



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
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[www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com)

# Bluestem NEWS

## BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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### CONTACT US

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## Growing Together: Caring for Trees and Keeping the Power On

There is something timeless about trees. They ground us. They remind us of where we have been, and they stretch toward what is ahead. Here in our community, we take pride in the natural beauty that surrounds us — the shade on a summer afternoon, the colors that mark the changing seasons, the quiet strength of something that grows slowly but endures.

At the same time, we share another responsibility — one that is just as essential to our daily lives. The responsibility to keep the lights on, to power our homes and businesses, to make sure that when you flip a switch, the energy you depend on is there.

That is why Bluestem Electric works every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important

ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Although it may not always be obvious, but keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. We have all seen what can happen when severe weather rolls in — strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles. In fact, nearly half of all power outages can be traced to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That is why you may notice crews from Bluestem or our trusted contractors working in neighborhoods throughout the year. Our crews are highly trained and certified, following the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it

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## WORK SAFELY NEAR UTILITY LINES

Whether you're running heavy equipment or using handheld tools, working outdoors can put you dangerously close to overhead and underground utility lines. A line strike can cause outages, fires, fines, serious injury or death.

### LOOK UP:

#### OVERHEAD POWER LINE SAFETY

- ▶ Survey the job site each day for overhead lines, poles, guy wires and pad-mounted equipment. Check carefully for lines hidden by trees or buildings.
- ▶ Assume all overhead lines are energized, including service drops from poles to buildings. Keep clear unless the utility confirms that a line is not energized.
- ▶ **SET A CLEAR BOUNDARY:** Keep workers, tools, ladders and equipment at least 10 feet from power lines. When using cranes or derricks, keep at least 20 feet away. Follow OSHA guidelines for clearance at different voltages.
- ▶ Use a dedicated spotter to keep you, your crew and your equipment a safe distance from power lines.

### DIG SAFELY:

#### UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES

- ▶ Pre-mark the excavation area with white paint (use black on snow), flags, chalk, lath or whisksers.
- ▶ Call 811 or [www.811beforeyoudig.com](http://www.811beforeyoudig.com) before you dig to have lines marked. Every job needs a locate request, even small ones.
- ▶ Wait for utilities to mark their lines before digging.
- ▶ Expose marked utilities carefully by hand or with soft excavation to verify location and depth.
- ▶ Report any utility strike or damage to the facility owner. Never cover up damage.

[WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG](http://WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG)

## Growing Together: Caring for Trees and Keeping the Power On Continued from page 12A ▶

is anything but — it is a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

And it is not just good practice — it is required. Electric utilities across the country are obligated to manage vegetation near power lines. Scheduled trimming helps remove dead or weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. It's about staying one step ahead, especially as we prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events.

But beyond reliability and efficiency, there is another reason this work matters: safety.

Electricity is a powerful force, and when trees grow too close to power lines, that power can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines — or even come close — can carry electrical current. Children climbing trees in their own yards may not realize the risk. And during storms, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our lineworkers restoring service.

There is also a financial reality we can't ignore. Preventative maintenance — like tree trimming — is far more

cost-effective than repairing widespread damage after an outage. Left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can lead to more frequent disruptions and higher costs for everyone. A thoughtful, strategic vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When planting new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees — those that exceed 40 feet — should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you are landscaping near pad-mounted transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to allow safe access.

If your neighborhood has underground lines, don't forget to call 811 before digging. It is a simple step that can prevent serious accidents.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. At Bluestem Electric we are proud to be part of that effort. Our roots run deep here, just like the trees that grow here.

## WORKING ON THE LINE



Bluestem linemen conduct a live-line safety demonstration for Rock Creek High School FFA members.

# TO ALL THE AMAZING DADS OUT THERE HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

JUNE 21, 2026



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During warm months, a smart thermostat can help keep your home comfortable while reducing cooling costs. Smart thermostats learn your routine and automatically raise the temperature when you're away and cool things down before you return. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher while you're away or asleep can lead to significant savings. Many smart thermostats provide reports and tips, helping you fine-tune your energy use and stay cool while keeping your electric bill in check. SOURCE: NRECA



## TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Protect your accounts by enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA). MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second step beyond just your password — like a code sent to your phone or an authentication app. Choose app-based authentication over text messages when available, as it's more secure. Taking a few minutes to turn on MFA for email, banking and additional online accounts can significantly reduce your risk of identity theft and financial loss. SOURCE: WWW.STAYSAFEONLINE.ORG



## SIGN UP FOR AUTO PAY ON SMARTHUB



Save time and pay your monthly electric bill automatically by bank draft. No need to find a postage stamp or worry if your payment will reach us on time. Contact Bluestem Electric to request an application or you can find it online at [www.bluestemelectric.com/payment-option](http://www.bluestemelectric.com/payment-option).

**TO SIGN UP, YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:** your name, bank name, phone number, checking account number, routing number (ABA No.), bank address and Bluestem account number(s).

You can also pay your bill online through our SmartHub application using your bank account or credit card!

