



CLARKE REC Headlines

The official publication of Clarke Electric Cooperative



SAFETY DRIVEN | ENERGY SMART | COMMUNITY INVESTED Volume No. 81 No.1 | January 2021



#PowerOn

Energy Efficiency



Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs, and washing clothes in cold water can help you save. 61-31-07-02

Looking Out for You: November Outages

- Equipment failure – 10
- Motor Vehicle – 2
- Unknown – 4
- Construction – 1



CLARKE
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Safety Driven • Energy Smart • Community Invested
Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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2020 Service Awards

EVERY YEAR, THE CLARKE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE FAMILY CELEBRATES and recognizes employees and board members who have achieved a longevity milestone. Though we can't be all together, we'd like to highlight the following staff and board members for their years of service:



2 YEARS



Dylan Bragg
Apprentice Lineman



Kim Griffin
Billing Specialist



Cori Smith
Customer Service/
Cashier



Sam Walkup
Manager of Finance



15 YEARS
Nick Gannon
Field Staking Engineer



1st TERM
Cody Miller
Board of Directors



4th TERM
Larry Jackson
Board of Directors



Bill Willis
Board of Directors



5 YEARS
Stephanie Moore
Operations & Engineering
Administrative Assistant

Board Approves 2021 Work Plan and Budget



SAM WALKUP
Manager of Finance

CLARKE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS approved the 2021 budget during the November Board of Directors meeting.

Board duties include overseeing and guiding the cooperative's capital and operational budgets. Each year, board members review the budget and workplan developed by the management team with a focus on Clarke Electric's mission to be "Safety Driven, Energy Smart, and Community Invested."

The budget process takes several months and involves numerous formal and informal meetings. The cooperative management team meets with their department employees

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Reading pays! We have hidden two of our members' account numbers in this issue. If you find your member location number, call during January to have \$10 deducted from your monthly energy account.



THE YEAR 2020 WILL GO DOWN IN the history books as one to remember. At many points throughout the year, it seemed as if headlines were made while we were sleeping. And by the time we awoke, the world we knew no longer existed. Everything was different. We wiped the sleep from our eyes and braced for whatever was coming next.

Early in 2020, the team at Clarke Electric Cooperative kicked off our ambitious renovation project and prepped for spring projects. We held optimism close, and many of us were excited about the changes that would bring the cooperative into the 21st century. At the same time, we watched the news and became familiar with the terms "coronavirus," "COVID-19" and "pandemic" while watching the number of infections spread across the globe.

And then early one March morning, we came face to face with a few other terms: "quarantine," "social distancing" and "isolation," as we talked about what each of these would mean to our team. In the matter of one short week, Clarke Electric Cooperative had to rethink how we would conduct business while keeping our workforce, membership and public safe.

With little options left, staff that could work remotely were sent home. Critical staff – like our line crew – were separated, placed in individual trucks, given PPE and directed to work as independently as possible. We made the difficult decision to close our lobby, a lifeline from us to our membership (because we always enjoy chatting with those who stop by). We thought we could hunker down and wait out the month and the "short" storm to pass. What we didn't understand at that time was that the storm would not pass anytime soon. We had to start looking at this as a long-term situation.

We continued to make adjustments to staffing and line crew schedules and procedures through the middle of summer. Learning ways to safely social distance, wearing masks and using hand sanitizer became common practices in our work and home routines. Office workers continued to work remotely until June. Our operations teams took cooperative trucks home to avoid having to come into the office and risk being in close proximity with other workers. We found a way to make it work while being safe, efficient and productive.

Around the time we started to see a second rise in coronavirus infections, Clarke Electric had reached the point in the renovation that required us to move our offices. This was done carefully and with thoughtful planning so as to avoid making too great an impact on our membership. Through it all, our goal was to continue providing safe, affordable and reliable electric service.

As we moved into late 2020, some teams returned to the headquarters while others continued working from home. Our priority has been, and always will be, the safety of our workers, our membership and our communities. So even as we carried out our new safety protocols, we completed upgrades to three substations, construction and maintenance projects, pole replacements and

built new services. In September, we held our first-ever "member less" annual meeting. Conducting board meetings virtually via Zoom were our new normal. And, we started a Facebook page to help us to better connect with you because we couldn't in person. We were able to accomplish each of these things despite the uncertainty in our world.

Now, as we enter 2021, I am proud to say that the perseverance and resilience of our team has helped us find our way through the pandemic and renovation project with minimal disruption to our work routines. Our team met each challenge with dedication, optimism and fortitude. I am so proud to be a part of this team. We hope you are too! Welcome to 2021 as we **#PowerOn** into a new year!



DAVE OPIE
General Manager



Virtual board meetings became part of the co-op's new normal in 2020.



CONNECT WITH US ONLINE!



Website: Check out our new website at www.cecnet.net!



