



# Current News

Volume 72 Number 2 February, 2026

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

## You can start the director election process today

The first step in the Eastern Iowa REC director election process is the submission of an address verification form, which enables the Cooperative to ensure the potential candidate is eligible to run within the district they indicate on the form.

The next step is for the candidate to

### Assistance is available for winter heating bills

Help is again available for Iowa residents who may struggle to meet winter home heating costs. You can apply now for the 2025-2026 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

This program is funded through the Iowa Department of Human Rights, and helps qualifying families meet home heating costs. Qualifying Iowa residents can submit applications until April 30, 2026.

For information about household income maximums and contact information, see the chart below.

#### INCOME MAXIMUMS

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$31,300
2	\$42,300
3	\$53,300
4	\$64,300
5	\$75,300
6	\$86,300
7	\$97,300
8	\$108,300

For each additional household member, add \$11,000

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are not sure where to apply, Dial 2-1-1, or look online at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap>

To contact your local community action agency, or write to:

LIHEAP  
Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Capitol Complex  
Des Moines, IA 50319

complete a petition signed by at least 15 memberships of their district by April 1.

Nomination packets, along with information regarding the district boundary map, qualifications to seek election, director compensation, director duties, responsibilities, Standards of Conduct and characteristics of a director can be found on the Cooperative's

website, [www.easterniowa.com](http://www.easterniowa.com) under the "My Cooperative" tab, Director Elections or call 563-732-7305 to request the information.

All candidates who submit qualifying petitions will then be asked to fill out a brief biographical form and return it to the Cooperative by May 15.

The nomination process puts no limit on the number of candidates in a given district and in no way screens or filters potential candidates.

The elections will be held during the 2026 district meetings.

Candidates should note that the time requirements of a director extend beyond the 12 monthly meetings and include an average of 30 days per year for Cooperative business-related activities.

The incumbent directors whose terms expire in 2026 are: Joel Carstensen, Charlotte, district 1; Mike Bixler, Clarence, district 2; Mike Shuger, Wilton, district 3; Robert Schneider Jr., Riverside, district 4; and Bradley Weiss, Burlington, district 5.



## Line school scholarships are awarded

Eastern Iowa REC donates funds to support a scholarship program at the Northwest Iowa Community College powerline program. The 2025 scholarship winners include: Emmit Kron, Maxwell Volk, Jacob Kamerling, Cael Wagaman, Mason Badtram, Zachary Harbison, Mason Tyler, Justin Geurink, Benjamin Lear, Cole Venema, Keegan Wells, and Damian Pestle.

# Years of Cooperative service are recognized

The success of Eastern Iowa REC over the past 91 years can be directly attributed to the hard work and dedication of the employees who work each day to ensure Cooperative members receive the best possible service. Each year Eastern Iowa REC recognizes employees for their years of service to the organization. In 2025, 17 employees and directors were honored for a combined 260 years of service to the Cooperative. The organization also welcomed seven new team members during 2025.



**Jim Williams**  
Communications  
Director  
35 Years



**Allan Duffe**  
Director  
35 Years



**Jamie Kirk**  
Lone Tree Area  
Supervisor  
30 Years



**Janet Davis**  
Payroll  
Associate  
25 Years



**Matt Nebel**  
DeWitt Area  
Supervisor  
20 Years



**Dustin Stagg**  
Dispatcher/GIS  
20 Years



**Jason Denkman**  
Substation Helper  
20 Years



**Angie Johnston**  
Storekeeper  
10 years



**Jordan Schoonover**  
Journeyman  
Lineman  
10 Years



**Brady Broders**  
Journeyman  
Lineman  
10 Years



**Austin Anderson**  
Journeyman  
Lineman  
10 Years



**Stephanie Miene**  
Econ. Dev.  
Director  
10 Years



**David Zorich**  
Div. Mgr.  
Accounting  
5 Years



**Cameron Mueller**  
Journeyman  
Lineman  
5 Years



**Jacob Nietfeldt**  
Member Service  
Staking Tech.  
5 Years



**Caden Talbott**  
Journeyman  
Lineman  
5 Years



**Mike Bixler**  
Director  
5 Years

## NEW EMPLOYEES



**Shawn Crees**  
Storekeeper



**Aaron Brau**  
Journeyman  
Lineman



**Chad Tucker**  
Journeyman  
Substation  
Serviceman



**Logan Eubanks**  
Distribution  
Engineering  
Technician



**Jason Caffery**  
SCADA  
Technician



**Jaz Welch**  
Member Service  
Representative



**Weston Durman**  
Apprentice  
Lineman

# Winter Energy Mythbusters: Separating fact from fiction to lower your winter energy bills

When winter hits, energy myths tend to spread just as fast as the cold. Believing the wrong advice can quietly drive up your bill without making your home any more comfortable. Let's bust a few of the most common winter energy myths.

## Myth #1: Cranking up the thermostat heats your home faster.

Truth: Your heating system works at the same speed no matter how high you set it. Turning the thermostat way up won't warm your house faster; it just makes your system run longer and can overheat your home. Set it to your normal comfortable temperature and let your heating system do its job.

## Myth #2: Turning off your furnace when you're away saves the most money.

Truth: Completely shutting off your heating system can actually use more energy when you turn it back on, especially in very cold weather. It can also

## Electric Snow Blowers:

# Performance without the gas

Electric snow blowers are a smart, modern alternative to traditional gas-powered models, especially for homeowners looking for convenience, performance, and savings.

