



Richland Electric  
Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# BACK TO SCHOOL

Electric co-ops are continually learning to improve service for members

**T**he new school year is here, and students of all ages are getting ready for a fresh year of learning! From kindergarten through college, students attend school to gain knowledge about a broad variety of subjects and learn new skills that will prepare them for the future. In a similar vein, Richland Electric Cooperative is continually learning in order to advance technology that improves electric service, reliability, and safety, and in turn enhances the quality of life for the members we serve.

Richland Electric keeps abreast of industry trends because the energy sector is rapidly changing. Innovations in technology and energy types are fueling demand for more options. On the consumer front, people are looking for more ways to manage their energy use with smart technologies. Consumers expect more convenient payment methods—whether through automatic bill pay, pre-pay, online, or in person. SmartHub, which is free to members, allows you to do more than simply pay your bill. You can quickly view your billing history, check your energy usage at any time, monitor your daily use, and even identify ways to lower your energy bill.

We're working to help sift through the options for our members in ways that benefit the greater community. At the same time, we never lose sight of the top priority—providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

## Technology improves operational efficiency.

For example, automated meter reading (AMR) is the technology of automatically collecting energy consumption data and transferring it from the meter to the co-op. Because this information can be collected remotely, it enhances our system's efficiency, helps control costs, and improves work processes.

Similar to AMR, there is another technology called advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). This is an integrated system of smart meters, communications networks, and data management systems that enables two-way communication between utilities and consumers. In the event of an outage, AMI helps to distinguish between events that impact a single home or multiple outages. This is critical because resolving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication is integral to AMI because it provides a means to verify that power has been restored after an outage. However, one of the biggest benefits from improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is pinpointing the outage location, which helps to reduce risk for crews out on the road during severe weather events.

In addition to providing essential information during major outages, Richland Electric analyzes AMI data for anomalies including faults, damaged meters, or energy theft. Detecting these problems early helps our cooperative save money and improve reliability for the whole community.

## Energy for the future.

Consumer interest in green energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high. Nationally, the increasing use of solar energy is paving the way for new methods of generating and using electricity. In our region, community solar programs allow co-op members to share in a remote solar array that generates electricity from the sun. U.S. energy experts say we will not be able to meet national energy goals unless we increase our solar energy capacity.

Whether it's examining green energy options or exploring how emerging technologies can better serve our members, for Richland Electric, our "school year" is never over. We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities for the future, and we will continue to study and research the issues so that we can better serve you, now and in the future.



# Take steps now to stay warm later

With the temperatures still warm and the sun shining brightly, it might seem a bit odd to be talking about getting ready for winter. However, this is the perfect time to begin preparing your home for the colder months ahead. Here are some low-cost—or no-cost—steps you can start taking now to stay warm and cozy later.



## Cover Drafty Windows

- Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.
- Install tight-fitting, insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.
- Explore other window treatments and coverings that can improve energy efficiency. Changing out your lighter summer curtains with heavier curtains made of insulating material can make a big difference.

## Find and Seal Leaks

- Visually inspect all the areas outside of your house where two different building materials meet for air leaks. These areas include exterior corners, outdoor water faucets, places where siding and chimney meet, and areas where the foundation and bottom of exterior or brick siding meet. Seal with caulking or weatherstripping.
- Check the inside of your house for any cracks and gaps that could cause air leaks. Look at areas like outlets, switch plates, electrical and gas service entrances. Seal these gaps with caulking or weatherstripping as well.
- Consider hiring a qualified technician to perform an energy audit on your home.

## Maintain Your Heating System

- Schedule service for your heating system. The first night of freezing temperatures is not the time to discover your furnace needs servicing.
- Replace the filter on your furnace or heat pump once a month or as needed.
- If you have a wood- or pellet-burning heater, clean the flue vent regularly and clean the inside of the appliance with a wire brush periodically.

## Reduce Heat Loss from the Fireplace

- Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a window wide open; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.
- If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue. Adding an electric fireplace insert gives you option of enjoying the cozy warmth and ambiance of a fire without having to open the damper.
- If you do use a fireplace, install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room.
- Check the seal on the fireplace flue damper and make it as snug as possible.

*Source: U.S. Department of Energy*



# HARVEST SAFETY TIPS FOR FARMWORKERS

- **Maintain a 10-foot clearance** around all utility equipment in all directions.
- **Use a spotter and deployed flags** to maintain safe distances from power lines and other equipment when doing field work.
- **If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, contact us immediately** by phone and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab, without touching it at the same time, and hop away to safety.
- **Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle.** Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipe and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

*Source: Safe Electricity*



# LEARNING FROM FARM LIFE

**Many people these days are in search of values to live by and to teach their children. Uneasiness has settled over many urban families as they work ever harder to make ends meet, educate their children, and provide a kind of family life with which they are comfortable and has lasting value.**

Many of these families are searching for a source of these values, and rural life is one place some of them are looking. When my book “Every Farm Tells a Story” first came out, I was signing books at a bookstore one evening. After my talk, people had lined up and I tried to take time to talk with each of them about my book. A younger woman, with her two boys, came through the line. She already had a copy of my book in her hand. She said to me, “Could I talk to you when you’ve completed signing?”

“Sure,” I said, fully expecting to hear how she had found an error someplace in the book and wanted to point it out to me. At other book signings, people had wanted to talk with me privately, and usually this is what they wanted to share.

I noticed that while I was signing books, she and her husband and two boys, about 8 and 10, remained in the background, quietly talking with each other and waiting.

When the last person came through the line, the family came up to the table. The boys were smiling, but stood back of their mother.

“My name is Nancy Thompson,” the woman said. “This is my husband, Tom, and my boys Josh and Kevin.”

“I’m pleased to meet you,” I said, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“I bought your book a few weeks ago,” She said. Here it comes, I thought. I wondered how badly I had goofed.

“My husband and I have been taking our boys out into the country, to our county parks. And we read to the boys from the book. After we’ve read a few pages, I ask them what they

think it means. We talk about it.”

I’m sure at this point my mouth must have dropped open as I sat rather dumbfounded at what I had just heard.

“Thank you for writing the book,” she continued. “It has given us to a chance to talk with our boys about something that we think is very important.”

“Thank you for telling me what you did,” I answered, finally gathering enough composure to say something halfway intelligent.

I chatted for a few minutes with the boys, about their interests, about their school, and what they thought of the countryside. Soon they said they had to leave, I shook hands with all of them and went home feeling good. This young family was clearly searching for values and believed that rural life was one place to look. There is much that can be learned from farm life, especially farm life before dramatic changes occurred in agriculture, driving many farmers off the land, and changing farm life in the process.

In this book I looked at the family farm and what made it special, at values associated with hard work, responsibility and what it meant to farm children. The differences between country and city living, what was lost when the threshing machine stopped touring rural communities, when the party-line telephone disappeared, and when the country schools closed.



For more about Jerry’s writing, go to [www.jerryapps.com](http://www.jerryapps.com).

## Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO

1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581  
608-647-3173  
[www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop)

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