

ACEC NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026 | VOLUME 29 | ISSUE 02

PLAN FOR SPRING PROJECTS



WHAT IS
CRC?

PCA
CHANGES

WELCOME
BACK



A MESSAGE FROM *Your General Manager*

Holley McCormick
EVP/General Manager

THE HUMAN SIDE OF TECHNOLOGY

Last month in the newsletter, I took some time to explain the relationship we have with Dairyland Power Cooperative, our Generation and Transmission power supplier. This month, I'd like to discuss another relationship we have that helps provide a critical service to our members.

Have you ever wondered what happens when the power goes out late at night or over the weekend? Is there someone there to answer your phone call when you report an outage? Hopefully, you've never had to make that call. But if you have, you know there's someone on the other end of the line, ready to take your information and dispatch a crew to the area as quickly as possible.

That person is an operator from the Cooperative Response Center (CRC), located in Austin, Minnesota. The trained member response team is ready to handle any call. Our co-op, and many others, are so grateful for this service.

A look back at history

Prior to the creation of CRC in 1992, cooperative employees were available day and night to handle any call, from reporting outages to paying bills. Co-op employees who lived within the Postville area took home "bag phones," which were portable phones before cell phones were widely available. Those employees answered the phone, day or night. If there was an outage, they would go to the office to dispatch the line crew.

As you can imagine, this wasn't the most practical work/life balance, nor was it very efficient.

It wasn't until 1992 that the idea for a centralized call center to help co-ops came to fruition. A strong winter storm that hit the Midwest over Halloween led several cooperatives to realize they needed a better way to handle a high volume of calls and dispatch a crew if needed.

Following that storm, 19 member electric utilities in the upper Midwest, including ACEC, joined together to form what is known as the Cooperative Response Center, with the original home office in the Austin, Minnesota area.

The idea was simple – have a centralized organization that assists multiple cooperatives handle after-hour calls and dispatch crews when needed, especially in the state of an emergency.

In 1993, CRC answered its first service call out of a facility in Brownsdale. As more co-ops began utilizing the service, the need for a bigger facility became apparent. In 2002, they broke ground at the current facility in Austin.

Since then, it's grown to serve over 500 member and associate members and over 12 million consumers, with four offices – Austin; Tunlap, Tennessee; Abilene, Texas; and Kirksville, Missouri.

Types of calls

Two types of call operators at CRC are trained for their monitoring services and for the 24/7 contact center. The monitoring service customer service representatives handle calls regarding alarm monitoring, from video services to responding to emergency calls using our FirstCall Emergency Response System.

ACEC has offered the FirstCall Emergency Response System to residents of Northeast Iowa since 1994. If you haven't heard of our system before, FirstCall is a monitoring system intended for seniors. FirstCall clients wear a pendant either around their neck or on their wrist. When they press a button, a trained emergency response operator at CRC receives that signal and answers the call, 24/7. If emergency medical help is needed, the operator contacts the appropriate support.

We have been able to offer this amazing service for over 30 years because of the responders at CRC. The operators are professionally trained to remain calm and handle every situation. In fact, CRC holds the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification and is an esteemed member of the Monitoring Association, meaning they can handle calls quickly and efficiently.

The contact center is a centralized hub of operators ready to handle calls at all hours of the day. These calls range from customers wanting to pay their bill to reporting outages to needing immediate emergency assistance.

These representatives receive specialized training and learn the basics of energy distribution.

When there are outage calls, those messages are relayed to the CRC dispatch team, who calls the on-duty lineworkers at each individual cooperative that's affected. Messages are relayed to the lineworkers on call as well as supervisors to explain the situation.

At the end of each day and end of the month, each co-op receives an email summary of the CRC calls for the day.

Their motto is "Focusing on the human side of technology." This sentiment couldn't be more accurate. While utilizing the newest technology available to make the consumer experience a positive one, they're able to provide compassionate care for every call situation. **5-A**

Why CRC matters

For smaller cooperatives like ACEC, having a resource like CRC is invaluable. It allows us to extend our service capabilities without the need for extensive internal infrastructure. This partnership ensures that we can maintain high standards of service and reliability. By working with CRC, we can focus on our core mission – delivering safe, reliable and affordable energy to you.

