

living with energy

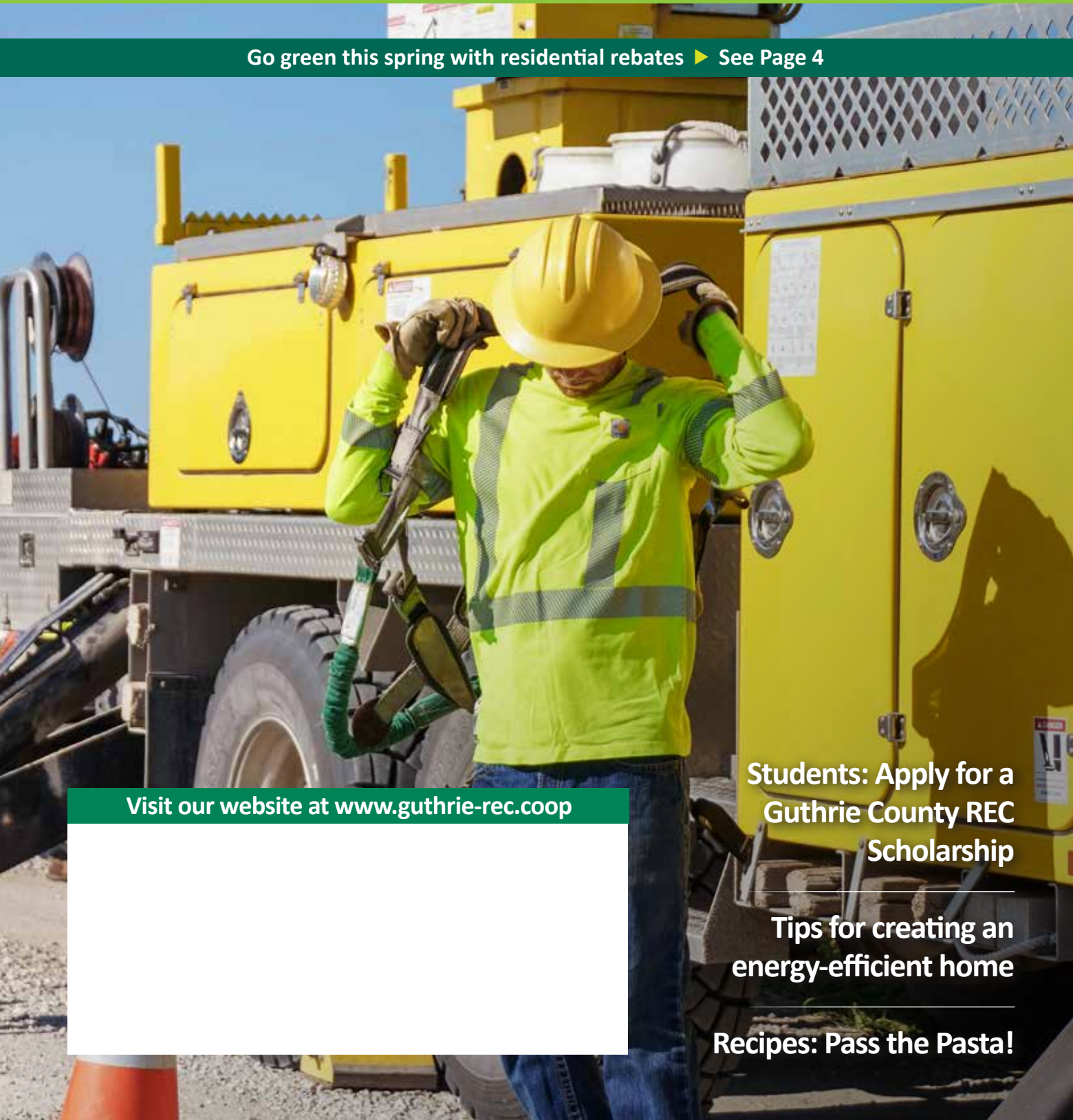
IN IOWA



Guthrie County REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

MARCH 2020

Go green this spring with residential rebates ▶ See Page 4



Visit our website at www.guthrie-rec.coop

Students: Apply for a
Guthrie County REC
Scholarship

Tips for creating an
energy-efficient home

Recipes: Pass the Pasta!

Living with Energy in Iowa magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase *Living with Energy in Iowa* is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350. E-mail address: editor@livingwithenergyiowa.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length before publication. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website: www.livingwithenergyiowa.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address: Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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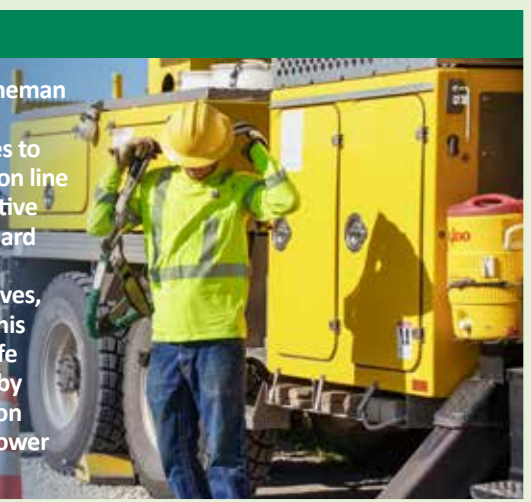
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ON THE COVER

Safety first! Grant Oliver, a lineman for Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, prepares to perform work on a distribution line near Harlan. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including hard hats, hi-visibility and flame-resistant clothing, rubber gloves, and a safety harness ensure his safety and gets him home safe at the end of the day. Photo by Rachel Rogers, communication specialist, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative. ⚡



Investing in educated leadership

BY STEVE SEIDL

Motivational speaker Zig Zigler once remarked, “There is only one thing worse than training employees and losing them, and that’s not training them and keeping them.”

