

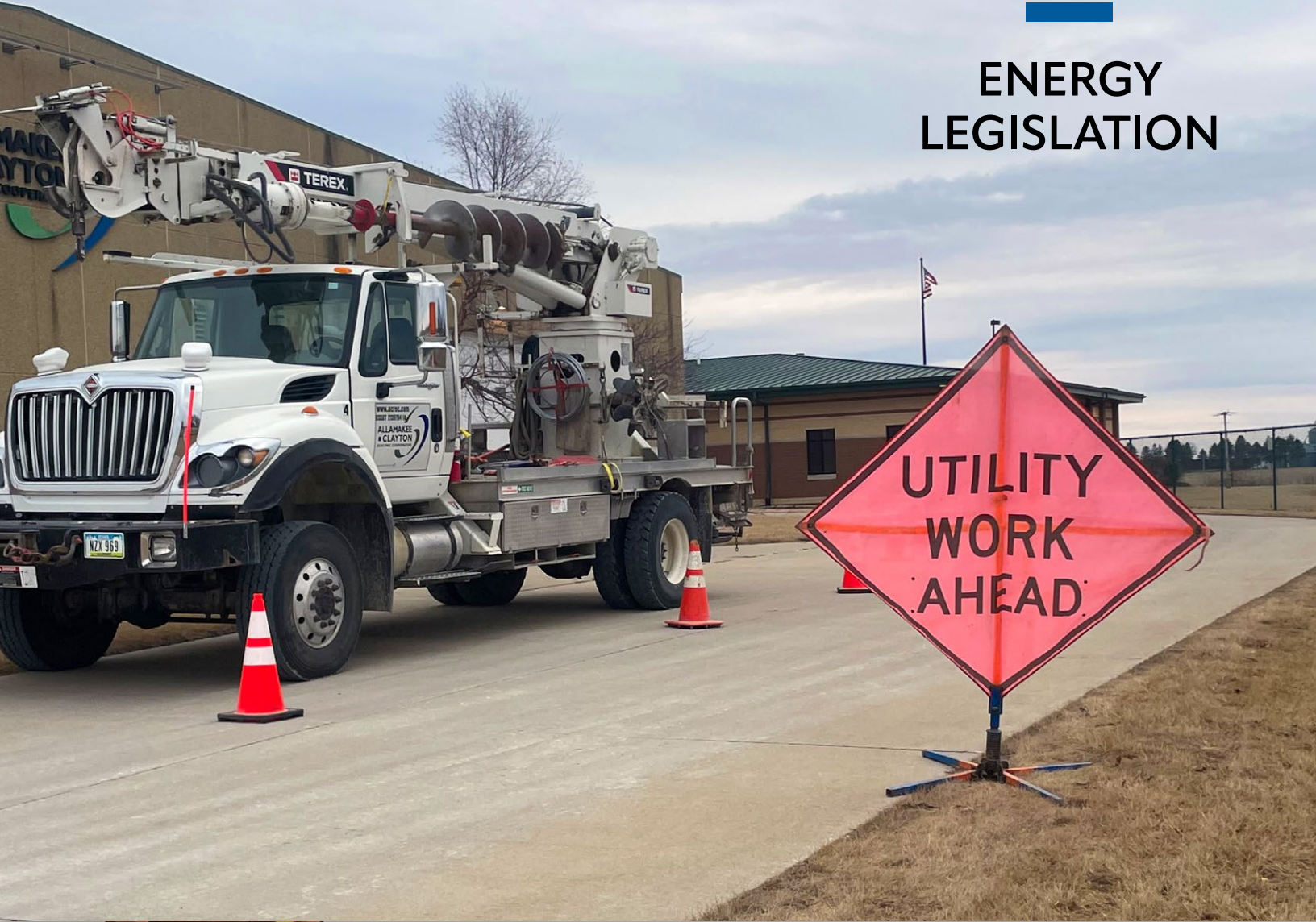
# ACEC NEWS

MARCH 2025 | VOLUME 28 | ISSUE 03

SCAMS IN THE  
AGE OF AI

CALL IOWA 811

ENERGY  
LEGISLATION



**HELP KEEP OUR  
CREWS SAFE**



## A MESSAGE FROM Your General Manager

**Hollie McCormick**  
EVP/General Manager

# Be Ready for Storm Season *Preparedness is the Best Defense*

Spring is on our doorstep and like many of you, I'm looking forward to more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy warmer weather!

Unfortunately, spring and summer can also create perfect conditions for severe storms.

Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative (ACEC) crews are always prepared and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines.

I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your First Aid kit is stocked with

pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.

- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from potential power surges and also will help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check ACEC's Facebook page for restoration updates.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk or drive through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and lessen the impact of the storm's effects.

Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and follow us on Facebook for the latest power restoration updates. If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 888-788-1551 as this is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out.

You can also sign up for our outage text alert system. When the power goes out, you'll receive a text message from us letting you know of the outage at your service location(s). We'll also text you once the outage has been resolved. You can learn more and sign up at <https://www.acec.com/outage-notifications>.

I hope we don't experience severe storms over the spring and summer months, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At ACEC, we recommend that you make a plan today—because storm preparedness is always our best defense. ■

## ARE YOU STORM READY?

Follow these safety and preparation tips during spring and summer storm season.

### Be Prepared.

- Create an emergency kit with power outage essentials: batteries, power banks, flashlights, non-perishable foods, water, medical supplies and prescriptions.
- Develop an emergency family plan with meeting points, communication methods and evacuation routes. Share your plan with all family members.
- Monitor weather for important updates that could impact your emergency plan.

### Stay Safe.

- Ensure a safe shelter. Stay away from windows and doors. In tornadoes, move to a basement or an interior room without windows.
- Use portable generators safely: operate outdoors in well-ventilated areas, place on a flat, dry surface, do not overload and always read the operating manual before use.
- Severe storms can bring down tree limbs and power lines. If you encounter a downed line, stay back. Always assume a downed line is live and dangerous.



# Call Acec Before You Begin Construction

It's never too early to start planning your spring construction projects. Make sure those plans involve a quick call to Allamakee-Clayton Electric. Whether it's an addition to your home, upgrading buildings on the farm or any other project that could increase your energy needs, it's vital to call ACEC as early in the planning process as possible so we can complete the electrical work to accommodate your construction timeline.

Every year, we receive outage calls from members who didn't call our office before starting their construction project. Why do we need to be involved? Because if your transformer is not large enough to handle the extra load from your projects, it can overload and create an unnecessary and inconvenient outage. **#D7**

"It is incredibly helpful 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 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 members that changes need to be made, causing a higher cost and a delay in the project, that all could have been easily prevented with a phone call."

If you have a project coming up, want to discuss a possible service upgrade or line extension or want someone to look over your plans, give us a call at 563-864-7611.

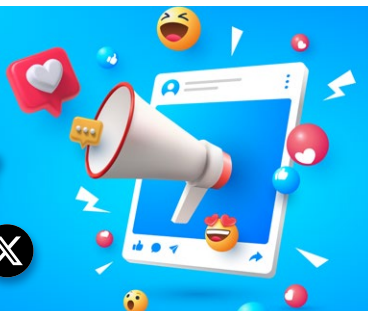
## Call 811

It's also important to give 811 Iowa One Call a phone call before any digging project. Every six minutes, an underground utility line is damaged because someone decides to dig without calling 811 first. Those utility lines also include fiber optic internet, which can involve a lengthy wait time for repair. Make sure you dig responsibly this spring. ■

## BOARD BRIEFS February 24 Meeting

- Approved 2024 audit report
- Approved 2025 operating budget
- Approved data center rates
- Approved contract renewal with HR Solutions
- Approved donation request to Fayette County Economic Development

Do you follow us on our social media platforms?



# Can You Dig It?



An underground utility line is **damaged once every 9 minutes** because someone didn't call 811.



Call 811, the "Call Before You Dig Number," at least **2 business days** prior to digging.



811 locators **do not detect** underground sprinkler systems, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.



Even if you have previously had underground utilities marked, **utilities can shift**, so it's best to call before starting a new project.



Once **all of your utilities** have been located, then you can start your digging project!

Learn more at

Safe Electricity.org

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar and a padlock icon. If you're ever unsure, call your utility company using the official phone number listed on your bill to verify payment or account details. Stay vigilant to protect yourself from utility fraud.



# UTILITY SCAMS IN THIS AGE OF AI

Someone calls claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Real utility companies don't do this. But scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you. And scammers are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult for consumers to detect. Learn how to protect yourself.



**BEWARE OF SCAM CALLS**

Do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment; instead hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your power bill.

## BEWARE OF THESE COMMON SCAM TACTICS

- ◉ Disconnect threats: Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment.
- ◉ Caller ID spoofing: Fraudsters use software to make their calls appear legitimate.
- ◉ Overpayment claims: they may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
- ◉ Smishing: Scammers send fake text messages that seem to come from your utility company.
- ◉ Phishing attempts: Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links.

If you have any doubt about the status of your electric service, call Allamakee-Clayton Electric at 563-864-7611.

## WATCH FOR THE FOLLOWING RED FLAGS

- ◉ High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action.
- ◉ Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift cards, reloadable cards or cryptocurrency).
- ◉ Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses.

