



Linn County  
Rural Electric  
Cooperative

# ElectriConnection

A monthly publication for our members



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MARCH 2024

## System Upgrades To Serve You Better

Our line crews work on improvements and upgrades to enhance system reliability and provide for future load growth every year. Linn County REC has a short- and long-term work plan that addresses anticipated or existing development and the replacement of older lines, equipment, or substations. In 2024, Linn County REC will complete approximately \$11 million in system improvements.

### Line Projects

Overhead line projects will occur in North Liberty, West Branch, Troy Mills, Center Point, and east of Marion. These scheduled projects are all line replacements due to age deterioration or to increase energy capacity.

New underground line projects are scheduled for North Liberty, Marion, and southwest Cedar Rapids. All line projects are connected with current and future city, county, and Iowa DOT projects.

### Substations

We are expanding our County Home substation, completing a transformer upgrade to our Ely substation, and building a new substation in North Liberty. These substation projects address load growth and increase energy capacity.

Linn County REC can complete most construction projects without loss of power. However, if it is necessary to interrupt power during construction, the cooperative makes every effort to contact members who will experience an outage.



## Spring Into Energy Efficiency

- **Service your air conditioner.** Replacing air filters can lower your cooling system's energy consumption by up to 15%.
- **Open windows.** Opening windows creates a cross-wise breeze to cool your home naturally.
- **Use ceiling fans.** In spring/summer, set ceiling fans counterclockwise to create a downward airflow that will make rooms feel cooler.
- **Install window treatments.** Blinds, shades, and films can slash heat gain when temperatures rise.
- **Caulk air leaks.** Using low-cost caulk to seal cracks in your home keeps warm air out.
- **Bring in sunlight.** During daylight, switch off artificial lights and use windows to brighten your home.

# Clearing The Path For Reliability

Overgrown trees and branches are one of the leading causes of power outages. To ensure safe and reliable service for all members, routine trimming or pruning of trees and other vegetation – such as vines, shrubs, and bushes – is necessary. There are several benefits to regular tree trimming, including:

## RELIABILITY

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. We've all seen severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

## SAFETY

Our primary concern is the safety of our workers and members. Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

## AFFORDABILITY

As a co-op, we always strive to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

## WAYS TO HELP LIMIT TREE TRIMMING

Plant trees in the right place. Take the tree's mature height and plant it that distance from the power line. Planting in the right place from the start helps reduce the need to trim trees near overhead power lines.

If you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's close to power lines, let us know by emailing our Operations Department at [lcrc@linncountyrec.com](mailto:lcrc@linncountyrec.com) and filling out the tree permit form on our website at [www.linncountyrec.com/forms/tree-permit](http://www.linncountyrec.com/forms/tree-permit).



**TREES — TOO CLOSE FOR (YOUR) COMFORT**

**TREES CAUSE MAJORITY OF POWER OUTAGES**

**WHY DO WE TRIM TREES?**

Although most trees do not present a problem, some of them grow into or crowd power lines, poles or other utility equipment and cause service issues. Unruly and overgrown trees can:

- ⚠️ **Cause outages.**
- 🔥 **Create fire hazards.**
- 🪓 **Break off and land on power lines.**
- ⚡ **Cause lights to flicker during high winds.**
- ❄️ **Get weighed down with ice and cause issues.**

Proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health, although sometimes a tree must be removed. This is a last resort, but it can be necessary if there are:

- 🌳 **Fast-growing trees directly under power lines.**
- 🌳 **Trees that are leaning into lines.**
- 🌳 **Trees that are declining, cracked or split.**

Unobstructed power lines make it easier and safer for utility crews to repair or service lines.

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**WOOD CHIPS AVAILABLE**

**Contact our Operations Department when we are tree trimming in your area.**





# Understanding Your Bill, SmartHub and Monthly Readings

Your monthly billing statement includes several charges that make up your total electric bill, including usage, the facility charge, and the energy adjustment charge. Some common questions we receive are about these charges and how we bill usage.

## Facility Charge

The facility charge is a fixed charge that covers a portion of the cost to have the availability of services at your account, regardless of how much electricity you use. It includes part of the cost of items such as the poles, lines, transformers, meters, and maintenance required to service your account.