Our partnership with CRC is a testament to our dedication to improving member services. While we hope you never have to call after hours and report an outage, it's reassuring to know our partners at CRC will be ready to take your call. ■

BOARD BRIEFS January 29 Meeting

- Reviewed Board Policy 407 Conflict of Interest
- Approved Bylaw Update Resolution concerning changes voted upon on 2025 Annual Election Ballot
- Approved 2026 Capital Expenditure Budget
- Review of 2025 IT Activities
- Approved donation requests to Fayette County Economic Development & Tourism and Linemen Bow Shoot



SCHOLARSHIPS DUE FEBRUARY 28

ACEC reminds students that both of our scholarship applications are due February 28! Applications and rules can be found online at www.acec.com/youth-opportunities-acec. For more information, contact Jennifer at jachenbach@acec.com or by calling 888-788-1551. We hope you'll apply!

Hauschild Memorial Scholarship

The Hauschild Scholarship supports graduating high school seniors who plan to enter a course of study in the electric field. Suggested majors include electrician, electric line worker, electrical engineer, etc. Students' parents or legal guardians do not need to be members of ACEC but do need to live within our service territory.

In addition to completing the application, students must submit two letters of recommendation, an unofficial high school transcript, and a short essay on why the applicant is seeking the scholarship and their future plans. Please note, all essays found to be AI-generated will be disqualified.

Dairyland Power Cooperative Careers Scholarship

ACEC is pleased to announce the NEW Dairyland Power Cooperative Careers Scholarship. This scholarship is for one post-secondary education student, with preference given to students who are pursuing studies for careers found in electric utility settings (engineering, IT, communications, economics, human resources, public relations, finance/accounting, etc.). Applicant's parents or legal guardians must be ACEC members.

Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA), with preference given to those with community service and extracurricular activities. In addition to the application, students must answer one of three essay questions. Essays found to be AI-generated will be disqualified.

PERFECT STORM RESULTS IN PCA CHARGES

January's Winter Storm Fern unleashed cold weather and heavy snow across most of the Midwest and East Coast. In our region, below-normal low temperatures coupled with unplanned power plant outages (due to weather or maintenance) and low wind generation strained grid reliability for the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). This reduced power supply meant higher energy and natural gas prices.

At the same time, our wholesale power provider- Dairyland Power Cooperative – was unable to utilize one of its primary "baseload" power plants due to an unplanned maintenance outage. This forced Dairyland to purchase power at higher prices than budgeted from MISO. As a result, actual wholesale power costs for January were considerably higher than forecasted, triggering an increase in the power cost adjustment (PCA) charge on your upcoming electric bills.

What is the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA)?

PCA is an amount per kilowatt-hour that is either added to, or subtracted from your bill each month. This is determined by how much ACEC has to pay Dairyland Power for the energy our members use each month.

ACEC includes a fixed amount of power costs into the energy rates our members pay. When the actual cost ACEC pays varies each month from the amount we build into our rates, we charge or refund the difference to our cooperative members. In that way, the PCA reflects changes in the cost of purchasing or generating electricity, ensuring that we can continue to provide reliable service without frequently altering base rates.

While Dairyland and ACEC strive to keep costs as low as possible, events like extreme weather or major disruptions to the power supply can be difficult to forecast.

What to Expect

ACEC expects slightly elevated PCA costs over the upcoming months.

"This is not the way we anticipated beginning 2026. Our commitment to our members is to keep the lights on 24/7/365; Dairyland has committed to ACEC and its 23 other member distribution cooperatives to provide the power we need to fulfill our mission," said Hollee McCormick, ACEC General Manager. "As a membership, we have been meeting with Dairyland since the end of January to discuss the most sustainable ways to address increased power costs and mitigate the impact of Winter Storm Fern on you, our members."

Our Commitment to You

We are here to answer any questions you may have and to assist you in managing your energy use effectively.

For more information about the PCA and ways to manage your energy consumption, please visit our website or contact our customer service team at 888-788-1551.

