



Bluestem NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Serving up Savings



Mike Morton

The holiday season is just around the corner and soon, festive music will flood the airwaves, sparkling lights and decorations will adorn homes and businesses,

and good tidings will abound.

The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking and family gatherings, and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills.

Keeping this in mind, I thought this month would be a good time to remind Bluestem Electric members of a few programs and efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use.

Programs Designed to Help You Save

Winter months typically bring some

of the highest energy bills of the year. Making minor, low-cost improvements, like weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows, can positively impact energy bills. If you are not sure where to start, check out www.bluestemelectric.com/save-your-bill for energy-saving tips and ideas to increase the energy efficiency of your home.

Attic Report Card provides Bluestem members with a free home attic inspection. Bluestem members can take advantage of this offer by calling 816-866-5070 with any questions or to make an appointment.

We also offer time-of-use electric rates, which can help you achieve greater savings by controlling when you use the most energy at home. With the SmartHub app you have the ability to track and monitor your daily usage at your residence.

Our member services team is also available to help, so I encourage you

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Offices Closed for Thanksgiving

Our offices will be closed Thursday, Nov. 23, and Friday, Nov. 24, in observance of the holiday. From our co-op family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving!



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to give us a call if you would like to learn about specific programs and services that can lower your bills.

Be Festive Without Breaking the Bank

Each year, as soon as we finish the Thanksgiving turkey, we begin preparing and hanging our favorite Christmas decorations. With Christmas lights adorning our home for well over a month, we switched to LEDs to save energy.

LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills will typically increase by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350. Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional benefits, such as being shock-resistant, shatterproof and cool to the touch, making them safer for the home.

You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers can help you save energy by connecting to a smartphone app or voice assistant to program lights to turn on and off at set times. If you do not use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers.

Additional easy ways to save during the holiday season

include turning off overhead lights and using your Christmas tree to illuminate your home. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when not in use to ensure heat does not escape through the chimney.

Cook Up Energy Savings in the Kitchen

If you plan to have family and friends over this holiday season, cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers and slow cookers when possible, as they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.

When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. After all, it takes as much energy to cook one dish as it does to cook several. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. Once the food is done, leave the oven door ajar to allow the residual heat to warm the room. When using the stove top, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stove top's efficiency.

I hope a few of these tips will be helpful as we approach the holiday season. Remember, we are here to answer any questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills. With a little planning up front, you can find efficient ways to save on everything from holiday décor to your favorite soup recipes.

OUTAGE TIMELINE



LINWORKER IS NOTIFIED

They ask questions to determine if it's an individual or section outage and its location.



CAUSE LOCATED — SAFETY FIRST

Once the cause is located, a safety briefing takes place, identifying hazards and locations of lineworkers and equipment. Lineworkers then isolate and ground the line to prevent backfeed.



REPAIRS COMPLETE

The lineworkers contact dispatch to get clearance to re-energize the line. Once dispatch confirms no one else is working on the line, the breaker is closed restoring power.



THE DRIVE

A crew is dispatched to the outage site. If after hours, lineworkers must travel from their homes, which often adds additional travel time.



WORK BEGINS

Lineworkers take special care and awareness to remove objects causing the outage. While crews work to clear the line, materials required for repairs are located and in transit.



POWER RESTORED — OUTAGE OVER

Restoration time varies by outage depending on the cause, location and materials needed for repair.



ARRIVAL AND INSPECTION

Crews visually inspect the line for open breakers and cause of outage. Evaluating the outage is time consuming but one of the most important steps of restoration.



MATERIALS ARRIVE

Materials and equipment arrive onsite to make the repair. Broken material is removed, inspections performed and repairs made.



CREWS RETURN SAFELY HOME

Our goal is to restore power safely and efficiently and ensure co-op employees go home safe after work is complete.



NOTE: OUTAGE AND RESTORATION TIMELINES VARY BY OUTAGE TYPE AND SEVERITY OF LINE DAMAGE.



10 Bluestem Offers SCHOLARSHIPS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. will award six \$1,000 scholarships and four \$750 scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

The scholarships will be awarded to the top 10 candidates who complete a two-stage process. The first stage will include an online application and test that must be completed **BY FRIDAY, JAN. 12, 2024, AT 4:30 P.M.** In the second stage, a panel of judges will interview finalists on **MONDAY, FEB. 19, 2024.**

For more information, contact your high school counselor **AFTER NOV. 6, 2023**, or call Bluestem Electric Cooperative at 785-456-2212.

2024 Bluestem Electric COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

The 2024 Bluestem Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on **MARCH 25, 2024**, at the United Methodist Church Family Life Center in Clay Center. Official notice of the annual meeting will be mailed no less than 10 days prior to the meeting.

We hope you will plan on attending the annual meeting and take part in the business of the cooperative.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and pressure cookers consume less energy. When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**




★ HONORING ALL WHO SERVED ★
VETERANS DAY
 From our co-op family to yours,
 Happy Veterans Day!

Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee nominated the following individuals as candidates for the trustee positions whose three-year terms will be expiring:

- ▶ **DISTRICT 1, POSITION 2**
BRUCE MEYER – Palmer
- ▶ **DISTRICT 2, POSITION 1**
GARY BUSS – Leonardville
- ▶ **DISTRICT 3, POSITION 1**
STEPHEN J O'SHEA – Blaine
- ▶ **DISTRICT 4, POSITION 1**
AMANDA GNADT – Alma
ERIC PECK – Manhattan

The election will be held by mail ballot in December. Each member will be mailed a ballot for the candidates in their district.

BALLOTS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE COOPERATIVE OFFICE BY JAN. 1, 2024.

Bluestem Welcomes Talsma

Bluestem welcomed **AUDRA TALSMAN** on Aug. 10, 2023, as our new human resources and accounting specialist.

Previously, Talsma was a regional HR business partner at Central National Bank. She is a graduate of Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in business administration and an associate degree from Butler Community College.

Talsma lives in Wamego with her husband, Weston, and their son, Everett, 2. They have a dog, Rex, and a cat, Archie.

"I am so excited for the opportunity to be part of the Bluestem team and look forward to helping the members," Talsma said.

Welcome to the cooperative family!



Audra Talsma

5 Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1 ENSURE CARBON MONOXIDE AND SMOKE DETECTORS ARE WORKING PROPERLY. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.

2 INSPECT ELECTRICAL CORDS. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double-check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip.

3 AVOID OVERLOADING ELECTRICAL OUTLETS AND POWER STRIPS. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for

multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

4 CLEAN THE FIREPLACE TO IMPROVE SAFETY

AND EFFICIENCY. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5 PRACTICE SAFETY IN THE KITCHEN. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

Bluestem wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season.



Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors once a month and clean them to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.



There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety.



Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire.