



ACEC NEWS

MARCH 2024 | VOLUME 27 | ISSUE 03

CYBERSECURITY
STEPS

CALL AHEAD
FOR PROJECTS

THANK YOU
LINEMEN!

ACEC launches new vegetation management webpage.

See story
on page

04



A MESSAGE FROM
Your General Manager

Hollie McCormick
EVP/General Manager

A BALANCED TEAM FOR RELIABILITY

The winningest basketball teams in history are ones that are consistent and have players with varying abilities. Some are better at shooting three-pointers, some are best at defense. Having a balanced mix of skills makes the team a powerhouse on the court. The way to keep electricity reliable is a bit like that too.

The power team first requires a foundation of consistent sources that can be put in the game any time they're needed. Having enough "always available" fuel sources like natural gas and coal can ensure consistent power generation.

Just like a team needs different players for different situations, our power grid requires multiple sources to keep the grid running. Relying solely on one player to win every game is not an effective strategy—if they get injured, that's bad news for the team. Similarly, using a single fuel source for electricity generation poses a significant risk to energy reliability. Natural disasters, geopolitical tensions or unforeseen disruptions can severely impact the supply chain of a particular fuel. A diverse mix of energy sources acts as a safeguard, ensuring that the grid remains operational even in the face of unexpected challenges.

A diverse energy mix also enhances grid flexibility by accommodating the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources like solar and wind. Think of solar

A DIVERSE FUEL MIX IS A SLAM DUNK FOR RELIABLE ELECTRICITY

Just like a basketball team depends on players with different skillsets, we depend on a variety of fuels to generate the electricity that powers life 24/7. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar are key players in our fuel portfolio, but the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow. A diverse team of fuels ensures we have electricity whenever we need it.

Source: 2022 EIA national utility data
Approximately 3% of electricity is generated from other sources.



power like a team's inconsistent shooter. It's awesome when the sun is shining bright, but what if it's nighttime or a cloudy day? That's where the other players, like wind, hydro, nuclear, natural gas and coal can step up and keep the team scoring.

Diverse fuel sources contribute to the stability and reliability of the electric grid. The different sources have varying characteristics, including generation patterns, responsiveness and storage capabilities. This diversity allows for a more balanced and resilient energy system that can adapt to fluctuating demand and unforeseen circumstances. Having a mix of these energy sources is like having a team with different skills to handle various situations and scenarios.

A diverse set of energy sources is essential, but that's not the only thing we need to have reliable electricity—or a winning team. Basketball teams are always trying out new plays or training rookies to create a versatile lineup. Similarly, electric cooperatives are constantly innovating to maintain reliability for tomorrow. But creating new ways to make our power sources more efficient and reliable takes time, money and advances in technology that aren't necessarily ready yet.

As we continue to work on the innovations of tomorrow, the key to keeping our electricity reliable right now is ensuring a diverse "team" of fuels. Each one brings something special to the table, and together, they make sure we have the power we need, whenever we need it. ■

BOARD BRIEFS | February 27 Meeting

- Approved 2023 Audit report
- Approved 2024 Operating Budget
- Approved revisions to the following policies:
 - 7.3 Board-General Manager-Employee Relations
 - 8.2 Employee Training & Development
 - 8.11 Employee Education Assistance Policy
- Received an IT/Cybersecurity update
- Discussed a comprehensive view of our current and future fiber assets
- Approved donation requests to Fayette County Economic Development, Clayton County Fair and Allamakee County Fair

On the cover: Do you want to add a caption for the cover?

CALL AHEAD BEFORE STARTING CONSTRUCTION

With the earlier than usual spring weather, it's even more important than normal to plan ahead and call ACEC with any construction plans. Whether a home addition, building a new farm structure, adding a new or update onto a grain drying facility or doing any other project that requires an increase in amperage, it's vital to call ACEC as early in the planning process as possible so we can complete the work in time to accommodate your needs. #288-XT


Each year, we receive outage calls from members who have added central air, geothermal or even built a newer, larger home, but did not call our office. If the transformer is not large enough to handle the extra load from those projects, it can overload and create an unnecessary and inconvenient outage. Not only is the outage and equipment replacement costly to the Cooperative and the members, it's something that can easily be avoided with a phone call.