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT SPRING

Although we're still battling the Iowa winter, it won't be long before spring is in the air and we're all tackling outdoor projects, from gardening to construction. Even during the dead of winter, staff at ACEC are making plans for spring and summer. Before starting those spring projects, we'd like to remind members of some essential tips and explain what we'll be doing in 2026.



Contact our office before starting construction projects

Before you begin any construction project, whether it's building a new shed, expanding your home or upgrading a facility on your property, it's crucial you contact our office early in the planning process. Our team can provide you and your electrician or contractor with important information about electrical infrastructure in your area, ensuring your project proceeds safely, smoothly and on time.

ACEC Staking Engineer Aandi Deering said it's important that members contact ACEC as early in their planning as possible to make sure things can stay on time. Aandi works hand-in-hand with members and electricians to make sure all updates are done according to ACEC requirements. These requirements are in place to alleviate any possible overloading or unnecessary outages. It also saves time and money for members and the Co-op.

"We're here to work with you and with your electricians to make sure projects stay on time and also without any unnecessary outages or unplanned costs," said Aandi. "The sooner we know about any projects and any possible updates needed to the system, the better for everyone involved. A simple phone call to our office can save an immense amount of time down the road."

If you have a project planned and want to discuss possible service changes, call Aandi at 888-788-1551.

Call 811 before you dig

One of the most critical steps before starting any digging project is to call 811. This national service is designed to prevent accidents by identifying underground utilities, including gas, water and electrical lines. Check out the graphic to see all the different flags identifying buried lines.

By calling 811, you ensure that your digging plans do not inadvertently disrupt essential services or create hazardous situations. It's a simple step that can save time and money. You must contact Iowa One Call at least 48 hours (not including holidays, weekends or the day of the notice) in advance of your digging plans. A ticket is valid for 25 calendar days from the time of the call. Be sure to call 811 or 1-800-292-8989 or file your request online at iowaonecall.com.

Know the Color Code	
WHITE:	Proposed Excavation
PINK:	Temporary Survey Markings
RED:	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
YELLOW:	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
ORANGE:	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
BLUE:	Potable Water
PURPLE:	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
GREEN:	Sewer and Drain Lines

Beware of buried fiber lines

Fiber internet lines are increasingly important for connectivity and communication in every community. These lines are often buried underground, much like the AC Skyways lines in and around Waukon. Damaging those lines can lead to significant service disruptions – and a significant cost. When planning any digging project, always make sure you're aware of the location of fiber lines. This can be done by calling 811 before you dig and having your lines marked.

Keep our lineworkers safe this construction season

Blaze orange isn't just the color to keep you safe during hunting season. It's also the sign of construction zones and utility work zones. Our lineworkers are in the field every day, ensuring your electric service is reliable and efficient. To keep themselves and motorists safe, they mark their work territory with orange cones and signs.

As you drive, especially near work zones, please be vigilant. Slow down before entering the work zone. Follow the posted signs and give our crews the space needed to work safely. Vehicles that drive too fast or don't move over can put a lineworker who is working high in a bucket in serious danger by causing it to move or sway into high-voltage lines. **3923**

Vegetation management projects



Proper vegetation management is key to preventing outages and ensuring the safety of our power lines. Allamakee-Clayton takes a preventative and proactive approach to our vegetation management strategy. We clear lines and right of ways on an annually scheduled basis.

This year, our crews and contractors plan to conduct cutting and trimming to lines fed at the Waukon, National and Harpers Ferry substations. Brush spraying will be done for those fed by the Postville, Farmersburg, Big Springs and Eldorado substations.

All members who are affected by these plans will be notified ahead of time by postcard.

You can learn more about ACEC's vegetation management plan at <https://acrec.com/vegetation-management>.

2026 line projects

Every year, ACEC conducts several planned power line upgrade projects to improve our service reliability and infrastructure. While we always have crews on standby to assist with outages and other repairs, our construction crews will have another busy year.

This year, crews will work on 10 miles of three-phase line out of the Mederville substation in Volga township, as well as 2.5 miles in Mallory Township, outside the Millville substation.