I think the same thought applies to your co-op’s board of directors. Locally owned electric cooperatives are committed to the co-op principle of education and training; it’s central to our purpose. We make it a priority to educate our member-owners, employees and board of directors because it makes our people more effective leaders, and it’s the right thing to do. Your co-op invests resources in sending this magazine to you every month as one way to keep you informed about electric safety, local co-op news, energy efficiency and more.

Your co-op’s directors, who are elected co-op members and your neighbors, receive valuable training from our national and statewide electric cooperative associations. For example, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) hosts a two-day conference with programming specifically for Iowa’s electric co-op directors every February. At the 2020 Directors’ Update conference in West Des Moines, more than 140 directors learned about cybersecurity challenges, received an update on the



state’s rural economic development efforts, learned more about engaging effectively with co-op member-owners, received updates from legal counsel and IAEC regulatory and government affairs staff, and attended a rate building workshop.

We know that for directors to be most effective, they must be knowledgeable about the challenges and issues that could impact their electric cooperative. Your local board guides the cooperative in providing electricity that is safe, affordable, reliable and sustainable in addition to playing a crucial role in determining the strategic direction and priorities of your co-op.

Education and training are especially important for newer directors as they must learn quickly about their roles and responsibilities and understand the challenges and issues unique to the electric industry. It’s equally important for seasoned directors due to the ever-changing and dynamic energy landscape. Investing in valuable education and training for board directors helps ensure our leaders make informed decisions that will guide the cooperative to a successful future as we power lives and empower the communities we serve. ⚡

Steve Seidl is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Teri Wallis engages the directors during the cooperative rate building session at the IAEC Directors’ Update conference in February.

Win a Philips Compact Pasta Maker for two!



This smaller version of the popular Philips Pasta Maker has a compact footprint, so it can be stored easily on the countertop or in a cabinet. The fully automated machine makes perfect pasta from scratch in just a few minutes. It comes with three discs for shaping spaghetti, fettuccine and penne. Separate flour and water measuring cups ensure you combine ingredients in exactly the right proportions for perfectly textured pasta. Create flavored pastas by adding ingredients like spinach, carrots or beets.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2So98Rq>. ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month’s contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than March 31, 2020. You must be a member of one of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to win. There’s no obligation associated with entering, we don’t share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Fitbit from the January issue was Robert Ruter from Prairie Energy Cooperative.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP


Go green this spring with residential rebates




Guthrie County REC provides our members with ways to save on your energy budget because unlike investor-owned utilities, cooperatives work for the benefit of their members.

GCREC offers rebates on the following products that can provide substantial savings for your home. Visit www.guthrie-rec.coop for more information on how to apply or call 641-747-2206. ⚡

ENERGY STAR® APPLIANCES	
ENERGY STAR Clothes Washer	\$40/unit ENERGY STAR qualified; must have electric water heater
ENERGY STAR Electric Clothes Dryer	\$20/unit ENERGY STAR qualified
WATER HEATERS	
Heat Pump Water Heater	
ENERGY STAR Integrated Unit	\$650/unit
High Efficiency Electric Water Heaters	\$75/unit (Not less than 40 gal. tank – min. EF ≥ 0.90)
Electric Resistance Unit w/First Time Heat Plus Account	\$125/unit
Geothermal Assisted Storage Unit	\$150/unit (Not less than 40 gal. tank – min. EF ≥ 0.90)
Drain Water Heat Recovery Systems	
Heat Recovery Pipe System	\$450/unit Not to exceed system cost. Must have an electric water heater. Homemade systems are not eligible.
HEATING & COOLING	
Heat Plus Rate	
Per Home	\$200
Per Apartment	\$100 Requires separate meter
Geothermal Heat Pump (Unit replacement \$150/ton + \$150/unit)	
Closed Loop System	\$400/ton + \$250/unit
Open Loop System	\$300/ton + 250/unit No “pump & dump” systems
ENERGY STAR Central Air Conditioning	
ENERGY STAR qualified	\$100/unit Min. SEER 15.0 & EER 12.5 Limit two air conditioner rebates per household.
LIGHTING	
All LED lighting fixtures must be ENERGY STAR or DesignLights Consortium™ qualified.	
Interior Lighting LED Fixtures	\$5/fixture (Cannot exceed 50% of cost)
Outdoor Lighting (Maximum rebate per home \$2,800)	
Outdoor lighting must be dusk-to-dawn with no manual switches or motion sensors (no outdoor floods).	
Fixtures 20-34 W	\$10/fixture
35-49 W	\$20/fixture
50-74 W	\$40/fixture
75-124 W	\$50/fixture
≥ 125W	\$60/fixture



Guthrie County REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Guthrie Center, IA 50115-0007

Office Hours
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Telephone Number
641-747-2206 or 888-747-2206
Calls answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Website
www.guthrie-rec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

STUDENT LEADERS

Scholarship can help ease stress of student debt

High school seniors who are planning their post-high school education should consider applying for the Guthrie County REC annual scholarship.

Three scholarships of \$1,000 each will be awarded this year to a student who has a parent or guardian who is a member-consumer of Guthrie County REC. Applications are due April 3 and can be found with more information at www.guthrie-rec.coop.

One recipient of last year’s scholarship, Chelsea Larsen, is now at Iowa State University, where she is pursuing a degree in animal science.

“College is definitely challenging, but I



am studying things that I’m interested in, so it’s a trade-off,” she says.

Earning the Guthrie County REC scholarship eased some of the stress that comes with paying for college, Larsen says. She encourages students to take advantage of the opportunity.

“I would tell them that it is worth it to apply because if you do receive it, it will benefit your overall success,” she says. ⚡

Doing our best for you

Guthrie County REC's board of directors works hard throughout the year to make sure the cooperative runs as efficiently as possible. That means sometimes making tough choices and following through on commitments for the benefit of the cooperative and its member-consumers.



At its January meeting, the board approved the \$14.5 million budget for 2020 that aligns the cooperative with its mission to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric power to its member-consumers.

At just over \$2.2 million, the Construction Work Plan will use funds to convert 20 miles of line and rebuild the Perry and Flint Hills substations. While these efforts may cause a brief inconvenience when we need to shut off the power during our work, rest assured the result will be a modernized and more efficient running system overall. We work diligently to make sure these upgrades are in the best interest of our member-

consumers and their daily electricity needs. Also budgeted are expenses for pole replacements and upgrades for service wire, meters and transformers.

The largest component of the cooperative's budget every year is the cost to purchase power from our power supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative. This year, it encompasses about 70% of our budget, which is down a little bit from last year. As an electric distribution cooperative, we rely on the stability of the power provided to us so that we can make it economical for our member-consumers at the end of the line.

Each year, the cooperative takes a hard look at the numbers and works to build a budget that makes good fiscal sense. While we can't always predict issues that may affect our bottom line, we promise to minimize them as much as possible to keep them from having a negative impact on your monthly bill. ⚡

LEGAL ISSUES

State law requires notification of Alternate Energy Production

As of Jan. 1, 2013, Iowa law requires electric utilities to be notified of the intent to construct or install an alternate energy production facility at least 30 days prior to construction.

The requirement applies to the owner of the facility that will be attached to an electric transmission or distribution line. Alternate energy production facilities are defined as the following if they are used to generate electricity:

- Solar panels
- Wind turbine
- Waste management
- Resource recovery
- Refuse-derived fuel
- Agricultural crops or residue
- Wood-burning facility



The written notice must include information on the type of facility being planned and the anticipated completion date of the construction.

If you're considering installing an alternate energy system, please contact Guthrie County REC at 888-747-2206. Let us provide information and assistance before you decide to purchase any type of alternate energy system that requires interconnection with the grid. ⚡

Show you care with RECare

It's not easy living through an Iowa winter when money is tight, and the bills keep coming. For those who may struggle to pay their winter heating bills, RECare can help.

RECare is a program that encourages member-consumers of Guthrie County REC to contribute a one-time or monthly donation to help other member-consumers pay their heating bills. RECare funds can also be used to weatherize the recipient's home and help make electricity usage more efficient. Your donation is directed to local community action agencies for distribution to low-income families near you.

Consider contributing to RECare and help your neighbors and your community with high heating expenses. It's an easy way to show you care. ⚡

YES, I want to help my fellow REC members by contributing to RECare.

- I will make a one-time contribution to RECare. My check is enclosed.
- I will contribute \$ _____ per month to RECare. I understand that this amount automatically will be added to my monthly electric bill.
- I will have my monthly electric bill rounded. I understand this amount automatically will be added to my monthly electric bill and rounded up to the next highest dollar. For example, if your bill was \$154.85, then we would bill you \$155.00 and donate 15 cents to RECare. By the same token, if your bill was \$154.01, we would bill you \$155.00 and donate 99 cents to RECare.

Name _____

Guthrie County REC Acct. No. _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Promoting the value of energy-efficient homes

2020 Momentum is Building conference educates residential building professionals

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

The phrase “it takes a village” is a well-known reference to raising children. It also applies to educating the public about the benefits and value of investing in energy-efficient homes and upgrades.

This concept was at the heart of a recent keynote message from Sandra Adomatis of Adomatis Appraisal Services. She spoke to more than 200 builders, electricians, HVAC professionals and co-op member services staff at the 2020 Momentum is Building (MIB) conference in West Des Moines in February. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, the annual conference promotes residential energy efficiency building concepts and provides valuable training for building professionals and tradesmen from across the state.

Adomatis stressed the importance of many groups working together to educate homeowners about the value of energy-efficient homes. “Promoting energy efficiency housing is a group effort that requires support from utilities, builders, lenders, appraisers



Electric cooperative organizers of the 2020 MIB event pose with Scott Sieper, the “Iowa Nice Guy,” who spoke at the event. Seated: Angela Catton, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, and Sieper. Standing, left to right: Donna Griebel, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO); Erin Campbell, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives; Dawn Sly-Terpstra, CIPCO; Joe Hejda, CIPCO; Crystal Davidson; Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative; Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative; and Cheri Monahan, CIPCO.

and realtors,” she says.

As an industry insider, Adomatis sees several opportunities for improvement in Iowa’s housing industry. “We need resources in Iowa for people to look for and buy energy-efficient homes. Consumers need help in finding what they’re looking

for,” she notes. Energy efficiency is becoming more of a priority and homebuyers are willing to pay more upfront to achieve long-term benefits.

