

Bluestem NEWS

BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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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

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

FROM THE CEO

This Fall, Refresh Your Cybersecurity Habits

As the leaves begin to change and we settle into the routines of fall, it's a good time to take stock of a few things around the house — preparing for cooler weather, checking our heating systems, and getting ready for the months ahead. It's also a good time to refresh our cybersecurity habits.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but protecting your personal information is something that deserves attention all year long.

At Bluestem Electric Cooperative, cybersecurity is a critical part of providing safe, reliable electric service. While much of our focus is on protecting the physical systems that operate the electric grid, we also work to protect the systems and information that help us serve you — including online accounts, payment systems, member portals and outage communications.

Unfortunately, scammers are becoming more sophisticated, too.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is making it easier for cyber criminals to create convincing emails, text messages, websites and even voice messages that can look and sound legitimate. The FBI has warned that generative AI can make fraudulent schemes more believable by eliminating many of the errors that once helped us identify a scam.

That matters when it comes to utility scams.

A scammer may impersonate Bluestem and claim your account is past due, your service is about to be disconnected, or you need to make an immediate payment. The message might even include our logo, use professional-looking language or direct you to a website that appears legitimate. With AI helping scammers create



Michael Leitch

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Fall back on Nov. 1

On Sunday, Nov. 1, remember to turn your clocks back one hour. It is also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors and have a professional check your fire extinguishers.

Outage Text Reporting

1

Confirm your cellphone number is listed on your account by calling the Bluestem office.

2

Text 'outagestatus' to 55050 to opt in.

You're signed up for Outage Texting!



If you are experiencing an outage text 'outage' to 55050.

For more information please visit
<https://www.bluestemelectric.com/outage-reporting>

This Fall, Refresh Your Cybersecurity Habits

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more convincing communications, simply looking for spelling mistakes or other obvious warning signs may no longer be enough. And these scams are not a small problem.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, consumers reported losing \$3.5 billion to imposter scams in 2025, making these types of scams the most commonly reported type of fraud. Nearly one in three fraud reports involved an imposter scam.

So, what should you do if you receive an unexpected message claiming to be from Bluestem Electric?

If a message creates a sense of urgency or threatens immediate disconnection, take a moment to verify it. Don't click the link or call the phone number provided in the message. Instead, contact Bluestem Electric directly using our trusted methods. You can reach us by phone at 800-558-1580 or by email at info@bluestemelectric.com.

You can also take steps to protect your online accounts before a scam occurs. Start with your password. Longer is generally better than simply adding

more special characters. Choose a long, unique passphrase that is difficult for others to guess, and don't reuse the same password across multiple accounts.

If the accounts you access online offer multifactor authentication (MFA), consider using it. MFA adds an extra layer of protection by requiring an additional way to verify your identity, such as a code sent to your phone or an authentication app. Turn on Two-Factor Authentication in your SmartHub Account under the Settings tab.

Most importantly, remember that you don't have to make a payment simply because someone tells you that you do. We want you to have an opportunity to verify any unexpected request.

Bluestem is committed to protecting the systems that help us deliver your electricity and serve our members. You can help by protecting your own account, slowing down when something seems urgent and contacting us directly when you're unsure.

For questions about your account or payment options, contact us at 800-558-1580.

TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, which is the perfect time to take a fresh look at your passwords. Forget the old advice about cramming passwords with symbols and random capitalization. Today's cybersecurity experts recommend using longer passphrases. A password made up of four or five unrelated words is easier to remember and much harder for criminals to crack than a short, complex password. Use a unique passphrase for every account and enable multi-factor authentication whenever available for added protection.

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH



Don't let phantom energy haunt your electric bill this October. TVs, gaming systems, coffee makers and phone chargers continue using electricity even when they're turned off. While each device uses only a small amount, the energy waste can add up over time. Before heading out for Halloween fun, unplug devices you don't use regularly or plug them into a smart power strip that automatically cuts power when equipment is off to keep phantom energy waste in check. SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE

Bluestem's trustee election opens Dec. 1, 2026, through Jan. 1, 2027. Bluestem will be offering web, telephone and mail-in (by member request only) voting for their members. Keep a lookout for more information regarding trustee elections in our *Kansas Country Living* magazine and posts on Facebook, SmartHub and our website.



EXCERPT FROM THE BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BYLAWS

Bluestem Nomination and Election Process

SECTION 4.05 NOMINATION OF

TRUSTEES. The Board shall appoint a nominating committee, on or before the first of October of each year, consisting of not less than one, nor more than five members from each district for whom a Trustee is to be elected. Board members may not serve on the nominating committee.

