



Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

Co-op displays line equipment at North Mac Elementary School



RECC's Sean Koen spoke with young students about his experience as a journeyman lineman. Several small groups lined up to see the bucket truck up close and personal. They also had the opportunity to hop into the bucket, try on some oversized gloves, and see many of the specialized tools used to perform the duties of a lineman.



Technologies for a smart home

Smart home technologies are transforming how we live, making our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient than ever before.

Smart home technologies are devices that communicate with each other to automate everyday tasks and functions around the home, like heating and cooling, lighting and security. In addition to convenience, smart technologies enable consumers to manage and monitor their energy consumption

through device scheduling and control.

With just a tap on your phone or a voice command to your virtual assistant (like Alexa or Siri), you can conveniently control many aspects of your home environment. If you're new to the smart tech world, there are several cost-effective devices you can try as you explore ways to make your home smarter.

One of the best and most inexpensive places to start is with a smart bulb or plug. Smart LED bulbs

allow you to control home lighting remotely through a smartphone app or voice commands. You can set schedules to automatically turn lights off or on, which can help you save energy and boost home security.

Smart plugs are another inexpensive way to give electronics and small appliances the smart home treatment. Smart plugs allow you to set schedules and remotely control power to lamps, small appliances

Continued on 18B ▶

Technologies for a smart home (continued)

and electronics, minimizing standby energy consumption and maximizing convenience. For example, you can sync the timing of your bedside lamp, alarm, speakers and coffee maker to turn on at the same time each morning.

If Alexa or Siri is already part of your household, you can build on your existing “tech ecosystem” by adding a smart hub, like Amazon Echo or Apple HomePod. Voice assistants that are synced to smart devices like bulbs and plugs provide additional options for device management and allow family members to interact with the various devices through voice control rather than individual apps.

Home heating and cooling account for a significant portion of energy use, so one of the best investments you can make in smart tech is a smart thermostat. While traditional programmable thermostats can be set to your schedule and preferences, a smart thermostat takes this one step further by learning and adjusting to your routine and building a schedule around it.

Smart security systems are popular options for homeowners looking to



TIPS FOR INTEGRATING SMART HOME TECH

If you're new to smart home technologies, keep the following tips in mind as you explore home automation options.

- 1. Define goals.** Determine the areas in your home you want to make smart, like lighting, security and entertainment systems.
- 2. Choose compatible devices.** A smart hub can make integration easier with a central device to control multiple smart technologies.
- 3. Check Wi-Fi strength.** Smart home technologies require a stable internet connection to function properly, so consider factors like router placement and signal strength.
- 4. Prioritize security.** Set strong, unique passwords for your Wi-Fi network, set devices to update automatically and limit personal data collection.

incorporate cameras, sensors and cloud-based video recordings. As with other smart technologies, smart security systems provide convenient, flexible ways to monitor homes and businesses, giving you peace of mind even when you're away.

If you're considering smart tech for your home, start by defining your goals. Is saving energy your top priority, or are you aiming to improve home security? Smart home technologies provide great convenience — but remember, they

are internet-connected devices. That means you'll need a stable Wi-Fi connection to ensure devices are working properly, and you'll need strong passwords for your router and individual devices.

Whether you're looking to automate every aspect of your home or simply want to try a device or two, smart technologies can transform your living space into a home where comfort and convenience reign supreme.

A dozen things to consider when the lights go out

Given our reliance on electricity, there's never a good time to be without it. Here is some insight into our restoration process. Hopefully, sharing some of the details will help our members understand what may be happening behind the scenes. Here are some things you might not know about restoration:

1. Member participation: We need you, because there's a chance that we don't know about an outage. We rely on technology to generate outage alerts, but you can help by letting us know if your power is out. Some of our best information comes from members who report broken

poles, downed lines, and felled trees.

2. Employees are members, too: Many of our employees are members of the cooperative and might also be affected. They are your neighbors, friends, and members of the community. When you're without power, some of our employees may be out of power, too.

3. A team effort: Every employee is working to get your power restored as soon as possible. Our member services representatives are taking your calls, field staff are surveying damage, foremen are organizing crews, and communicators are keeping everyone informed of progress or potential

dangers. We all work together as quickly and safely as possible to get you back to normal.