“Energy-efficient homes give us many valuable benefits like a healthier environment, lower operating costs and increased comfort. But when

HERS Index Ratings

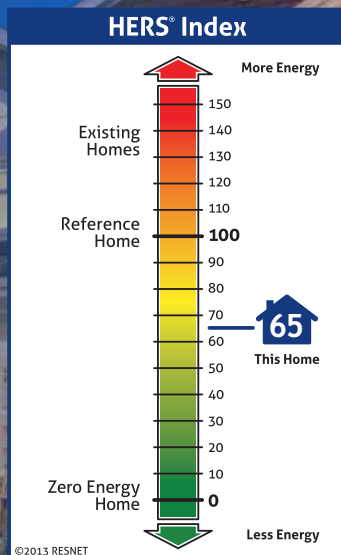
Developed by the Residential Energy Systems Network (RESNET), the Home Energy Rating System (HERS®) Index is the industry standard by which a home’s energy efficiency is measured. It’s also the nationally recognized system for inspecting and calculating a home’s energy performance.

A HERS rating can tell you a lot about the home you live in, like how efficiently it’s operating and where you can make modifications for greater energy savings. When you’re selling your home, a low HERS Index Score can command a higher resale price. And when you’re buying a home, you can anticipate the costs of

energy bills and efficiency upgrades.

A certified Home Energy Rater assesses the energy efficiency of a home, assigning it a relative performance score. The lower the number, the more energy efficient the home and the lower the energy bills. The U.S. Department of Energy has determined that a typical resale home scores 130 on the HERS Index while a standard new home is awarded a rating of 100. ENERGY STAR-certified homes average around 85 on the index.

Visit the HERS Score website at www.hersindex.com to find an energy smart rater, find an energy smart builder and search for a HERS-rated home. ⚡



people are building a new home, they don't know what they don't know," Adomatis explains. "They focus on granite countertops, but energy-efficient upgrades can also increase the value of a home while saving the homeowners money in the long run. It's up to us in the home building industry to educate homebuyers and present them with options and accurate information. We can build houses better, and we need to tell people about it."

With more than 25 years of experience as a real estate appraiser, Adomatis has served as an active member of the Appraisal Institute since 1985. She is now a national instructor for residential seminars and courses through the Appraisal Institute and has earned the prestigious Senior Residential Appraiser (SRA) designation, NAR GREEN designation and LEED Green Associate credential.

Adomatis offers several strategies for builders, lenders, appraisers and realtors within the home building industry regarding energy efficiency promotion.

BUILDERS: Adomatis encourages home builders to start listing detailed energy efficiency features for potential buyers because people want to save money on their energy bills. Builders can also seek a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) report for appraisers to use in valuing energy efficiency and quantifying energy savings. Appraisers usually appraise new construction from plans and specifications and that requires builders to provide a projected HERS rating for appraisers to use in quantifying the energy savings for valuation. Build with a vision for the second and third homeowner. Place efficiency stickers and stats in the electric box so details don't get lost. Document what's behind the walls because the original homeowners often forget to share that information when selling the home.

REALTORS: Most realtors don't market energy-efficient homes because they feel uninformed themselves. Adomatis says that builders and vendors must be able to explain why an energy-efficient home is more valuable and worth the investment. Realtors can also work to populate the MLS with energy information, so homebuyers have as much data as possible. The MLS should have a HERS search field that appraisers and homebuyers can use in finding energy-efficient homes.

LENDERS: Mortgage lenders can help promote energy-efficient homes. According to Adomatis, energy-efficient mortgages exist, but lenders do not typically offer them because many lenders are not familiar with them and they may take additional paperwork. Homebuyers need to find lenders who will work for them by identifying energy-efficient mortgage options. She adds that lenders can do more to promote the total cost of homeownership, including monthly utility bill estimates with the monthly mortgage payment so homeowners have a better sense of energy-efficient cost savings.

APPRAISERS: Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and FHA guidelines require appraisers to consider the energy-efficient features of the home, and if the market supports an adjustment in the appraised value, one must be made. But an average appraiser won't take this into account if they aren't aware of the energy efficiency of the home. An appraiser herself, Adomatis is passionate about working on adding more energy efficiency features to the standardized appraisal form. Once these additions are made, it will become more acceptable for appraisers to analyze energy efficiency.

Advice for Buyers/Sellers:

- Access a list of qualified appraisers – <https://bit.ly/3bAjllr>
- Download the brochure, "Appraised Value and Energy Efficiency: Getting It Right" – <https://bit.ly/2Sm9O9X>
- Search for HERS rated homes: <https://bit.ly/2vrvk3B>
- Work with a lender who has experience with energy efficiency mortgage products. ⚡

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.





Baked Spaghetti

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup onion, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 tablespoon butter or oleo
- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 4 ounces canned mushrooms
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- 10 ounces spaghetti, cooked and drained
- 2 cups shredded cheese

In large skillet, sauté onion and peppers in butter. Add beef, mushrooms, garlic salt, salt, cayenne and chili powder. Simmer together with the spaghetti sauce. Break spaghetti into pieces, cook and drain. Mix the cooked spaghetti with the sauce mixture and put in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle with cheese and bake at 350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes.

Jacqueline Petersen • Logan
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

Ham Stuffed Manicotti

- 8 manicotti shells
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cups (1 pound) ground ham, fully cooked
- 4 ounces mushrooms, drained and sliced
- 4 ounces shredded Swiss cheese, divided
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup green pepper, chopped
- 3 tablespoons butter or oleo
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- paprika
- fresh parsley, chopped

Cook manicotti according to package directions; set aside. In a large skillet, sauté onion in oil until tender. Remove from heat and add ham, mushrooms, 2 ounces of the Swiss cheese and the Parmesan cheese, set aside. In a saucepan, sauté green pepper in butter until tender. Stir in flour until thoroughly combined. Add milk and cook, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbly. Mix a quarter of the sauce mixture into ham mixture and stuff each shell with portions of the filling. Place in a greased 7x11x2-inch baking pan. Top shells with remaining sauce and sprinkle with paprika to taste. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Top with parsley and the remaining Swiss cheese before serving.

