



Bluestem NEWS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative

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Contact Us

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FROM THE MANAGER

Reliable Power for Today — and Tomorrow

Ring in a new year sparks a sense of renewed hope and optimism about the future. As the general manager of Bluestem Electric Cooperative, for me, it is a time to reflect on where we are and where we are going. At the heart of this reflection, I think about ways we can better serve you, the members of our cooperative.

Our team at Bluestem Electric is always looking ahead, exploring ways to innovate and use new technologies to improve our services. As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more important. We are committed to powering — and empowering — our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power while adapting to a changing energy

landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across Bluestem Electric Cooperative's territory. You may not realize it, but Bluestem Electric does not generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from our energy provider, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. and from there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community. Our current energy resource mix is made up of nuclear, coal, hydro, wind, gas/oil and solar, 64.4% of this energy portfolio is non-greenhouse-gas-emitting energy.

We are increasingly using more

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Mike Morton

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!



Trustee Elections This Month

In the next few days, you will be receiving a voting packet for the trustee elections at Bluestem Electric Cooperative. Please be sure to follow the directions and return your marked ballot in the envelopes supplied.

Ballots must be postmarked or received at the cooperative office prior to **JAN. 1, 2024**. The teller committee will meet on Jan. 3, 2024, at the Bluestem Electric Cooperative office located at 1000 South Wind Drive in Wamego, Kansas, at 7 p.m. to tabulate and certify the election results.

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

Trustees With Expiring Terms Are:

- ▶ **DISTRICT 1, POSITION 2**
BRUCE MEYER – Palmer
- ▶ **DISTRICT 2, POSITION 1**
GARY BUSS – Leonardville
- ▶ **DISTRICT 3, POSITION 1**
STEPHEN O'SHEA – Blaine
- ▶ **DISTRICT 4, POSITION 1**
AMANDA GNADT – Alma

Meter System Upgrade

Bluestem Electric is in the process of upgrading the advance metering infrastructure (AMI) system. The current TWACS metering system has exceeded its life expectancy. The new metering system has advanced features that include instant outage detection, remote disconnect and reconnect, and data collection. Contractors will be assisting Bluestem with installing new meters. Contractor vehicles will have signs identifying them as "Contracted by: Bluestem Electric Cooperative."

Planned Rate Study Underway

Have you ever wondered how the rates you pay for electric service are established? All operations of an electric cooperative are funded through the rates paid by the members. As a not-for profit member-owned business serving your local communities, Bluestem Electric Cooperative has two primary obligations. First is to provide safe, reliable and affordable service to the members. The second is to maintain sound financial operations that satisfy the requirements of our lenders. Our member-elected board of trustees and the cooperative's management must examine rates periodically to ensure they continue to fulfill these obligations, while keeping rates fair and reasonable for the members.

For this reason, Bluestem Electric Cooperative is currently undergoing a rate study process to fulfill this responsibility. Cooperatives use independent rate consultants to ensure the process is completed without bias. We have retained the services of Power System Engineering, Inc. to conduct our rate analysis using industry-accepted standards.

When the rate study is completed, it will be reviewed by the board in detail. The board takes its responsibility to set fair rates very seriously. After all, they

Stages of a Rate Study

- 1** Calculate the revenue needed to operate the business successfully in the future.
- 2** Identify the portion each rate class is responsible for in the suggested revenue requirement.
- 3** Design rates so that revenue is collected fairly in each rate class, while also meeting any other goals identified by the board.

are members of the cooperative and pay the same rates.

After the board's review, they will determine if there needs to be a discussion and vote on any potential rate changes. Kansas law requires that we provide the membership with notice of the time and place of any meeting of the board of trustees, where rate changes will be discussed and voted on.

Rate change meeting notices will include as many details as possible about any proposed changes. Members will have the opportunity to attend the board meeting to hear the discussion and vote of the board, and express opinions on the changes. Members can find the notice for these meetings in the *Kansas Country Living* centerspread.





Bluestem Offers 10 SCHOLARSHIPS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. will award six \$1,000 scholarships and four \$750 scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

The scholarships will be awarded to the top 10 candidates who complete a two-stage process. The first stage will include an online application and test that must be completed **BY FRIDAY, JAN. 12, 2024, AT 4:30 P.M.** In the second stage, a panel of judges will interview finalists on **MONDAY, FEB. 19, 2024.**

For more information, contact your high school counselor or call Bluestem Electric Cooperative at 785-456-2212.

2024 Bluestem Electric COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

The 2024 Bluestem Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on **MARCH 25, 2024**, at the United Methodist Church Family Life Center in Clay Center. 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.

