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Bluestem NEWS

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Ideas to Help You Save



Mike Morton

Bluestem Electric Cooperative is here for you, and given the challenging times we've all experienced the last few months, I'd like to share some

information and ideas to help you save energy and money.

Conduct an Energy Audit

Summer is a great time to conduct an energy audit of your home and identify ways to boost energy efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help you determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

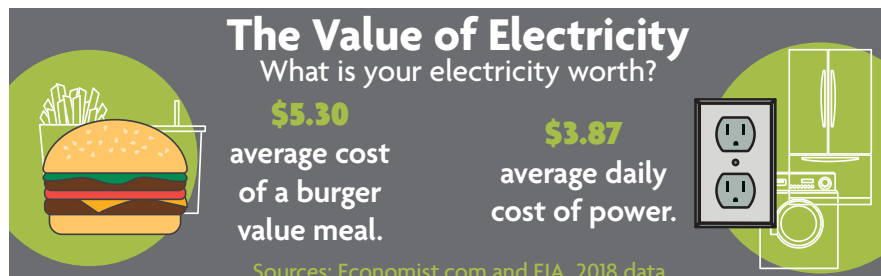
An energy audit is one of the best ways to determine how energy efficient your home is — an audit can also identify areas for potential energy savings. Search for qualified energy auditors in your area. Be sure to hire a professional

who will conduct a thorough audit of your home. If you'd prefer to do an energy audit yourself, try ENERGY STAR®'s online audit. Visit www.energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started. But keep in mind, an online audit won't be as thorough as an in-home audit.

Shifting to Off-Peak Periods

The time-of-use rate may benefit members who can shift the majority of their electricity consumption outside of the peak period of 3-6 p.m. during the summer months of June, July, August and September. Electric rates based on time of use offer co-op members the ability to lower their electricity costs without reducing the amount of electricity used. By performing some of your daily chores such as running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours (when people are using less electricity), you can see meaningful savings on your energy bills. Use your programmable

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The Value of Electricity
What is your electricity worth?

\$5.30
average cost
of a burger
value meal.

\$3.87
average daily
cost of power.

Sources: Economist.com and EIA, 2018 data.

Ideas to Help You Save

Continued from page 16A ▶

thermostat to adjust the settings so that your heating and air conditioning systems sync with the off-peak rate periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way. Be sure to program the timers to coincide with the less expensive off-peak times.

Putting Power in Your Hands

Prepaid metering is intended to aid in budgeting your monthly energy costs. Bluestem members can pay for electricity before it is used, then use the electricity until the credit expires. During the time period you've paid for, you will receive regular feedback on your balance. You are able to monitor your usage online, through SmartHub, or with the free SmartHub app available to IOS and Android devices. Industry studies show that consumers who participate in prepaid metering plans use less electricity as you closely monitor your electric usage.

Lastly, if you have recently purchased a new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliance or product, make sure you are taking advantage of any special offers or rebates that are available.

As your trusted energy adviser, we're here to help. If you have questions about your bill or additional ways to save energy, please let us know. We're only one click or phone call away.

Safety Trailer Demonstrations Available



Service Journeyman/Safety Director Kevin Swenson and Operations Foreman Courtney Grater review safety tips.

Bluestem Electric provided a demonstration with their safety trailer for Clay County first responders on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2020. The demo was to show what to do if there is an accident involving power lines, which includes staying away from any power lines that are down. Always treat power lines as if they are live. Never exit the vehicle until you are told by a power company representative that it is safe to do so. If however, the vehicle catches fire, it may be necessary to exit the vehicle even if help has not arrived. When exiting the vehicle, jump with both feet together and continue to jump that way as far as possible from the power lines.

The linemen also demonstrated what would happen when different objects come into contact with power lines.

"The trailer gave us first responders a greater understanding of the functions and potential dangers of electrical equipment; knowledge that we can use to better manage hazardous scenes and

patient care," stated Alec Trembath, paramedic at CCEMS.

To schedule a safety demo training, please contact Bluestem Electric at 785-632-3111 or 785-456-2212.



Service Journeyman/Safety Director Derek Francis simulates what an electrical burn would look like by using a grapefruit on the stick figure.

HAPPY
★
4TH OF JULY
★ ★ ★
INDEPENDENCE DAY

Our office
will be closed on
Friday, July 3,
for the holiday.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Spending more time at home? Try an online energy audit to assess the overall efficiency of your home. Visit www.energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started. Source: energystar.gov

Be Smart Around Electricity: Inside Your Home

Many safety hazards are obvious and can be seen, smelled or heard: that wrinkled rug you could trip on, spoiled food that could make you sick, icy pavement that could cause a nasty fall, or a weather siren announcing an approaching tornado.

Electrical hazards, however, are often undetectable. While some you can see, smell or feel — outlets that are warm to the touch or lights that constantly flicker, for example — many others you cannot.

