



# Bluestem NEWS

## Bluestem Electric Cooperative

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### Contact Us

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## FROM THE MANAGER

### Playing It Safe Online



**Mike Morton**

In today's world, most of us do not leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders

with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It is the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identity, banking, health records and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to pumpkin-spice lattes, crisper air and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at Bluestem Electric we use this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders with our employees.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, I would like to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Bluestem Electric is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

1. **IMPLEMENT MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION (ALSO KNOWN AS TWO-STEP VERIFICATION) ON YOUR ACCOUNTS.** The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled.

*Continued on page 12C* ▶

## Board Approves Revenue Requirement and Cost-of-Service Study

The Bluestem Electric Board of Trustees has authorized a revenue requirement and cost-of-service study to consider the need for a future rate increase. Power Systems Engineering has been contracted to perform both studies.



# LOOK UP BEFORE YOU CLIMB

**USING A LADDER OR ANYTHING THAT ELEVATES YOU NEAR OVERHEAD POWER LINES COULD CAUSE ELECTROCUTION IF YOU ARE NOT AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS.**

**WHEN USING A LADDER:**

**Keep yourself and all equipment 20 feet away from overhead power lines.**

- ▶ Electricity can arc or jump if a ladder gets too close.
- ▶ A ladder could make direct contact with the line.

**Avoid wet or windy weather conditions.**

- ▶ Rain can make the ground slippery.
- ▶ Wind could blow a ladder into a power line.

**Do not trim trees/branches near power lines.**

- ▶ Trimming near power lines is dangerous.
- ▶ By law, only certified line tree trimmers can trim near power lines.

**Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near overhead lines.**

- ▶ All power lines can cause electrocution, including those feeding your home.
- ▶ Always follow the 20-foot distance rule when working or playing outside.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.COM

# Bluestem Accepts Safety Achievement and Recognition Certificates



Bluestem Electric Journeyman Lineman Derek Francis (second from left) and Journeyman Lineman Kevin Swenson (second from right) receive Safety Achievement and Safety Recognition certificates from Bluestem Board Vice President Donald Classen (left) and Board President Richard Ridder (right).

Bluestem Electric Cooperative Safety Coordinators and Journeyman Linemen **KEVIN SWENSON** and **DEREK FRANCIS** were presented Safety Achievement and Safety Recognition certificates during the August Bluestem Board of Trustees meeting.

The awards, from Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and National Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NRECA), were the result of Bluestem Electric employees working safely to maintain and keep the power on, during all weather conditions for 483,185 employee hours from Feb. 11, 2016, to Dec. 31, 2022, without a lost time accident. Safety is at the top of the list for the Bluestem Electric Cooperative Strategic Plan. The Bluestem Board of Trustees would like to thank and congratulate all the employees for their dedication to safe work procedures.



# UPGRADE UNLOCKED

## New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

Manage your account like never before with the new, improved SmartHub web application. A simplified yet enhanced design is coming your way soon. This new version of SmartHub puts your usage and payment details front and center for fast, easy access and the simplified menu structure makes navigating the site a breeze.

**CHANGE COMING OCT. 16, 2023.**



# Playing It Safe Online Continued from page 12A

- 2. UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE.** This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it is coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.
- 3. THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK.** Most successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email. Do not take the bait when cybercriminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, or urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.
- 4. CREATE STRONG PASSWORDS, USING LONG, UNIQUE AND COMPLEX WORDS OR PHRASES.** Consider using a password manager to save time, work across all devices, protect your identity and notify you of potential phishing websites.

## For the Young People in Your Household

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know early on, that what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money

or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent or guardian, help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

## Keeping the Electric Grid and Your Data Secure

We are doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Bluestem Electric reliability means repairing wear and tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather and using technology and proven practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues.

We work together with co-ops across the state in protecting our infrastructure. We also participate in programs, where co-ops around the country come together to simulate realistic cyber issues and practice responding to the latest types of issues we might have to manage.

