



Corning | Mount Ayr | Stanton

Southwest lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

May 2015

New Phone System Enhances Member Support

STARTING JUNE 1, SOUTHWEST IOWA REC will roll out a new, updated phone system with enhanced capabilities that will improve how we communicate with our members.

Last month we told you that the three Southwest Iowa REC locations – Corning, Mount Ayr and Stanton – each have their own local phone number as well as an individual toll-free 888 number. With the new system, members can simply call **(888) 220-4869** to reach any of our three locations. Calls will be answered by an auto attendant that will then get you to the right person quickly.

“Our member support options will be much more reliable on the new system and provide a streamlined member experience when they call us,” said Phil Kinser, CEO. “With one phone number instead of three, we will function more as one organization. As part of this change, our Internet service will also be upgraded which will be a great benefit to responding to our members.”

When you receive your bill this month, you’ll also receive a refrigerator magnet with the new phone number and additional information for you to keep handy.



“The new system allows us to streamline the customer service experience for our members as well as co-op employees,” Kinser added.

You Get the Credit: Board Approves Patronage Allocation for 2014

ONE OF THE MANY BENEFITS OF BEING A Southwest Iowa REC member is the allocation of excess revenue, called margins, in the form of patronage capital credits. In March, the Board of Directors allocated margins of

\$770,480.82 for 2014. That means you’ll receive a portion of that allocation based upon the amount you paid for electricity in

2014 in proportion to what other member-owners paid. Since

electric co-ops operate at cost,

we collect just enough revenue to run and expand the business without the need to raise rates to generate profits for shareholders, like investor-owned utilities. After the annual independent audit of the books, these margins are allocated to the various reserve accounts and also to the member-owners who received service from the Cooperative during the year the margin was created.

The majority of the 2014 allocation, \$706,362.13, will be type “Co-op,” with the balance of \$64,118.69 as type “G&T” – generation and transmission. The “G&T” portion comes from our power supplier,

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), and will only be paid out to our members when the cooperative receives that portion in cash. This amount may not be received for up to 40 years.

Southwest Iowa REC has a goal to retain the “Co-op” allocated funds for no longer than 20 years. We have been able to reduce that retention time to 16 years and maintain a solid financial position. Member-owners who purchased electricity from us in 2014 will receive a Patronage Allocation notice letter in the mail in late May or early June.

Asking the Right Questions About Solar



Phil Kinser

WHENEVER A LARGE PURCHASE IS BEING considered, it's important to do your homework and ask good questions. For example, if you're purchasing a new home, a personal vehicle, or farming equipment, there are certain questions you ask to ensure you make the right purchase to align with your needs. When purchasing a personal vehicle, you are likely to look at how you are going to use it before making a decision. Is it going to be used primarily to get you to and from work, do you have children who need to be transported to and from activities, or are you going to be hauling goods and equipment? You'll likely consider things such as vehicle size, buying vs. leasing, new vs. used, fuel economy, safety performance, and available incentives. Your goal is to end up with a vehicle that best meets your unique needs. These same principles apply if you are considering investing in a solar distributed generation system.

First and foremost, if you are considering a solar distributed generation system, talk to Southwest Iowa REC's staff at the beginning of your process. We'll recommend you also talk to credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals and knowledgeable in distributed generation. These resources can help you understand the economics of a distributed generation system, what type of renewable energy technology would be best for your property, and financing, incentives, and other requirements, such as insurance.

Completion of an energy efficiency audit is an important precursor to considering distributed generation. Implementing energy efficiency measures before installing a distributed generation system can save you money by reducing your overall energy or water consumption, which subsequently reduces the size of the distributed generation system you'll need to meet your energy needs.

Talking to Southwest Iowa REC's staff and asking questions is an important part of the process from the start. For example, if you're considering solar panels for your property,

some of the questions you should ask us include:

1. Does Southwest Iowa REC have a written policy for interconnecting my solar panel to the grid? Ask us for a copy.
2. Are there any costs for me to connect my solar panel to the grid?
3. If my solar panels generate electricity that I do not use what is the Southwest Iowa REC's policy for paying me for these excess kilowatt-hours?
4. What rate code will I be on after I install solar panels?
5. Is Southwest Iowa REC considering any rate design changes that might impact my decision to install solar? How would I be impacted?
6. Will I be able to use my solar panel as backup generation during an ice storm or other outage situation?
7. Do I need to have my solar panels inspected by a qualified local inspector or the State of Iowa?
8. Does Southwest Iowa REC have other resources that might help me understand my decision to purchase solar panels?
9. Should I wait to implement energy efficiency

until after I install the panels?

