



## Top Five Considerations Before Installing Solar

We have received several inquiries from members considering solar. Some companies advertising solar systems are promising unrealistic expectations. Here are some helpful tips if you are considering installing solar:

**1. Address energy and behavioral efficiency.** Energy efficiency and changing when you use energy can be a cost-effective first step in lowering costs. Both strategies also reduce the size of your solar system.

**2. Analyze your electric load.** With our time-of-day rates, it's important to understand the amount of energy used within each of our 3-time blocks (Off-Peak, On-Peak, Super Saver). Most solar production occurs during off-peak hours.

**3. Determine costs - solar is not free.** The three common purchase methods for solar are cash, financing, and leasing. It is very important to understand the pros and cons of each and their future

effects on a home sale. Tax credits can help reduce costs if you own the system; consult with a tax professional prior to signing a contract.

**4. Choose a reputable company.** Finding a reputable installer who will give you realistic expectations is essential. Ask for references, check reviews, and seek third-party input. **Take time to review contracts closely.**

**5. Contact us.** Contact us if you decide to install solar. If you are connected to the grid, you'll need to go through our interconnection process before installing the system.

Then, speak with credible, skilled professionals to help guide you through the process, including safety requirements and what tasks/costs you will be responsible for.

**Check out next month's newsletter for more information on our interconnection process.**



## Annual Meter Testing To Begin In April

Linn County REC will begin performing our annual meter testing this month. Approximately 400 meters throughout our service territory have been randomly selected to be tested.

Members who have their meters checked will experience a brief outage (one - two minutes). Testing will begin in April and continue until all meters have been completed.

Linn County REC uses an advanced metering system to read your meter. This system also provides daily usage data so you can make informed energy choices. Members can view usage data through our SmartHub app.

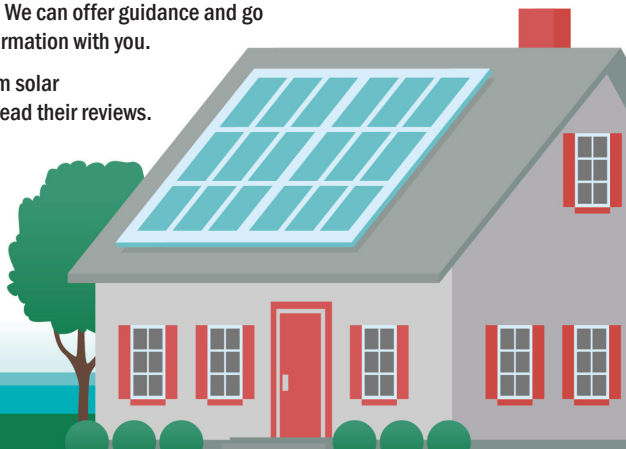
SmartHub offers many benefits to members. You can manage your account, view your daily usage, and report service issues. To learn more and create an account, visit our website.

If you have questions about our metering, call to speak with our metering department or email us at [metering@linncountyrec.com](mailto:metering@linncountyrec.com).

## TIPS FOR AVOIDING SOLAR SCAMS

As the popularity of rooftop solar panels increases, so do solar scams. Here are a few tips to consider before you install a solar PV system for your home.

- Talk to Linn County REC first. We can offer guidance and go over our interconnection information with you.
- Get at least three quotes from solar companies, and thoroughly read their reviews.
- Avoid solar companies that use high-pressure tactics.
- Don't believe unrealistic promises.
- Only sign clear, easy to understand contracts.



# MEMBER EDUCATION SEMINAR

**MAY 16**  
**10:00 AM**

**Register by email at**  
**rebates@linncountyrec.com**



Our Member Services team will host a member education seminar at our headquarters in Marion (5695 REC Drive) on Thursday, May 16, at 10:00 am. This informative one-hour presentation will include information on the following topics:

- Rates
- Rebates & Heat Plus Rate
- SmartHub app
- Smart Plugs
- Alternate Energy Production (solar, wind, etc.)
- Trees/Safety

Members can register for the seminar by emailing us at [rebates@linncountyrec.com](mailto:rebates@linncountyrec.com). The registration deadline is May 10. Please include your account number and how many people will be attending with you. **All registrations will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a smart plug!**

If there is high interest in this new program, we will host another seminar at our North Liberty location in the future.

If you have any questions regarding the seminar, please contact our office to speak with Member Services.

