

ACEC NEWS

JUNE 2024 | VOLUME 27 | ISSUE 06

SEE YOU AT THE
PICNIC JUNE 27

MONONA'S
BUTTERFLY
GARDEN

NOW ACCEPTING
BIDS



DERRICK PETER'S
25-YEAR CAREER
AT ACEC

See page 4.



A MESSAGE FROM *Your General Manager*

Hollie McCormick
EVP/General Manager

ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Allamakee-Clayton Electric Co-op wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share updates on some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

Recent Utility Scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves—either physically or digitally—as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment

webpage—and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is—it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

Spotting a Scam

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam.

Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

What Allamakee-Clayton Electric Co-op Will (and Won't) Do

ACEC will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without any prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

ACEC will never ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, through our Smarthub app, scheduled payments, by mail and by phone. Our payments are always due by the 25th of every month.

Avoiding Scams

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be an ACEC employee requesting banking or other personal information. We will only send you text messages if you have opted in for our text outage notification system (learn more about receiving texts at <https://www.acec.com/outage-notifications>).

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at 563-864-7611 so we can assist. ACEC wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim. ■

SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



SHINING A LIGHT ON THE MONONA BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Nominations now open for 2024 Shine the Light contest



Nestled in the city of Monona is the Monona Butterfly Garden & Trail. Since the early 2000s, resident Jim Langhus and a host of volunteers have worked tirelessly to create a safe haven for butterflies, as well as provide a safe walking path throughout the city.

Last year, Jim was nominated for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) Shine the Light contest. Nominations for this year's award are being accepted now through June 30. **#1277-10-XX**

A retired teacher, Jim and his family began tagging butterflies in 1994 through the Monarch Watch. That stoked a fire in him to provide a space in Monona for the butterflies. Along with nearly 20 other volunteers, Jim met with several conservation experts, culminating in the space being named one of the 2001 Iowa Community Betterment projects.

The main entrance to the garden is located at 601 Davis Street, across the street from Monona Family Aquatic Center.

"This is a place where butterflies thrive, migrate through, and volunteers gather to enjoy and care for the beauty of Northeast Iowa in Monona," said nominator Midred Stewart in her letter to the IAEC last year.

Most recently, through the work of Jim and the other volunteers, the entire trail was paved, allowing for more visitors to safely view the garden.



The power of human connections

"Each year, Jim and his volunteers have pursued grants and local contributions to improve the trail. Monona residents share Jim's vision of having the entire trail paved so all residents, regardless of age or mobility, can enjoy the butterflies, gardens and trail," wrote Stewart.

A ribbon cutting ceremony for the trail was held last fall. ■



About Shine the Light

Guided by our cooperative commitment to the community, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative encourages members to participate in the statewide Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the contest will accept nominations through the end of the month and select three winners who will each receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

Members and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers during the month. If you receive electricity from ACEC, you're a co-op member and we invite you to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians.

The three winners will be announced in September and featured in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine and on social media.

Go to **www.IowaShineTheLight.com** to review the contest rules and submission guidelines. Contest entries will be accepted at this website through 11:59 p.m. on June 30. Help us shine the light on community volunteers this summer and consider making a nomination.

A 25-YEAR CAREER WINDING DOWN



ACEC Lead Equipment Technician Derrick Peters has seen a lot in his 25 years at the Co-op. From installing controls for the Load Management Program to doing locates to

programming meters to working on line regulators and doing transformer setup and repair to taking meter readings, Derrick has experienced a vast amount of changes at ACEC.

On June 27, Derrick will punch out for the last time, retiring after nearly 26 years of service. ACEC's Equipment Technician Steve Gehling will take over the Lead Equipment Technician role. Samuel Ash joined the meter department as the Equipment Technician earlier this month.



Finding a place at ACEC

A native of the Monona area, Derrick spent the early part of his career working for the Air Force, where he was a flight simulator technician. Prior to joining the ACEC staff, he worked for Hughes Aircraft in Japan, near the Misawa Air Base. Derrick and his wife, Maria, were planning to move back to Northeast Iowa, since his time in the air force was drawing to a close. **#4759**

There was an opening for the equipment technician position at ACEC. However, Derrick said he chose not to apply because he would have had to fly to the U.S. to interview in person. When the Peters moved to the Postville area in the summer of 1998, the equipment technician position was still open.