"I like to be contacted at the beginning stages of a project so that I'm able to help guide members with decisions for the new service or service changes, allowing me to work hand-in-hand with the electricians on our requirements," said ACEC Staking Engineer Aandi Deering. "Quite often when we are left out of the process until the end, it comes back to them that changes will need to be made causing more cost and delay in the project that all could have been easily prevented with a phone call."


If you have questions about a planned project, want to discuss a possible service upgrade or line extension or want to have someone look over a plan, we encourage you to give us a call at 563-864-7611. By working together, we keep costs down and the power on. ■




Aandi Deering,
Staking Engineer




HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE







Be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and **safely** to restore power.





ZONE IN ON SAFETY

Respect **roadside** work crews.






1 work zone crash occurs every **5.4 minutes** 

70 work zone crashes result in **injuries** each day 


12 work zone crashes result in at least **1 fatality** each week 

Don't drive distracted.
Reduce your speed.
Change lanes.







Never plug a generator into a wall outlet in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line **could electrocute a utility worker** or neighbor.





DON'T post signs on utility poles.

Foreign objects can **tear** utility workers' **protective clothing**, which is the first line of protection from an electric shock.



Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!



Learn more at 

The power of human connections

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KEEPING THE LINES CLEAR

ACEC plans for 370 miles of line clearance in 2024



Josh Mitchell,
System Forester

For the past 20 years, ACEC System Forester Josh Mitchell has filled every position from the bottom to the top when it comes to managing vegetation management, or tree trimming. From clearing brush to bucket truck operator, climber to general foreman, Mitchell has devoted his career to helping the Right of Way (ROW) tree clearing program for ACEC and other electric cooperatives.

Today, Mitchell oversees the annual work to maintain the ROWs for ACEC, as well as handles questions from members regarding safe practices when it comes to trees and power lines.

Recently, ACEC launched a new webpage at [acec.com/vegetation-management](https://www.acec.com/vegetation-management) to help educate members on our vegetation management practices, as well as answer common questions we receive. #3225

What is Vegetation Management

Vegetation management is the process of maintaining power reliability and safety through ROW tree clearing. At ACEC, we have a 5-6 year tree trimming cycle, with a follow up brush spraying project two years after any cutting.

“At one time our rotation was spread too far apart, and we could not keep up with the growth of the vegetation. This has changed in the last eight years, and we are now on a shorter schedule, with what the industry calls a ROW maintaining cycle and not ROW reclaiming process,” said Mitchell.

Mitchell explains that ACEC utilizes contractors to assist with the tree trimming. Bids are sought months prior to any tree trimming and ROW clearing projects. The projects are set up as circuits from the 16 ACEC substations. Circuits can be anywhere from 20-80 miles in length, affecting hundreds of members and taking several months to complete.

Once bids have been awarded, Mitchell works with the contractors to create a schedule for the work to be completed. Postcards are then mailed to members describing the work. Davey Resource Group (DRG) calls the members and landowners, as well as makes site visits to prepare for the work.

“We would like to have the details figured out before the tree workers show up. This leads to a more efficient process with labor and equipment costs and less down time,” said Mitchell.

ACEC cuts any trees within 25 feet of overhead lines and 10 feet of pad transformers. Other reasons to perform tree trimming include reports of electrical outages caused by trees, areas where storms have damaged trees or reports indicating potential tree/powerline problems.

In 2023, ACEC cut or trimmed 336 miles of line, as well as brush sprayed 451 miles.

In 2024 ACEC will cut and trim 370 miles of line, and brush spray 333 miles.

Why It's Important to the Co-op

Mitchell explains it's a step-by-step process with multiple crews doing parts of the work when it comes to successfully trimming ROWs.

“This process is like building a house. Your plumber does

not put your roof on. The machine operators are not going to climb the tree in your yard. The boom truck operator will not be taking the side-by-side to the back 40 to clear the off-road ROW. This is why you may have different crews show up multiple times on your property,” he said.

“We try to plan as best we could, but certain crews and machines move through the circuit at a different pace. Some circuits may have more bucket truck work and some may have more manual work getting these crews spread several weeks apart from their assignment.”

The work isn't done once the crews leave the area. Mitchell explained there's always follow up work to make sure the project is completed as planned.