Marjorie Alliger • Lohrville
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

Pepperoni Pizza Mac and Cheese

- 8 ounces large elbow macaroni
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dry mustard
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups whole milk, warmed
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup pizza sauce
- 6 ounces sliced pepperoni
- Optional toppings: cooked sausage, olives, mushrooms, etc.
- 2 ounces Italian blend cheese, shredded
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Cook pasta according to package directions until al dente (cellentani or large spiral pasta can also be used). Melt butter in pan over medium-high heat and whisk in flour and mustard. Slowly whisk in milk until smooth. Continue whisking until sauce boils. Turn heat to medium, cook and whisk until thickened, about 4 minutes. Turn off heat and whisk in cheese until smooth. Stir in pasta and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer pasta to a greased baking dish. Top pasta with pizza sauce and then pepperoni (and optional toppings if desired). Top with Italian and Parmesan cheeses. Bake at 400 degrees F until hot and bubbly, about 20 min.

Chris Daniels • Casey
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

RINSING PASTA

Rinsing pasta quickly cools it down and washes away the starch. For most warm pasta recipes, such as those with marinara or Alfredo, having some starch on the pasta gives the sauce something to cling to.

PASTA TIPS

FLAVOR IN THE SALT

For flavorful pasta, salting the cooking water is a must. The typical rule of thumb is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of salt for every pound of pasta (and three to four quarts of water per pound).

PASTA TIPS

Ravioli Bake

- 1 26-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup water
- 2 1-pound packages frozen ravioli, either beef or cheese or one of each
- 2 cups shredded Italian three-cheese blend or other Italian cheese
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Mix spaghetti sauce, tomatoes and water (the water can be poured into the empty spaghetti sauce jar to shake and rinse it). Spoon 1 cup sauce mixture into the bottom of 9x13-inch baking dish. Layer half the ravioli and 1 cup shredded cheese over sauce mixture. Top with remaining ravioli and sauce mixture. Sprinkle with remaining shredded cheese and cover with foil. Bake at 400 degrees F for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake additional 15 minutes or until ravioli is tender. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Let stand 10 minutes.

Suzanne Stills • New Virginia
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Shrimp Linguini

- 1 pound linguini
- ½ cup olive oil
- Italian seasoning, to taste
- garlic salt, to taste
- 2 onions, finely diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound fresh or frozen shrimp

Cooked linguini in salted water until al dente and drain. Meanwhile in a large skillet, heat olive oil seasoned liberally with the Italian seasoning and garlic salt. Sauté onions and garlic in the heated oil until soft. Add shrimp. If using frozen shrimp, rinse in cold water to thaw and drain well. Pour oil and shrimp over the hot, drained linguini.

Audrey Metzger • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Tomato Basil Pasta

- 12 ounces pasta
- 15 ounces diced tomatoes with liquid
- 1 large sweet onion, cut in julienne strips
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 large sprigs basil, chopped
- 4½ cups vegetable broth
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoon oregano
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper
- Parmesan cheese

Place pasta, tomatoes, onion, garlic and basil in large stock pot. Pour in vegetable broth. Sprinkle pepper flakes and oregano on top. Drizzle with oil. Cover pot and bring to a boil. Reduce to a low simmer, keep covered and cook about 10 minutes, stirring about every 2 minutes. Cook until almost all liquid has been absorbed. Season to taste with salt and pepper, stirring pasta several times to distribute liquid at bottom of pot. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese.

Ernie Schiller • Donnellson • Access Energy Cooperative

Sausage & Macaroni Comfort Food

- 1 pound pork sausage, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup green peppers, chopped
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1½ cup elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1½ cans water

Mix all ingredients together in a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 375 degrees F for 50 minutes. Uncover, stir and bake another 15 minutes at 350 degrees F.

Bonnie Hunold • Argyle • Access Energy Cooperative

FILL YOUR POT PROPERLY

Use enough cold, fresh water that once the pasta begins to cook and expand, there will still be plenty of room for the noodles to move freely.

PASTA TIPS

WAIT FOR A BOIL

Adding noodles to non-boiling water will cause them to get mushy. Always give your pasta a good stir once it hits the water.

PASTA TIPS

MATCH NOODLES TO SAUCE

For the perfect dish, pair complementary sauce to your noodles' shape. For example, penne noodles are tubular and ridged. These two features help sauces cling to the noodles.

PASTA TIPS

TIMING MATTERS

A drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate your finished pasta dish. But, don't add the oil to the cooking water. By doing so, your sauce will slide right off the noodles.

PASTA TIPS

Wanted: Summer's Best Burger Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

The best summer meals come right off the grill. To celebrate July being National Grilling Month, we're looking for your favorite burger recipes. Whether they are made with beef, pork, turkey or veggies, a burger is an All-American staple of backyard barbecues. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is March 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:

Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992



7 easy steps for planning energy efficiency upgrades

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

With spring on the horizon, it's a great time to start planning home projects. Making your home more energy efficient can be done by taking one step at a time, or you can take it on all at once as a larger project. Either way, it's helpful to have a plan in place before you dive in, so you don't end up doing unnecessary work or repeating steps along the way.

