

Bluestem NEWS

BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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CONTACT US

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.
P.O. Box 5, Wamego, KS 66547
800-558-1580

FROM THE CEO

Working Together to Lower Demand



Michael Leitch

When outdoor temperatures drop, electricity use naturally rises. Colder weather drives us indoors, where we rely more heavily on home heating systems, more lighting and household appliances. Heating systems run longer and more frequently to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures. Combine that with the fact that most people use electricity at the same times — typically in the mornings and early evenings — and the result is significant pressure on our electric grid.

Bluestem works closely with Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, to plan for these seasonal

weather patterns and changes and ensure you have reliable power every day of the year. This partnership involves detailed resource and infrastructure planning to make certain electricity is available whenever you need it. However, it's important to remember that our local system is part of a much larger regional and national electric grid.

During the winter months, when homes and businesses across the country are using more electricity simultaneously, overall demand can increase — or occasionally exceed — available supply. This is especially true during severe weather events, such as ice storms, sudden temperature drops, or equipment malfunctions that reduce generation capacity. In rare cases when demand threatens to outpace supply, the regional grid operator, Southwest Power Pool (SPP), may call for

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees. Even small adjustments like these can reduce heating costs and improve comfort during the coldest months.

SOURCE: NRECA



Bluestem Offers 10 SCHOLARSHIPS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. will award 10 scholarships for \$1,000 each to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

The Scholarship Committee will select the top 10 candidates that complete an online application, test, and personal video. Completed applications must be submitted by

**Friday, Feb. 6, 2026,
at 4:30 P.M.**

For more information contact your high school counselor after Dec. 1, 2025, or call Bluestem Electric Cooperative at 800-558-1580.

2025 HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSINGS

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day

JULY 2 & 3
Independence Day

NOVEMBER 26 & 27
Thanksgiving

MAY 25
Memorial Day

SEPTEMBER 7
Labor Day

DECEMBER 24 & 25
Christmas

2026 Teller Committee Selected

Each year the Bluestem Board of Trustees shall appoint a teller committee whose function is to count and verify the ballots for the election of trustees. The teller committee was appointed by the Bluestem Board of Trustees at their Dec. 15, 2025, meeting.

The teller committee will meet on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026, at the Bluestem Electric Cooperative office located at 1000 South Wind Drive in Wamego at 6 p.m. to tabulate and certify the election results.

The results of the election of trustees will be printed in the February edition of the *Bluestem News* located in the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7442, or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Switch to Paperless Billing, Receive Credit

Switch to paperless billing through your SmartHub account and receive a one-time \$5 credit on your next bill.

Starting Jan. 1 through March 31, Bluestem is offering a one-time \$5 credit on the following month's bill after you sign up for paperless billing. Please note that all offers are valid only for first-time sign-ups. If a member has more than one account that they sign up for, they will only receive one \$5 credit to be applied to one account.

Go to www.bluestemelectric.com/paperless-billing for more information. If you have questions, call us at 800-558-1580.

Reminder to Update Payment Information

If you are signed up for automatic bank draft or recurring credit/debit card payments for your Bluestem Electric account(s), please update your information if you change bank accounts or get new credit/debit cards. This will ensure that your account will be paid on time and avoid any penalty charges.



For Safety's Sake, Do Not Mess With a Meter

For your safety, never try to tamper with or pull (remove) a meter. Only Bluestem employees, agents of the cooperative and other persons authorized by law should access an electric meter.

Improperly accessing a meter can cause an arc flash bright enough to result in blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of red-hot, shrapnel-like debris, according to the Cooperative Research Network. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion or fire is often a result of meter tampering.

If an electrician is pulling (removing) your electric meter, please call Bluestem first at 800-558-1580.

MORE ON METER SAFETY

- ▶ Tampering with a meter is illegal in most states.
- ▶ Meters should only be installed, maintained, or removed by electric utility crews or authorized persons.
- ▶ Accessing the backside of a meter can generate high voltage; pulling or tampering with a meter can cause electric shock, sparks, surges, explosions or fire.
- ▶ Electricity should always be connected or disconnected using a transfer switch or a dedicated disconnection point.
- ▶ There is no guarantee that a structure is deenergized by pulling a meter.
- ▶ If firefighters respond to a call and know they will need a disconnect, they should call the electric utility when en route.
- ▶ If firefighters try disconnecting a home by pulling a meter, it can introduce additional problems and damage.