## AI USE ENHANCES UTILITY SCAMS

By leveraging AI-powered techniques, utility scammers can create sophisticated and convincing frauds that are hard for consumers to recognize and avoid.

- ◉ AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of

company colors and logos.

- ◉ Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.
- ◉ AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- ◉ AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- ◉ Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.
- ◉ Scammers use AI to launch large-scale utility scam campaigns quickly and efficiently.

According to Kathy Stokes, AARP Director of Fraud Presentation Programs, "the ability of AI to improve and scale scam tactics is the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution for fraud criminals."

## PROTECT YOURSELF

- ◉ Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
- ◉ Verify any communication by calling your utility company directly using the number on your bill.
- ◉ Never share personal information. Legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone.
- ◉ If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification. **#3743**

If you suspect a scam, report it to ACEC and the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov).

Remember, legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt, let ACEC know so we can take a proactive measure to both protect you and others from becoming victims. ■



**Don't be fooled!**

Never answer calls from unknown numbers and never give out personal information to someone who calls you.

# Help Keep Our Crews Safe

Orange road signs are not just for highway construction zones; they also apply for utility work zones. Slowing down before entering work zones helps save lives, including the lives of our crew members, who must often work roadside to maintain or restore power.

Cars or trucks that go too fast not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or not moving over can also put a lineworker who is working high up in a bucket in serious danger by causing it to move or sway into high-voltage lines.

Please, take extra care in work zones. Our crews and their families thank you. ■

## 2025 Line Clearance Project

This year, ACEC is planning to do cutting/trimming line clearance work on lines fed by ACEC's Hawkeye, Banks, Ludlow and Waterville substations. In addition, there will be brush spraying at the Dorchester and Echo Valley substations. Prior to the start of these projects, landowners will receive a postcard from ACEC. If at any time you have questions regarding vegetation management at ACEC, please call our office at 563-864-7611. You can also learn more about our vegetation management program at <https://www.acec.com/vegetation-management>. ■



## STAY IN THE KNOW



Stay connected by keeping your contact information up to date. Current contact information benefits you in multiple ways.

- ✓ Faster outage reporting and response
- ✓ Timely alerts about planned outages and other important updates
- ✓ Smoother customer service interactions
- ✓ Improved access to member benefits and programs

Ensure your phone number, email address and mailing address are up to date so you can enjoy the benefits of staying connected.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**MEMBER APPRECIATION PICNIC**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 26**

## CONGRATULATIONS!



**TO ACEC DIRECTOR**  
**JERRY KELEHER ON**  
**HIS RECENT**  
**CERTIFICATION**



*Congratulations to ACEC Director Jerry Keleher for recently earning the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Director Gold Certification. This honor recognizes directors committed to continuing their education beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certification program.*

# Energy Issues at the Forefront of the 2025 Legislative Session

By Haley Moon, senior manager of policy & advocacy at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives



Energy policy remains a top priority for Iowa lawmakers in the current state legislative session. Since the 91st General Assembly began on January 13, legislative leaders and Governor Reynolds have emphasized key issues that could impact how electricity reaches Iowans in their homes and businesses. As always, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged in these discussions to ensure the voices of co-op member-consumers are heard and that the best interests of rural Iowa are considered.

The following are key legislative issues under discussion and their potential impact on your local electric cooperative:

## Service Territory Protections

Protecting the state's defined electric service areas remains the top priority for Iowa's electric cooperatives. This law, established nearly 50 years ago, is essential for cooperatives to invest in local economic development, maintain affordable rates and ensure reliable service. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) remains vigilant in safeguarding these protections from legislative proposals that could undermine them. Learn more at [www.ProtectRuralIowa.com](http://www.ProtectRuralIowa.com).

## Third-Party Solar Developments

Proposals in the legislature aim to establish third-party community solar programs in Iowa. These arrangements are different from the community solar programs available from some Iowa electric co-ops. You may have received information at your home or heard of neighbors being approached about subscribing to or leasing land for non co-op community solar projects.

While electric cooperatives support a diverse energy generation mix, there are concerns that these entities do not adhere to the same consumer protection standards required of public utilities. Additionally, these projects could disrupt assigned service territories that are crucial for co-ops. If you have questions about solar energy or are approached by one of

these third-party entities, please contact your local cooperative for more information.

## Governor's Energy Priorities

Governor Reynolds has outlined several energy-related priorities aimed at shaping Iowa's future in energy generation, transmission and distribution. These initiatives cover a wide range of topics, including how investor-owned utilities plan for and set rates and invest in new energy projects, ways the state of Iowa can examine the potential of nuclear energy, and making funds available for water infrastructure projects.

