



# Current News

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A monthly publication for the members of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 8...

## Whatever it takes: Powering life, from a lineworker's perspective

Eastern Iowa REC has 34 lineworkers working out of service centers in DeWitt, Lone Tree, Wapello and Wilton. These lineworkers work every day in all weather conditions to make sure Cooperative members have the power to live their lives. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. The following is a look at what they face and more importantly, why they do it.

### *The Danger*

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because lineworkers work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. Lineworkers have to be aware of their surroundings and the safety of the person next to them. They often work on energized power lines, and can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them.

They're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when the weather is worst. They often work in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what they're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but lineworkers undergo years of training before they can officially be called a lineworker. They typically start at the apprentice status, which usually spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training under their belts, they transition to journeyman lineworker status—that's when they're considered officially trained in their field.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

### *The Physical Demand*

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but lineworkers understand that's what they signed up for—loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, they go places the



trucks can't, so it might mean hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most are just glad to be outside.

### *The Sacrifices*

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. They are often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. Lineworkers don't know what type of situation they're going to face or when they're going to face it. They get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. Lineworkers have missed a lot of their children's ball games and family dinners, but the families of lineworkers are very supportive, and it pays off in the end. They make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping their friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

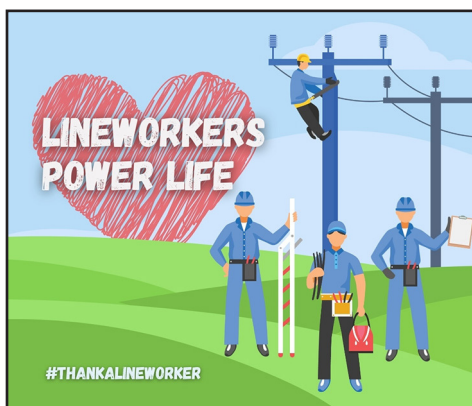
### *It's Worth It*

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. The Cooperative is like a second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you have to depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

Lineworkers have a lot of pride in their work. Even when it's cold and wet, they know they are working to keep people warm. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired lineworkers are or how long they've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

Eastern Iowa REC and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible—so you can get back to normal life.

Please join us as we recognize them on April 8, and follow "#ThankALineworker" on social media to see how others are recognizing lineworkers.



# Three Cooperative employees attain drone licenses



Three Cooperative employees have earned their drone wings. Aaron Healy, member service supervisor presented Chad Ruden, member service lead staking technician (left) and Mike Schmidt, energy advisor (center) with their wings. Ruden presented James Garcia, member service staking technician (right), with his wings.

Eastern Iowa REC has three licensed drone pilots on staff, Chad Ruden member service lead staking technician, Mike Schmidt, energy advisor, and James Garcia, member service staking technician.

Each obtained their Federal Aviation Administration license after completing a rigorous process which involved many hours of online coursework and testing. The drone is equipped with a camera

and the Cooperative plans to use it for right-of-way inspection, documenting damage following major storms, aerial photography of potential industrial development sights and other projects.

## Two new employees joined the Cooperative team in February

Tony Adams and Brianna Brase began their Cooperative employment this month. Tony started on Monday, Feb. 19, as a journeyman lineworker at the Lone Tree service center. Brianna Brase started on Wednesday, Feb. 21, as a member service representative at the Wilton service center. We welcome them both to the Eastern Iowa REC team.



Tony Adams



Brianna Brase

## The nomination period for the director elections has closed; 2024 scholarship winners will be listed in the May Current News

All candidates who turned in petitions with 15 signatures of members within their district will be on the ballot for the director elections to be held during the 2024 district meetings.

These meetings will be held in July

and early August. Look for details in future issues of the *Current News* and online at [www.easterniowa.com](http://www.easterniowa.com).

The candidate profiles will be available online at [www.easterniowa.com](http://www.easterniowa.com) in June.

All completed 2024 Cooperative

scholarship and Youth Tour applications have been forwarded to a panel of independent judges.

The winners of the 2024 scholarships and Youth Tour trip will be announced and in the May issue of the *Current News*.

## With the weather getting nicer, it's now easier to complete home weatherization work

Eastern Iowa REC offers a Home Weatherization Rebate Program. The rebate amounts will vary by installation type and by type of primary heating and cooling system.

*Rebate Amount - \$2,200 maximum*

- Electric Heat: If 75% of your homes is heated via electricity and operates prior to any non-electric backup.
- Central A/C Only: if central air conditioning system provides cooling to the entire home (basement excluded) and the heating system is not electric.



If you have questions about the Cooperative's rebate program contact an energy advisor. Call 1-800-728-1242 or email [member.relations@easterniowa.com](mailto:member.relations@easterniowa.com).



## Comments from the CEO

# We recognize the efforts of our lineworkers and all Cooperative employees

Electric cooperatives across the country recognize National Lineworkers Appreciation Day April 8. The U.S. Senate declared April 18, 2013, as Lineworker Appreciation Day, but this was a one-time resolution. Because the 2013 designation was a one-time resolution and to avoid having that date coincide with a holiday or weekend, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association board designated the second Monday of every April as Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Our group of lineworkers are part of a dedicated team of employees at the Cooperative working hard each day to ensure all Cooperative members receive the best possible service. From our energy advisors and member service representatives, to our engineering staff, technology professionals, to our accounting, inventory, warehouse, mechanics and human resources professionals, we all strive to make certain the Cooperative operates as reliably and efficiently as possible.

We pause to recognize our lineworkers this month, but we also realize Eastern Iowa REC only accomplishes its mission of providing safe, reliable

and affordable electric service to its members through the efforts of an entire team of dedicated employees.

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Some temptations are hard to resist, like turning down that last piece of chocolate cake.