OTHER FACTS

If a home's electricity is shut off at a main disconnect, the house can be automatically reconnected if there is a standby generator or battery-stored power.

Only the electric utility can properly and safely disconnect a meter. Utility crews are trained in proper disconnection techniques and wear protective clothing and gear.

For more information about electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

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.**

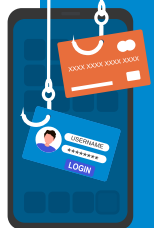


**BLUESTEM ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
WAREHOUSE**
1502 17TH ROAD, CLAY CENTER

TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Beware of “winter bill relief” energy scams. Scammers exploit high winter bills by offering fake discounts or relief programs. They may ask for upfront payments or personal details to lower your rate. Legitimate utilities never demand gift cards, wire transfers or payment through apps. Always verify offers directly by calling your utility’s phone number located on your energy bill — do not call any phone numbers provided in a suspicious email or text. Remember to take time to confirm before you pay; real savings programs won’t pressure you for immediate action.



Working Together to Lower Demand

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temporary, controlled outages — often referred to as rolling blackouts — to prevent broader system failures. If such a situation arises, Bluestem will provide updates and information as we receive it from SPP.

To prepare for these scenarios and minimize risks, Bluestem and our G&T partner take proactive measures to strengthen reliability year-round. These include routine system maintenance, investments in grid modernization and comprehensive disaster response planning. Bluestem has a proactive vegetation management program to improve service reliability. These proactive steps are designed to ensure our portion of the grid remains resilient even under extreme conditions. Yet, maintaining a reliable electric system requires a collective effort — and every member plays an important role in lowering demand when the grid is under stress.

You can help by taking simple actions during periods of high electricity use, especially on the coldest days of winter:

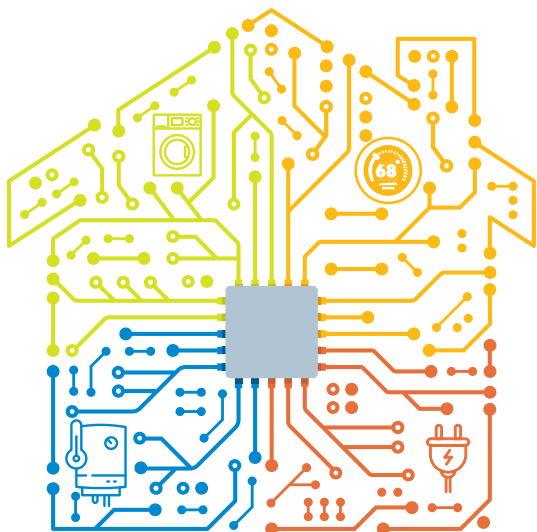
1 LOWER YOUR THERMOSTAT SLIGHTLY. Even reducing the temperature by a few degrees can help.

2 RUN LARGE APPLIANCES LIKE DISHWASHERS, WASHING MACHINES AND DRYERS AT DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE DAY INSTEAD OF ALL AT ONCE – TYPICALLY MID-MORNING OR LATE EVENING. This will help reduce your overall demand.

3 ADJUST YOUR WATER HEATER. Setting it to 120 degrees and spacing out showers helps conserve both energy and hot water.

4 UNPLUG UNNECESSARY DEVICES. Power used for lighting and electronics adds up and accounts for a significant portion of home energy use. Disconnect unused items to reduce energy waste.

Understanding how winter weather impacts electricity demand is key to maintaining system reliability. By practicing simple energy conservation habits at home, you not only save money on your monthly bill — you also help strengthen the resilience of the grid that powers our community. Together, through small actions and shared awareness, we can ensure that our homes remain warm, our lights stay on, and our local grid continues to serve us reliably throughout the season.



POWER UNDER PRESSURE

Four Ways to Ease Grid Strain This Winter

Energy use spikes during periods of extremely cold weather, which adds strain to the electric grid. When our community works together to reduce energy use, we can make a big impact in supporting reliability.

Here are four simple ways you can help:

Delay using large appliances.
Run them in the evenings
or midday when demand is lower.

Lower your thermostat.
Even a difference of
a few degrees can help.

Unplug unnecessary devices.
Electronics and lighting add
up. Unplug any unused items.

Lower your water heater
to 120 degrees and avoid
back-to-back showers.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION