



## Interested in community solar?

Have you been looking into solar power or solar panels for your home or business recently? Are the financial numbers not quite working out in your favor? Franklin REC can help! If you have driven past the company headquarters, it is hard not to notice the bank of solar arrays sitting out front. Those solar panels make up our community solar program.

How community solar works can be broken down into three steps:

1. **Construction** – Co-op builds the solar arrays, and members are eligible to buy subscriptions for a panel or panels;
2. **Energize** – Renewable electricity is generated and distributed to the power grid;
3. **Savings** – Members receive credits for the output of the panel they purchase.

One of the many advantages of a community solar project such as ours at Franklin REC is that there is no additional cost once the member purchases the panel. In 2021 a single panel costs \$588, with no other payments over the life of the program. Members will not have to worry about the costs of insurance, maintenance, or repairs. Those are handled by your cooperative.

So, what kind of savings can you expect to see on your monthly bill? On average, members have seen a \$5 credit on their



*Franklin REC's community solar array located south of our headquarters in Hampton.*

bill, which equals \$60 per year in savings on a single panel. The community solar program will be in place through the year 2042, which means over the next 21 years you will see a total savings of \$1,260. That is a 114 percent return on your initial investment! I wish my 401k statement could say the same.

Above all else, the environmental impact solar power has is fantastic. Twenty to twenty-five solar panels (equivalent to a roof top solar installation) would equate to the planting of around 150 trees every year ([newenglandcleanenergy.com](http://newenglandcleanenergy.com)). That means that over the life of our 508-panel solar array, it will have the environmental impact equivalent of planting nearly 80,000 trees!

If you are interested in purchasing a subscription for a panel, or multiple panels, please call the office. We are more than happy to help.

A WORD FROM



**Garrett Thompson**  
Chief Executive Officer

## New economic development director named

Mary Amsbaugh is no stranger to Franklin County. Although Amsbaugh, recently named Franklin REC's economic development director, grew up in Dougherty in neighboring Cerro Gordo County, she has been a Franklin County resident for 27 years.

A graduate of Iowa State University, Amsbaugh has worked for non-profit agencies and Floyd and Cerro Gordo Counties public health departments. Most recently, she was a human resource generalist and the community engagement coordinator for Sukup Manufacturing Co., Sheffield. Franklin REC is sharing her services with the Franklin County Development Association.

Of her new position, Amsbaugh commented, "I'm impressed by the teamwork that I've witnessed with the staff and board of directors. Everyone is willing to help where needed. I'm also impressed by the amount of knowledge and their willingness to take on something new. They keep the REC members in the forefront in their planning." Welcome to Franklin REC, Mary!



## Suds and savings in the laundry room

By Abby Berry, NRECA

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion



of energy consumption from major appliances. Follow these Department of Energy tips for saving on suds:

**Wash with cold water.** Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half.

**Wash full loads when possible.** Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy.

**Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle in the washer.** This setting removes more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.

**Dry heavier cottons separately.** Loads will dry faster and more evenly.

**Make use of the "cool down" cycle.** Your clothes will finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer.

**Use lower heat settings to dry clothing.** Regardless of drying time, you'll still use less energy.

**Use dryer balls.** Dryer balls help keep clothes separated for faster drying, and they can help reduce static, so you can eliminate dryer sheets.

**Switch loads while the dryer is warm.** This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.

**Clean the lint filter after each drying cycle.** If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.

**Purchase ENERGY STAR®-rated washers and dryers.** ENERGY STAR®-rated models rating use about 20% less energy than conventional models.

To learn about additional ways you can save energy at home, visit your Touchstone Energy cooperative website.



**BUILT** by our community.  
**SHAPED** by our community.  
**LED** by our community.

**WE'RE PROUD TO  
POWER YOUR LIFE.**

## Brownouts: What are they, and why do they happen?

The lights flicker and dim. Your computer screen goes dark. As soon as you start to wonder when or if you clicked save, the lights become brighter and everything seems to return to normal.



When these events occur simultaneously, it could mean that you have experienced a brownout. But what is a brownout, and how is it different from a blackout — also known as a power outage?

A brownout means that energy is reduced by 10 to 25 percent, where a blackout is a complete shutdown of power. Brownouts typically occur when outdoor temperatures are extreme, causing a significant spike in energy demand. This heightened demand can cause electricity production to be near or at capacity.

*To prepare for high-energy demand, we recommend:*

- Keeping your home stocked with flashlights, batteries, water, non-perishable food, and other emergency items in the event of an extended outage.
- Installing point-of-use surge protectors.
- Considering a whole-home surge protector, installed by a qualified electrician, which helps protect all your home's electrical devices.
- Having a fully charged portable power bank on hand. It is also good to have a fully charged cell phone on hand in case of an emergency.

*During high-energy demand, we recommend:*

- Unplugging unessential appliances. If done in multiple homes, it may help shorten the length of the brownout.
  - Unplugging computers and high-end electronics to protect them from potential damage caused by power sags and surges.
- For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

# Safety first: Take cover when a storm is brewing

Sometimes a storm pops up or changes direction without any warning, while other times it is forecast days in advance and follows its predicted course. In either case, knowing what to do can help to keep you safe.

