



Bluestem NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Factors That Impact Electricity Prices

I was recently asked by a colleague about what impacts electricity prices. We talked about how the daily cost of living seems to have increased across the board.

Just as inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the fuels required to produce electricity have also risen. This is a timely topic, so I wanted to help explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills) in this month's issue of *Kansas Country Living*.

While there is no short answer, there are a few key elements that impact electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Bluestem Electric can manage, some of them you can impact and other factors are beyond our control. So, let me break it down.

There are three primary parts to your monthly electric bill: a customer charge, an energy charge, and a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). To understand your total energy costs and what impacts

your bill, let's unpack one piece at a time.

THE FIRST IS A FIXED

MONTHLY CUSTOMER

CHARGE, which covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes equipment,

materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in Bluestem's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment. Like many other businesses, we have experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for a distribution transformer (which looks like a tall metal can at the top of a power pole) went from \$850 in 2021 to \$1,700 this year, and wait times to receive this essential equipment can be up to 52 weeks. Be-

Continued on page 12D ►



Mike Morton





INSPECT IT REGULARLY



MAKE SURE FENCING IS VISIBLE.

Use electric fence tape, warning signs or other methods.

INSPECT FENCING REGULARLY.

Ensure everything is tight, secure and free from frays.



MAKE SURE FENCE IS TIGHT AND WELL-SUPPORTED.

A lack of support can cause it to sag.



CAP POSTS, ESPECIALLY METAL T-POSTS.

This prevents an animal (or human) from being impaled.



CHECK FOR A LOOSE OR SAGGING FENCE.

Not only can animals escape, but wires can fall out of insulators.



SOURCE: SAFE ELECTRICITY

EXCERPT FROM THE BLUESTEM ELECTRIC BYLAWS

Bluestem Nomination and Election Process

SECTION 4.05 NOMINATION OF

TRUSTEES. The Board shall appoint a nominating committee, on or before the first of October of each year, consisting of not less than one, nor more than five members from each district for whom a Trustee is to be elected. Board members may not serve on the nominating committee.

Only committee members from each district will nominate their own candidate. Committee members from districts one and two will meet together in any County within District #1 and/or District #2 where the Cooperative is providing a Cooperative Service and committee members from districts three and four will meet together in any County within District #3 and/or District #4 where the Cooperative is providing a Cooperative Service. Nominating committees shall meet during the month of October. On or before the first day of November, the nominating committee shall prepare and post a list of nominations for Trustee at the Wamego office and on the Cooperative Website and/or other Cooperative Social Media sites. The committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each position. Nominations may be made by petition, filed on or before the close of business, November 30, at the Wamego office. The petition must be signed by no less than 5% of the membership of the

district for whom the Trustee is to be elected. The secretary shall immediately post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations by the committee is posted. Nominations made by the petition shall appear on the ballot in the order received.

SECTION 4.06 ELECTION OF

TRUSTEES. The election of Trustees shall be by mail ballot and/or electronic ballot as determined by the Trustees. Only those nominees selected by the nominating committee or nominated by petition shall appear on the ballot. There may be write-in votes for a qualified member not named on the ballot. The ballot shall first list the name(s) nominated by the committee, then the name(s) nominated by petition in the order received and, at the end, a place to write in a name. Failure of strict compliance with provisions of this section shall not affect the validity of any election of Trustees.

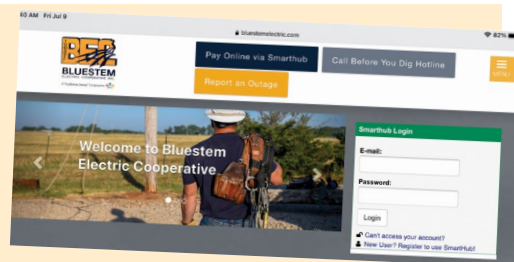
The secretary shall mail the ballots to the respective members by the 10th day of December of each year.

On or before the first day of January of each year, ballots must be post marked or received at the Wamego office.

Those members who have been appointed to serve on each district's respective Nominating Committee will be listed in next month's Kansas Country Living Magazine.

Beware of Third Party Bill Payment Services

Bluestem Electric **DOES NOT** charge members to make payments on our cooperative website (www.bluestemelectric.com), through the SmartHub app, or by phone. Third-party payment locations and websites are **NOT** affiliated with Bluestem Electric, and payments made through these sources cannot be guaranteed. Be sure that you see the BEC logo and use the Bluestem Electric website www.bluestemelectric.com.



SAFETY TIP

If you have electrical fencing, make sure everything is tight, secure and free from frays. A loose fence means wires can fall out of insulators.



SOURCE: SAFE ELECTRICITY

Stay Safe During Harvest — Get Proper Rest

For many farmers, fall requires long days in the field and little rest. The pressure to harvest as much as possible, combined with fatigue and looming deadlines, increases the risk of injury. In fact, most injuries occur during the spring and fall when stress and fatigue are often at their highest.

The safety and health of workers, including making time for sleep, should be a priority when considering a farm's productivity, according to Josie Rudolphi, University of Illinois Extension associate research scientist.

"Rushing and cutting corners can lead to injury, which no one has time for, especially during the harvest," Rudolphi says.

Rudolphi grew up on a farm and understands the pressures of harvest season. She says that getting proper rest can make a huge difference in staying safe, but during the time crunch of harvest season, farmers sacrifice sleep to work late into the night.

"Sleep deficiency has been associated with increased injury, reduced reaction time and reduced concentration," Rudolphi says. "All of which could impact health and safety, as well as productivity."

