



Bluestem NEWS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

The Power of Preparation



Mike Morton

With severe weather events occurring more frequently, now more than ever, it makes sense to be prepared. During a prolonged power outage or other emergency, this

means having enough food, water and supplies to last at least a few days. In honor of National Preparedness Month in September, I want to remind community members about the power of preparation. While you don't have to achieve a "doomsday prepper" level of preparedness, there are several practical steps you can take to keep you and your family safe.

Even at a modest level, preparation can help reduce stress, anxiety and lessen

the impact of an emergency event. We recommend starting with the basics. Here are general guidelines recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- ▶ Assemble a grab-and-go disaster kit. Include items like nonperishable food, water (one gallon per person, per day), diapers, batteries, flashlights, prescription medications, first-aid kit, battery-powered radio and phone chargers.
- ▶ Develop a plan for communicating with family and friends (i.e. via text, social media, third party, etc.).
- ▶ Have some extra cash available; during a power outage, electronic card readers and ATMs may not work.
- ▶ Store important documents (birth certificates, property deed, etc.) in safe place away from home (for example, a bank safe deposit box).

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Nominating Committee Selected

Each year the board of trustees of the cooperative shall appoint a nominating committee whose function is to nominate one or more candidates for trustee positions with expiring terms. The Bluestem Board of Trustees has appointed the following members to serve on the respective nominating committee:

Districts 1 & 2 (to meet in Clay Center on Oct. 3)

DISTRICT 1

JIM KOLLE – Linn

JON PENNER – Hanover

MICHAEL MUSSELMAN – Clifton

DISTRICT 2

DAVID PFIZENMAIER – Clay Center

KATHY MARTIN – Clay Center

Districts 3 & 4 (to meet in Wamego on Oct. 4)

DISTRICT 3

ANDY MORTON – Westmoreland

MIKE HEPTIG – St. George

ELAINE HOFMAN – Blaine

JON HOLLIDAY – Soldier

DISTRICT 4

EVAN PARSONS – Manhattan

KATHERINE (WRENN) PACHECO – Alma

Trustee Positions with Expiring Terms

DISTRICT 1, POSITION 1

STEVE OHLDE – Linn

DISTRICT 2, POSITION 2

PATRICIA BLOOMDAHL – Clay Center

DISTRICT 3, POSITION 3

DAN POLLOCK – Soldier

DISTRICT 4, POSITION 2

DONALD CLASSEN – Manhattan

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Keep Food Safe When the Power Goes Out

Severe winds, lightning and even squirrels can temporarily cause the power to go out. We understand power outages of any length can be frustrating, especially when your fridge is stocked with perishable foods.

Extended power outages are rare, but when they occur, it's important to understand food safety measures to take to avoid illness.

Here are a few food safety tips to keep in mind before, during and after a power outage.

Before an Outage

A good rule of thumb is to keep an emergency supply kit on hand. Be sure to include nonperishable food items like bottled water, powdered milk, canned goods, cereal and protein bars in your emergency kit.

If you have advance warning that an outage is possible, fill a cooler with ice — just in case the outage spans several hours. Having a cooler ready to go can buy extra time for your refrigerated, perishable items.

During an Outage

If an outage occurs, do not open the refrigerator or freezer unless absolutely necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A

Food Safety Tips

- 1 Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- 2 Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color or texture.
- 3 Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator after four hours without power or a cold source, like a cooler with ice.



half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours and a full freezer for about 48 hours. If it looks like the power outage will last longer than four hours, move your important perishable items to an ice-filled cooler.

After an Outage

If refrigerated foods have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40 degrees for more than two hours, the American Red Cross recommends discarding the items. If any foods have an unusual color, odor or texture, they should be thrown away.

While most perishable foods should be thrown out after an extended outage, these items are safe to consume after a two-hour exposure to 40-plus degrees:

- ▶ Hard cheeses that are properly wrapped.
- ▶ Butter or margarine that is properly wrapped.
- ▶ Taco, barbecue and soy sauces.
- ▶ Peanut butter, jelly, mustard, ketchup and relish.

The best way to avoid illness from spoiled food during or after an outage is to follow the four-hour rule of thumb. After an outage, always smell and inspect foods before consuming and remember when in doubt, throw it out.

To learn more about food safety after an emergency, visit www.ready.gov/food.



5 Easy Ways to Exercise Your Civic Duty

America's electric cooperatives, including Bluestem Electric, understand the value of building relationships with elected officials at all levels of government. There are many important policy issues that directly impact electric utilities and ultimately, you, the consumer-members we proudly serve. Strengthening our relationships with elected leaders positions us to advocate for our local community.

While Bluestem Electric is a locally-owned cooperative, we're part of a larger network of electric co-ops. Through our non-partisan grassroots program known as "Co-ops Vote," we're working to enhance the political strength of electric co-ops and boost voter turnout. There's power in numbers, and when we all show up at the polls, we can voice the issues that matter most to our community.

National Voter Registration Day is Sept. 20, and midterm elections are right around the corner. If you're looking to get involved or simply make sure you're ready to vote, here are five easy ways you can exercise your civic duty.

1 DON'T ASSUME YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS IS UP TO DATE. Visit www.vote.coop, then

click "Election Resources" to verify your status.

