with power lines. When branches and limbs break off, they often land in roadways or bring the power lines down with them – posing a safety risk to cooperative employees and the public. Because our distribution system connects thousands of people across our service territory, one tree coming in contact with a power line may impact your neighbors near and far. The Iowa Electrical Safety Code requires electric utilities, including cooperatives, to have a schedule and procedures for regular tree trimming and vegetation management, which is critical in minimizing these instances.

Both federal and state policies require that vegetation must be cleared from power lines as a safety measure for member-owners and our employees. These groups also have strict guidelines, including prohibiting trees from being planted certain distances away from power lines.

Each year, Southwest Iowa REC invests in tree trimming and vegetation management across our service territory. To help reduce tree and vegetation-related outages, Southwest Iowa REC has increased its vegetation management budget significantly in 2025. We are hiring a contractor to assist in the effort and plan for them to clear vegetation on approximately 100 miles of line this year. Southwest Iowa REC crews will also be performing vegetation management on the system.

Under our vegetation management program, maintaining line clearance is our primary objective. We do this while ensuring we trim vegetation in an environmentally responsible manner. The tree trimming process has two purposes – to remove elements that may already be coming into contact with utility equipment, such as wires and conductors and to create a clearance that will provide hazard-free operation of electric service.

Using the established standards as the guide, we also know that a methodical, proactive approach is important to ensure the safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible delivery of service. Like many things in life, preventative maintenance is a key to health – oil changes are vital to the longevity of a vehicle, regular dental visits are important in cavity prevention, and annual inspections and maintenance will likely extend the life of your furnace. Left to chance – rather than being proactive – your vehicle, teeth or furnace would likely suffer. The same is true with your cooperative's electric system. By proactively clearing vegetation before it reaches power lines, Southwest Iowa REC will be less impacted during severe weather and we'll avoid longer, more costly outages.

The areas we and/or our contractors will be performing vegetation management practices this year are as follows:

Adams County – Carl, Lincoln, Quincy, and Washington townships

Cass County – Noble and Pleasant townships

Fremont County – Monroe and Walnut townships

Page County – Douglas and Pierce townships

Ringgold County – Athens, Benton, Clinton, Liberty, Lotts Creek, Middle Fork, Poe, Rice, Riley, and Washington townships

Union County – Jones, Pleasant, Sand Creek, and Union townships



Phil Kinser



2025 Residential Energy Efficiency Incentives – Effective 1/1/2025

Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative provides our members with ways to save on your energy budget.

We offer rebates on the following products that will offer substantial savings for your home.

Appliances: When replacing appliances, always look for **Energy Star** qualified appliances. Appliances can account for 13% of your energy bill.

Energy Star qualified appliances incorporate advanced technologies that use 10-50% less energy and water than standard models.

Energy Star Clothes Washer/Dryer

With electric Water Heater \$40/unit

Energy Star Clothes Dryer \$20/unit

Indoor Air Quality: Equipment must serve the entire conditioned space of the home. Limit of two air quality system per home.

Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV) \$250/unit

Heating and Cooling: As much as half of the energy used in your home goes to heating and cooling.

So, making smart decisions about your home's heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system

can have a big effect on your utility bills - and your comfort.

Geothermal Heat Pump (closed loop system) \$400/ton (AHRI listing)

(open loop system) \$300/ton (AHRI listing-- no "pump & dump systems)

G.S.H.P. Replacement \$200/ton

Cold Climate Air Source Heat Pump \$400 /ton

ASHP units over 1/2 ton that meet current federal standard efficiencies.

Eligible products listed here: <https://ashp.neep.org/>

Air Source Heat Pump \$200/ton (ASHP units over ¾ ton; including mini-split systems)

(Hybrid system) \$300/ton

Energy Star Bonus \$250/unit (Min. SEER 15.0, EER 12.5, HSPF 8.5)

Water Heaters: From warm showers to clean dishes, we count on hot water. In fact, the average household spends \$400-\$600 per year on **water heating - making it the second largest energy expenditure** behind heating and cooling. Depending on the technology you choose, you can cut your water heating costs in half!