Single phase projects include a one-mile stretch in East Lafayette Township outside the Waterville substation, 5.5 miles in Makee Township from the Waukon substation and 6.5 miles of line out of the National substation in Mendon Township.

There will also be a 6.5 mile project in Garnavillo Township, out of the National substation. "These projects will be done because of age and the condition of overhead lines and to make stronger connections between substations," said Jason Troendle, director of operations and engineering.

Use caution when burning fields this spring

Spring often brings field burning as a part of land management practices. If you plan to burn fields and ditches, exercise caution and follow local regulations. Fire can quickly become uncontrollable, posing risks to nearby structures and power lines.

Every year, we have poles and other equipment damaged by uncontrolled burns. That also can include fiber lines. While not as common as underground fiber, there are some overhead fiber lines that run along power poles. Uncontrolled burning can run up poles and cause damage to those fiber lines.

Any damage to electric or fiber structure can be expensive and labor-intensive to fix, said Troendle. "Ensure you have adequate firefighting resources on hand and monitor weather conditions to minimize the risks. Also, don't leave fires unattended as they can quickly get out of control." ■

We're committed to supporting our members with the information and resources needed for safe and efficient projects. If you have any questions or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to us at 888-788-1551.

To-Do List:

- Update contact info**
Anytime you have a new mailing address, phone number or email address, let us know!
- Sign up for text notifications**
Go to <https://acrec.com/outage-notifications> to receive messages when the power goes out
- Pay your bill online**
To save money on postage, set up paying your bill through automatic bank draft or online through SmartHub.
- Like our socials**
Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to stay in the know.

We can help with your to-do list! Call 888-788-1551 or visit www.acrec.com for more information about our programs and services.

LEGISLATORS WELCOMED BACK



ACEC's Brenda Hackman and Jerry Keleher recently attended the Welcome Back reception to kick off the 91st Iowa General Assembly. Pictured are, from left – Dairyland Power Cooperative Government Relations Manager Branden Yates, Jerry Keleher, Brenda Hackman, Senate Majority Leader Michael Klimesh, Representative Michael Bergan, Representative Chad Ingels, Representative Jason Gearhart.

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.

Electric cooperatives will again focus on protecting Iowa's defined electric service territories, an important law that helps ensure every corner of the state receives consistent, cost-effective electric service. Another legislative challenge that could resurface involves third-party or "community solar" proposals that would attempt to allow non-utility solar developers to provide retail electric service inside an established utility's service area, in direct conflict with service territory law.

Iowa's electric co-ops are also seeking to further protect utility workers, who encounter threats, harassment and assaults while on the job. Strengthening penalties for violence against utility workers reaffirms our commitment to the safety of cooperative employees and our communities. **6414**

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. 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. Learn more about our advocacy efforts at www.IAruralpower.org. ■

THROUGH A MEMBER'S LENS

We have some pretty talented members! We recently asked our members to submit a photo on our Facebook page for a contest and we were blown away by the results! We've decided to feature one photo a month in our newsletter! Each month on our Facebook page, we'll ask our members to submit a photo, and one photo will be selected at random to appear in the newsletter. We can't wait to see what you show us!

This month we selected this beautiful sundog, captured near Ludlow by Vickie Winke!



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.

March – PIES, APRIL – EGGS, MAY – BEEF



NOODLE CHEESE CASSEROLE

- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 ½ c. milk
- 1 can mushrooms
- 1 can chicken broth (or 2 cups)
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ to ½ cup chopped celery
- 4 oz. noodles
- 1 c. shredded cheese
- 2 c. chicken

Directions

To make the white sauce, melt the butter and add the flour to the butter, then add the milk. Cook until it thickens. Add the cheese to the white sauce. Boil the noodles in the chicken broth until done. Add celery to the noodles. Add to sauce, then add in other ingredients.

■ **Lori Barry, Guttenberg**

MOTHER'S BEST OATMEAL COOKIES

- 2 c. flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 c. shortening
- 2 c. oatmeal
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tsp. milk
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- 1 c. chocolate chips

Directions

Mix all ingredients together. Drop by spoonfuls onto cookie sheet and bake at 350°F for 12 minutes.

