

HIGHLINES

May 2020

A publication for members of Pella Cooperative Electric

IMPORTANT NOTICE

As May begins and while our office remains closed, we would like to remind you that we are still fully operational. We have taken steps to protect the employees of Pella Cooperative

Electric by staggering starting time for the line crew and assigning one man per truck. The business office is rotating staff, some that work in the office and some from home. Whatever your electric needs may be, we are here to help.

Also, please note that although electric accounts will not be disconnected for nonpayment until the order put in place by Iowa Governor Reynolds is lifted, we recommend that if you are able to pay your electric bill please do so, even if it is just a portion. By doing this, you will help eliminate larger unpaid bills once this emergency has passed. If you are experiencing financial difficulties and are interested in a payment agreement with Pella Cooperative Electric, we encourage you to contact our office.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our office at (641) 628-1040.



NRECA Annual Meeting

The 78th NRECA Annual Meeting was held February 27-March 4 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. The structured programming had three key topics: beneficial electrification, digital and data transformation of the industry, and consumer engagement and expectations.

Roughly 600 voting delegates participated in the business meeting. They approved changes to existing resolutions to address assistance to Puerto Rico and flood risk management issues. Pella Cooperative Electric Directors Carroll Hoksbergen and Darrell Boot and CEO Jon Miles attended these meetings.

Pictured from left: Jon Miles, CEO; Directors Carroll Hoksbergen and Darrell Boot; Cheri White, Touchstone Energy Chief Pilot and General Manager of the Balloon Team; and Kevin Bernson, Shelby REC, Illinois.

4 COMMON CULPRITS OF ELECTRICAL FIRES



Check the following in your home to ensure your electrical safety is up to par



Replace outlets that are loose, damaged or warm to the touch.



Contact qualified electrician if home wiring is outdated.



Too many extension cords? Call an electrician to install more outlets.



Older appliances are more likely to catch fire due to faulty wiring.

May is Electrical Safety Month!
Read more on pg. 2



Pella Cooperative Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections



Stepping Up to Keep Your Power Flowing

As we all deal with the new realities brought on by the coronavirus, I want to assure you that your local electric cooperative is here to help you. We have an Emergency Response Plan that serves us well in a variety of circumstances, from ice storms to tornadoes and everything in between. Early in this crisis, our staff updated that plan with a special emphasis on ensuring we can continue to provide the reliable electric service you have come to expect from your cooperative.

So far, that is exactly what has happened. We know that after a sufficient supply of food and water, electricity is the number one thing you need to maintain some sense of normalcy as we shelter in our homes. With that in mind, keeping the power flowing is “Job 1” for everyone involved in maintaining the electric cooperative system.

That starts with our generation and transmission cooperative, Central Iowa Power Cooperative, which has taken extreme measures to ensure its workforce is healthy and its power plants are functioning as needed. It extends to the 13 cooperatives that wheel that electricity across Iowa, and it includes PCEA where business may be a bit unusual, but our service remains the same.



Jon Miles, CEO
Pella Cooperative
Electric

We thought you might want to know some of the steps we have taken in order to keep your power flowing. We’ve closed our lobby to help prevent the spread of germs. Instead, we are encouraging members to use our drop box, online and phone payment options and the U.S. Postal Service to pay bills.

Some of our employees are working from home. We’ve divided the office staff into shifts so that they can practice social distancing even when in the office. Your call will be answered as always during regular business hours.

We have separated our line crews from other employees and even from each other to limit possible spread of the virus.

Our management team is in daily contact with the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, which in turn is working closely with our national association and the state legislature. We are listening to the daily news conferences held by Governor Reynolds to stay abreast of health matters that affect us all.

So far, it is working well, and everyone has adapted to the new normal. That’s because we’ve done this before. Nothing brings out the best in our employees better than working together in tough times.

Our focus here is doing our part to keep your life as normal as possible through this situation and beyond. The cooperative way of doing business has brought us this far, and the cooperative way will bring us through this crisis.

In closing, we want to thank you for your patience. We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Stay healthy, stay home and we will get through this together, the cooperative way!

Spring into Safety During National Electrical Safety Month

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and it’s a great time to be aware on how to avoid potential electrical hazards.

By taking simple precautions, everyone can avoid electrically related fires, fatalities, injuries and property loss.

Indoors:

- Replace cords that may be damaged, and don’t overload electric outlets.
- Extension cords are intended to be temporary.
- Don’t run cords under carpets or rugs and don’t tack or nail cords to walls or floors.
- Keep electric appliances and tools away from water. Never reach for or unplug an appliance that has fallen into water. Instead, turn the power off at the breaker before you unplug the appliance or remove it from the water.
- Never put anything other than an electrical plug in an outlet. Use outlet covers or caps to protect children.

- Keep your home’s electrical system in good repair. Contact a licensed electrical contractor if you have flickering lights, sparks, non-functioning outlets, or need wiring repairs or upgrades.

Outdoors:

- Never touch downed power lines!
- Always call your local utility or 911 if you see lines down.
- Watch for overhead lines every time you use a ladder, work on roofs or trees. Keep kites, model airplanes, and metallic balloons away from power lines.
- Call 811 at least three days before starting any digging or excavating project to have underground utility lines, pipes and cables marked for free.
- Avoid planting trees underneath or above power lines or near utility equipment.