2 GET INFORMED. In addition to ensuring your registration is up to date, learning about local policy issues and candidates is one of the best ways you can prepare to vote.

3 GET ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. Follow @coopsvote on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and let others know you're a #coopvoter and #VoteReady; encourage your friends and family to do the same.

4 HELP OTHERS PREPARE TO VOTE. Work a National Voter Registration Day event (visit www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org/events), volunteer to be a poll worker during midterm elections or offer to drive others to their polling places.

5 VOTE! It's the easiest — and most important — way you can exercise your civic duty.

Voting is a form of personal empowerment that gives you the opportunity to voice your opinion on the issues that matter most to you. Make a plan to vote and help others in our community get #VoteReady.

We encourage everyone, regardless of political beliefs, to vote, stand up for our local community and make a collective impact.

CO-OPS VOTE
A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
WWW.VOTE.COOP

Make Your Voice Count

Co-ops across the nation are dedicated to making our voices heard at the polls. Collectively we can make a difference.

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National Voter Registration Day is Sept. 20, 2022

WHAT IS A GENERATOR TRANSFER SWITCH?

A transfer or throw switch, also called a double throw switch, is an essential mechanism that shuts off power to the grid before backup power is used.

ALWAYS USE A GENERATOR SAFELY.

WHAT DOES A TRANSFER SWITCH DO?

- ▶ Changes or transfers the power load from one source to another.
- ▶ Connects generators rated at 5,000 watts or more to your home's main circuits to provide backup power during an outage.
- ▶ Prevents power from backfeeding into the power grid and endangering utility workers and others.

PERMANENT GENERATORS

- ▶ Have an internal switch that automatically transfers the source of power.
- ▶ Automatically turn on when the power goes out.
- ▶ Must be installed to code by licensed contractors and usually placed near the electric and gas meters.
- ▶ Not all permanently installed generators are standby versions. Some have manual transfer switches. Make sure your permanent generator and switch are installed to code and working properly.

PORTABLE GENERATORS

- ▶ Can be connected to your home's electrical service panel that is properly wired through a transfer switch.
- ▶ Never plug it into a wall outlet as this can cause backfeed.



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- ▶ Keep neighbors and coworkers apprised of your emergency plans.
- ▶ Fill your car with gas.
- ▶ Organize your supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location that family members know about.

Caring for Vulnerable Family Members

If you have older family members or those with special needs, make sure they have enough medication and supplies for a few days. If they don't live with you, arrange for a neighbor to check in on them. If a severe weather event is expected, consider having your relative stay with you if feasible, otherwise call them daily. If you have an infant or young children, make certain you have ample formula, diapers, medication and other supplies on hand to weather an outage lasting several days or more.

Keeping Four-Legged Family Members Safe

For families with pets, having a plan in place in the event of a prolonged outage or an emergency will help reduce worry and stress especially during an emergency.

- ▶ Bring pets indoors at the first sign of a storm or other emergency. Pets can become disoriented and frightened during severe weather and may wander off during an emergency.
- ▶ Microchip your pet and ensure the contact information is up to date.
- ▶ Store pet medical records on a USB drive or in an easy-to-remember location.
- ▶ Create an emergency kit for pets (include shelf-safe food, bottled water, medications and other supplies).

At Bluestem Electric Cooperative, we care about your safety. Planning for an emergency today can give you more confidence to deal with severe weather and potential outages in the future.

Your Bluestem Payment Options

Bluestem Electric has six convenient payment options for our members. All members receive a standard monthly bill for their electrical use. Bills are due and payable upon receipt. We realize one method of payment does not fit every Bluestem member's needs, so we have several payment options available for your convenience. All our payment options are free.

Auto Payment/Bank Draft



Members have the option to have payments automatically withdrawn from their bank accounts or credit/debit cards. Sign up through our online bill pay system or visit the office. Auto payments are drawn automatically each month on the due date of the bill.



Prepaid

Bluestem Electric has a prepaid option where you pay for electricity as you go, in advance. When your account becomes low, an email or text is sent to advise you to add more to your account, much like putting fuel in your car. The meter is your "electricity tank gauge" and you will no longer receive a paper bill.

SmartHub/Online Bill Pay



Online bill pay is also available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Click the "Pay Online" button on Bluestem Electric's website or follow bluestemelectric.smarthub.coop/login.html. Members can also download the "Smart Hub" app from the Apple or Android marketplaces on any mobile device.



Mail*

Bluestem Electric's monthly bill comes with a return envelope you can use to mail your check back to us at P.O. Box 33, Wamego, KS 66547. *Please allow additional time if using the Postal Service. Payment must be received in our office on or prior to due date. We DO NOT use the mailing post date for the payment date.

Bluestem Electric Office



You may pay by check, cash or credit/debit card at our office in Wamego. Our office is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, except for select holidays.



Night Deposit Box

A night deposit box is located at our office in Wamego. Payments dropped off after 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday will be posted the next business day. Please pay inside to avoid broken pay arrangements or disconnection.

Bluestem Electric also has budget billing for members who prefer to pay the same amount each month. Payments are set at your monthly average, making it easy to budget. An accurate 12-month history of your use at your current residence is helpful in determining payments. If you are interested, please call 800-558-1580 to see if you qualify.