This seven-step checklist can help you get organized.

Step 1: Set goals and constraints.

Start by setting your primary goal. Are you mainly looking to save money on your home's energy bills, make it more comfortable, increase the resale value or help the environment?

Then, set a deadline for when you need the project completed. This may affect whether you do some of the work yourself and which contractor you choose.

Set your budget. How much is it worth to you to live in an energy-efficient home? One way to look at this is to review your annual energy bills. If they're around \$2,000 per year, you might ask yourself how much you'd be willing to spend if

you could cut that expense in half. Maybe you'd be willing to spend \$10,000 to save \$1,000 each year? That would be a 10% rate of return on your investment. Or, if your home is drafty and cold, how much are you willing to spend to make it more comfortable?

Step 2: Educate yourself.

This step is crucial so you can weigh the costs and benefits of each potential improvement. There are many helpful lists of small and large energy efficiency upgrades available online. There are also some great resources like the Department of Energy, ENERGY STAR® and Consumer Reports. Your electric co-op may have a home energy advisor on staff or available literature that can help.



Photo Credit: Piedmont Electric Cooperative.

An energy audit will help you prioritize so you can spend your money on the measures that will bring you the most benefit.

Inspecting and sealing furnace ducts are high-impact projects best left to the professionals.



Photo Credit: United Cooperative Service.



Step 3: Schedule an energy audit.

An energy audit will help you prioritize so you can spend your money on the measures that will bring you the most benefit. And an energy auditor can help in other ways during the project. If a contractor is hired to do some major energy efficiency upgrades, ask an energy auditor to look at the work before paying for it. In some cases, auditors find the work isn't close to the level agreed to in the contract and more work is required. Ensure the completed work is up to the promised level of efficiency.

Step 4: Plan your projects.

Now that you have set your budget and priorities and have a sense of the work and costs involved, make a list of the items you want to include in your energy efficiency upgrades.

Step 5: Are there tasks you can take on yourself?

Some work, like caulking windows or adding weather stripping to doors, can easily be done by the homeowner, especially with the help of online tutorials. Other work, like insulating an attic, can be dangerous and may require special equipment or know-how.

Step 6: Identify and select contractors.

You want a contractor who really knows how to do energy efficiency work. And you may need two or more contractors, such as one for your heating system and another for insulation. Maybe you'd like to find one who can do air sealing or duct sealing. In some rural areas,

contractors may not specialize in the efficiency measures you are interested in. Are they willing to learn what they don't know?

Be sure to get several quotes if possible, as well as references from past clients. Create and sign a contract with guaranteed work and completion dates, with payments due only as work is completed and inspected.

Step 7: Oversee the work.

The quality of the work makes a big difference in the amount of energy savings and added comfort you desire. Keep an eye on the project, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Remember, it's your home, and you're the one paying the bills! ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.



Caulking around windows inside and outside the home is a cost-effective improvement that can be done with a little research.

Your attic can be one of the greatest sources of heat loss in your home. An energy auditor can look for issues and recommend steps to correct them.



Photo credit: Andy Harper, EE Image Database.

SAVINGS TIP

Hot food in a cold fridge could cost you

As a Guthrie County REC member-consumer, you're probably already savvy when it comes to saving on your electric bill. When it



comes to your refrigerator, you may do things like keeping it mostly full, avoiding browsing for snacks with the door open and cleaning the coils regularly.

There's another tactic that can help you save a few bucks, but it's a bit of a tightrope walk: how long should you wait before putting hot leftovers in the fridge?

Although it won't damage the appliance in any way, or cause the other food inside to spoil, placing hot food in a cold fridge can cause a significant spike in the inside temperature. The result is that your refrigerator's compressor will work harder to bring the temperature back down. To do this once in a while won't be a major drag on your household energy efficiency, but if you've made it a habit, it could be impacting your bill.

Ensuring your refrigerator is using energy efficiently is simply making sure leftovers are mostly cooled before putting them inside. It's also critically important to not leave food sitting out for too long, or bacteria can develop and lead to foodborne illnesses like salmonella or E. Coli. The FDA recommends cooked foods remain unrefrigerated for no longer than two hours, or one hour if the room is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

There are a couple of things that can help lower that temperature faster:

1. Put hot leftovers in a covered dish and set it in a shallow bath of ice water in your sink. A few minutes of this will rapidly cool down piping-hot foods.
2. If your leftovers are mostly liquid like soups or stews, split them up into multiple shallow containers. Make sure the food is less than 2 inches deep. This will speed cooling on the counter and will help the leftovers cool more rapidly and evenly in the fridge. ⚡

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Conference leads the way for energy efficiency industry

As the residential building and commercial construction industries increase their emphasis on new and emerging energy efficiency technology, it's easy to get confused about what's right for you – and your budget. Guthrie County REC Member Service Clerk Marlene Chalfant is a knowledgeable professional who can help you navigate your options and even save you money.

Every February, Chalfant joins hundreds of representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives, building trades and construction industry professionals at the Momentum is Building (MIB) conference in West Des Moines. The conference not only promotes energy efficiency, but also gives participants a chance to network, see the latest energy-efficient building products and technologies, and hear from nationally known speakers to gain insight into new techniques and products.

"This is one conference I look forward to every year because it puts us all in one room together to have those important conversations about how to promote energy efficiency as a viable option for our cooperative



Marlene Chalfant takes a moment to speak with Sly Grimm, area sales manager at Mitsubishi Electric US, Inc., during MIB2020.

member-consumers," Chalfant says. "That way, I know when I'm working with a member-consumer, I'll have the most up-to-date and accurate information for them to make smart decisions."

