



RELIABILITY REQUIRES INVESTMENT

By Tim Holtan, CEO

As your local power provider, Riverland Energy Cooperative's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid—through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur and create a stronger backbone for our growing community.

The demands on the electric grid are evolving rapidly. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and this trend is expected to continue. Technologies such as electric vehicles, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances, and new commercial facilities are adding significant load to the local distribution system. As these advancements take hold, the grid must be capable of supporting increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members expect. To address these challenges, Riverland Energy Cooperative has developed a strategic 4-year work plan with a budget of \$6.8 million annually, approved by the board, to guide system upgrades and ensure we can meet growing demand. This investment is aligned with REC's total equity and system size, positioning us effectively to keep up with load growth.

Riverland determines necessary upgrades using its system engineering model—an advanced, live model of REC's infrastructure. By inputting forecasted load growth into the model, we can proactively identify areas that require improvement. These system upgrades, including line rebuilds, cable replacements, and voltage regulators, enhance voltage support throughout our infrastructure. By taking a strategic approach to planning and investing, Riverland Energy is



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prepared to meet the needs of our members today and for decades to come.

Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience, it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

In 2026, Riverland Energy continues to prioritize system reliability as a key focus. One of our major initiatives includes rebuilding lines, with some overhead lines being transitioned to underground to improve durability and performance.

Specific projects include the lines from Highway 53 to Quarne Road, County Road D to Nyen Road, and Thompson Road to County Road I. Additionally, larger conductors are being installed to accommodate load growth and enhance reliability.

Another key improvement involves the deployment of VIPERs and TripSavers, which are advanced, smart devices that act like remote-controlled circuit breakers. Five years ago, the board approved the transition from traditional OCRs (Oil Circuit Reclosers) to the more efficient VIPERs and TripSavers. This decision has already enhanced system reliability and offers long-term cost savings, as OCRs require more frequent maintenance, whereas VIPERs and TripSavers do not. By 2026, all OCRs will be removed from the lines. With these advancements, Riverland Energy is strengthening its network to meet current needs and prepare for future demand.

Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, repair, and technological advancement we implement is an investment in your daily life, contributing to the comfort of your home, the success of local businesses, and the growth of schools in our community.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH RIVERLAND'S ROUNDING UP FOR COMMUNITY CARES!

Time is running out—apply by February 12, 2026!



Riverland Energy's Rounding Up for Community Cares program collects spare change by rounding up participating members' monthly bills. These small amounts, from \$0.01 to \$0.99, combine to fund local charitable projects and organizations.



Community Cares funds help support local projects, including a recent grant awarded to the City of Alma Library.

How to Request Funding:

If you have a community project in need of support, apply now!

- Complete the application online or call us to request a form.
- Include required documentation and submit before the deadline.

Guidelines to Remember:

Funds are distributed to non-profit or charitable organizations within Riverland's service area, with priority

Don't wait—act now! Join the program or submit your application today to help create positive changes in our community.

Deadline: February 12, 2026

**CALLING ALL
RIVERLAND ENERGY
MEMBERS**
ENTER OUR PHOTO CONTEST!



Get ready to show off your photography skills! Riverland Energy is kicking off a brand-new **Member Photo Contest**, and we're thrilled to invite YOU to participate!

Here's your chance to submit your favorite photos and compete to win a \$25 electric bill credit. Plus, the top-voted photos will appear in our special 2027 calendar, showcasing the incredible talent of our members!

How to Participate:

- Members can submit up to three photos.
- Photos should highlight the beauty of the seasons and demonstrate electrical safety.
- The deadline to submit is **August 31, 2026**.

Submit your photos online! Watch our Facebook page or visit our website for the submission link. Don't miss out on this fun opportunity to be creative, celebrate our community, and win a little extra for your energy bill!

Start snapping and good luck!



2026 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Due March 20, 2026



Traditional and At-Large Scholarships:

Riverland Energy is offering 30 scholarships, each worth \$1,000, to high school seniors whose parent or guardian resides within the Riverland Energy service area. Two graduating seniors from each of the following schools will be selected: Alma, C-FC, G-E-T, Independence, Osseo-Fairchild, Arcadia, Durand, Gilman, Mondovi, Whitehall, Blair-Taylor, Eleva-Strum, Holmen, and Onalaska. Additionally, two at-large scholarships will be awarded to eligible seniors who live in our service area but do not attend any of the listed schools.

One \$5,000 Luck of the Draw Scholarship:

Riverland Energy will draw one additional \$5,000 scholarship from all of the qualified applicants. The applicant, or the applicant's parent or guardian, must be present to win.

All scholarship recipients will be selected through a random drawing at Riverland Energy's Annual Meeting, held on Saturday, March 28, 2026.

Non-traditional Scholarships:

Riverland Energy is offering two \$750 scholarships to an adult student who is either headed to college for the first time, returning to complete an interrupted education, or looking to return to college to improve his or her career opportunities.

To be eligible to win:

- Traditional and At-Large applicants, or their parent/guardian, must be present at the Annual Meeting.
- Non-traditional applicants must personally attend the Annual Meeting

Deadline for all scholarship applications is March 20, 2026. Applications can be found on our website at riverlandenergy.com or through your high school guidance counselor.

FALL IN LOVE WITH ENERGY SAVINGS THIS VALENTINE'S DAY

This Valentine's Day, why not show some extra love... to your energy bill? Just like a great relationship, saving energy takes care, attention, and a little effort, but the rewards are so worth it! As you plan your romantic night in, consider these energy-saving tips to create a cozy atmosphere and keep love (and your savings) going strong.



Set the Mood with Energy-Efficient Lighting

There's nothing more romantic than soft, warm lighting for your special evening. Switch to dimmable LED bulbs to create that perfect glow while using up to 75% less energy than traditional bulbs. Add a few candles for extra ambiance, they're not only romantic but also electricity free!



Cook Up Romance with Energy-Smart Appliances

A home-cooked meal is the ultimate Valentine's gesture, and you can show love to the planet (and your wallet) too. Prepare your dinner with energy-efficient appliances like an air fryer or slow cooker, which use less energy than an oven. When using the

stove, keep lids on pots to cook faster and save energy. After you are finished, load the dishwasher – surprisingly, handwashing uses more water and energy!



Skip the Thermostat—Snuggle Instead

Rather than cranking up the heat, grab a warm blanket and cuddle up together. Layering up not only saves on your heating bill but also makes for a great excuse to stay close to your Valentine. That's the kind of energy efficiency you'll both appreciate!



Show Love All Year Long

Energy-efficient habits aren't just for Valentine's Day—they're for every day! Maintaining a happy home, like a healthy relationship takes consistent effort. Simple actions such as turning off unnecessary lights, sealing drafty windows, and unplugging unused devices can help you save energy and money throughout the year.

This Valentine's Day, fall in love with energy savings and enjoy a night that's both romantic and efficient. After all, saving energy might just be the second best way to keep the sparks alive!

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Jordan Tamke, Editor



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Call 1-800-927-6206 24 hours a day

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