

Bluestem **NEWS**

BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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FROM THE CEO

Preparing for the Big Hunt: Look out for Power Lines



Michael Leitch

As hunting season approaches, excitement builds for time outdoors. But before you head into the woods, make sure electrical safety is part of your

preparation checklist.

Power lines and utility equipment are often out of sight — and out of mind — especially in wooded or rural areas. Ignoring them can lead to serious injuries or even death.

BEFORE YOU CLIMB THAT TREE STAND, LOOK UP AND OUT

Never install a tree stand near a power line or on a utility pole. Electricity can arc — jump through the air — up to 10 feet from high-voltage lines. This means you don't even have to touch a wire to be at risk of electrocution.

Never shoot near or toward power lines, utility poles, transformers or substations. Stray bullets or pellets could damage equipment, possibly interrupting electric service. Even more concerning, they could drop a power line to the ground, causing a hazardous scenario: Those who get within 50 feet of a downed line could be shocked or electrocuted.

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SAFETY TIP Prepare for the Hunt

- ▶ Maintain a distance of at least 10 feet from overhead lines and electrical infrastructure.
- ▶ Never climb a utility pole.
- ▶ Don't use utility poles to support tree stands or blinds.
- ▶ Avoid aiming toward power lines and equipment.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG



NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The nominating committee nominated the following individuals as candidates for the trustee positions whose three-year terms will be expiring:

DISTRICT 1, POSITION 1

STEVE OHLDE — Linn

DISTRICT 2, POSITION 2

PATRICIA BLOOMDAHL — Clay Center

DISTRICT 3, POSITION 3

MATT REZAC — Onaga

DISTRICT 4, POSITION 2

DONALD CLASSEN — Manhattan

The election of all candidates will be held by mail ballot in December. Each member will be mailed one ballot for the candidates in their district. Ballots will need to be returned to the cooperative office by Jan. 1, 2026.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

With the holiday season approaching and more time spent in the kitchen, consider ways to save energy in the heart of your home. When possible, cook meals with smaller, energy efficient appliances, such as toaster ovens, slow cookers and air fryers. When using the range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. Keep range-top burners and reflectors clean so they reflect heat more efficiently. After your holiday meals are complete, load the dishwasher fully before starting the wash cycle.

SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV

‘Blinks’ Can Signal a Properly Working Electrical System

We often hear the question from members, “What causes my lights to blink?” The utility network is subject to certain short-term losses of power, and Bluestem Electric Cooperative takes all possible measures to prevent these occurrences and minimize the effects on our members. Blinking lights are a result of momentary outages that occur when a disturbance exists on the line. These momentary outages can result from natural events, power supply issues, or human activity, including storms, lightning, vehicle accidents, or animals and tree branches contacting power lines. These momentary outages can sometimes occur on our power supplier’s transmission lines that feed the cooperative’s system, which Bluestem does not have control of.

When lights blink, it is an indication that the cooperative’s equipment is operating properly. If a fault or short circuit happens on a power line, a device called an “oil circuit recloser” (OCR) opens to stop it, then quickly closes back in. Although the process is quick — and usually temporary — it may cause your lights to blink, making it necessary to reset digital clocks and appliances with digital displays.

The OCR is essentially a breaker, functioning much like a breaker in the electrical panel in your home. It permits power to continue flowing through the line with only a brief interruption of service — rather than causing an extended power outage. If the short circuit contin-

ues, the OCR will operate or ‘trip’ three times before eventually stopping the flow of electricity and causing a power outage. This process protects the lines from damage, cutting off power to the affected section of the line and isolating the problem until it can be repaired.

Bluestem’s system is operating as it should. The co-op cannot guarantee 100% uninterruptible power because of the above-mentioned causes. The OCRs and fuses protecting the electrical grid are designed to open up, (cause a blink) then close back in to keep the power on. The reason for this is to try and clear any transient faults on the line, like a squirrel or tree, then close back in to keep the line on. Without this type of equipment protecting the circuits, the power would just go off and stay off, causing an outage until a line crew is dispatched to clear the problem and restore power.

Although the weather, nature’s creatures, power supply issues and acts of God, are beyond our control, cooperative members can lessen the effects and inconvenience of “blinks” when they occur. When purchasing small appliances and digital clocks, consider a model with battery backup. You may also want to install surge protection for the major appliances in your home and surge protection with built-in uninterrupted power supply (UPS) for your computer or other electronic devices whose “memory” would be lost with a power interruption.

