

in touch

WITH MEMBERS OF GRUNDY COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



A WORD FROM

Vicki Daily, General Manager

What is grid resiliency?

Grid resiliency is many things – it's reliability in your electric service, it's our ability to efficiently restore your power, it's being able to meet the demands of new technology and it's how we serve you with various generation sources without skipping a beat. Ultimately, resiliency is how we deliver on our promise to improve the quality of life for our member-owners.

When it comes to having a resilient electric grid, it begins with a system designed and built to withstand high winds, powerful storms, cybersecurity threats and other disruptions that could result in outages. A resilient grid is also flexible and adaptable by allowing different types of generation – such as wind, solar, coal and hydro – to seamlessly work together to provide you with safe and reliable power. The way our systems react to advancements in technology – from demand response investments to serving the needs of electric vehicles – all factor into the resilience of our grid.

Resiliency is a 24/7, 365-days-a-year task. Whether it's the power lines, substations or generation facilities on our grid, it takes proactive maintenance and investment to keep them running smoothly. Throughout the year, we regularly conduct pole and line inspections. Our goal is to find a problem before it becomes one. For example, if we find a weak pole that has damage from termites, we replace that pole. Doing so ensures that pole is as strong – or as resilient – as it can be.

Living in Iowa, we know that significant power outages can occur, especially as we enter the fall and winter storm season. Whether we're at the mercy of snow or ice, we have confidence in the resiliency of our system to recover from the situation with as little disruption as possible.

In the dictionary, resiliency is defined as “the ability to bounce back, recover quickly and go back into shape or position after being stretched.” When it comes to providing our member-owners with resilient service, this is what we work toward – day in and day out!

Grundy Co REC receives safety award!

We are proud to report that Grundy County REC recently received a No Lost Time Accident Award from our cooperative's insurance carrier in recognition of an accident-free record of 340,009 employee-hours since April 6, 2006. We congratulate our line employees on their accomplishment of working safe and accident-free!



Operations crew pictured l to r: Tyler Thomas, Karl Nielsen, Tony Sienknecht, Steve Ralston, Erik Freese, Aaron Bird and Jacob Paulding.



The Duane Arnold Energy Center at Palo.

Iowa's only nuclear plant to close in 2020

On July 27, NextEra Energy, the operating owner of the Duane Arnold Energy Center (DAEC), Iowa's only nuclear power plant, announced that commercial operations at the Palo plant will cease in 2020. Next Era and Alliant Energy have agreed to shorten the term of their existing power purchase agreement for the output of the plant by five years in exchange for a buyout agreement.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative, power supplier to your cooperative, owns 10 percent of DAEC and sells the output of its 61-megawatt share to Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck, N.D. Any negative impact of the early 2020 closure to member cooperatives has been diminished through Corn Belt Power's membership in Basin Electric, which has adequate supplies of generation to cover all member cooperatives' needs.

Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power, said, "Corn Belt Power has valued DAEC as a well-run, reliable source of emission-free power that is available 24/7. Although we were prepared to have the plant continue to operate through its 2034 license, we still have an adequate supply of power to serve our member cooperatives."

With an immediate focus to minimize any financial impact that early closure may have on its membership, Corn Belt Power plans to modify its internal accounting procedures to reflect the change in the plant closure date.

Alliant Energy and NextEra Energy said the existence of cheaper forms of energy prompted the decision to shut down DAEC. The market value of other sources — primarily renewables such as Iowa's growing wind portfolio — have dropped below the cost of nuclear generation.

Tips for a Safe Harvest



Harvest season brings hard work and can be an exhausting, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous (even deadly!) when working near overhead power lines. We urge farm operators and workers to keep the following safety tips in mind:



Use care when operating large machinery near power lines.



Inspect the height of equipment to determine clearance.



Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away (in all directions) from power lines.



Remember to lower extensions when moving loads.



If a power line is sagging or looks to be dangerously low, please call us immediately.



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**

WHAT THE SIGN REALLY SAYS IS - MOVE OVER OR SLOW DOWN. Iowa law requires motorists to change lanes or slow down when approaching a stationary utility vehicle that has its flashing lights activated. Failure to do so can result in hefty fines or the loss of your driver's license.

Take the Pledge. Join your fellow Iowans who have pledged to move over or slow down for Iowa's utility workers at moveoveriowa.com.