SmartHub: See account information, and pay your bill at cecnet.smarthub.coop or on the SmartHub app



Outage Center & Map: View outages on SmartHub or at cecnet.net



Online Forms: Find rebates, service requests and sign up for programs

Call Before You Dig: Notify utilities before you dig at www.iowaonecall.com or by calling 8-1-1

Facebook: Find co-op news and updates at facebook.com/CECIowa

Clarke REC Headlines: Email clarke@cecnet.net to receive your monthly newsletter electronically

+ Safety Driven: Excessive Clutter is a Fire Hazard

ARE YOU LIKE MILLIONS OF Americans who vowed to get organized in 2021? If so, you're not only helping to make your life easier, but also safer! 38-12-01-00

The thing about clutter is that it can accumulate to the point of creating a dangerous situation, without a homeowner ever knowing what is happening. It may be something that slowly creeps up on you

after years of accumulation and rarely throwing anything away. Before you know it, you have a fire hazard on your hands. According to the National Fire Prevention Association

(NFPA), fires in homes that were moderately to severely cluttered or in a state of disrepair are more likely to result in the death of the home's occupants.

Clutter is a safety issue when it impedes free movement around the house. In addition to causing falls (more than 1.6 million seniors suffer injuries from falls at home every year), clutter can prevent someone from exiting the home safely in the event of a



fire. What would you do if your only escape route during a house fire was a first-floor window you couldn't reach because stacks of clutter blocked it? Clutter can also inhibit the ability of firefighters to rescue the occupants of a home, and other efforts to battle a blaze.

Clutter, in general, is a fire hazard, particularly when stacks of old newspapers or magazines have dried out over the years.

This creates a virtual tinder box just waiting for one spark to ignite a single page. Sometimes clutter can become so pervasive that it invites household

pests including mice, rats and cockroaches. In addition to poor sanitary conditions, these pests can cause structural damage to your home and chew on wiring that can create a fire hazard.

Need some help getting started decluttering? Try these ideas: www.becomingminimalist.com/creative-ways-to-declutter.



2021 Budget...from pg. 1

to ascertain budget needs and receive feedback on budget requests. When that is completed, the management team then meets first with the cooperative board finance committee, and then the board of directors as a whole, who will vote to approve or amend the proposed budget.

The budget process focuses on various projections for the coming year. We look at what we anticipate for purchased power, usage, our general workplan, and other capital and operational needs. Maintaining the financial integrity of the cooperative and meeting industry benchmarks are a major focus of this process since the budget serves as the cooperative's financial guide for the upcoming year.

Below are some of the budget highlights approved for 2021, including vehicle purchases and system upgrades to help deliver on our commitment to you, our member-consumers:

- Replace a 2009 International truck with a 2020 Altec bucket truck;
- Add new underground and overhead lines and services;
- Loop upgrades;
- Pole inspections and replacements;
- Substation upgrades and improvements;
- Right-of-way clearing – tree clearing;
- Replacement projects for underground services and 8A wire; and
- Building renovation.

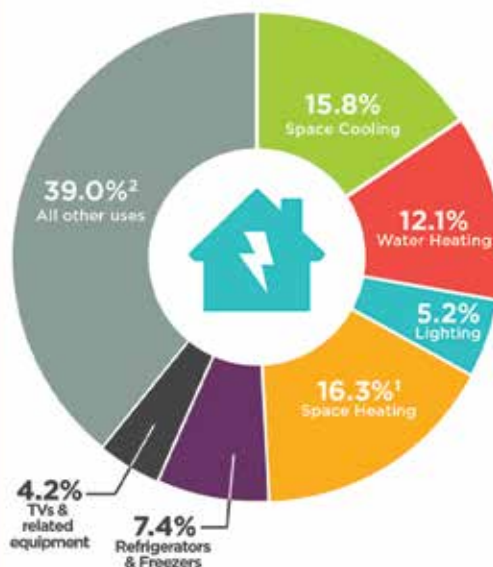
How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" at right) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.

Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020

¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps

²Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.





Energy Smart: 5 Ways to Stay Cozy This Winter

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE! WHEN you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat.

Here are five ways to stay cozy this winter:

1. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.
2. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
3. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open all curtains, drapes and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you'll be able to feel the difference.
4. Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.



5. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate!



The Cooperative Difference: Connecting with Legislators

COOPERATIVE DIRECTORS AND employees attended a virtual annual event recently to meet and discuss important issues impacting cooperative members with our elected officials.

Even when we are unable to meet face to face, maintaining relationships is key to knowing who to call when we have an issue that impacts our cooperative members.

This annual event gives your cooperative a chance to talk about these key topics in detail with our area representatives and express any concerns. It also gives our legislators a chance to hear firsthand how your electric cooperative is different from municipal and investor-owned utilities, as well as issues impacting fairness down the lines and offer support for programs that promote rural growth opportunities.

Statewide, RECs will welcome legislators back to the Capitol as they begin their 2021 Legislative Session Jan. 11. Your cooperative will also participate in the annual REC Day on the Hill in March, another opportunity to advocate for Iowa's electric cooperatives during session.

Heat your home efficiently.

Right about now you might be thinking your furnace could use an upgrade. Ever thought about an energy-efficient electric heat pump? Call our office to find out more about how the switch can save you money and keep you comfortable all winter long. **Visit our website to learn more about going electric – and find rebates on new equipment.**



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

David Opie, General Manager

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