Official Notice of the annual meeting will be mailed prior to the meeting. Again, this will be included in the March issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

We hope you will attend the annual meeting and take part in the business of the cooperative.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Get smart with a better way to heat and cool your home! Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and automatically adjust heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. Smart thermostats learn your temperature preferences and establish a schedule that adjusts to energy-saving settings when you're asleep or away. For maximum energy savings, look for smart thermostat models with the Energy Star® label.

SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV



Reliable Power for Today — and Tomorrow

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electricity generated from renewable energy sources, but we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power that is available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, Bluestem Electric is using technology to enhance our local grid, limit service disruptions and improve outage response times.

Bluestem Electric is in the process of upgrading our advanced metering infrastructure system, also known as AMI, which enables two-way communication between the co-op and consumer-members. In the event of a power outage, AMI helps pinpoint the exact location of the outage and can even analyze damaged or tampered meters. AMI helps Bluestem Electric save money with real-time data, and ultimately improves power reliability for our entire community.

Proactive tree trimming is another way we limit service disruptions. Scheduled trimming keeps power lines clear from overgrown limbs that are likely to fall. Members are encouraged to contact Bluestem if they notice trees that need to be trimmed out of electric lines. As technology advancements become more accessible, we anticipate using advanced mapping software to better maintain the environment while providing more reliable service.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric co-ops in Kansas and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model because for us, it is about cooperation, not competition.

As we turn our focus to 2024, Bluestem Electric will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable and safe electricity you expect and deserve — for today and tomorrow.

Guard Against Utility Service Scams, Fraud and Identity Theft

It is the world we live in today — the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer or respond to someone seeking information. No industry, person or business is off limits to scammers, who even try to con their way into the utility industry.

The Better Business Scam Tracker reports that victims usually lose \$274 in all types of scams and \$500 in a utility scam.

When it comes to power bills, scammers make threatening phone calls to consumers to demand immediate payment, or else their service will be shut off, they threaten. This deceiving claim is often made during the height of summer or winter, when people want to stay comfortable during the extreme heat or cold. However, utilities typically send initial disconnection notices in writing.

Utility Scams: How They Get You

Scammers request that immediate payment be wired, loaded on a reloadable gift card or debit card or sent using cryptocurrency (a digital money system that does not rely on banks for verification). Only scammers request this type of payment and threaten immediate service disconnection. Do not provide any information (including your utility account number) or agree to immediate payment. Instead, hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your power bill. Fake numbers and links can appear in emails and texts.

Utility bills that double the amount typically due may be a utility scam. Utilities are closely regulated and may not have the right to raise prices substantially without previous notice. Consumers should trust their gut reaction; if it seems like a fraud, it probably is.

Protect Personal Info

When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a Social Security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information. Additionally, do not give out sensitive information to anyone who calls you. Verify the phone number and call the utility directly to discuss any matter that would involve providing personal information. In general, some companies do have password-protected, secure methods to obtain personal information via an app or portal, but always verify this before using.

At Your Door

The famous song by Paul McCartney, titled “Let ‘Em In,” features the artist’s welcoming plea, “Someone’s knockin’ at the door; Someone’s ringin’ the bell ... Do me a favor; Open the door and let ‘em in,” but that is not great advice these days.

Door-to-door scams may involve impersonators of utility workers saying the meter is broken or offering to perform repairs or an energy audit — all at the consumer’s cost. Your utility will contact you in advance, prior to arriving at your home for service or for any other reason. Do not let someone in the house without a pre-approved appointment.

Scams in General

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) warns that phishing emails and texts may attempt to convince individuals to make payments or provide personal information. Thieves use this stolen information to open accounts and pass charges on to the victim.

Caller ID Can Fib

Over the phone, calls appearing to be local are not always an accurate assessment of who is calling. AARP has a fraud watch network that provides alerts of new frauds; do an internet search for the fraud watch network to learn more.

Scams are Everywhere

Non-utility-related scams may include the announcement of an inheritance or pop-ups on a computer warning that technical support is needed. There are even puppy purchase cons when cute and often sought-after breeds are offered in all their puppy cuteness, but scammers take your money and run. There are student loan forgiveness scams and one-time password bot scams.

Hackers even prey on the many smartphone users who have cracked screens. It is called the “chip in the middle attack,” and scammers get ahold of a screen replacement and install it on your phone with a spyware chip. Always verify a screen-fix-it phone number or take your phone to a store/ servicer you trust. If the company cannot be verified by a search engine, do not trust it.

No matter the scam, the goal of the scammer is to gather personal information. Stay safe: Do not share Social Security numbers, account details, credit card numbers, bank information, death certificates or birth dates. Thieves can use this information to steal their victim’s identity.

If you become a victim of a scam, report it to the local police and your bank. Consumers can protect themselves by blocking unknown callers and keeping software updated on phones and computers.

BE AWARE OF SCAM CALLS

Do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment. Instead hang up and call your local electric cooperative.