Derrick began at ACEC in mid-August, 1998. At the time, Derrick was the only employee working in the meter technician

office. Days were spent working on regulator panels that needed repairs, testing and adjusting meters, installing load management devices, locating underground cables and faults, working on the fleet vehicles radio system and even serving as an information technology (IT) person. One of his biggest responsibilities was testing, installing and maintaining the more than 9,700 new AMR meters.

Another added responsibility was being available on-call on nights and weekends. Derrick and Data Processing Clerk Jo Suckow used a "bag" cell phone to be available at all times should someone call the Co-op after hours. This was before ACEC utilized the services of the Cooperative Response Center (CRC) to answer calls once the office closed for the day. Anytime the phone rang, Derrick or Jo had to stop what they were doing and take the call in case there was an outage being reported. Derrick recalled one time in the winter when he was trying to go get the mail from the post office. He recalled getting stopped five times on his way out the door with people calling to report their meter readings.

Big changes

Through his career, Derrick has seen many changes at the Co-op. Among the biggest has been the technological changes. He said responding to an outage when he first started involved a large amount of guess work.

"You might get a call at midnight with someone saying they're out of power. You'd go into the office and call in the crew. From that one call, it might be one person who was out of power or you might have a whole substation out," he said. "You'd get to work and block out all the phone lines but one and sometimes the phone would be ringing with outages and then you'd have the crew calling on the radio and you're there trying to research things and figure out where the problem was. Outages could be really busy."

On the meter side, he said the amount of data they're able to collect is astounding compared to what it was when he started. With the increase in technology, he said they're often able to help members with any issues much faster than before.

Passing along the knowledge

On a busy spring afternoon recently, Derrick and Steve Gehling were out at a remote campground testing for a better way to get accurate meter readings. That included a drive down a dusty gravel road, looking at meters that weren't automatically bringing the readings to the office and assessing how best to improve the technology.

On another day, Derrick and Steve went with two lineworkers to a busy farm to survey the line to make sure it could handle an increase in load. That same day, they drove the countryside, assessing the reliability of new meter technology.

ACEC's Lead Equipment Technician Derrick Peters is retiring this month

It's that drive to provide the best service to members that ACEC co-workers will remember best about Derrick.

"Derrick has a wealth of knowledge and experience that he's been passing down to me over the past three years we've worked together," said Steve. "He's very meticulous in his work and incredibly thorough. He's been a great mentor in this department."

ACEC's Manager of Member Services Ryan Wagner worked with Derrick for 12 years in the meter department. He said he also learned a lot from his time working side-by-side with Derrick.

"He doesn't leave a stone unturned in his work," said Ryan. "I learned a lot working side-by-side with him. We had a lot of laughs and he made work enjoyable."

We wish Derrick good luck in his next adventure in life! ■



BOARD BRIEFS | May 28 Meeting

- Received update on Stand Up Rural America Conference
- Approved DPC Cost Share to fund scholarships for conference registration
- Received updates from management team regarding ACEC's Strategic Plan
- General Manager annual review
- Approved donation request to Fayette County Fair

3RD ANNUAL MEMBER APPRECIATION PICNIC

Thursday, June 27
3:30-6:30 PM
Postville Big Four Fairgrounds

SAVE THE DATE



ACEC ACCEPTING BIDS FOR THREE VEHICLES

ACEC is currently accepting bids for three vehicles and one plow. **Sealed bids are due by July 5** and should be mailed to:

Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative

Attn: Jason Troendle

PO Box 715

Postville, IA 52162

or Email: jtroendle@acrec.coop



Truck with Strobe – 2010 Dodge Ram 1500 4x4. 202,177 miles. Tire size LT265/70 R17. 50% tread remaining. 4.7 liters. Check engine light is on for the catalyst system. Ball joints are loose.