■ **William Necker, Oelwein**

CHICKEN BACON RANCH CASSEROLE

- 1 pkg. (16 oz.) uncooked spiral pasta
- 1 ½ c. 2% milk
- ½ c. ranch salad dressing
- 1 envelop ranch salad dressing mix
- 1 pkg (8 oz.) cream cheese, cubed
- 2 c. cubed rotisserie chicken
- 8 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
- 2 c. shredded Colby cheese, divided
- Sliced green onion (optional)

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and transfer to a large bowl. In the same pan, combine milk, ranch salad dressing and salad dressing mix until smooth. Stir in cream cheese. Cook and stir over medium heat until cream cheese is melted; pour over pasta. Stir in chicken, bacon and 1 c. Colby cheese. Transfer to a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Top with the remaining 1 c. Colby cheese. Bake, uncovered, until heated through and cheese is melted, 15-20 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with green onions.

■ **Cici Mueller, Postville**

EASY TUNA CASSEROLE

- 1 can tuna
- 1 can creamed soup (chicken, celery, mushroom, etc.)
- ½ c. half and half
- 1 c. sliced celery
- ¼ c. chopped onion
- 2 c. chow mein noodles

Directions

Mix all ingredients together and enjoy.

■ **Carol Deering, Postville**

Looking for a recipe from a previous newsletter? Wanting to try something new?

Check out the recipe section on our website - <https://acrec.com/member-recipes>.

Every recipe submitted to the newsletter is posted on the website. Be sure to submit your recipe for publication as well – people who submit a published recipe receive a \$5 bill credit!



CYBERSECURITY Tip of the MONTH

Sponsored by



There's a part of protecting your personal information that often gets overlooked: data deletion. Every app, website, and device collects information about us, sometimes far more than we realize. Companies use this data to fuel algorithms and "personalize" ads. The data also has value to cybercriminals. The biggest misconception is that deleting something online makes it vanish instantly. When you're deleting data on apps or platforms, look for the option to permanently delete, close, or remove your data. Another tip – review your accounts once a year and permanently delete those you don't use. ■

~ Courtesy of staysafeonline.org

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 \$10.00 and two are 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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AL STEFFENS, President, Clermont

BRICE WOOD, Vice President, Lansing

CINDY HEFFERN, Sec./Treas., Harpers Ferry

JEFF BRADLEY, Wadena

NELSON CONVERSE, Postville

GREG FORMANEK, Farmersburg

MICHAEL D. GIBBS, Waterville

RON HARTMAN, Sumner

JERRY KELEHER, Elkader

MANAGEMENT STAFF

HOLLEE McCORMICK, EVP/General Manager

JENNIFER ACHENBACH, Manager,
Marketing & Communications

DAVID DECKER, Director,
Finance & Administrative Services

BRENDA HACKMAN, Manager, Economic
Development & Community Relations

JENI KOLSRUD, Manager, Information
Technology

JASON TROENDLE, Director,
Operations & Engineering

RYAN WAGNER, Manager, Member Services

STAY CONNECTED



Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc.
PO Box 715 - Postville, IA 52162-0715

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
DPC

Data Centers

Data centers are the backbone of the internet, storing and managing everything from social media and cryptocurrency mining to artificial intelligence, cloud computing and streaming services. As these digital services expand, the size and number of data centers is growing rapidly, with many being sited in rural areas served primarily by electric cooperatives. This new load brings big opportunities and major challenges.

Why rural areas?
• Companies are choosing rural locations for their data centers because of cheaper land, available power and possible tax breaks.

HVAC

Constant cooling is needed to ensure the servers function properly.

Servers

Servers are the “brains” of the data center, running applications and processing data 24/7. Each rack of servers can consume 10-30 kW, enough to power a small home or grain mill. A large data center may have thousands of server racks.

Infrastructure

Data centers often require new electrical infrastructure to accommodate their power needs.

Water source

Many large data centers are deploying evaporative cooling, which is more efficient than compressor-based systems.

Backup power

On-site generators keep data centers running during system outages and can be used to curtail load during peaks.