Bluestem Electric and Safe Electricity remind you of these electrical safety tips for in and around your home:

- ▶ **CELL PHONES MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS:** Do not sleep or lounge in bed with a cell phone or other device that is charging. Doing so can cause burns to your skin or it can cause the soft bedding materials to ignite. This also goes for devices that are warm to the touch but not plugged in.
- ▶ **DO NOT USE CHEAP CHARGERS:** Use the original charging components that came with your cell phone or other electronics. When it comes time to replace them, spend a little extra to buy brand-specific chargers and cubes. Using cheaply made generic chargers with your electronics can cause injury (shock or burns) or even a fire if they are defective.
- ▶ **CHARGING DEVICES AND WATER DON'T MIX:** Do not use a plugged in (charging) cell phone near water. Take a break from your phone while bathing. Deaths have occurred when a plugged-in cell phone has fallen into the bathtub. DO NOT use plugged in items near water.
- ▶ **DO NOT OVERLOAD OUTLETS OR CIRCUITS.** It's tempting to plug in several items in one outlet or on one circuit, but drawing too much power can damage your electronics or your home's wiring, or cause more serious problems such as a fire. If too much current is drawn, usually a circuit breaker will trip or fuses will blow, but this is never guaranteed.
- ▶ **DO NOT USE PORTABLE HEATERS UNATTENDED OR AROUND SMALL CHILDREN OR PETS.** Do not place flammable items near or on a space heater.
- ▶ **DITCH THAT OLD ELECTRIC BLANKET:** Do not use an electric blanket that is 10 years old or older or one that has frayed or visible wires in the blanket itself. Do not use one that has a damaged electrical cord or plug.
- ▶ **TEST YOUR GFCI BUTTONS ONCE A MONTH:** Put a reminder in your phone or mark it on your calendar each month. GFCIs help prevent ground faults that can shock or injure you, but they can't do their job if they are not working properly.
- ▶ **DO NOT IGNORE ODD ELECTRICAL SYMPTOMS IN YOUR HOME.** If your lights flicker often, if your outlets are warm to the touch, or if you smell odors like something is overheating but can't determine where the odors are coming from, there may be problems with your home's electrical system. There might also be a problem if your circuits or fuses are tripped or need to be changed often. If you notice any of these symptoms or other unusual electrical oddities in your home, have a qualified electrician assess your home's electrical system.
- ▶ **IS YOUR HOME AFCI PROTECTED?** AFCI stands for arc fault circuit interrupter, and when there is an arc fault, it means that an electrical source in your home is malfunctioning.

When that happens, an arc (intense heat or light) can be discharged. Because of that, AFCIs are required by National Electric Code since they help prevent home fires. Have a professional electrician assess your home to make sure AFCIs are installed, especially if your home is older. He or she can also inspect your older home's wiring to make sure it can handle today's electrical demands.

- ▶ **BABYPROOF AND CHILDPROOF YOUR HOME, INCLUDING ELECTRICAL SOURCES.** There are many everyday electrical dangers that toddlers and children can tamper with, such as exposed outlets, accessible power strips and surge protectors, and hanging or dangling cords. In addition, little ones like to imitate you, and there have been reports of toddlers trying to plug the wrong end of a phone charger into the outlet, which can cause severe shocks or burns. Be aware of potential electrical dangers throughout the home. Get down on the floor and see what's at eye level or within reach.

DO NOT GET OUT

If your machinery, vehicle or other equipment makes contact with a power line, guy wire or electrical box, do not get out of your cab. Stray power could energize your equipment and the ground.

To avoid becoming electrocuted:

- ▶ Call 911 and wait for us to arrive to cut the power.
- ▶ Wait to exit your cab until the power is de-energized.

In rare cases you may need to exit your cab due to smoke or fire. If you must get out, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop.



WHEN TO CALL IT



Between 2006 and 2018, 396 people were struck and killed by lightning in the U.S.

HAVE A GAME PLAN TO STAY SAFE WHEN SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES

1. Check weather forecasts in advance.
2. At first signs of stormy weather, seek shelter in a hard-top car or four-sided building.
3. Do not seek shelter under a pavilion or tree.
4. Do not sit on or lean against metal (e.g. bleachers, fencing).
5. Before resuming activities, **WAIT at least 30 MINUTES** after the last rumble of thunder.

SOURCE: NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY COUNCIL

TOP SPORTS RELATED LIGHTNING FATALITIES

- #1 SOCCER | #2 GOLF
- #3 RUNNING | #4 BASEBALL
- #5 FOOTBALL | #6 DISC GOLF

A Well-Designed Landscape Can Save You Some Green

Thinking of planting trees in your yard this summer? If the answer is yes, giving some thought about where you'll plant them could help reduce your energy bill. Not only are trees beautiful, but shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun — a good thing in the summer.

And the savings are nothing to sneeze at. According to the Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs by 15-50%. Our nation's energy authority also boasts, that on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years.

Although effective, shade-producing landscaping strategies vary by climate, here are some general planting guidelines from the Arbor Day Foundation:

- ▶ Plant on the west and northwest sides of your home to provide mid- to late-afternoon shade.
- ▶ Plant shade trees over patios, driveways and air-conditioning units (but never crowd or block your A/C unit; it should have a 5-foot clearance above it and 3 feet on all sides).
- ▶ In general, large, deciduous trees planted on the east, west, and northwest sides of your home create shade in the summer and can help decrease

the cost of running your air conditioner in the heat of the summer.

- ▶ Use trees to shade east and west windows. If they block your view, prune lower branches.

And what is deciduous, you ask?

Deciduous trees shed their leaves annually. Although it equates to a lot of leaves to rake come October, the annual cycle lets the sunshine through in the winter but blocks the sun's rays in the summer. Either scenario helps reduce energy costs if trees are strategically placed in relation to your home.

Trees that don't shed leaves are called evergreens, which usually block the sun year-round. That's great in the summer but not so hot in the winter.

Consult a landscape professional for specific climate/region recommendations.

NOTE: When planting trees, be sure to consider height potential. Do not plant a tree that will mature to more than 15 feet tall near or under power lines. Taller-growing trees (taller than 15 feet at maturity) should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, or much farther to avoid future pruning/power line issues.

For more information about planting the right tree in the right place or about electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.