Momentum is Building is sponsored by Guthrie County REC as part of Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa. A grant from the Iowa Energy Center also supports the conference. Learn more about this year's event on Pages 6-7 of this issue. ⚡



What Powers Us: Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers

Communications Clerk Rebecca Schwartz's husband, Steven, teaches son Nolan how to care for animals on their family farm.

Join Guthrie County REC to show support for our farmers on National Ag Day March 24!



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Keeping crews safe and power flowing

BY ANN THELEN

Electric cooperative employees across Iowa participate in numerous meetings each year to work on one of their most significant challenges – staying safe as a lineworker.

“Anyone involved in working with electricity knows it has the potential to be dangerous and life-threatening,” says John Dvorak, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association Electric Cooperatives (IAEC). “Lineworkers are handling 7,200-volt and 14,400-volt power lines daily, and while that can become routine, we work hard to ensure the hazards of the work should never be taken for granted.”

Commitment to Zero Contacts

That’s why the Commitment to Zero Contacts program has become a central component of safety training for electric co-ops throughout Iowa and the country. Developed as a joint initiative by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Cooperative, it was introduced to electric co-ops in spring 2018 as a major focus of safety awareness.

“Since April of 2018, more than 570 CEOs of electric co-ops have personally endorsed the goals of the program,” says Bud Branham,



NRECA’s director of safety programs. “These commitments are centered on reviewing current safety efforts against the initiative findings and adjusting where possible to mitigate risk. It is not meant to be a top-down initiative, and the real value comes through involving employees as part of the commitment.”

“One of our greatest challenges is making sure that routine familiarity with the work, complacency and overconfidence don’t erode overall safety awareness,” Dvorak says. “We strive to instill the philosophy of never letting your guard down and knowing that if you lose focus – even for a second – it could result in a serious injury or fatality.”

Reinforcing safety fundamentals

The consequences of an incident in this industry are so high and getting that critical “buy-in” requires much more than lectures, memos and discussions. IAEC’s safety instructors use a variety of techniques to make safety awareness personal and encourage lineworkers and other

employees to discuss safety concerns.

In the breakrooms and gear rooms of several co-ops, the family connection to safety is a regular reminder for co-op employees, with family photos hanging on the walls to remind crews that one mistake can be fatal.

Reinforcing safety fundamentals is critical, and IAEC’s safety instructors always look for ways to interject the Commitment to Zero Contacts into their regular discussions and training lessons.

“We encourage conversations about safety during job briefings, and that includes a thorough inspection of personal protection equipment before work gets underway,” Dvorak says. “Our cooperative commitment to safety never stops. Every day, our goal remains the same – for linemen to go home safely to their families.”

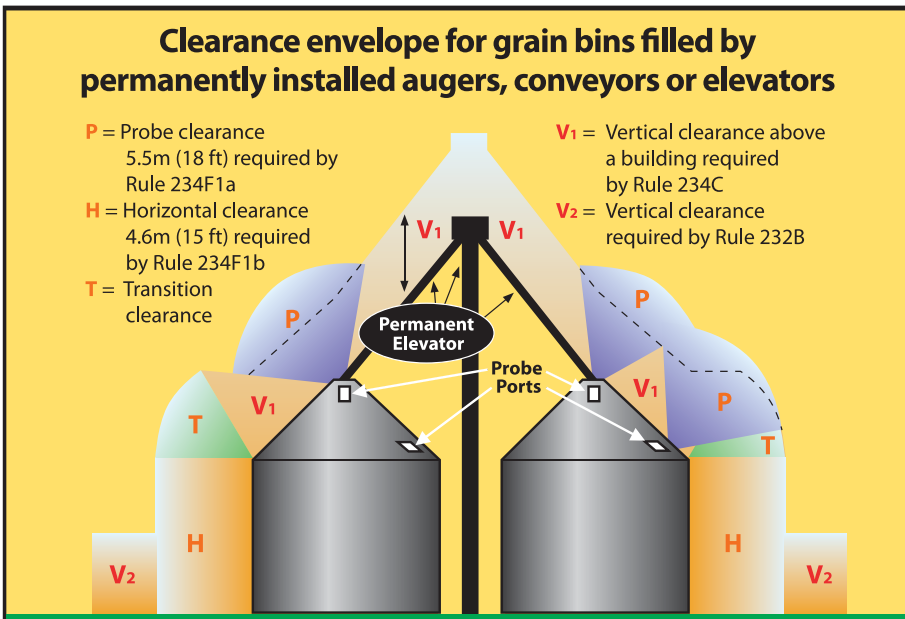
When co-op crews are protected and ready to get the job done, members can count on the safe, reliable power they depend on day in and day out. ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.

