

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF  FRANKLIN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

August 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## A free lunch could cost you thousands

A WORD FROM



**Garrett Thompson**  
Chief Executive Officer

Recently I received a flyer at my personal residence offering a free meal if I sat through an hour-long sales pitch on solar panels. I was scheduled to be out of town the day they had the seminar, so I was unable to attend in person. Naturally, working for an electric cooperative, I was curious how they would portray us and our rates to our membership.

We have had issues in the past with solar companies promising one thing without speaking to us, the area electric provider, only to have the member(s) frustrated after they have signed the solar panel agreement and learn that our net metering structure is not set up the way the solar company described.



Locally owned and governed by the member-consumers we serve, Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative fully supports energy-efficiency efforts. In fact, we own and operate four solar arrays within our service territory. One of those arrays, located at our headquarters, is a community solar program. Often, members have found it more economical and much easier to subscribe to a panel from us and receive the direct output from the panel for the next 20 years. This saves costly maintenance and repair bills because we take care of all of that for you.

If you instead decide to work with a solar panel company, consider asking them some or all of the following questions:

***On average, what is the economic breakeven point for ground and rooftop solar?***

- You should see a payback period of around eight years, but it could be upwards of 15 years depending on the price of the system.
- As of 2021, our community solar program has a nine-year payback.

***How does the solar company handle utility rates in their breakeven analysis?***

- I'm proud to share that Franklin REC's average annual rate increase since the year 2004 is just under 1 percent. Most solar companies use an annual price increase between 3 percent - 5.5 percent.

***What kWh rate is used in your net metering calculation?***

- Franklin REC does offer net metering to our members that have solar or wind generation. We buy back any unused kilowatts at the end of the month at .02267/kWh, which is calculated and provided from our power supplier.

***If someone were to install rooftop solar, what is the procedure for removing the panels when the roof needs to be replaced? Is that something I'd pay for out of pocket? If so, how much does that cost?***

- Unfortunately, we have heard horror stories from other electric cooperatives of individuals installing rooftop solar only to need their roof replaced a few years later. The reported cost for the company to remove the panels and then re-install them once the roof is replaced can be upwards of \$20,000.

***With any of the agreements, whether direct with the consumer or with the lending institutions you work closely with, will there be a UCC-1 (or lien) filed on my home/property?***

- Some companies will claim they won't put a lien on your house if you finance the solar panels through them or a lender they work closely with. However, they will file a UCC-1 against your property, which is just another name for a lien. This could cause issues should you want to sell your property if the potential buyer(s) are not interested in inheriting the lien.

I hope the list of questions and comments help you, a friend, or a neighbor. If you have additional questions, please let us know. We are also happy to speak directly with any solar company you may be working with, so that you receive accurate information. Also, if you would like more information about our community solar program, we would be happy to help with that too. Call us at 641-456-2557 to discuss your options.



## Stop by and see us at the Iowa State Fair!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the Bruce Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair. We are proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned co-ops that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member-consumers use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair this summer, make sure to stop by and see us in the newly renovated 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. Come into the air-conditioned facility for a break from the heat and look for us near the new concession area.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats for the kids while supplies last. They can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station!

Electric co-op members who take a quick survey on our iPads will automatically be entered into our fair contest. After the fair, three lucky winners will be randomly selected to choose one of three prize options:

- Roomba 614 Robot Vacuum
- DEWALT 20V MAX XR Blower
- Breville Smart Oven Pro

We will also announce the winners of our new Shine the Light contest during the fair. Iowa electric co-op member-consumers and employees had an opportunity to nominate local community volunteers for the contest in June. Three deserving volunteers will each receive a \$1,500 donation for their charity as we celebrate our cooperative commitment to community.

We look forward to connecting with our co-op members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!

## Electrical safety basics for back to school

As children head back to school, parents can teach them a valuable, potentially life-saving lesson: to respect electricity.