## Manage Your Account With Convenient Billing Options

Linn County REC offers many convenient ways to receive and pay your bill. Visit [www.linncountyrec.com](http://www.linncountyrec.com) for more information and to create an account.

### Paperless Billing

Paperless billing eliminates your paper bill and newsletter. Instead, your bill statement and newsletter can be viewed online or printed at your convenience. It is safe and offers you the flexibility to manage your account online at any time from anywhere.

### Budget Billing

Budget billing allows you to pay your bill in equal monthly installments, so you know how much to budget for your utility bills. Based on your usage history, monthly payments will equal 1/12 of your estimated annual billings.



### AUTOPAY >

Set up automatic payments from your bank or credit card account. Sign up at: [www.linncountyrec.com](http://www.linncountyrec.com)



### SMARTHUB

24/7 online account access

Cell Phone / Tablet / SmartHub App >  
Desktop: [www.linncountyrec.com](http://www.linncountyrec.com)



ANDROID



### ONE TIME PAYMENT >

Make a payment using your bank or credit card.  
Call 1-877-999-9619



### KIOSK >

Self service payment

Available at:  
- 5695 REC Drive, Marion  
- 835 W 240th Street NE, North Liberty



### MoneyGram

Pay in cash >  
Pin 15106

Find locations at  
[www.moneygram/locations](http://www.moneygram/locations)



# Plant In The Right Place To Limit Tree Trimming In The Future

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce heating and cooling costs. A well-placed tree, shrub, or vine can deliver effective shade, act as a windbreak, and reduce your energy bills. Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy. The Department of Energy has determined that properly placing only three trees on your property can save an average home between \$100 and \$250 in yearly energy costs.

If planting trees and shrubs are part of your landscaping projects this year, don't plant under or near power lines. Trees interfering with power lines are one of the top reasons for power outages. Storms and winds can also cause branches to rub on power lines causing, blinking lights in your home.

Before you plant trees, consider their mature height. Take the mature height and plant it that distance from the power line. If limbs grow near power lines, Linn County REC may trim the tree to prevent damage to the line and eliminate potential hazards and outages. We will not trim



beyond what is necessary to ensure public safety and service reliability.

For more information on proper tree placement and our vegetation management program, visit our website at [www.linncountyrec.com](http://www.linncountyrec.com).

## 3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

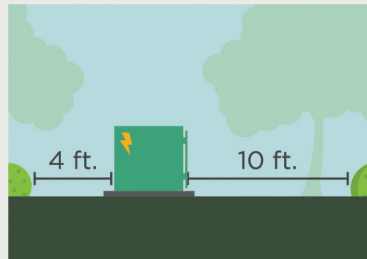
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

**Here's how you can help:**

**1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



**2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers.** Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



**3. Report dangerous branches.** If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



**Trimming improves safety for all.**

**Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**





## Lineworker Appreciation Day Is April 18

We celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day to honor the men and women who power life! Rain or shine, day or night, lineworkers brave challenging conditions to make sure we have electricity when we need it. Thank you!



## Garlic Butter Steak Bites

- |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1½ lbs steak cut (any kind) | 1 Tbsp Montreal steak seasoning    |
| 1 Tbsp olive oil            | ¼ cup unsalted butter              |
| 4 to 5 cloves minced garlic | 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh chives |
| 2 tsp chopped fresh oregano |                                    |

Cut steak into 1-inch bite-sized pieces. Season steak with Montreal steak seasoning. Add the oil to a large skillet and heat it over medium-high heat. Add steak to the pan and cook for at least two minutes before stirring the steak pieces for a good sear. Stir. Continue cooking for another two minutes or until the steak reaches your preferred temperature. Transfer the steak bites to a plate and reduce heat to medium. Allow the skillet to cool slightly then add the butter. After the butter has melted, add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Remove the pan from the heat. Return the steak bites to the pan with the chives and oregano. Toss and coat thoroughly.

## April Is Safe Digging Month

Spring is here, and you may be starting to plan your outdoor projects. Whether planting a tree or adding a deck, remember to call Iowa One Call before you dig. Simple tasks like planting shrubs or installing a new mailbox can damage utility lines. A severed power line can disrupt service, harm the person digging, and potentially result in fines or repair costs. Be safe and know what's below. Call 811 or visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) to protect underground utilities before you dig.

### 5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



#### 1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

#### 2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

#### 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



#### 4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



#### 5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: [call811.com](http://call811.com)

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