## When a storm hits

- Never seek shelter under tall objects.
- Immediately vacate elevated areas.
- Get away from ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity—wires, fences, golf clubs.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Pick a safe place in your home, away from windows and doors.
- Know the difference between a weather watch and a warning. A watch means that the weather is possible in and near the area. A warning means that severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar.

## After the storm

- Never step into a flooded basement or other standing water or touch (or use) electrical appliances, cords, wires, or switches while you are wet or standing in water.
- Never go near a downed line. If you see one, call 9-1-1.
- If you encounter a downed power line while driving or after an auto accident, do not get out. Call 9-1-1 to report the downed line (pull over first if you are driving). If you must exit your vehicle after an accident because of a fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump out, landing with both feet together. Make solid hops with your feet together, hopping as far away as you can.
- If your home has been damaged by a flood, turn off the power to your house if it is safe to do so.
- If the wiring, electrical system, or appliances have been damaged by water, have your home inspected by an electrician; also, have appliances serviced by a qualified technician before using them.

For more information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR AFTER A STORM

When the skies clear and the birds sing, know that the storm's fury could have created **electrical hazards that you may or may not be able to see**. Conditions in which stray electricity could energize the area, a person or objects include:

### DOWNED POWER LINES

- On the ground.
- Under storm debris.
- Draped over or touching a metal fence.
- Covered by standing water.
- Across or by the road.
- Hidden in tree branches.

### OTHER POSSIBLE DAMAGE

- Drooping or sagging lines (never try to move one).
- Split or broken utility poles.
- Damage to a padmount transformer (green box).
- Lightning strike to a substation transformer.
- Damaged or unstable guy wires.

**NEVER GO NEAR** downed power lines or other damaged electrical equipment to assess damage or clean up the area. **STAY AWAY** and call 9-1-1 to report damage.

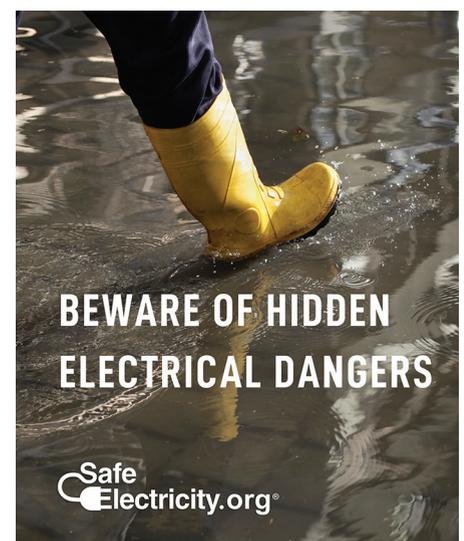
Power lines and other electrical equipment **do not have to be sparking, arcing (giving off a flame) or on fire to be energized**.

 Safe Electricity.org®



**Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$1,500 for their charity!**

Contest entries accepted during June at [IowaShineTheLight.com](http://IowaShineTheLight.com)



**BEWARE OF HIDDEN ELECTRICAL DANGERS**

 Safe Electricity.org®

# It's free ice cream time!

Franklin REC is pleased to announce our sponsorship for the Franklin County Fair July 14-18, 2021. We are once again providing ice cream coupons to our members, *watch your mail in June for your free ice cream coupon!* Take a trip to the fair and visit us at Grandpa's Farm, and be sure to watch for us in the fair parade.

## 5 reasons to have your air conditioner tuned up

Neglecting to maintain your air conditioning unit not only puts your family at risk of getting caught without cool indoor air on a sweltering summer day, it can unnecessarily cost you extra money.

Here are five reasons to have your air conditioner checked by an HVAC professional:

- 1. Prevent a breakdown.** A well-maintained air conditioning unit is less likely to break down unexpectedly when you have a house full of Fourth of July company or are enjoying a staycation at home with your family.
- 2. Identify needed repairs.** Like your car, a unit that is regularly tuned up will reveal small problems that the tech can repair before they become big ones or even ruin the device.
- 3. Keep it running efficiently.** A qualified service check will make sure your unit doesn't have any problems keeping it from operating efficiently. An efficiently operating unit doesn't have to work as hard as one with problems, so it uses less energy. That can save you money on cooling bills.
- 4. Extend its life.** A new air conditioner isn't cheap. If you keep yours in good shape, it will last longer, which means you won't have to shell out money for a new one so soon.
- 5. Feel comfortable.** An air conditioner that isn't working well might not cool your home evenly or enough. During a regular visit from a repair tech, you can explain which rooms never seem quite cool enough.



### Board room highlights

At their April meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Re-elected officers of the board: *Gordon Greimann, president; John Snyder, vice president; David Keninger, secretary/treasurer*
- Reviewed and accepted the auditor's report
- Approved donation to Bradford Fire Department from the Operation Roundup fund
- Approved work orders and special equipment
- Approved 2020 patronage allocation
- Approved 2021 patronage refund

At their May meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved special equipment
- Approved a donation to the CFC Integrity Fund
- Approved sponsorship of the Franklin County Fair
- Approved an employee policy



(L to R) Linemen Cole Marzen and Justin Wenzel recently attended an overhead workshop sponsored by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. Cole and Justin commented that the workshop was very educational and informative.