“We utilize software to help keep track of all of this information. After work is completed by the contractor, we audit the work to make sure clearances are up to specifications and there isn't any missed work,” said Mitchell. “We keep track contact records, work plan records, past records and any organic and special circumstance properties. It also helps us track progress.”

Keeping Everyone Safe

Mitchell said vegetation management isn't just cutting trees. The concept of integrated vegetation management involves “the development of lush shrub or grassy areas that do not interfere with overhead power lines, pose a fire hazard or hamper access.”

The goal isn't to remove all trees and vegetation from the area. It's to maintain the level of safety needed for members as well as lineworkers.

“It's not all about trees or limbs in the power lines. Having a clear path for the linemen to restore power in a storm event will ensure your lights or heat and air come on a lot faster,” he said.

Mitchell said he encourages food plots and pollinator plots in areas near utility lines.

“We do not spray in those areas, as there is no reason to,” he said. “The herbicide we use, ‘Vastlan’ is a selective herbicide and does not kill grass. We use a targeted method and never blanket spray an area under the powerline.”

Mitchell urges any member who has questions or concerns about trimming or spraying on their property to visit the website at [acec.com/vegetation-management](https://www.acec.com/vegetation-management), email him at jmitchell@mienergy.coop or call the Co-op at 563-864-7611.

Always at the forefront for Mitchell is the safety for the members and the safety for the crews.

“It's a hard job and 99% of the time they are working around energized electrical lines. They are people with families to go home to,” he said.

“When the lights stay on during the wind, snow, ice or thunderstorm, thank the tree crews.” ■

Asplundh is one of the contractors ACEC uses to trim trees near power lines. ACEC utilizes several crews to trim trees as well as clean up any work done.



Pictured above is one area recently cleared. Mitchell explains the Co-op encourages the use of food plots and pollinator plots near transformers and power poles.

2024 LINE CLEARANCE PROJECTS

This year, ACEC is planning to do cutting/trimming line clearance work on lines fed by ACEC's Big Springs, Postville, Eldorado and Farmersburg (partial) substations. In addition, there will be brush spraying at the Mederville and Elkader substations. Prior to the start of these projects, landowners will receive a postcard from ACEC. If at any time you have questions, please call the ACEC office at 563-864-7611.





Guardians of the Grid

How co-ops take proactive steps against evolving cyber threats

Electric cooperatives recognize the evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to the nation's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to consumer-members, co-ops continuously take proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, have the potential to disrupt power reliability. That's why electric co-ops work to stay one step ahead by assessing vulnerabilities, monitoring emerging threats and implementing cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, co-ops ensure a more reliable power supply and reduce the risk of disruptions.

Electric co-ops are implementing multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for their communities and the importance of reliability for the members they serve.

Electric co-ops are deploying advanced monitoring and protection systems that analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and alert security personnel to threats. Additionally, co-ops regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks, and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

Cybersecurity is a team effort, so electric co-ops regularly engage with other co-ops, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay up to date on the latest threats. This collaboration enables the development of robust cybersecurity measures. Electric co-ops also participate in mutual aid efforts focused on cybersecurity events, such as the cyber Mutual Assistance Program. By working together, co-ops are stronger and better prepared.

Electric co-ops also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, which is why co-op staff members are regularly trained on best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols. By cultivating an internal culture of cybersecurity awareness, co-ops are improving cyber knowledge and skills for employees.

In addition to internal measures, co-ops are establishing dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so that members can easily access

individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns. Co-op members are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through false claims or messages sent as emails, or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the co-op. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help play an important role in keeping the co-op community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to their members. Their top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

Your electric co-op will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of the communities they serve. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid. ■

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

CYBER SECURITY Tip of the MONTH

What should you do if you receive a phishing email? If you're at the office and the email came to your work email address, report it to your IT manager or security officer as quickly as possible. If it came to your personal email address, don't do what it says. Don't click on any links – even the unsubscribe link – or reply back to the email. Just use the delete button. Take your protection a step further and block the sending address from your email program. ■

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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.

April – **AIR FRYER RECIPES**; May – **PICNIC DISHES**
June – **BLUEBERRIES/RASPBERRIES**



MARCH MADNESS APPETIZERS

PINK LASSIES

- 2 c. cranberry juice
- ½ c. orange juice
- 2 c. vanilla ice cream

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth. Serve in a tall glass with a straw.

