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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## **A controlled burn can quickly turn chaotic**

POSTVILLE – A “controlled burn” can quickly become an uncontrolled one, so take precautions before burning on your land or in a ditch. Controlled burns are used for various reasons, including vegetation and weed management.

If the area you choose to burn is near a utility pole or if it spreads more quickly and farther than you thought it might, your controlled burn could get expensive.

Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. In some cases, the pole can look like it has little damage on the outside, all the while burning from the inside out.

In all cases the result is the same: the utility pole is compromised and will most likely need to be replaced, compliments of the person who started the burn. The fees passed on to the person who caused it are substantial—usually in the thousands of dollars.

The damage could also cause a power outage or other serious service issues including energized lines falling near or on the ground, creating a potentially deadly situation.

### **So what can you do to prevent burn-related damage to a power pole?**

1. Plan your burn before you begin.
2. Check the forecast for weather conditions, such as wind direction and speed, as well as humidity (as a general rule, relative humidity should be 40 percent or higher).
3. If there are power poles in the planned burning area, clear all vegetation and weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole.



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4. Wet the base of the pole with water before beginning your burn.

If your fire gets out of control, gets too close to a power pole, or if the pole catches on fire, call 911 immediately and then call Allamakee-Clayton REC at 888-788-1551. Once a fire breaks out, NEVER spray water near the pole, power lines, or any other utility equipment. Electricity and water do not mix and you could cause a short circuit that could cause serious injury or death.

To inquire about controlled burns (aka prescribed fire) near power lines, contact ACEC at 888-788-1551.

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