Solar surges in rural communities

Five years ago, many people in the electric industry viewed solar energy as more of an energy accessory than a power supply option.

At local electric cooperatives, member-consumers were asking questions about whether this new technology would be suitable for their home or for the cooperative.

Given the high cost, electric co-ops had questions about the economic feasibility of solar installation and its effect on the electric system.

To answer these questions, co-ops started installing small arrays and analyzing costs and efficiency.

As the solar industry grew, thanks in part to tax credits and other policy incentives, the cost of solar panels and other equipment started declining.

In 2014, 17 electric co-ops joined with their national trade organization, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), to collaborate on solar installations in 10 states whose combined solar capacity would be 23 megawatts.

Over the course of this project, the cost of solar fell dramatically. For example, one co-op that built a solar installation at the beginning of the project and another one two years later, found the cost was half what it had been two years earlier. In 2013, the cost was \$4.50 per watt of installed solar, and in 2016, the cost was \$1.74 per watt.

With the decline in costs and the increase in knowledge, today America's electric co-ops own or purchase more than nine times as much photovoltaic solar power as they did in 2013. By the end of 2019, the combined solar capacity of America's electric cooperatives is expected to surpass a gigawatt (enough energy for about 700,000 homes).

Prepare your home for the colder days ahead

Heavy accumulations of ice and snow along with changing temperatures can bring down utility poles, trees and limbs with the ability to disrupt power for days. With this comes a threat to property and life.

Be prepared for dangerous snow and ice storms and the power outages they may cause—including preparing your home:

- Insulate walls, attics and pipes.
- Caulk and install weather-strips on windows and doors.
- Install storm windows or plastic sheeting to cover windows.
- Repair roof leaks.
- Ask your co-op to cut branches away from your home and power lines.
- Always keep a battery-powered radio or TV, flashlights and a supply of fresh batteries.
- Know where to find extra blankets.
- Keep a supply of bottled drinking water on hand and a supply of non-perishable food items, along with a hand opener for canned food.
- Consider installing ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) for electrical outlets in areas that might be affected by melting snow or ice.
- If you use a standby generator, make sure it has a transfer safety switch or that your power is cut off at the breaker box before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, or what is also known as back feed. Back feed creates danger for anyone near power lines, particularly crews working to restore power. Be sure to let your cooperative know that you have a generator.



Can Homeward, Inc. help you?

Homeward, Inc., established in 1996, assists rural Iowa families with their housing needs and helps small communities and employers in rural Iowa.



This is accomplished through their programs, which focus on making homes more affordable and easier to maintain.

Homeward offers the following services:

- Community Home Construction and Revitalization Programs
 - Downpayment Assistance
 - Energy-Efficiency Loans
 - Geothermal Heat Pump Loans
 - Minor Repair Financial Assistance
 - Trust Fund Grants and Loans
 - Well and Septic Loans
- Visit homewardiowa.com or call Cheryl Rhead, program manager, at 515.532.6477.

Substation equipment upgraded

With the addition of the new Mid-Iowa Cooperative in Grundy County REC's service territory the Grundy Substation required an upgrade for the increased load.

On August 7, our generation and transmission cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, replaced all three of the 2500 kVA primary transformers with 5000 kVA transformers and also upgraded the voltage regulators to maintain proper voltage at the substation. The Grundy County REC linemen assisted Corn Belt Power with the substation improvements. With this upgrade the 2500 kVA transformers were moved and installed in the Cramer Substation replacing older equipment and increasing system reliability for members.

All of Grundy County REC's substations are owned and maintained by Corn Belt Power.



Our Grundy Substation

Commitment to Community

On July 21, Grundy County REC lineman Karl Nielsen, drove the cooperative's large bucket truck (top photo below) in the Hudson Days Parade. Our director, Larry Rohach, also joined the fun with his John Deere classic tractor and plow.



Iowa Choice Renewables

Grundy County REC is now a member of Iowa Choice Renewables (ICR), a solar company made up of 10 electrical co-ops throughout the state.

As electric cooperatives, we have been trusted energy experts for more than 75 years and counting. We are here to provide renewable energy resources that will benefit cooperative members as well as those in surrounding communities.

With ICR, members will have one point of contact for education, evaluation, purchase, installation and interconnection. If interested in solar energy, contact Grundy County REC at 800.390.7605.

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smart choices 

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