DOWNTIME SAVINGS

If you find yourself with some downtime due to the coronavirus, now is a perfect time to make a few changes to the way that you use electricity. With just a few changes in your daily electric usage habits, you can turn your downtime into downtime savings.

Here are a few tips:

- **SEAL AND INSULATE.** Seal air leaks and properly insulate. These are always the first steps for reducing energy waste, saving up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills and increasing home comfort.
- **TURN IT OFF.** Turn off all lights, appliances and electronics when not in use.
- **USE WINDOW COVERINGS.** Use your window shades, blinds and draperies to keep the warm sunshine out during the summer months.
- **PROGRAM IT.** A programmable thermostat, properly programmed, can save up to 10 percent on cooling and heating costs.
- **BUY ENERGY STAR® PRODUCTS.** Look for the ENERGY STAR label, the symbol of quality and energy efficiency, on a wide range of consumer products to save up to 30 percent on related electricity costs.
- **USE IMPROVED LIGHT BULBS.** New and improved LED bulbs reduce energy use from one-third to as much as 80 percent for your lighting needs.
- **CLEAN AND CHANGE FILTERS.** Clean or change furnace filters regularly. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make the system run longer to keep you cool. Schedule an air conditioning checkup to ensure it's running efficiently.
- **REDUCE WATER TEMPERATURE.** Reduce water heater temperature to 120° F to save energy and money on heating water. Turning down the water heater thermostat also can prevent scalding, which is great for households with young children.
- **DO LAUNDRY WITH COLD WATER.** Wash clothes in cold water to save an average of \$63 a year.
- **CONTROL THE FLOW.** Use low-flow faucets and shower heads to save on water heating and water consumption.

Take Control of Your Smart Devices

The number of internet-connected devices in homes seems to have jumped exponentially in recent years. These devices are everywhere including the kids' rooms, the family room, the kitchen and the garage.

This rise has been growing for more than 30 years. In the 1980s, the integration of people, processes and technology with connectable devices and sensors began to enable remote monitoring of a growing number of devices.

Today, some homes have upward of 25 or 30 connected devices. And once you have a number of devices, they can start communicating with each other. This means more convenience and services for you, but it also leaves you vulnerable to cyberattacks.

By taking control of your devices, you can reduce your risk of hackers hijacking your internet-connected devices, says Cynthia Hsu, cybersecurity program manager with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"Understand what you are buying," Hsu says. "If you have a choice between two vendors who are producing a product and one takes security seriously and the other doesn't, use your money to buy a product that takes security seriously."

She also reminds homeowners to keep their wireless internet software up to date, particularly when there are security updates. Install firewalls in your home network. Always change the default passwords that equipment comes with and then change those passwords regularly.

Finally, unplug your electronics when they are not in use. Not everything has to be plugged into the internet all the time. Be smarter than your smart devices and stay in control of your security.



Bright Idea



When the weather is nice, put your grill to use! During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors. For added savings, use the microwave more – it's quicker and generally the most efficient way to heat up and cook food. For added savings, use the microwave more – it's quicker and generally the most efficient way to heat up and cook food.

Safety on the Farm



It's finally May and that means planting season for area farmers. While you prepare to plant the crops that keep the world fed, Pella Cooperative Electric would like to remind you to spring into safety, especially when working around electricity.

It is a fact that farming is the sixth most dangerous job in the United States. Every year, 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the U.S. according to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and these deaths can be prevented by practicing some simple safety measures.

- To prevent electrocution, make sure farm equipment (including planter arms and sprayers) safely clear overhead power lines. Keep a minimum of a 10-foot distance from power lines in all directions.
- Keep a safe distance from power poles and guy wires when working the land or planting crops. Contact 911 immediately if your equipment comes into contact with a guy wire or power pole. Don't try to fix it yourself. Leave that to the experts.
- Danger also lurks around grain bins. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. Contact Pella Cooperative Electric if you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to grain bins.
- Water, dust and farming often go hand-in hand. Install waterproof and dustproof electrical boxes and outlets at the farm.
- If a standby generator is used on a single-phase system, it must be connected to the farm's wiring system through a double pole, double-throw switch. The switch disconnects the farm's electrical system from the electric cooperative's lines during an outage and prevents backfeed, keeping linemen safe from the risk of electrocution.
- Finally, make sure full-time and seasonal farm workers are educated to stay safe on the farm. Each worker should be aware of dangers and utilize proper safety procedures.

- If contact with electricity occurs, contact 911. Keep others away and remain calm. DO NOT try to exit the machinery or touch someone who has had electrical contact. If you must exit your equipment for life-threatening reasons, jump out and away from the machinery, making sure to land with your feet together and touching. Then, shuffle at least three tractor lengths away with your feet touching. NEVER attempt to get back into or touch machinery that is in contact with a power line.



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An electric heat pump is the most energy-efficient home cooling and heating option available today – and can reduce your energy consumption and utility bills during even the warmest months of the year. Visit our website to learn more about going electric – and find rebates on new equipment.

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Pella Cooperative Electric is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric cooperative. The co-op exists to provide electric service at cost. It is the members (anyone who gets electricity from the cooperative), not outside investors, that own and control the co-op. Cooperatives are governed by a member-elected Board of Directors. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. See pella-cea.org > Nondiscrimination Statement for more information.

Board of Directors: Bryce Arkema, Darrell Boot, Carroll Hoksbergen, Steve Inskeep, Bob Van Soelen, Norman Van Zante, Duane Ver Ploeg, and CEO Jon Miles.