## Why Meter Disconnection Should Be Left to Professionals

For safety and compliance, it is crucial to have a Bluestem employee or licensed electrician remove an electric meter. These professionals are equipped with the knowledge and tools to handle live electrical systems safely, reducing the risk of electrocution, equipment damage or fire. Unauthorized meter disconnection violates Bluestem's rules and regulations, poses serious hazards, and potentially disrupts service to other customers. Relying on qualified personnel ensures the work is done safely, accurately and in accordance with local codes and utility guidelines.

**IF AN ELECTRICIAN IS REMOVING YOUR ELECTRIC METER, PLEASE CALL BLUESTEM FIRST AT 800-558-1580.**



## Lightning Safety for OUTDOOR WORKERS

Outdoor work increases lightning risk — especially in open areas, near tall objects and around metal.

### HIGH-RISK OCCUPATIONS

- ▶ Utility/line work
- ▶ Farming
- ▶ Forestry
- ▶ Construction/maintenance
- ▶ Heavy equipment operation
- ▶ Plumbing/pipefitting

### STAY ALERT

- ▶ **CHECK THE FORECAST.** Delay work if storms are possible.
- ▶ **WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS** like dark clouds, increasing wind, rain or thunder.
- ▶ **TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY** in a building or hard-topped vehicle if you hear thunder.

### AVOID

- ▶ **HIGH PLACES AND TALL OBJECTS**, like roofs, scaffolding, ladders, poles and trees.
- ▶ **LARGE EQUIPMENT**, such as bucket trucks, bulldozers, cranes, backhoes and tractors.
- ▶ **CONDUCTORS** like metal tools, utility lines, water and plumbing.

### IF A COWORKER IS STRUCK:

- ▶ **CALL 911.**
- ▶ **MOVE THEM TO SAFETY** if possible. Lightning victims are safe to touch.
- ▶ If the victim is not breathing or has no pulse and you are trained, **START CPR.**

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

## HEAT PUMPS EXPLAINED

### How They Heat and Cool Your Home

Heat pumps aren't brand-new technology anymore. What's changed is how well they work (including in colder weather) and how many options homeowners have, from ductless mini-splits to high-efficiency, variable-speed systems. If you've heard the term and wondered what a heat pump actually does, here's the simple idea: it doesn't "make" heat like a furnace. It moves heat, which can make it an efficient way to keep your home comfortable year-round.

#### WHAT ARE HEAT PUMPS AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

In general, a heat pump extracts heat from one place and transfers it to another, similar to how an air conditioner or refrigerator cools. In warmer months, a heat pump takes heat from inside a home and relocates it outdoors, helping to make your home cooler. In cooler months, it pulls heat from the outdoor air (even when it feels cold) and transfers it indoors. Some newer models use variable-speed (inverter) compressors that adjust output in small increments for steadier comfort and better efficiency.

#### DO THEY SAVE ENERGY?

Because heat pumps move heat rather than generate it, they can be very efficient — especially when replacing electric-resistance heat (like baseboard heaters). The U.S. Department of Energy notes that today's heat pumps can cut electricity use for heating by up to 75% compared with electric resistance heating, though actual savings depend on your climate, home and the system you're replacing.

Heat pumps for larger homes can save energy with a zone-heating feature that warms only the rooms in use. High-efficiency heat pumps also dehumidify more effectively than standard systems, resulting in lower energy use.

#### IS THERE MORE THAN ONE TYPE?

Four primary types of heat pumps exist:

**1 AIR-TO-AIR OR AIR-SOURCE PUMPS** are the most common and are powered by electricity. They have an outdoor compressor/condenser unit that warms or cools the coils inside the air handler. It then circulates the

warmed or cooled air through the system and pushes it back into rooms through ducts. For homes without air ducts, air-source heat pumps are also available as ductless mini-split heat pumps.

**2 ABSORPTION HEAT PUMPS** are similar to air-source heat pumps except that, instead of using electricity to operate, they use alternative energy sources such as natural gas, propane, or solar- or geothermal-heated water.

**3 GEOTHERMAL/GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMPS** can heat, cool, and even supply hot water to a home by transferring heat to or from the ground (or nearby water source), according to Energy.gov. They have higher installation costs but lower operating costs because they take advantage of relatively constant ground or water temperatures. They're usually more efficient, provide steadier performance, and work better in extreme climates than air-source heat pumps. However, air-source models have improved: cold-climate versions can still heat efficiently below freezing, so they can be a good option in many northern states.

**4 AIR-TO-WATER HEAT PUMPS** are a special type of air-source heat pump called a "reverse cycle chiller" that generates hot and cold water rather than air, allowing it to be used with radiant floor heating systems.

#### WHAT TO ASK:

- ▶ Ask about cold-climate performance for your area (and whether you'll need backup heat).
- ▶ Confirm the system is right-sized (bigger isn't always better).
- ▶ If you're choosing ductless, ask about zoning and placement for comfort.
- ▶ Ask what electrical work (panel/circuit) might be needed before installation.

Heat pumps are electric appliances, so safe installation matters. Use a qualified contractor to determine the best heat pump system for your home, and if your installer recommends electrical panel upgrades, have them done by a licensed electrician.