Corning | Mount Ayr

Southwest lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

November 2026

Stackhouse Helps to Power Guatemala



Southwest Iowa REC lineman Cody Stackhouse had the opportunity to attend a volunteer trip to Guatemala with lineworkers from Iowa, Oklahoma, and Colorado, working alongside translators and NRECA International. In the middle of the trip, we were able to chat with Cody for a bit during a lunch break while he played soccer with the community children.

The team brought electricity to at least 80+ homes, a school, and a health clinic in the communities of Montenegro and El Estucal.

The work wasn't easy. The linecrews couldn't get any standard equipment up the narrow switchbacks, so they had to use man-power. Steep mountain terrain, long hikes carrying equipment, climbing poles, hoisting heavy transformers to the tops of poles, and several days of heavy rain and flooding made the project challenging. But Cody said seeing the progress made it all worthwhile.



"We started with just a staking sheet, and it was exciting to see the gradual progress. The people were so excited when they saw us coming, and they had the biggest smiles. They have welcomed us with open arms."

The people have been just as memorable. Cody said the communities welcomed the linemen with incredible hospitality. A local man named Rudy jumped in to help whenever there was a need- carrying ladders, sharing fresh papaya from his garden, and even playing soccer with the linemen and local youth.

For Cody, the project was about more than putting up poles and stringing wire.

"The fact that electricity gives them the opportunity to grow. I'm amazed how happy they are with so little. I feel we take so much for granted. They have to walk about 5 miles on switchback hillsides just to get to town."

On the last day, there was a lighting ceremony, where the Mayor and the local community gathered to celebrate with the lineworkers and the other volunteers for the project. They had a feast, and each volunteer was given a plaque to commemorate their hard work. In total, the team was in Guatemala for 20 days and got electricity to a school, medical facility, and over 80 homes. The team was also tasked with wiring the homes to ensure they could utilize their new electricity.





We're proud to have had Cody representing Southwest Iowa REC and the cooperative spirit of our members during this incredible project. Please enjoy some of the photos taken on their trip.







WHAT MAKES THE POWER BLINK?



Phil Kinser CEO

Blinks are a sign that the electrical system is working properly.

It has happened to everyone at one time or another. You return home from work to find every digital clock in the house blinking. Or worse, the alarm doesn't go off in the morning, making you late to work. While this is an annoying situation, it's actually a sign that the power supply system is working as it is supposed to. Those little blinks - actually brief power outages - are designed to prevent big power outages that can cause large-scale damage to the entire system.

Momentary power interruptions - blinks - can occur anywhere on the power system, during generation, during high-voltage transmission from the generation facility to your co-op's substation or during distribution from the substation to your home. Blinks are created when a breaker, or switch, is opening any portion of the power system. The breaker usually opens because of a very large, very quick rise of electrical current on the power system. This large rise is called a fault condition. Examples of this include: when a tree touches the lines, lightning strikes them or a wire breaks. When this happens, a relay - think of it as a brain - senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the site where the tree touch, lightning strike or wire break occurred.
Then, in short order, the breaker closes again. The brief delay is to allow the fault to clear the power line. It usually lasts less than two seconds. When this happens, every electrical service that receives power from that line has just blinked. This could include thousands of homes and businesses if the breaker protects a transmission line or is a substation breaker.

If this didn't happen, power lines or other equipment could be severely damaged. These blinks are more common in rural areas for a number of reasons. Many of our electric lines travel through areas with heavy vegetation (trees) and wildlife - more common in rural areas - causes a lot of these blinks. Squirrels, cattle rubbing against guy wires, hawks, owls, raccoons, frogs and even snakes have all caused blinks on rural electric lines. Because of the many miles of line your co-op owns, the source of the problem can be difficult to locate.