4. Assessing the situation: Every outage is different, and we don't know what kind of danger is involved or what equipment may need to be replaced. We must evaluate the problem, develop a plan, and determine which materials are needed to restore power. Restoration must be done without compromising electric service for other members.

5. Additional resources: Depending on the damage and number of outages, we may need

Continued on 18C ▶

A dozen things to consider (continued)

additional support. This could include having our office personnel answer members' calls all the way up to requesting assistance from neighboring cooperatives. This is one of the cooperative principles — cooperation among cooperatives.

6. Restore the most, first:

Restoration is normally prioritized by the largest number of members we can get back on in the shortest amount of time. After addressing public safety issues, we complete work that impacts the largest number of members first.

7. Employees' safety: Besides working around high voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for falling trees, fast-moving cars, and inclement weather. Many of the country roads are dark and narrow, so slow down and give our line crews some room to work.

8. Flickering is not an outage: Don't mistake flickering lights for

an outage. These are blinks, which indicate our equipment worked and prevented a possible outage likely caused by animals or tree limbs brushing against the lines.

9. Have a backup plan: We do our best to keep your power on, but if you depend on electricity for life support, you need a generator or alternative power source for emergencies. Remember, we don't always know how long restoration efforts will take. If you're unsure what to do, call us. While we may not be able to predict the length of the outage, we could determine that it could be extensive and advise relocation for those dependent on electricity for survival.

10. Crews plan and eat when possible: If you ever see our trucks in a restaurant parking lot while your power is out, know that sometimes our employees huddle in a safe, common area to map out their plan for getting your power back on. Also, our

crews work long, hard hours during outages and need to take time for meals just like everyone else.

11. The waiting game: Our portion of the power grid starts at the substation and is connected to transmission lines supplied by other electric utilities. We maintain a good working relationship with the interconnected utility companies and notify them when there is an interruption from their feed into our substation transformers. We must let them do their repairs and be mindful of what they're going through to fix it.

12. Outages will happen: We do our best to avoid power disruptions, but they are inevitable from time to time. If the lights go out, know that your co-op team is working as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. If you experience an outage, please let us know by calling at 217-438-6197.

COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.

WEATHER

High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.

CRITTERS

Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.

ACCIDENTS


Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.

Scheduled MAINTENANCE

Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

RECC students meet lawmakers at Youth Day



On March 25, 168 Illinois students gathered at the State Capitol for Youth Day. The annual event was sponsored by electric cooperatives and designed to introduce young leaders to state government. The event promotes one of the cooperative's core principles, serving our communities. Students met with elected officials, explored historic sites and experienced the workings of state government firsthand.

Representing Rural Electric Cooperative were Elizabeth Allen from Palmyra and Lydia Megginson from Pawnee.

"As cooperatives, we're committed not only to providing reliable service but also to investing in the next generation," said Brooke Gross, member services manager at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and facilitator of its youth programs. "Youth Day helps students understand the cooperative difference and the impact they can have as informed citizens."

After meeting State Senators McClure and Tracy, the RECC students learned more about the cooperative's role in their own community. They had the opportunity to tour the Capitol Building and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

During lunch, Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs addressed the students. He shared his journey from a small town in Illinois to his current role, emphasizing the importance of finding interesting and challenging opportunities. He encouraged students to pursue their passions, participate, and become lifelong learners.

"You have found time to participate here today by coming to Youth Day," Frerichs said. "You're talking to people. You are learning. And I'll tell you that learning never stops. It only stops when you decide you don't want to learn anymore. ... If you decide to push yourself and become a lifelong learner, you'll grow from it."

In addition to Youth Day, Elizabeth Allen and Lydia Megginson were selected to participate in Youth Tour, an annual trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by the cooperatives. The two students represented RECC on a weeklong trip where they learned firsthand how cooperatives work.

"From touring Washington, D.C., to learning the cooperative difference, Youth Tour is much more than a trip," said President/CEO Sean Middleton. "It's a learning experience they will carry long after high school."



**Our office will be closed
on Friday, July 3rd, for
Independence Day.**