One issue of particular importance to electric cooperatives is the Right of First Refusal (ROFR). ROFR grants Iowa-based electric utilities the first opportunity to construct and maintain regional transmission projects within the state. Electric cooperatives support ROFR, as it enables Iowa's utilities to continue working together on critical infrastructure projects that help maintain reliable electricity service. **#5409**

Iowa's utilities employ thousands of Iowans to design, maintain and repair power lines in the state to ensure power continues to flow during our most extreme weather conditions. They invest in our communities and utilize Iowa companies as suppliers while working with landowners to protect Iowans' interests. Learn more at [www.IowaElectricHomeTeam.com](http://www.IowaElectricHomeTeam.com).

## Staying Engaged in the Legislative Process

As the legislative session progresses, your local electric cooperative directors and staff are actively engaging with lawmakers to advocate for policies that protect and strengthen rural Iowa's energy future.

For more information on these issues or to stay updated on legislative developments, please reach out to Brenda Hackman at ACEC, 563-864-7611. ■

## NOTICE: Complaint Procedures

The following notice is delivered annually to our members in compliance with Complaint Procedures rules as adopted by the Iowa Utilities Commission (IUC).

If you have a complaint concerning your electric service received from Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, contact the Co-op at 229 Hwy 51, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162, 888-788-1551 or 563-864-7611.

If your complaint is related to Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative service rather than its rates, and Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Commission by calling 515-725-7300, or toll-free 1-877-565-4450, by writing to 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069, or by email to [customer@iuc.iowa.gov](mailto:customer@iuc.iowa.gov).

# 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 – ANYTHING WITH GARLIC;**

**May – BEEF; JUNE – SEAFOOD**



## PUMPKIN PECAN COBLER

- 1 c. plus 3 Tbsp. flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¾ c. sugar
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. cloves
- ½ c. pumpkin
- ¼ c. milk
- ¼ c. oil
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla
- ½ c. sugar
- ½ c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. chopped pecans
- 1 ½ c. very hot water

### Directions

Mix together first 7 dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, mix together pumpkin, milk, oil and vanilla. Pour over dry ingredients. Pour into an 8-in. casserole dish. Mix together sugar, brown sugar and chopped pecans. Sprinkle over the batter. Pour the very hot water over the entire mixture. Do not stir. Bake for 40 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean in a 350° oven.

■ Lynn Monroe, Postville

## COCONUT CREAM DESSERT

### Crust:

- 1 c. all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- ½ c. cold butter
- ½ c. chopped pecans

### Filling:

- 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1 c. confectioner's sugar
- 1 12 oz. carton frozen whipped topping, thawed

*The power of human connections*

- 4 c. cold milk
- 3 packages (3.4 oz.) instant coconut pudding mix
- ½ c. flaked coconut, toasted

### Directions

In a bowl, combine the flour and sugar. Cut in butter until crumbly. Stir in pecans. Press into a greased 9x13 baking pan. Bake at 325° for 20-25 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese and confectioner's sugar until smooth. Fold in 1 c. whipped topping. Spread over the crust. In a large bowl, whisk milk and pudding mixes for 2 minutes. Let stand for 2 minutes or until soft set. Spread over cream cheese mixture. Top with remaining whipped topping. Sprinkle with coconut. Refrigerate overnight.

■ Gail Good, Dorchester

## DAFFODIL DELIGHT

- 1 lb. mini marshmallows
- 1 16 oz. crushed pineapple
- 2 packages lemon Jello
- 1 pint whipped cream
- 1 angel food cake

### Directions

Pour pineapple over marshmallows and stand until fluffy. Set 2 packages of lemon Jello (whip). Whip 1 pint whipped cream. Mix all together. Take 1 angel food cake. Break into small pieces. Line bottom of a 10x13 cake pan. Pour half of mixture over cake. Add another layer of cake and rest of mixture. Refrigerate overnight. Delicious. A winner for over 60 years.

■ Dorothy Lau, Fayette

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.

## CYBER SECURITY Tip of the MONTH

### Keep a Clean Machine

Keep all software on internet connected devices – including personal computers, smartphones and tablets – current to reduce risk of infection from ransomware and malware. If you want to “set it and forget it,” configure your devices to automatically update or to notify you when an update is available. ■

Sponsored by

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INTERNET SOLUTIONS  
BY ALLAMAKEE ■ CLAYTON  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – **two are 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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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    **STAY CONNECTED**



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**WIRED FOR SERVICE.**

We thank electrical lineworkers for their commitment to powering our local communities.

**LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY**

Electric lineworkers are wired to serve and show strength that shines in darkness. They are committed to keeping our communities connected and illuminating life. **On April 14, we will celebrate these remarkable individuals as a part of Lineworker Appreciation Day.** The next time you flip a switch, take a moment to remember those who make it possible—the lineworkers who ensure we have reliable electricity.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 