



# Bluestem NEWS

## Bluestem Electric Cooperative

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### Contact Us

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## FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

### Let's Connect

When we say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology, like our smartphones and other devices and gadgets. But when you are a consumer-member of an electric co-op, there’s so much more to being part of our connected cooperative community.

As a member of Bluestem Electric you help to power what is good in our local community through initiatives like the CoBank Sharing Success program, the USDA REDL&G program and other initiatives that help out our community.

We depend on you because you power our success, and when Bluestem does well, the community thrives because we are all connected.

We greatly value our connection to you, the members we serve. And we would like to help you maximize the value you can get from Bluestem through a variety of programs, products and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our efficiency tips, attic insulation advice

and rebates on water heaters and heat pumps. When you download our SmartHub app, you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online and access a menu of additional options for potential savings and more.

You can follow Bluestem on social media and stay up to date on power restoration efforts, tree trimming, safety advice and more. You could also see photos of our line crews in action and our employees helping with community service projects — and who doesn’t enjoy seeing good things happening in our community!

When you sign up for Outage Texting, you can send a notice of outages and receive restoration information by text.

By connecting with us, you can get real-time updates from your co-op. That’s why we want to make sure we have your most current contact information on hand. If we can’t connect

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**Mike Morton**

## Bluestem’s 2021 Annual Meeting Canceled

Bluestem Electric Cooperative’s 2021 annual meeting, which was scheduled for March 2021, has been canceled. The annual report of Bluestem Electric Cooperative will be published in the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

## 2021 Teller Committee Selected

Each year Bluestem Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees shall appoint a teller committee whose function is to count and verify the ballots for the election of trustees. The teller committee was appointed by the Bluestem Board of Trustees at their Dec. 21, 2020, meeting.

The teller committee will meet on Jan. 6, 2021, at the Bluestem Electric Office in Wamego at 6 p.m. to tabulate and certify the election results. The results of the election of trustees will be printed in the February edition of the Bluestem NEWS located in the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

### 2021 Holiday Office Closings

Jan. 1.....	New Year's Day
April 2.....	Good Friday
May 31.....	Memorial Day
July 5.....	Independence Day
Sept. 6.....	Labor Day
Nov. 25 & 26.....	Thanksgiving
Dec. 24.....	Christmas

## Time to Ditch Your Old Space Heater

If you can't remember when you purchased your space heater, it might be time to replace it. Just

as the flip phones of yesteryear have progressed into today's modern cell phone, portable space heaters have come a long way too. Most of today's models have built-in safety features, such as non-exposed coils and sensors that detect overheating or touch, as well as an automatic shut-off feature in case it gets tipped over.

Regardless of whether your space heater is fresh out of the box or several years old, it should be used safely. Most home heating fire deaths (86%) involve using one, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In fact, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires, right behind cooking.

Along with using a unit that is in good working order, be sure to keep clothing, papers, rugs and other flammable items at least 3 feet away from a space heater. More than half of the heating-related home fires start when items are too close to the heat source, according to the NFPA, including upholstered furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding.

**Most of today's models have built-in safety features, such as non-exposed coils and sensors that detect overheating or touch ...**

Safe Electricity and Bluestem Electric recommend these additional space heater safety tips:

- ▶ Read all instructions and only use as recommended.
  - ▶ Do not leave a space heater unattended.
  - ▶ Plug it directly into an outlet; most power strips and extension cords are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by a space heater cycling on and off.
  - ▶ Unplug other items from the outlet you are using; also try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
  - ▶ Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
  - ▶ Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.
  - ▶ Do not use a heater in disrepair or with a frayed cord or damaged plug.
  - ▶ Place them on flat, level surfaces and never place on furniture, counters or carpet, which can overheat.
- Use a space heater with care. For additional safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Feeling Chilled? Heat Your Space Safely.



Before you dust off your space heater and plug it in, consider that 86% of home heating fire deaths involve space heaters, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

More than half of the heating-related home fires start when flammable items, like furniture, clothing and bedding, are too close to the heat source, according to the NFPA.

### Here are some space heater safety tips:

- ▶ Only use them as the manufacturer recommends.
- ▶ Do not leave them unattended.
- ▶ Give them space: remove any flammable items within 3 feet.
- ▶ Plug them directly into outlets; don't use an extension cord.
- ▶ Consider using a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
- ▶ Keep children and pets away from space heaters at all times.
- ▶ Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.

## Let's Connect

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with you on these platforms or in person, you could miss out on potential savings or important information.

Bluestem Electric relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, and up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure we can provide the highest level of service that you expect and deserve.

Updated contact information can even speed up the power restoration process during an outage. That's because when you call to report an outage, our automated system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage-management system predict the location and the possible

cause of an outage, making it easier for Bluestem crews to correct the problem.

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can — whether that means attending our annual meetings, providing feedback on a recent visit or call with our employees, or simply downloading our SmartHub app.

Bluestem Electric exists to serve our members, and when we're better connected to you and our local community, we're better prepared to answer the call.

To update your contact information or to learn more about co-op products and services that can help you save, visit [www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com), call 800-558-1580, or stop by our office wearing a mask for now, of course. We look forward to connecting with you.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

## To Mask Or Not to Mask: That is (Not) the Question

Most people don't enjoy wearing masks. They are inconvenient and put the kibosh on social interaction. They can give us the sudden urge to take a deep breath and they can make it difficult for others to hear us, just to name some of the downsides.

However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed its stance on mask recommendations from when COVID-19 first hit in the U.S. CDC experts first advocated not wearing masks but later changed that recommendation based on new research and data.

Since recommending mask usage, the CDC came up with these specific guidelines for wearing them:

- ▶ Wear masks that have two or more layers to help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- ▶ Masks are recommended for people 2 years old and up.
- ▶ They should not be worn by children younger than age 2, people who have trouble breathing, or people who cannot remove it without help.
- ▶ People should not wear masks intended for healthcare workers, for example, N95 respirators.

- ▶ Although it might be better than nothing, the CDC does not currently recommend using gaiters or face shields. A gaiter is like a thick headband you wear around your neck that you can pull up and over your mouth and nose.

### How to Select A Mask

Although mostly common knowledge these days, here are some reminders about selecting types of masks and how to wear them.

#### ACCORDING TO THE CDC, CHOOSE MASKS THAT:

- ▶ Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric.
- ▶ Completely cover your nose and mouth.
- ▶ Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps.

#### DO NOT BUY OR USE MASKS THAT:

- ▶ Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe — for example, vinyl.
- ▶ Have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape (or possibly enter).
- ▶ Are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators or surgical masks.

If you wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or one that has a nose wire or reinforcement to help limit fogging.

And, although tempting, a mask cannot do its job if it is worn around your neck, under your nose, on your chin, dangling from one ear, or left in your car.

## Keep Your ACH Payment Information Current

If you are signed up for automatic bank draft or recurring credit/debit card payments for your Bluestem Electric account(s), please update your information if you change bank accounts or get new credit/debit cards. This will ensure that your account will be paid on time and you will avoid any penalty charges.



# 2021 ENERGY EFFICIENCY CALENDAR

There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your family’s monthly bills — and it helps our environment. Change your energy use habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar on your refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.



JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
<p>Take short showers instead of baths.</p> 	<p>Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.</p>	<p>Turn off lights when you leave a room.</p> 	<p>Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to shade your home in the summer.</p>
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<p>Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.</p>	<p>Turn off ceiling fans when you leave the room.</p> 	<p>Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.</p>	<p>Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the HVAC filter every 60-90 days.</p>
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.</p> 	<p>Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.</p>	<p>Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.</p> 	<p>Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.</p>