Energy Star Heat Pump Water Heater \$650/unit

Geothermal Assisted Unit (DSWH) \$150 (40 gal. or larger tank w/ desuperheater)

Electric Resistance Storage Tank Water Heater \$75/unit (40 gal. or larger tank-min. EF 0.90)

Electric Resistance Unit / First Time Heat Plus \$125/unit (40 gal. larger tank-min. EF 0.90)

Go Electric Bonus for New Accounts or Conversions \$175

*Inquire for prices on water heaters purchased from **SWIAREC**

Weatherization: Weatherizing your home will put money back in your pocket every month.

It's that simple. On average, weatherization helps homeowners reduce their energy consumption by

25% to 30% - a savings of \$600 per year, every year. Older homes save even more – around 35% or more!

Requirements are you must have electric heat and/or central air conditioning.

Home must be built prior to 2000.

Must be upgrade to existing home (new additions do not qualify)

Project cost must be \$150 or more (labor costs for self-installed projects cannot be included).

Maximum incentive per home \$2,200 (with electric heat with or without air conditioning)

\$300 (with central AC only and non-electric heating)

*Inquire with the Cooperative for details

New Home Construction: Building an All-Star home is the maximum goal you can obtain toward energy efficiency and will result in putting the most money back in your pocket.

All-Star Home \$500/home

Premier Electric Home \$200/home

(new construction, heat pump, electric water heating and appliances)

*Please ask about the Building Checklist

Other Programs:

Electric Vehicle Level 2 Charger \$500

(Must be installed at a residence served by Southwest Iowa REC)

EV Ready \$100

• 240/208 Volt wiring with 50-amp breaker (to support 40-amp charging) box on back or side wall of garage with NEMA 6-50 or 14-50 outlet.

Please visit swiarec.coop/rebates to find the forms.



AVOID UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers will threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let us know as soon as possible.



Philly Cheesesteak Pasta

Ingredients

- 8 oz elbow noodles
- 1 lb thinly sliced steak (ribeye or sirloin)
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups shredded provolone cheese
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh parsley, chopped (optional, for garnish)

Instructions

1. Cook the elbow noodles according to package instructions until al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add steak slices, season with salt and pepper, and cook until browned. Remove from skillet and set aside.
3. In the same skillet, add remaining olive oil. Sauté bell pepper, onion, and mushrooms until softened, about 5-7 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook for another 1-2 minutes.
4. Return steak to skillet. Stir in beef broth, Worcestershire sauce, and heavy cream. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes, allowing sauce to thicken slightly.
5. Add cooked elbow noodles to skillet, stirring to combine. Sprinkle in shredded provolone cheese and stir until melted and creamy. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Garnish with fresh parsley if desired and serve hot.



Notes

For a spicier kick, add crushed red pepper flakes or hot sauce to taste. Substitute steak with chicken, hamburger, or tofu for alternative protein options.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: energy.gov



Like us on Facebook

Accepting Applications for High School Leadership Trip to D.C.



Students can apply now for a trip to Washington, D.C., from June 15-21!

Southwest Iowa REC will send 1 student on an all-expenses Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June

At Southwest Iowa REC, we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders by participating in the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program. We're looking for high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors passionate about government and public service to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital in June.

1 student will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2025 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., from June 15-21 along with 40 other student leaders from Iowa. The Iowa Youth Tour group will join with nearly 2,000 other students from across the country as they learn more about electric cooperatives and American history and come home with a greater understanding of their role as American citizens. Students will also learn about U.S. government and meet with their members of Congress. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums, and historical landmarks. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

We are accepting Youth Tour applications from now through March 14th. High school students from Southwest Iowa REC Service territory are eligible to apply; the student must be a current sophomore, junior, or senior student. You can download our form at swiarec.coop/scholarships. Contact Suzy, Southwest Iowa REC Administrative Assistant, at suzy.olson@swiarec.coop for more information.

Local high school students interested in public service & government are encouraged to apply now! Learn more at IowaYouthTour.com



For more than 65 years, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have been sending deserving students to D.C. This program is a great resume builder for student leaders and a wonderful opportunity to kickstart one's passion for government affairs or advocacy. Make sure to apply for Youth Tour 2025 by March 14th!



SOUTHWEST IOWA
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Southwest Iowa REC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.