The demands of harvest are stressful, and a lack of sleep can intensify that and lead to errors in the fields or even on the roads.

To improve sleep, Rudolphi advises farmers to go to bed and wake up at regular times when possible. They can

use rainy days to catch up on sleep. Other sleep health tips include:

- ▶ Create a bedroom environment that encourages sleep; keep it quiet, dark and cool.
- ▶ Limit electronic device use.
- ▶ Avoid large meals, caffeine and alcohol before bedtime.

In addition to improving sleep, managing stress is an important component to injury prevention, health and safety, according to Rudolphi.

"By using the 'Four A' Method of avoid (planning ahead), adapt (changing expectations), alter (changing the situation when you can) and accept (acknowledging that a situation is what it is), farmers can successfully manage the stress of long hours and unpredictability," she adds.

For information about safety around electricity, including farm and ranch safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

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**JOSIE RUDOLPHI, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION ASSOCIATE RESEARCH SCIENTIST**

4 KEY FACTORS THAT IMPACT ENERGY BILLS

You pay for the electricity you consume each month, but there are additional factors that impact your energy bills.

1 Fuel Costs

Before electricity can be delivered to your home, it must be generated at a power plant or from a renewable source. The fuel cost to generate electricity fluctuates, which is why you see a power or fuel charge on your monthly bill. This charge covers cost changes without having to continually restructure electricity rates.



2 Service Costs

Your bill includes a monthly service charge, which recovers part of the co-op's ongoing investments in poles, wire, meters, system maintenance and additional costs necessary to provide reliable electric service.



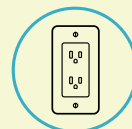
3 Weather

When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling or heating equipment must run longer and at maximum capacity, which can greatly increase your energy use. Extreme temperatures can also affect electricity market prices. When the need for electricity increases due to extreme heat or cold, the price of power typically rises.



4 Energy Consumption

This is the amount of electricity you use each month to power your home's cooling/heating system, appliances, lighting, electronics and more. The amount of electricity you consume is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh). You control how much energy you use, which can ultimately help you manage your monthly costs.



STAY SAFE AFTER A FIRE

After a fire, seek out a professional service to clean ash and debris. Contact your insurance company for guidance.

WHAT TO WEAR

Wear long sleeves, pants, sturdy shoes, a proper mask and protective gear.

Once you get the go-ahead to return home, hazards will be present. To help you stay safe:

- ▶ Use caution around trees, power poles and other tall objects, which could easily fall.
- ▶ Check for the smell of gas, which smells like rotten eggs.
- ▶ If you smell gas, leave the area and notify authorities.
- ▶ Do not ingest or breathe in anything that is damaged.
- ▶ Be aware of slip, trip, fall and puncture hazards.
- ▶ Know that hazardous chemicals could be present.
- ▶ Throw out compromised food.
- ▶ If running water is contaminated, do not use it.
- ▶ Do not use damaged or waterlogged appliances.

Have major home systems inspected prior to use, including solar, electrical, water, septic, heating oil tank and propane.



SOURCES: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OF SONOMA COUNTY AND CAL FIRE

Factors That Impact Electricity Prices *Continued from page 12A*

cause we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. I should note that the costs are shared equally across the membership.

ANOTHER COMPONENT OF YOUR MONTHLY BILL IS THE ENERGY CHARGE, which covers how much energy you consume. You have likely noticed the amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures. When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling and heating equipment runs longer, which increases your home energy use. Regardless, energy consumption is an area that you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by actively reducing energy use. Your thermostat is a great place to start, so be sure to keep it close to 78 degrees during summer months. Bluestem Electric offers an optional Single-Phase Time-of-Use Service. Consumers who can shift a majority of their

electricity consumption outside of the peak period may benefit from this rate.

THE LAST COMPONENT OF YOUR BILL IS THE PCA, which is the same amount for all co-op members. The PCA had increased because of higher fuel prices, which means the power that Bluestem purchases from our wholesale provider is more expensive. However, for the past few months the PCA has been a credit on your electric bill as fuel prices have stabilized. The PCA covers fuel cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates.

I hope this information sheds light on some of the factors that impact electricity prices. While we cannot control the weather or the rising costs of fuels, please know Bluestem Electric is doing everything possible to keep internal costs down.

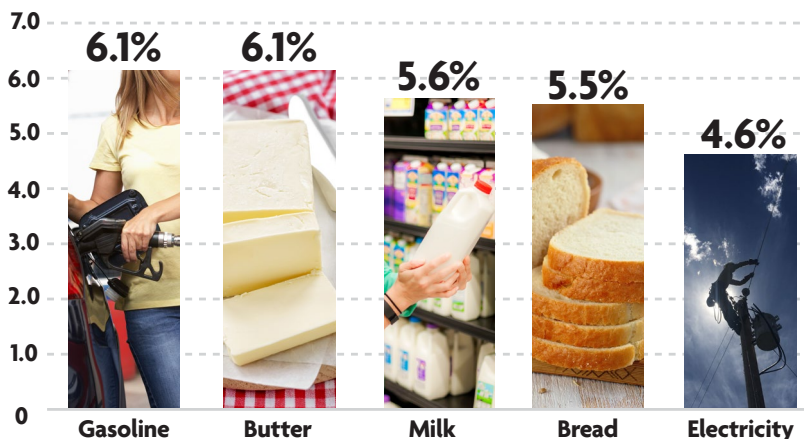
We are here to help you, too. Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home at 800-558-1580.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022

Percent



SOURCES: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS & CONSUMER PRICE INDEX