10. What type of records should I keep?

There are other significant questions that should be a part of your decision-making process, such as if solar generation is the right source of generation for you based on your energy use patterns. The Iowa Utilities Board – a regulatory entity for utilities in Iowa – recently developed a Consumer Informational Guide for On-Site Generation, which outlines additional questions that will aid in your decision-making process.

With the help of our statewide association, we also have developed a series of checklists, considerations, and questions to ask potential solar vendors to help you navigate the waters of distributed generation. Visit our website, www.swiarec.coop, or contact our Member Services department for these guides.

Connecting with your co-op early in the process if you're considering a distributed generation system is critical to the success of your investment. We'll make sure you're asking the right questions and provide straightforward answers so you can make informed decisions.

FOR SALE

1993 Ford F350 Dually 4x4

Flatbed (7.5' x 9') with hydraulic dump
 5-speed manual transmission
 124,380 miles-subject to change as vehicle is still in use
 460 V8 gas engine
 Jan. 2015 - over \$1,200 spent on ball joints, brakes, calipers and rotors
 Sold as-is, no warranty



Vehicle may be seen May 11-18 at our Corning office, 1801 Grove Avenue, and from May 19-27 at our Mt. Ayr office, 1502 W. South Street. Business hours are Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sealed bids are due by close of business May 27, 2015 and will be opened May 28, 2015. Only the winning bidder will be notified. Please mark your envelope "Flatbed Bid" and mail it to the following address: Southwest Iowa REC, 1801 Grove Avenue, Box 367, Corning, IA 50841; Attn: Phil Kinser. Southwest Iowa REC reserves the right to refuse any and all bids.

Save The Date for 2015 Annual Meeting Sept. 22

PLANS ARE WELL UNDERWAY FOR Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2015 and plan to join us at the Lenox Community Center. The business session will be called to order at 7 p.m.

The agenda includes reports of the cooperative's 2014 operations and, perhaps most importantly, the election of four directors to serve three-year terms. Directors whose terms expire at the Annual Meeting in September are:

Region 1, District #1 – Jack Stephens

Region 1, District #3 – Dale Walkup

Region 2, District #5 – Glen Roberts

Region 2, District #7 – Dana Morgan

A nominating committee will be selected at the May 28 board meeting that will find qualified candidates to run for each of these positions. Once the slate of candidates is chosen, members will be given the opportunity to vote by mail or in person at the Annual Meeting. A detailed explanation of the nominating and election process will be provided in the next newsletter. If you are interested in being considered to serve on the nominating committee this year, please contact Phil Kinser at (888) 591-1261.

Changes to After Hours Calls In Effect May 21

SOUTHWEST IOWA REC IS CHANGING HOW OUR AFTER-HOURS OUTAGE CALLS are processed. Effective May 21, we will use the Cooperative Response Center (CRC) for this service. CRC is a nationwide, cooperatively owned and operated, 24/7 contact center. Founded in 1992, CRC has steadily increased in the size and scope of its operation with offices in Austin, Minn., Dunlap, Tenn., and Abilene, Texas. They provide services to over 300 electric utility members and associate members in 41 states, representing over 4.7 million consumers. This change will result in a greater capacity to handle after-hours outage calls and provide an enhanced level of service to our member-consumers.



Now on Facebook

SOUTHWEST IOWA RURAL ELECTRIC Cooperative is now on Facebook! Like our page and stay up to date with the most current news and events and enjoy special features such as weekly energy efficiency and electrical safety tips.



Reduce Energy Use During Peak Hours

PEAK HOURS ARE THE BUSIEST TIMES for your local electric cooperative, since many people are using electricity at the same time. In addition, it costs your co-op more to generate electricity when demand soars during peak periods – and the cost of your electricity also may rise. Obviously, using less electricity during peak periods can save your co-op – and you – money.

- Use the most energy-efficient appliances you have. Your microwave oven, for example, uses considerably less energy than your stove or cooktop.
- If you're buying a new appliance, make sure you get a highly efficient one. Look for "Energy Star" labels when you're evaluating different models.
- Be aware of your energy consumption, and try to get in the habit of using energy efficiently year-round.