Here are five electrical safety basics every child should know:

- 1. Mixing water and electricity can harm you.** Teach children not to use electrical toys or other devices near water or in the rain.
- 2. Electrical outlets have limits.** Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.
- 3. When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord.** Yanking a cord out of an electrical outlet can damage the appliance, the outlet or the plug, leaving the appliance or toy unable to operate safely.
- 4. Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines.** If a tree has a power line running through it—or if it's even within reach of the line—that's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.
- 5. Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and pets out.** If a toy or small pet gets inside of the fence, the child should tell a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it.

### Using a generator for backup power protection and peace of mind?



## Generate Safely.

Never use a portable generator indoors.

Do not plug generators into standard electrical outlets.

Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances into the generator.

Start the generator before connecting appliances.





## August 11 is 811 National Safe Digging Day

Don't start that project until you've located all underground utilities. Contact Iowa One Call at 811 at least 48 hours before work is scheduled to begin.

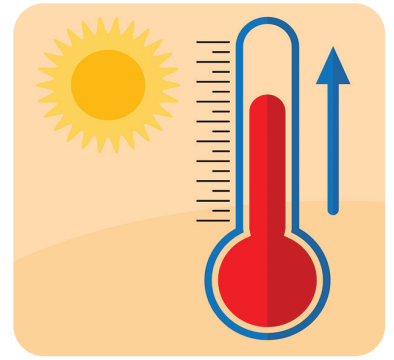
As an Iowa law, you are required to contact One Call so that utilities can mark their services. The call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Making the call can eliminate disruption of service and more importantly, reduces the chance of injury.

Take the time to make the call. It's a fast, free call that will help keep you, your family, and your farm safe. Or, visit [www.iowaonecall.com](http://www.iowaonecall.com) to request your locate.

## Keep cool during August heat

Unless you keep your thermostat so low that you send your cooling bill through the roof in August, it's a good idea to find some energy-friendly ways to keep your cool during the hottest month of the year. Here are five tips:

1. **Take cool showers.** If your house isn't cold—and there's no reason it should be, even with the air conditioner on—ease up on the hot showers. A cool shower will lower your body temperature and get you just as clean.
2. **Chill the meal plan.** Instead of baking, broiling, boiling, sautéing and frying every night, how about chopping fresh veggies, making colorful salads and satisfying your family's hunger with healthy raw foods that will fill them up and give your stove and oven a break?
3. **Filter the sun.** Install solar screens or window films on east- and west-facing windows so you can keep the heat out while allowing the light to come in.
4. **Seal leaks and cracks.** You'll find them all over your home—around windows, doors, and electrical and cable outlets. It's easy to caulk and weatherstrip, and it's an activity you can do with your kids as you teach them to use energy responsibly.
5. **Schedule a check-up.** Even if you skipped your air conditioner's spring maintenance, go ahead and schedule it now. Your HVAC tech can tell you if your air conditioning unit is running efficiently.



## Affordable electricity powers quality of life By Anne Prince

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater, and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones, computers, TV, and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. Typically when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity.

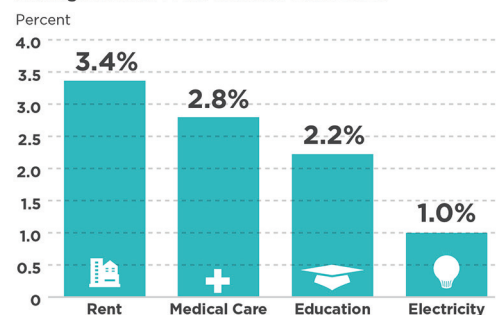
Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses. Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4%, medical care increased 2.8%, and education increased 2.2%. But the cost of electricity only increased 1%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity—it's a necessity. That's why we will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

### ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

# Franklin REC receives grant to help Bradford Fire Department

As part of our Commitment to Community, Franklin REC was recently awarded a CoBank Sharing Success grant on behalf of the Bradford Fire Department (pictured right). The grant monies will cover the entire remaining cost of LED headlamps for the firefighters' helmets.

CoBank is a cooperative bank providing loans; leases; export financing; and other financial services to agribusinesses and rural power, water, and communications providers across the United States.



## Scenes from the Franklin County Fair



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