While we cannot stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. If we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone.

## Cold Weather Rule Effective Nov. 1–March 31

Bluestem Electric Cooperative members who are unable to pay their electric service bills during the cold weather period may qualify for this program. The requirements members must meet to qualify are summarized below:

- ▶ **MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY** Bluestem Electric of their inability to pay their bill in full.
- ▶ **MEMBERS MUST APPLY** to federal, state, local or other financial assistance programs for which they may be eligible to receive aid in paying utility bills.
- ▶ **MEMBERS AND BLUESTEM ELECTRIC WILL REACH** a mutually agreeable payment arrangement.

Please note that failure to follow the above requirements, illegally diverting utility service, receiving service by tampering, or defaulting on a payment agreement will disqualify the member from receiving benefits under the Cold Weather Rule.

Bluestem Electric will send one written notice mailed first class at least five days prior to termination of service. A member may not be disconnected until a recognized regional weather forecasting agency predicts a 24-hour forecast above the activating temperature.

The co-op shall make at least one telephone call attempt and a personal contact attempt with the member of record on the day of termination of service prior to termination of service.

In no event will Bluestem Electric disconnect service if the temperature is forecast to fall below 35 degrees Fahrenheit within 24-hours following the time of disconnection.

The Cold Weather Rule is to ensure that human health and safety are not unreasonably endangered during the cold weather months.

The Cold Weather Rule does not apply to prepay meter accounts.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Did you know using your dishwasher is more energy efficient than washing dishes by hand? To maximize efficiency, wash full loads in the dishwasher and don't block the arms or other parts that move while the appliance is in use. For additional savings, turn on the "air dry" setting instead of using the "heat dry" setting and use a rinse aid to help dishes dry faster without spotting and streaking. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



## Fall Back on Nov. 5

On Sunday, Nov. 5, remember to turn your clocks back one hour. It is also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors and have a professional check your fire extinguishers.





# Get Outage Updates Via Text Message

Bluestem has contracted with Cooperative Resource Center (CRC) so members can now report outages and receive outage updates via text message.

Bluestem members who have a mobile phone equipped for sending/receiving text messages and an updated phone number on their Bluestem account can utilize outage texting. Members will receive automated responses to confirm the report has been received and another text when power is restored. Messaging and data rates may apply.

If a member has difficulties with the text messaging, please call 800-558-1580.

## How to Report an Outage Via Text

- ▶ **TEXT:** 55050
- ▶ **USE THE MESSAGE:** Outage (home, well, irrigation, etc.) however you have the account designated.
- ▶ **WHEN CRC RECEIVES YOUR MESSAGE THEY WILL AUTO RESPOND WITH** “outage reported.” When power is restored another message is sent out “power restored.”

## Set Up Outage Text Reporting

1. Check with BEC Office to make sure your smartphone number is listed on your account.

2. Visit <https://notifications.crc.coop/?uid=6727> or scan the QR code at right to setup service.
3. Follow the instructions on the above link to set-up an account that will allow outage text reporting.
4. Once you receive a text verification code on your smartphone, enter it into the window prompt on your computer to confirm your account and click “submit.” You are now ready to report an outage at your location(s). A welcome message should be sent to your smartphone.
5. View your account set-up screen on your computer and associate keywords for each account based on their service location (e.g. home, well, shop, irrigation, etc.). Use these keywords when texting outages to allow Bluestem crews to expedite restoration time (e.g. outage home or outage well).



**CO-OPS GROW Communities**

Electric cooperatives are joining co-ops across the U.S. to celebrate *National Co-op Month* in October.

As your local electric co-op, our services are shaped to meet your specific needs. We love growing with you, the members we are proud to serve.

## Don't Text and Drive

Would you drive down a football field with your eyes closed?

Texting diverts your attention from driving for about 5 seconds. At 55 miles per hour, that's enough time to travel the length of a football field.