Only committee members from each district will nominate their own candidate. Committee members from districts one and two will meet together in any County within District #1 and/or District #2 where the Cooperative is providing a Cooperative Service and committee members from districts three and four will meet together in any County within District #3 and/or District #4 where the Cooperative is providing a Cooperative Service. Nominating committees shall meet during the month of October. On or before the first day of November, the nominating committee shall prepare and post a list of nominations for Trustee at the Wamego office and on the Cooperative Website and/or other Cooperative Social Media sites. The committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each position. Nominations may be made by petition, filed on or before the close of business, November 30, at the Wamego office. The

petition must be signed by no less than 5% of the membership of the district for whom the Trustee is to be elected. The secretary shall immediately post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations by the committee is posted. Nominations made by the petition shall appear on the ballot in the order received.

SECTION 4.06 ELECTION OF

TRUSTEES. The election of Trustees shall be by mail ballot and/or electronic ballot as determined by the Trustees. Only those nominees selected by the nominating committee or nominated by petition shall appear on the ballot. There may be write-in votes for a qualified member not named on the ballot. The ballot shall first list the name(s) nominated by the committee, then the name(s) nominated by petition in the order received and, at the end, a place to write in a name. Failure of strict compliance with provisions of this section shall not affect the validity of any election of Trustees.

The secretary shall mail the ballots to the respective members by the 10th day of December of each year.

On or before the first day of January of each year, ballots must be postmarked or received at the Wamego office.

COLD WEATHER RULE

Effective Nov. 1-March 31

Bluestem Electric Cooperative members who are unable to pay their electric service bills during the cold weather period may qualify for this program. The requirements members must meet to qualify are summarized below:

► MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY

Bluestem Electric of their inability to pay their bill in full.

► MEMBERS MUST APPLY to

federal, state, local or other financial assistance programs for which they may be eligible to receive aid in paying utility bills.

► MEMBERS AND BLUESTEM ELECTRIC WILL REACH a mutually

agreeable payment arrangement.

Please note that failure to follow the above requirements, illegally diverting utility service, receiving service by tampering, or defaulting on a payment agreement will disqualify the member from receiving benefits under the Cold Weather Rule.

Bluestem Electric will send one written notice mailed first class at least five days prior to termination of service. A member may not be disconnected until a recognized regional weather forecasting agency predicts a 24-hour forecast above the activating temperature.

The co-op shall make at least one telephone call attempt (or other acceptable means of notification) with the member of record on the day of termination of service prior to termination of service.

In no event will Bluestem Electric disconnect service if the temperature is forecast to fall below 35 degrees Fahrenheit within 24 hours following the time of disconnection.

The Cold Weather Rule is to ensure that human health and safety are not unreasonably endangered during the cold weather months.

The Cold Weather Rule does not apply to prepay meter accounts.

BEWARE OF THIRD PARTY BILL PAYMENT SERVICES

Bluestem Electric **DOES NOT**

charge members to make payments at www.bluestemelectric.com, through the SmartHub app or by phone. Third-party payment locations and websites are **NOT** affiliated with Bluestem Electric, and payments made through these sources cannot be guaranteed. Be sure that you see the BEC logo and use the Bluestem Electric website, www.bluestemelectric.com, to make bill payments.



PAYMENT OPTIONS

Bluestem Electric offers an automated pay-by-phone option 24 hours a day, seven days a week. By calling 844-973-2526 and following the prompts, you can pay with a credit card, debit card or electronic check with **NO FEES**. You will be required to use your Bluestem account number when calling in to ensure accuracy. If it is your first time using the system, be prepared to create a four-digit PIN. For security reasons and to comply with federal rules and Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security standards, Bluestem employees cannot take your payment information over the phone; however, they are happy to assist if you have questions and can be reached at 800-558-1580.



CONVENIENT PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR OUR MEMBERS

All members receive a standard monthly bill for their electrical use. Bills are due and payable upon receipt.



AUTO PAYMENT

Payments can be made automatically when you sign up for Automatic Bank Draft. Your bank account will be drafted on the due date of the bill each month. Members can sign up through our online bill pay system or through the office. You will receive a statement each month from Bluestem to let you know how much your bill is. The bill will say "Auto Pay on xx/xx/xxxx. Do not send payment."



ONLINE BILL PAY

Online bill pay is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by visiting www.bluestemelectric.com. Members also have the option to download the SmartHub app from the Android or Apple stores on their smartphone. By using your credit card, debit card or bank account, you can either set up a one-time payment or recurring. Recurring payments will be automatically withdrawn each month on the due date.



MAIL

You can pay your electric bill by mailing a check or money order in the return envelope that is included with your monthly bill. If you are mailing a check without the return envelope, please mail to: P.O. Box 33, Wamego, KS 66547.

Be sure to include the name and Bluestem account number of the account to be paid to ensure its proper posting. Please allow sufficient time for postal processing. Payments must be received in our office prior to the due date. We **DO NOT** use the mailing post date for the payment date.



PHONE

Our automated pay-by-phone system is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 844-973-2526.

It is as simple as calling and following the voice prompts. This is a **FREE** service allowing you to make a payment by phone with a debit or credit card or electronic check with **NO FEES**.

For security reasons and to comply with PCI (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard), Bluestem employees cannot take your payment information over the phone.



800-558-1580