■ *Patricia Meyer, Guttenberg*

BACON-WRAPPED JALAPEÑO POPPERS

- 1 8oz. block cream cheese, softened
- 1 ½ c. shredded pepper jack
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Kosher salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper
- 12 jalapeños
- 12 slices bacon, halved

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°. In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, pepper jack and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Halve jalapeños lengthwise, then use a spoon to remove seeds and veins. Fill with cheese mixture and wrap each with a halved slice of bacon. Place on a baking sheet and bake until bacon is crispy and peppers are tender, about 35-40 minutes.

■ *delish.com*

HAWAIIAN ROLL SLIDERS

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, halved and thinly sliced
- Kosher salt
- 4 Tbsp. melted butter
- 1 Tbsp. poppy seeds
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce

- 12 mini Hawaiian rolls
- ¼ c. mayonnaise
- ¼ c. honey mustard
- 2 lb. deli sliced ham
- 1 lb. sliced Swiss cheese

Directions

Make caramelized onions: In a large skillet over medium heat the oil. Add onions and season with salt. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally until onions are caramelized and jammy, about 25 minutes. Let cool slightly. Preheat oven to 350°. Make poppy butter topping: In medium bowl, combine butter, poppy seeds, garlic and Worcestershire. Make sliders: Split slider buns in half horizontally and place bottom halves on baking sheet. Spread mayo in an even layer on bottom layer of slider buns, then top with half the ham. Top with Swiss, then remaining ham. Spread ham with honey mustard and onions and close sandwiches. Brush poppy seed dressing on tops of buns until all buns are coated. Bake until cheese is melty and buns are golden, 10 to 12 minutes.

■ *Delish.com*

ALABAMA FIRECRACKERS

- 2 170g. boxes of crackers, saltine or Ritz style
- ¾ c. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. Italian seasoning
- 3 Tbsp. chili flakes

Directions

Empty cracker boxes into a large Ziploc bag and cover with olive oil. Coat the crackers with the oil and sprinkle in the spices. Seal the bag and turn it over and over until the crackers are well and

evenly coated. Leave at room temperature in the sealed bag overnight, turning it over every so often. Serve with a creamy dip, if desired.

■ *Genette Halverson*

BUFFALO CHICKEN DIP

- 2 10oz. cans of chunk chicken, drained
- ¾ c. Frank's RedHot Buffalo Sauce
- 2 8oz. packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 c. ranch dressing
- 1 ½ c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 bunch celery, cut into 4-inch pieces

Directions

In a crock pot, heat the cream cheese so it's softened. Add in shredded cheese so it melts. Stir in chicken, hot sauce and ranch dressing, stirring until it's smooth. Serve with celery sticks, chips, etc.

■ *Jennifer Achenbach, Harpers Ferry*

PICKLE WRAP DIP

- 1 8oz. package cream cheese, softened
- 1 8 oz. sour cream
- 1 c. minced dill pickles
- 6 oz. corned beef (I use Buddig brand)

Directions

Cut dill pickles into small pieces. Cut corned beef into small pieces. Stir in cream cheese and sour cream and continue stirring until smooth. Serve with Fritos, club crackers, bagel chips, etc.

■ *Jennifer Achenbach, Harpers Ferry*



PLUGGED IN: Electric Vehicle Update

FEBRUARY

of miles driven: **428 miles**
kWh's charged: 29 kWhs @ \$0.36 and 33 kWhs @ \$0.31 of fast charging; and 63 kWhs @ \$0.13

Total cost to charge \$20.67 fast charge + \$8.19 regular charge for a total of **\$28.86**

FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

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 and one is worth \$5.** 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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LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY APRIL 8TH

In the middle of the night, on weekends, on holidays, rain or shine, lineworkers are there to do what it takes to keep the lights on.

On Monday, April 8, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative and other Co-ops throughout the country will celebrate the men and women who help meet our nation's energy needs during National Lineworker Appreciation Day.

ACEC invites all Co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for all the work they do. #6220

If you would like to send a message to the lineworkers, feel free to send it to jachenbach@acrec.coop or mail it to ACEC, Attn: Jennifer Achenbach, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162. ■

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 