



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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Bluestem NEWS

BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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FROM THE MANAGER

How Severe Winter Weather Impacts Reliability

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. We are doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times — in the morning and early evenings — and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

At Bluestem Electric, we work closely with our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative in resource and infrastructure planning

to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and G&T.

In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow



Mike Morton

Continued on page 12B ▶

2024 Bluestem Electric COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

The Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting will be held on March 25, 2024, at the United Methodist Church Family Life Center in Clay Center, Kansas. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. The annual meeting notice will be included in the March issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine. Please look for this issue as there will not be a separate booklet mailing.

Again, the official notice of the annual meeting will be included in March *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

We hope that you will plan on attending the annual meeting and take part in the business of the cooperative.



BLUESTEM ELECTION RESULTS

BEC members of the respective districts elected the following cooperative members for three-year terms on the Bluestem Electric Board of Trustees by mail ballot in December 2023.

DISTRICT 1, POSITION 2
BRUCE MEYER – Palmer

DISTRICT 2, POSITION 1
GARY BUSS – Leonardville

DISTRICT 3, POSITION 1
STEPHEN J. O'SHEA – Blaine

DISTRICT 4, POSITION 1
AMANDA GNADT – Alma

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. They can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet comfy on cold winter days. Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION



How Severe Winter Weather Impacts Reliability

Continued from page 12A ▶

or ice storm or equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and Bluestem will inform you if this situation occurs.

Bluestem Electric Cooperative and our G&T take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- ▶ Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temperature and the outdoor temperature.
- ▶ **PRO TIP:** Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.
- ▶ Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers.
- ▶ **PRO TIP:** Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances like slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.

As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply.

- ▶ Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Make sure your furnace filter is not clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed. Experts recommend replacing your furnace filter at least every three months or every two months if you have pets or allergies.
 - ▶ When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.
 - ▶ Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.
- As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected.

2024 HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSINGS

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day

JULY 4 & 5
Independence Day

NOVEMBER 28 & 29
Thanksgiving

MAY 27
Memorial Day

SEPTEMBER 2
Labor Day

DECEMBER 24 & 25
Christmas

BEST BETS FOR Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid and lower your energy bills by conserving during peak energy times.

ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before going to bed.



MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.



LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



UP, UP AND AWAY

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO A BALLOON RELEASE

Everyone has great intentions when planning a balloon release. However, as soon as balloons are let go, they can go from sentiment to hazard.

Although beautiful to look at, balloons can cause power outages.

LATEX AND MYLAR BALLOONS AND ATTACHED STRINGS AND RIBBONS CAN:

- ▶ Threaten birds and animals (via ingestion and entanglement).
- ▶ Harm marine life.
- ▶ Obstruct the flight path or cause damage to an airplane's engine.
- ▶ Cause ground and ocean trash.
- ▶ Create plastic pollution.

ACCORDING TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS:

- ▶ What goes up, must come down: Balloons will fall back to earth either semi-deflated or in tiny and hard-to-retrieve fragments.
- ▶ Only an estimated 5% of all released balloons return intact.
- ▶ Even if balloons are marketed as degradable, they may take several weeks to break down.

ALTERNATIVES TO BALLOONS:

- ▶ Blow bubbles.
- ▶ Light candles.
- ▶ Throw biodegradable confetti.
- ▶ Plant trees or flowers.
- ▶ Paint stones.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.COM

How Do I Love Thee?

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS, I MEAN DOLLARS.

According to the National Retail Association, more than half of U.S. consumers celebrate Valentine's Day.



It is the third largest spending holiday in America, behind Christmas and Halloween.



The average household spent \$192.80 in 2023.



Individuals spent \$25.9 billion in 2023 on gifts for the holiday.



About 36% expect their sweetie to spend at least \$50.



Valentine's Day flower sales account for 30% of total annual flower sales.



Close to 67% expect their partners to get them something.



Many people, especially millennials, buy gifts for their pets.

VALENTINE'S DAY GIFT GIVERS SPEND \$26B.

TOP GIFTS



CANDY



CARDS



FLOWERS



AN EVENING OUT



JEWELRY

SOURCES: NRF, WALLETHUB, VESTED

Horses Gallop and so Can Power Lines

How can galloping lines impact power transmission and distribution?

Galloping power lines are typically caused when ice and high winds occur at the same time. Freezing rain creates icicles and odd-shaped ice formations on power lines and conductors. The ice buildup changes how wind and air impact the now misshapen, ice-covered line. This change in airflow can cause the power line to begin bouncing.

They can bounce and buck enough to hit another line, damaging themselves enough to cause a power outage or even fall to the ground.

A power company can't prevent galloping lines since the wild motion is caused by Mother Nature. However, some power lines have special mechanisms, such as twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal, attached to the line to minimize the motion. While they can help, sometimes they are no match for severe ice and whipping wind.

Aside from ice storms, year-round storms can cause damaging winds, which can knock down power lines and blow trees and limbs onto power lines. Keep the following safety tips in mind:

- ▶ When you see power lines on the ground, stay away, warn others to stay away and contact the electric utility or call 911. Lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live.
- ▶ Any utility wire, including telephone or cable

lines that are sagging or down, could be in contact with an energized power line, also making it dangerous. Do not try to guess the types of lines — stay away from all lines.

- ▶ Be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide electrical hazards. Downed power lines can energize objects around them, such as chain-link fences and metal culverts.
- ▶ Keep in mind that a deenergized line could become energized during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators.
- ▶ Never drive over a downed line. It could start a chain reaction and cause additional poles or other equipment to collapse.
- ▶ If you are in a car that has contacted or is near a downed power line, stay in your vehicle. Wait until the utility crew has arrived and deenergized the line. Warn others not to approach the car.
- ▶ Only exit a car or cab near or on downed lines if there is a fire. If this happens, cross your arms over your chest and make a solid jump out and away from the car with both feet together. Then hop away at least 50 feet or more while continuing to keep both feet together. For more electrical safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

What is *Backfeed*?

Avoid deadly backfeed and help keep lineworkers safe.

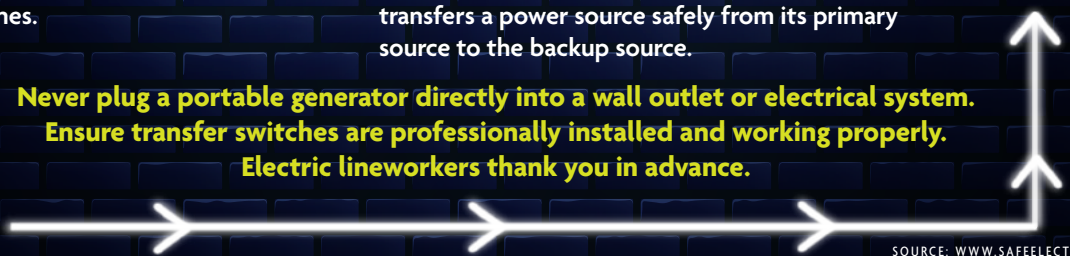
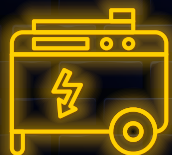
Backfeed is when power flows in reverse. An alternate power source, usually a portable or permanent generator, feeds energy back through a home's electrical system, meter and into the power lines.

Permanent generators should be wired into your home by a qualified electrician and have an automatic or manual transfer switch, depending on the generator. A transfer switch transfers a power source safely from its primary source to the backup source.

Never plug a portable generator directly into a wall outlet or electrical system.

Ensure transfer switches are professionally installed and working properly.

Electric lineworkers thank you in advance.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRIC.ORG