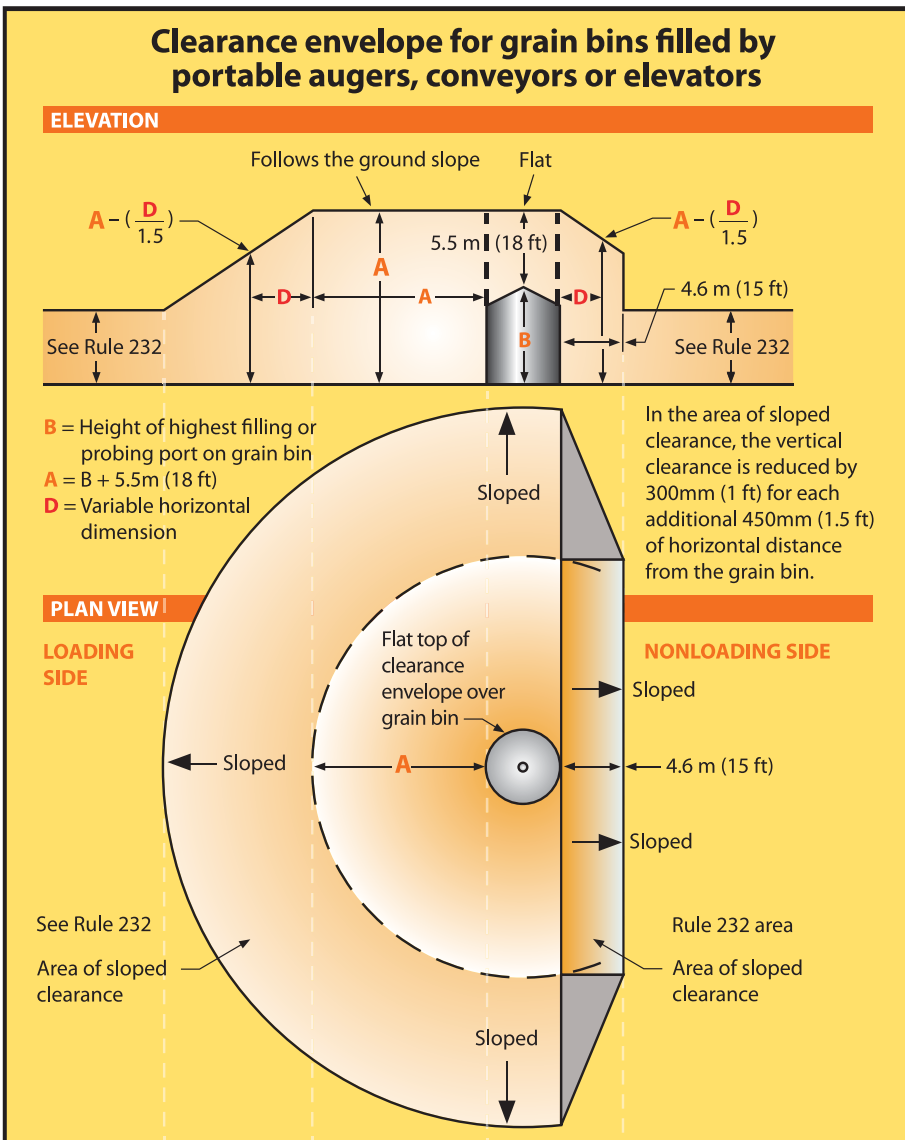
Maintain proper clearance around grain bins

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b: *An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 “National Electrical Safety Code,” Rule 234F. This paragraph “b” shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997.* The Iowa Utilities Board has adopted this language.

Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op’s policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call your electric co-op for help. ⚡



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Disclaimer

These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives’ annual public information campaign and are based on the 2017 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

WALLPAPER LEAVES A STICKY RESIDUE ON HER LIFE

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

All the home decorating magazines are saying that wallpaper is back “in.” I read that statement with trepidation. The truth is, I have a love-hate relationship with wallpaper. I love the look, the way it gives a room depth and expresses the personality of the homeowners. It appears, however, that I think the personality of the previous homeowners stinks.

I’ve lived in old houses my entire life. And in each of those houses, I’ve found myself scraping through endless layers of paper that were put on, I’m convinced, with whatever the Super Glue of the era was. No one thought of removing old paper before applying the next layer. Oh no, they left that to someone 80 years down the road, namely *moi*.

Equipped with sprayers and white vinegar and scrapers and damp sponges, I’ve never had luck in gouging out anything larger than a postage stamp-sized fragment at any given moment.

My biggest project was about 25 years ago in a huge old Victorian home that we had just bought in Pella. The place was a drafty old barn, but it had an open stairway that made my heart go pitter-patter. The problem? The walls of the stairway and adjoining hallway were encased in ... we didn’t know how many layers.

There was a pressing need to get this done – I was eight months pregnant with our third son, and the thought of standing in ankle-deep paper scraps cradling a newborn held no appeal for me.

So, I spent a summer begging, cajoling, bargaining with anyone who walked through the door to help. Just one hour, and then we’ll watch *Northern Exposure* together, I pleaded



with Kent, which, when you think about it, was a pretty pathetic offer.

Inch by inch, the layers peeled off. And what layers they were – an entire history lesson in interior design on our very walls. It started with the 1970s gold flocking – a psychedelic design in gold and cream that made me dizzy as I scraped away. Once that was retired, the next layer emerged, straight from the 1950s: palm leaves and tropical blooms that looked as if Cuba had just thrown up on my walls.

On it went ... a purple-and-green plaid paper from the 1940s, applied with what I guessed was a flour and water paste; a jaunty Jazz Age print that featured fuchsia saxophones; Edwardian designs flaunting rust flame print; and finally, the bottom layer, a nifty 1890s pattern of teal-and-burgundy paisleys.

Underneath it all were plaster walls with cracks and holes filled with newspaper. And like Edgar Allan Poe’s Raven, we quothed “Nevermore.”

Scraping wallpaper is a lot like giving birth. In the throes of it, you are sure you’ll never, ever do this again. But sooner or later, you just might find yourself in that situation again.

So, I’m torn about the new wave of wallpaper that’s trending now. But I am really curious if fuchsia saxophones might work in my dining room. ⚡

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.

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