2014 Jeep Cherokee – 2014 Jeep Cherokee Sport 4x4. 182,000 miles. Tire size 225/65/R17. Check engine light is on due to evaporation system code. Slight imperfection on front hood from front sliding into snowbank.



Truck with plow – 2008 F350 XLT 6.4 Powerstroke Diesel 4x4 with a 6 speed manual transmission. 173,000 miles. Tire size LT245/75/R17. Tires have about 6,000 miles on them. Includes Western wide out mount, harness and control. Check engine light is on due to a glow plug fault. Needs ball joints. New clutch with less than 1,000 miles on it.

Western 8' x 10' wide out snowplow – New pump with less than 1 hour of use. **Can combine for bid with 2008 truck or bid separately.**

#5694

CYBER SECURITY Tip of the MONTH

One of the easiest ways to boost your cybersecurity is to always keep software and apps up-to-date. If you install the latest updates for devices, software and apps, not only are you getting the best security available, but you also ensure that you get access to the latest features and upgrades. Here are four easy-to-remember tips: automatic updates make your life easier; select farm-raised updates fresh from the source; don't fall for phishy fakes; and turn checking for updates into a habit. ~ *Information from staysafeonline.org.*

Sponsored by



ATTENTION ACEC MEMBERS

Call 855-940-3913 to pay your bill

We have a new 24/7 pay-by-phone number! The new secure pay-by-phone number is **(855) 940-3913**. That number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. When calling, have your ACEC account number and Visa or Mastercard ready. As always, you can also pay by Smarthub, by mail, autopay, paperless or visit our office. ■

BILLING AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

SMARTHUB
Take control of your account from your computer, smart-phone or tablet.

BY MAIL
Mail check or money order to PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162.

AUTOPAY
Set up automatic payments from your bank or credit card account.

PAPERLESS
View your bill electronically. Enroll in paperless billing through Smarthub.

ONE TIME PAYMENT
Call **855-940-3913** to pay using your bank or credit card.

VISIT
Make a payment in person at our office located at 229 Hwy 51, Postville, IA.

MEMBER RECIPES

Send your favorite recipes and/or recipe topics to Jennifer Achenbach, ACEC, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162 or email jachenbach@acrec.coop.

You'll receive a \$5 bill credit if your recipe is printed. Please note – recipes must be received by the 25th day of the month before the intended publication.

July – **ON THE GRILL**; September – **VEGETARIAN**

STRAWBERRY BLUEBERRY SALAD WITH BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

Salad

- 8 c. mixed salad greens
- 1 c. strawberries, washed
- ½ c. blueberries, washed
- ½ c. raspberries, washed
- 4 oz. crumbled goat cheese or blue cheese
- ½ c. chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)

Balsamic vinaigrette

- 1 c. olive oil
- 4 ½ Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper

Directions

The salad – Add the salad greens to the salad bowl. Remove the leaves from the strawberries and cut them in thirds. Add the chopped strawberries, blueberries and raspberries to the bowl. Add the crumbled goat or blue cheese to the salad. If you want to use nuts, chop the walnuts and pecans and add them to the salad as well. Toss with 2-3 Tbsp. vinaigrette dressing.

The dressing – Add all of the ingredients to the vinaigrette to a mason jar. Put on the lid and shake well.

■ Nancy Einck, Waukon

FROZEN BERRIES DESSERT

- 2 12 oz. bags of frozen mixed berries
- 1 box of white cake mix (no pudding)
- 1 can of Sprite or Sierra Mist (clear soda)

Directions

Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 9x13" pan. Spread berries in pan, sprinkle cake mix over them, covering them completely. Pour soda pop evenly over cake mix, making sure it is evenly distributed. Bake 45-50 minutes or until top is golden and berries are bubbling.

■ Sharen Peters, Monona

BERRY JAM

- 3 c. crushed mulberries
- 3 c. crushed wild black raspberries
- 3 c. crushed red raspberries
- 6 c. sugar

Directions

Wash whole berries and drain. Coarsely crush berries using a potato masher before measuring. Combine berries and sugar and boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and cook to gelling point (220° or test by placing a spoonful of jam on a plate and run a finger through it. If the line stays and the jam does not run together, it should set.) Remove from heat and skim off foam. Ladle into jars and refrigerate or can according to your canner's instructions.