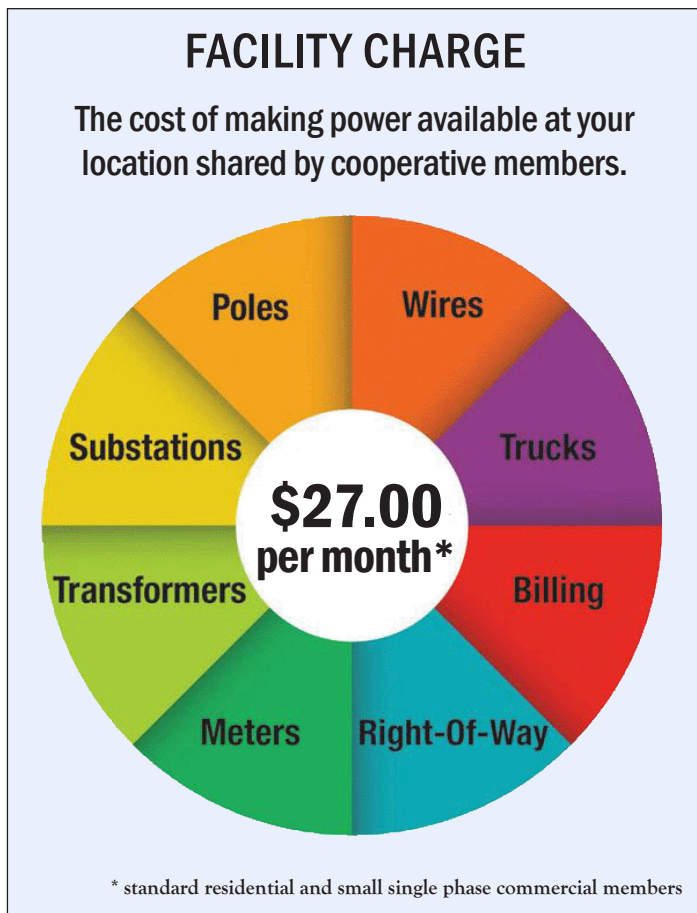
## Energy Adjustment Charge (EAC)

The EAC accounts for monthly variations in the cost of power and appears as a line item on your monthly bill. It is a positive or negative amount based on the cost of power that is charged to Linn County REC from our power provider (Central Iowa Power Cooperative). This pass-through charge to our members is in place for all our rates.

Your bill amount is reduced if the EAC is negative and increased if the EAC is positive. To calculate your EAC amount, multiply the kilowatt hours (kWh) you consumed for the month by the EAC factor on your bill statement. (This is done automatically on your bill statement)

**Some factors that may cause the EAC to be positive or negative:**

- **Unscheduled maintenance on a power generation facility**
- **Rising or falling fuel costs to produce electricity**



- **Higher or lower demands for peak power** (hotter summers or colder winters)

Visit our website for a complete listing of all Linn County REC's charges, fees, and rates.

## Meter Readings and SmartHub

We have also received questions regarding how usage is displayed on SmartHub versus on our bill statement.

Linn County REC does not bill off of the usage shown in SmartHub. We calculate your monthly bill from a meter reading collected on the first day of the month.

Smarthub is a database that uses interval data, which members can then view as monthly, daily, or 15-minute data. It is a tool designed for members to track and find when they use the most electricity.

If you have any questions regarding your bill and/or usage, please contact our office.



# Daylight Savings Begins

## MARCH 10



TURN CLOCKS FORWARD ONE HOUR, BEGINNING AT 2 A.M.



As you prepare for planting season, don't forget to plan for safety. There are many aspects to safety on the farm, but electrical safety is often overlooked. Keep these safety tips in mind as you prepare for planting.



### TRAIN OTHERS

Train anyone working on your farm, including family members and seasonal workers, about electrical hazards.

### SAFETY FIRST

Have daily meetings to review the day's work and discuss safety implications. Know and review where the power lines are, the clearance required, and the proper position of extensions as they are transported.



### WAIT TO UNFOLD

Remind workers to fold or unfold extensions well into the field, not close to the field's edge where power lines are typically located.



### DO NOT EXIT YOUR CAB

If your machine or truck makes contact with a power line, pole, or guy wire, you could become electricity's path to ground and become electrocuted if you step out of the cab.



### CALL 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 to have your electric utility dispatched to deenergize the power source. Only exit the cab if your equipment is on fire. If that happens, make a solid jump out and hop away with feet together as far as you can.



### Brunch Ham Enchiladas

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 cups cubed fully cooked ham | 1/2 cup chopped green onion    |
| 10 flour tortillas            | 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese |
| 1 tablespoon flour            | 2 cups half & half cream       |
| 6 large eggs, lightly beaten  | 1/4 teaspoon salt, optional    |

In a large bowl, combine ham and onions; place about 1/4 cup down the center of each tortilla. Top with 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up and place seam side down in a greased 13 x 9-in. baking dish. In another large bowl, combine the flour, cream, eggs and, if desired, salt until smooth. Pour over tortillas. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Cover and bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Uncover; bake for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese; bake 3 minutes longer or until the cheese is melted. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

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