While driving, we typically hear that “ding” on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn’t, but we reason that we’re going to make an exception—just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and in many states, illegal? Call it hubris. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

Now that spring has arrived, area roads will be busier than ever with farmers moving equipment around in connection with the planting season and families running children to events. Cooperative crews are always on the road doing maintenance, building new facilities and tackling power restoration jobs. It’s a good time to remember the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a

driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. I find this statistic heartbreaking considering so many of these accidents could easily be avoided if we’d simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, I’d encourage you to move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At Eastern Iowa REC, safety is foremost in everything we do—for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you’ll have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let’s work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait and waiting just might save a life.



Kirk Trede  
CEO

### From the Boardroom, February, 2024

- Approved annual reliability report.
- Approved a budget amendment for abandoned patronage funds.
- Approved an amendment to the bylaws.
- Reviewed potential USDA New ERA program project.
- Discussed the Cooperative’s cybersecurity program.
- Discussed the Cooperative’s participation in a project to send Iowa lineworkers to Guatemala.
- Reviewed 2024 Annual Meeting.

The next board meeting will be held on April 26, 2024.

# Cooperative Board approves amendment to Bylaws

The Eastern Iowa REC Board of Directors voted unanimously at the Feb. 29 meeting to make an amendment to the Cooperative’s Bylaws.

The amendment to Article 4, Section 6 of the Bylaws allows acceptance of a resolution

as a recommendation to the Board without the need for a member vote from the floor.

Changes to the Bylaws can be made by a 3/4 affirmative vote of the Board (Article XI, Section 1) and such changes are to be published according to

Article VII, Section 5g.

The portion of the Bylaws recently amended is in italics:

“Section 6. At all annual and district meetings of members, any member may speak as to any *relevant* matter affecting the conduct of the business of the Cooperative. Any *member resolution from the floor, duly seconded when made*, at an annual or district meeting shall be deemed, *without the requirement of a vote of the members, a non-binding recommendation for consideration* to the Board of Directors, unless the Articles of Incorporation provide otherwise.”

## Cooperative bylaws are available online

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, copies of the bylaws of Eastern Iowa REC are available to anyone interested, either members of the Cooperative or the general public, at the reception counter of the headquarters office at

Wilton, Iowa, and at Cooperative service centers in Wapello, DeWitt, and Lone Tree, Iowa. The Bylaws are available online at [www.easterniowa.com](http://www.easterniowa.com) under the “My Coop” tab or you may call 1-800-728-1242 to request a copy.

# Updated records needed for patronage payments

Eastern Iowa REC will return patronage this year. The board of directors will be approving the patronage amounts at an upcoming meeting. Current members taking service during the years approved will receive a credit applied to their electric bill.

Previous members no longer receiving service from the Cooperative will receive a check in the mail.

If there has been a change to your joint membership due to death or divorce, the Cooperative would like to correct its records.

In the case of divorce, the patronage will be split between both members. If only one

party maintains an active Cooperative membership, their portion of the patronage will be deducted from their bill. The second party will receive their portion in the form of a check. If neither party in a divorce maintains an active Cooperative membership, both parties will receive a check.

Contact the Cooperative's patronage department, toll free, 1-800-728-1242 or email [brianne.bell@easterniowa.com](mailto:brianne.bell@easterniowa.com) by May 24 so your account can be reviewed and any necessary changes can be made.

Please provide the account number, name on the account, and reason for making a change (divorce, death, etc.).



## Current News Monthly Quiz

### Quiz Winners:

**Barb Wuestenberg,  
Durant  
Jeff Moon,  
Davenport**

**Karl Christoff,  
Donahue  
Michael & Sharon  
Krebs, Blue Grass**

Mail your answers to Current News, P.O. Box 3003, Wilton, IA 52778 or email answers to [info@easterniowa.com](mailto:info@easterniowa.com). Be sure to include your name, address and Eastern Iowa REC account number on all quiz answer entries.

Four winners will be drawn from all submissions with the correct answers. The winners will receive a \$25 bill credit.

### Question 1

How many hours of training are required for a lineworker to attain journeyman status?

### Question 2

Name one of the Cooperative's drone pilots?

### Question 3

Distracted driving accounts for how many deaths each year?

Name

Address

REC Account

## Clip this item and help others

Eastern Iowa REC has always extended a helping hand to those needing it. Now, in response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your Cooperative has established RECare, a program of members helping members. RECare will provide funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and to assist in the weatherization of homes of low-income consumers. You may make a one-time contribution or you may make a monthly pledge. Even a dollar a month pledge will help others! You care, we care, RECare.

YES, I want to be part of members helping members and contribute to RECare.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will make a one-time contribution to RECare.  
My check is enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will contribute \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month to RECare.  
I understand this amount will be my monthly RECare pledge added to my bill.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOUNT NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: RECare  
Eastern Iowa REC  
P.O. Box 3003  
Wilton, IA 52778-3003

## Current News



BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Kathrine Wunderlich, president; Ken Purdy, vice president; Kurt Olson, secretary; Michael Bixler, treasurer; Henry Bentley, assistant secretary; Joel Carstensen, Allan Duffe, Tom Hotz, Gary Kester, Glenn McCulloh, Michael Moes, Bill Petersen, Robert Schneider Jr., Mike Shuger, Bradley Weiss.

Kirk Trede  
CEO

Jim Williams  
Communications Director

DeWitt  
500 South Fifth St.  
Lone Tree  
309 W. Commercial St.

Wapello  
101 Surrey Drive.  
Wilton  
1705 West Third St.

Call toll free, 1-800-728-1242.

General Information.....[info@easterniowa.com](mailto:info@easterniowa.com)  
Billing Questions.....[billing@easterniowa.com](mailto:billing@easterniowa.com)  
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