■ Kiley Roth, Postville

LUNCHBOX COOKIES


- ½ c (1 stick) margarine or butter
- ½ c. vegetable shortening
- ½ c. sugar
- 3 c. crushed crispy rice cereal
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 large eggs

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Beat margarine and shortening until creamy. Add sugar, eggs and vanilla. Beat until fluffy. Stir in flour and baking soda, mix well. Stir in cereal, mix well. Drop by tablespoons 2" apart onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand 1 minute before removing from cookie sheet.

Notes – I've added dried fruit, flavored baking chips and nuts to change it up a bit. Who ever knew rice crispies would taste so good in a cookie.

■ Angela Winters, Nashua



with
Sympathy

Our Co-op extends its heartfelt thoughts to the family and friends Ralph Kneeland, who passed away May 15.

Ralph worked as a staking engineer at ACEC from 1983 until he retired in January of 2002. He later worked part time for the Co-op.

PLUGGED IN: Electric Vehicle Update



MAY

of miles driven: **234 miles**

kWh's charged: **150 kWh**

Total cost to charge
.13 x 150kWh = **\$19.50**



FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

WOW! It was a record day at the Co-op as all three people who had their service numbers hidden in the May newsletter called the Co-op within 30 minutes of each other to claim their prize! Congratulations to **Craig Cose of Harpers Ferry, Gary and Donna Jones of Edgewood and Gregory and Marcia Kilcher of West Union** for finding their service number in a past newsletter. The Cooperative awarded them bill credits.

ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – one is worth \$12.50, one is worth \$10.00 and one is worth \$5.00. The service location number must be yours to claim the credit, and you need to notify us when you find it.

CONTACT ACEC

HEADQUARTERS

229 Highway 51 • PO Box 715
Postville, IA 52162

PHONE NUMBERS

LOCAL 563-864-7611

TOLL-FREE 888-788-1551

PAYMENT LINE 24/7 833-284-5051

UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING
811

SKYWAYS INTERNET SOLUTIONS

800-864-1611

WEBSITE

acrec.com

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

OUTAGES

888-788-1551 or 563-864-7611

IOWA STATE ONE CALL

811

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Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

PO Box 715 - Postville, IA 52162-0715

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



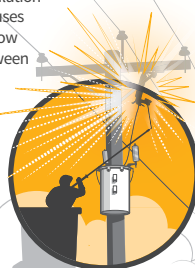
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FR/AR Gear

Flame-resistant (FR) clothing is made from specialty fabrics—aramid, modacrylic, synthetic blends and even treated cotton, nylon or wool—that won't ignite when exposed to intense heat. Arc-rated (AR) clothing is simply FR gear that has been scored for its ability to resist burning when exposed to the extreme temperatures of a high-voltage flash. Modern FR/AR garments are gauged based on caloric protection and have been engineered to be lighter-weight and more breathable, durable and flexible.

Arc Flash

An arc flash occurs when a breakdown in insulation or a short circuit causes electric current to flow through the air between conductors or from a conductor to ground. It causes a sudden release of intense heat, light and energy.



Headwear

FR hard hats or helmets and FR balaclavas or hoods under the helmet to protect the neck and face.

Face Shield

Undergarments

FR base layers or undergarments for added protection.

Jacket

Extra layer of protection, especially in colder climates.

Gloves

Made from leather or other FR materials and may include additional insulation for thermal protection.

Shirt

Vest

High-visibility FR vests when working near roads or in low-light conditions.

Pants

Coveralls

Worn over regular clothing for additional safety.

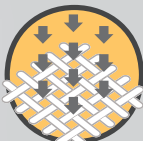
Footwear

Leather work boots with rubber soles.

FR/AR Fabric

Treatment

Fabrics can be naturally fire-resistant or infused/coated with FR chemicals.



Ordinary Fabric

Catches fire easily; flames spread rapidly.



Treated Fabric

Chemicals inhibit combustion and char rather than burn.



Source: NRECA; Design: Jeff Dionise