




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
1000 South Wind Dr., P.O. Box 5  
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800-558-1580

[www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com)

# Bluestem NEWS

## BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Mark Diederich**

President

**Donald Classen**

Vice President

**Bruce Meyer**

Secretary

**Amanda Gnadt**

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**Matthew Rezac**

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**Richard Ridder**

Trustee

### MANAGEMENT STAFF

**Michael Leitch**

CEO

**Trisha Bradley**

Manager of Accounting and Finance

**Jerod Chaffee**

Manager of Line Operations

**Benjiman C. Easterberg**

Manager of AMI and Mapping/OMS

**Kevin Heptig**

Manager of Member Services

### CONTACT US

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## FROM THE CEO

# Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

February brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Bluestem, you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. On SmartHub you can see how electricity usage may have spiked on days when you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn

that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.



Michael Leitch

### FUEL PRICES

Bluestem purchases electricity from our power generation partner, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo), at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partner accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to homes and

*Continued on page 12C* ▶

## 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 2024.

**DISTRICT 1 & 2,  
POSITION AT-LARGE**

**MARK DIEDERICH**  
Greenleaf

**DISTRICT 3,  
POSITION 2**

**BRENT MCKEEMAN**  
Manhattan

**DISTRICT 3 & 4,  
POSITION AT-LARGE**

**RICHARD RIDDER**  
St. George

## COMPLETE OUR MEMBER SURVEY

Bluestem Electric Cooperative is conducting a member satisfaction survey. Please scan the QR code to take the 2-5 minute survey. We appreciate your time and input. Thank you for being a member of



Bluestem Electric Cooperative!

## Morton Celebrates Retirement



General Manager Mike Morton celebrates his 41 years of service with his family during his retirement party. Morton joined PR&W Rural Electric Cooperative in August 1984 before the co-op consolidated with C&W Rural Electric Cooperative and formed Bluestem Electric Cooperative. He served as general manager of Bluestem beginning in 2018 before his retirement on Jan. 3, 2025. We're thankful to Mike for his dedicated years of service!

# 2025 Bluestem Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

The Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting will be held on **MARCH 24, 2025**, at the Bluestem Electric Cooperative Warehouse in Wamego, Kansas. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Official Notice of the Annual Meeting will be mailed no less than 10 days prior to the meeting. We hope that you will plan on attending the annual meeting and take part in the business of the cooperative.



**MARCH 24, 2025**



**7 P.M.**



**BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WAREHOUSE IN WAMEGO**



# Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

Continued from page 12A ▶

businesses. The cost of fuels that are used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand. While these fluctuations can impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with KEPCo to plan and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

## EXTREME WEATHER

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, Bluestem members pay a monthly customer charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in Bluestem's service territory. To ensure the safe and reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations and other essential equipment.

## ENERGY POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations on the always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed

and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

## YOU HAVE CONTROL

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce your energy bill by controlling your demand. Demand is the rate of energy used at any given point in time and is measured by the highest rate at which a member uses electricity during a 60-minute period and is billed accordingly. The demand charge is billed on the highest demand registered during the billing period. Stagger energy-intensive chores throughout the day, such as early in the morning or later in the evening, to save energy. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Bluestem is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. As always, we will continue working efficiently to provide you with safe and reliable power at an affordable cost.

## EFFECTIVE WAYS TO LOWER HOME ENERGY USE

Outside factors, such as fuel, equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.

### THERMOSTAT MANAGEMENT

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Department of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



### SEAL YOUR HOME

According to Energy Star, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping.



### UTILIZE OFF-PEAK ENERGY TIMES

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



### MAINTAIN EQUIPMENT

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.



## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers will try anything to deceive utility customers, including a tactic that claims customers have overpaid their bill. If you receive a call, text or email from someone claiming you overpaid a utility bill and need to provide your banking or credit card information to receive a credit, it's likely a scam. In most cases, your utility will apply a credit to your account to cover future charges or refund an overpayment with a mailed check.



SOURCE: UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use Energy Star-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. Use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.



SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV

## EFFICIENCY TIP

About 30% of your home's heating energy escapes through windows. Use window coverings to minimize energy loss in cold weather and consider smart blinds that automatically adjust based on sunlight and temperature. This helps regulate indoor climate and keeps your heater from kicking on, saving energy.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

# Snowmageddon, Snowpocalypse, SnOMG!

Whether it's a big snow storm or an everyday snowfall — there's a risk of death by shoveling. Sudden exertion after being sedentary for several months can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower can also cause injury.

**Shoveling heavy, wet snow can cause back injuries and heart attacks. So don't push yourself!**

- \* Dress warmly, covering your head, fingers and toes.
- \* Take it slow and stretch before you begin.
- \* Stay hydrated and don't shovel after eating or while smoking.
- \* Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter.
- \* Push small amounts of snow rather than lifting.
- \* Take frequent breaks and do not work to the point of exhaustion.

Know the signs of a heart attack, including chest discomfort, an uncomfortable feeling of fullness and shortness of breath. Stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing symptoms; every minute counts.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

## 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