Here's how you can help during peak hours, which generally are on the hottest summer days between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.:

- Shift household chores and activities away from peak periods. Wait to run your dishwasher until you go to bed, for instance.
- If you have air conditioning, turn the thermostat up when you are gone and at night. Cool only the rooms that you are using.

Use the energy you need, but use it wisely! You'll help your co-op avoid building expensive new power plants – and that, in turn; will help keep your electric rates stable.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Circulate savings! Ceiling fans are a great way to keep cool during summer months and can even allow you to raise your thermostat setting about 4° without affecting your comfort. *Source: energy.gov*

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Name: Paul Vanderholm.
Family: Three children: Heidi, 17; Jody, 15; and April, 10.
Date of Hire: November 1, 1978 – April 16, 1987 and January 17, 2005 - present.

Current Position: Lineman.

Favorite Recipe: Chicken Breast with Gravy.

Bravo!

I would like to thank the REC employees that came out to find where my high usage was coming from. They were prompt and very thorough. —*Mary Morehouse*

Thanks for the good service! Also enjoy the recipes. —*Helen Trust*

Thank you for the repair to our lines the other night. Your prompt attention and service is greatly appreciated! —*Rand & Eileen Carlson*

We would like to extend our appreciation for your gift contribution to the 2015 MCMH benefit raffle. It is your generosity that made the benefit a success. —*Montgomery County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary*

On behalf of the entire Lenox Neighborhood Center Board, we extend our thanks for your recent donation for our fundraiser auction. We appreciate your support.

—*Debbie Tillman, Center Director*

Chicken Breast with Gravy

Ingredients:

- 5 boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut in half
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 10 slices bacon
- 1 pint (16 oz.) sour cream
- ½ lb dried beef
- 1 8oz. pkg cream cheese
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- Minute rice (serving size as desired)

Preheat oven to 300°. Cut the dried beef into small pieces and put in the bottom of



a glass 9" x 13" pan coated with nonstick spray. Wrap a slice of bacon around each half breast and lay on top of dried beef. Mix the soup, sour cream, and cream cheese together and pour over chicken. Bake 2 hours covered and 1 hour uncovered.

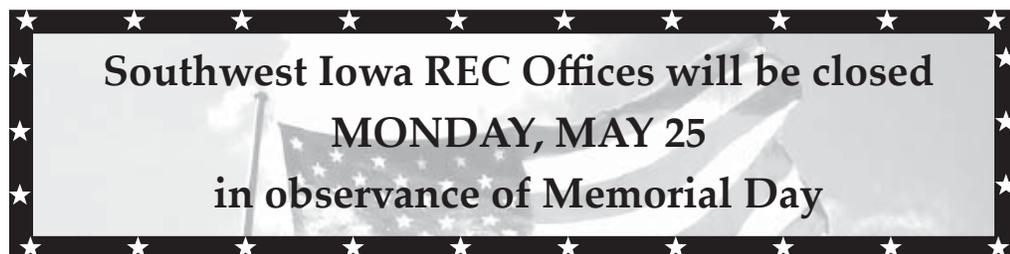
Cook rice as directed, adding bouillon cube to water. Serve with chicken dish.

Putting safety first

IT'S MAY – AND SOUTHWEST IOWA REC is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is top priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety excellence.

This year, we're focusing on electrical safety in the home. Electricity is the cause of over 140,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 deaths, 4,000 injuries and 1.6 billion in property damage, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

There are many measures you can take to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Please visit www.esfi.org or www.swiarec.coop for helpful tips to safeguard your home.



Corning

1801 Grove Ave., Corning, IA 50841
 (641) 322-3165 / (888) 591-1261

Mount Ayr

1502 W. South St., Mount Ayr, IA 50854
 (641) 464-2244 / (888) 220-4869

Stanton

415 Broad Ave., Stanton, IA 51573
 (712) 829-2211 / (888) 591-1260

Board of Directors

Richard Fast, President	Mark Herzberg
Marilyn Werner, Vice President	Dennis Meier
Jack Stephens, Treasurer	Dana Morgan
Dale Walkup, Secretary	Ken Peppmeier
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Phil Kinser, CEO