There are no solutions that can completely eliminate blinks on power systems. But there are things your cooperative can and does do to reduce their frequency. Tree trimming is probably the easiest and most used method to reduce possible blinks on the power system. This is where your cooperative needs your help. Make sure your co-op knows of any trees or limbs close to a power line that could cause problems. The cooperative has or hires right-of-way crews that are trained to cut and trim trees near power lines. Meanwhile, one way to reduce the frustration of blinking clocks is by purchasing an alarm clock that has a battery back up. This type of digital clock will keep the correct time and sound the alarm at the right time even after a lengthy outage, provided it has a good battery installed.

Blinks affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. If there is a blink while you are using a computer, the odds are good that your computer will crash. Any data you have not saved will be lost if this happens. To prevent this from happening invest in an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) for your computer. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology along with a battery back up. The battery provides the computer with a supplementary power source to keep it operating during a blink. This battery will keep the computer running long enough for you to save work and shut it down properly.
Many UPS systems also have software that warns you when an outage occurs.

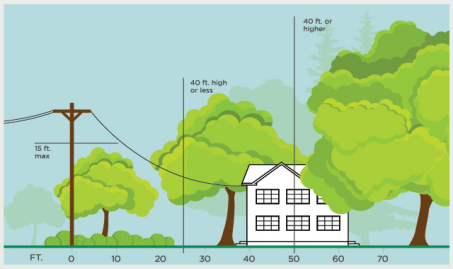
The blink is something that will never disappear from your electric energy delivery system. The best we can do is to minimize the effects of these interruptions and the frequency in which they occur. Your cooperative has an active maintenance program. Identifying and fixing sources of interruptions is a top priority.



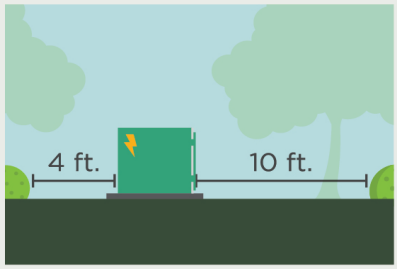
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

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.

Safety is always our first concern.

Twice a year, our linemen practice pole-top rescue and climbing competency. They train to rescue a lineman (dummy) who 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 left: IAEC Safety Instructor, Kyle Kirchner- Southwest Iowa REC Apprentice Lineman, Ross Christie (in bucket) – Southwest Iowa REC Apprentice Lineman, Brayden Daly (on pole).



Happy Thanksgiving!!
Our offices will be closed on Thursday, November 26th and Friday, November 27th.



Pumpkin Bars



Ingredients

- 1- 15 oz can pumpkin
- 2 eggs
- I cup sugar
- ½ cup oil
- ¼ cup ground ginger
- 1/8 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda

Frosting

4 oz cream cheese
3 tbsp butter (softened)
1 tsp milk
1 tsp vanilla
1 cup powdered sugar



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9×9 inch pan with parchment paper and spray lightly with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl whisk together flour, sugar, ground ginger, baking soda, baking powder, salt, ground cloves and cinnamon. Create a well in the center of the dry ingredients.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer combine the eggs, vanilla, oil and pumpkin on medium speed until light and fluffy. Stir gently, just until combined.
4. Pour into a pan and bake for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool completely.
5. When completely cooled, frost.
6. Combine the cream cheese and butter in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the sugar and mix at low speed until combined. Stir in the vanilla and mix again.
7. You may need to add a little milk to make it spreadable if your butter wasn't soft enough.
8. Spread frosting evenly on top of cake. Cut the bar into any size you like.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Trim your holiday energy costs by choosing energy efficient LED lights! LED holiday lights use less energy and can last up to 40 seasons. They're also easier to install – you can connect up to 25 LED strings without overloading a wall socket!

Source: energy.gov

Veterans Day November 11



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

here for you 24/7 365

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. Founded in 1992, CRC has steadily increased in the size and scope of its operation with offices in Austin, MN, Dunlap, TN, Kirksville, MO and Abilene, TX. They provide services to over 535 electric utility 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.

Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Southwest Iowa REC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.