Battery-powered snow blowers start instantly with the push of a button, even on the coldest mornings, and require far less maintenance since there is no gas, oil, spark plugs, or fumes to worry about. They are also significantly quieter, making them more neighbor-friendly during early or late snow removal. Electric models produce zero on-site emissions, helping reduce air pollution

increase the risk of frozen pipes. A small setback of 5 to 10 degrees is usually safer and more efficient than turning the heat off entirely.

## Myth #3: Closing vents in unused rooms saves energy.

Truth: Most homes are designed for balanced airflow. Closing vents can increase pressure in your system, reduce efficiency, and can even cause long-term damage to your heating system.

## Myth #4: The higher the furnace efficiency rating, the bigger the savings—no matter the house.

Truth: High-efficiency equipment works best when it's properly sized and installed for your home. In some cases, air sealing and insulation improvements can deliver greater savings than upgrading equipment alone.

## Myth #5: If your home feels cold, you must need a new heating system.

Truth: Comfort issues are often caused by air leaks, poor insulation, or

and keeping your garage cleaner and safer.

Lastly, the batteries from your electric snowblower can be used in other outdoor battery-operated equipment such as leaf blowers, pruners and more!

To make the switch even easier, members may be eligible to receive a rebate for 25% of the purchase cost, up to \$150, on qualifying battery-powered equipment like electric snow blowers. Contact Max Holtz, Energy Advisor at [max.holtz@easterniowa.com](mailto:max.holtz@easterniowa.com) or 563-732-7353 with any questions.

airflow problems and not by failing equipment. Sealing drafts and improving insulation can make your home feel warmer without replacing your home's heating system.

**The Bottom Line:** Smart habits beat shortcuts every time. Use your thermostat wisely, avoid extreme temperature swings, and focus on efficiency basics to stay warm and save all winter long.

## GENERATOR SAFETY: PROTECT HOMES & LINWORKERS



Generators can be lifesavers during outages—but only when used safely. Never run one indoors, in a garage, or near windows or doors. Carbon monoxide is invisible and deadly. Place generators at least 20 feet from your home and point exhaust away from buildings.

Plug appliances directly into the generator using outdoor-rated extension cords—never into a wall outlet. This prevents dangerous backfeeding, protects lineworkers, and keeps your home safe.

**MAX'S TIP:**  
Test your generator in daylight before the next outage. Check extension cords, review the owner's manual, and practice safe setup now to avoid risky shortcuts later. **-Max**

The application period for three youth programs is now open: the Eastern Iowa REC STEAM program, Eastern Iowa REC Scholarship program and the 2026 Youth Tour program.

## STEAM GRANT PROGRAM

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics

Find complete details at: [www.easterniowa.com/scholarships-steam-grant-program](http://www.easterniowa.com/scholarships-steam-grant-program)

## TWENTY-SIX \$2,500 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Application materials are available at [www.easterniowa.com/scholarships-steam-grant-program](http://www.easterniowa.com/scholarships-steam-grant-program)

Deadline: March 12, 2026

All-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C.

## Apply

INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE.

June 14-20, 2026

APPLY TODAY!

[www.easterniowa.com/youth-tour](http://www.easterniowa.com/youth-tour)

Deadline: March 13 2026

**MAKE YOUR MARK!**  
Youth Tour 2026

## Comments from the CEO

# Maintaining a high level of reliability requires ongoing investment in our system

As your local electric cooperative, Eastern Iowa REC's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid—through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur and create a stronger backbone for our growing community.

The demands on the electric grid are also evolving. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue. Electric vehicles, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial facilities add load to the local distribution system. As these technologies take hold, the grid must be able to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members expect.

Regular maintenance such as our annual pole inspection and meter testing help the Cooperative identify problems before they cause disruptions.

### From the Boardroom, December, 2025

- Approved resolutions for the disposition of uncollectible bills.
- Approved contribution to NRECA International Foundation.

*The next board meeting will be held on February 26, 2026.*

tions in power. Our line crews regularly patrol the system to seek out potential issues before they create trouble. Strategic upgrades such as investments made to upgrade equipment at our substations are also essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as automated switching devices and advanced monitoring systems allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies can isolate problems, reroute power to minimize outages and provide real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently.

Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience—it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life—from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.



**Kirk Trede**  
CEO

## Current News

### Monthly Quiz

#### Winners:

Laura Shelley, Blue Grass  
Jeffrey & Diana Huff, Riverside  
Merry Howell, Moscow  
Alan Edmondson, Columbus Jct.

Mail your answers to Current News, P.O. Box 3003, Wilton, IA 52778 or email the 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 signatures are needed for the Director nomination petition?

#### Question 2

Who was one of the new employees hired in 2025?

#### Question 3

What was one of the generator safety tips included in this month's Max Efficiency graphic?

Name

Address

REC Account

## Current News



BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Ken Purdy, president; Kurt Olson, vice president; Michael Bixler, secretary; Henry Bentley, treasurer; Bradley Weiss, assistant secretary; Gary Bruns, Joel Carstensen, Aubrey "Lee" Cartwright, Allan Duffe, Tom Hotz, Gary Kester, Robert Schnieder Jr., Mike Shuger, Denise Timmerman, Kathrine Wunderlich.

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, 1-855-938-3616.

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

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# 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.

If you want a copy of the Cooperative's bylaws, please ask at any Cooperative office or visit [www.easterniowa.com/my-cooperative](http://www.easterniowa.com/my-cooperative)