VETERANS DAY

*Honoring All
Who Served*

NOV. 11, 2025

Happy Thanksgiving
from our co-op family to yours

*Our offices will be closed Thursday, Nov. 27,
and Friday, Nov. 28, to celebrate the holiday.*

Preparing for the Big Hunt: Look out for Power Lines

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KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND TO STAY SAFE AND AVOID COSTLY OR DANGEROUS INCIDENTS:

- ▶ **SCOUT THE AREA.** Before hunting, take time to scout your area during daylight. Look for power lines, poles and electrical equipment. Note their locations to avoid them later.
- ▶ **POWER SAFELY.** If you're using a portable electrical generator on your hunting trip, don't use it inside a cabin or RV, or in a confined area. Use it outside where there is plenty of ventilation.
- ▶ **AVOID AIMING TOWARD POWER LINES OR EQUIPMENT.** Never fire near or toward poles, lines, substations

or transformers. A stray bullet could knock down a line, interrupt power or create a deadly hazard.

- ▶ **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.** Always stay at least 10 feet away from overhead lines, poles and other electrical infrastructure when setting up or taking down tree stands.
- ▶ **NEVER CLIMB A UTILITY POLE.** Even if it looks like the perfect vantage point, don't do it. Poles carry high-voltage lines and climbing them can be deadly.
- ▶ **DON'T USE UTILITY POLES FOR SUPPORT.** Tree stands or blinds should never be attached to or

supported by power poles or electrical equipment.

KNOW THE DANGER OF DOWNED LINES

If you come across a downed power line or damaged electrical equipment, stay at least 50 feet away, even if it doesn't appear to be live. Power lines can still carry electricity when on the ground, posing a risk of shock or electrocution. Call 911 or your utility right away to help prevent a dangerous situation.

Whether you're a seasoned hunter or heading out for the first time, staying aware of your surroundings could save your life.

Bluestem Electric Cooperative

Annual Meeting

The Bluestem Electric Board of Trustees voted to change to a virtual format for the 2026 annual meeting.

Bluestem will host an open house at the Clay Center warehouse, **1502 17TH ROAD IN CLAY CENTER, KANSAS, FROM 5-7 P.M. ON MARCH 23, 2026**, giving members an opportunity to visit with the Bluestem Board of Trustees.

The annual meeting video will review the cooperative's progress in 2025, along with the financial report, and will be shown during the open house. Refreshments will be served. The video will also be available on Bluestem's YouTube channel.

At the end of the video, members will be shown a code to provide when contacting Bluestem in order to receive their \$20 bill credit.

We hope to see you there!



MARCH 23, 2026



**OPEN HOUSE
FROM 5-7 P.M.**



**BLUESTEM ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
WAREHOUSE**
1502 17TH ROAD, CLAY CENTER

Infrastructure Costs

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and broadband providers, escalated by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend.

PERCENT INCREASE SINCE 2020:

● Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25-40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25-35%
Smart meters	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%

● Generation

Diesel gensets	+20-40%
Gas turbines	+20-30%
Solar PV systems	+25-35%
Wind turbines	+25-35%
Hydropower components	+20-30%
Battery storage	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20-30%
Inverters	+20-30%
Relays & switchgear	+25-40%
Natural Gas	+20-120%
Coal	+30-60%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40-70%

● Build-outs

Utility construction labor	+20-40%
Freight/logistics	+30-60%

● Broadband

Fiber-optic cable	+25-40%
Splicing & telecom gear	+20-30%

● Fleets

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%
Insurance premiums	+20%

SOURCES: BLS; ENERGYNEWS.COM; REUTERS; WOOD MACKENZIE; NREL; IEA

Turkey Fryer SAFETY

Keep holiday meals joyful
— avoid fires and injuries

Deep-frying a turkey can be delicious, but it's also one of the riskiest ways to cook. Before you plug in or fire up a fryer, follow these safety tips:

SET UP SAFELY

- ▶ Use outdoor fryers at least 10 feet away from buildings, garages and overhangs.
- ▶ Place the fryer on a flat, sturdy surface and don't move it once it's heating.
- ▶ Never leave a fryer unattended.
- ▶ Keep children and pets at least 3 feet away.

PREVENT BURNS AND FIRES

- ▶ Wear oven mitts and use long utensils to avoid contact with hot surfaces and oil.
- ▶ Test the oil level before cooking. Fill the fryer with water and lower the turkey in to see how much liquid is needed. Dry everything completely before adding oil.
- ▶ Use a fully thawed and dry turkey — never fry a frozen one.

MONITOR TEMPERATURES

- ▶ Use a thermometer to make sure the oil is at the recommended temperature.
- ▶ Avoid overloading outlets if using an electric fryer; unplug other appliances before use.

SMART TIP:

Consider using an electric fryer or going oil-free with an air fryer for safer indoor cooking options.