



Bluestem NEWS

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

It's a Matter of (Co-op!) Principles Part II



Mike Morton

For me, this is a time of year for reflection, and topping my list of things I'm grateful for is our wonderful communities. I know I speak for all Bluestem Electric Cooperative employees when I

say we are thankful to be in such incredible communities. We are fortunate to live in the same place where we work, which makes our ties to these communities that much stronger.

You may recall last month, my column touched on the first three Cooperative Principles, so this month, I'd like to tell you about the remaining four principles. The Cooperative Principles are essential to the co-op business model and benefit all members of the co-op.

Autonomy and Independence

The fourth principal, Autonomy and Independence, means that the co-op operates in an autonomous way that is solely directed and guided by its members, reflecting the values and needs of our local communities. This means the co-op is not being influenced by leaders or shareholders several states away. Instead, the co-op is led by the local members it serves.

Education and Training

The fifth principle, Education and Training, focuses on enhancing the knowledge of co-op employees and board members, which enables them to contribute to the development of the co-op. By investing in continuous learning for our employees and board members, our co-op is making a commitment not just to individual professional and personal growth, but

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ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting will be held on March 28, 2022, at the at the United Methodist Church Family Life Center in Clay Center. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Official Notice of the annual meeting will be mailed approximately 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.





10 Bluestem Offers SCHOLARSHIPS

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

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 and submitted by **FRIDAY, JAN. 14, 2022, AT 4:30 P.M.** In the second stage, a panel of judges will interview finalists on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022.

For more information, contact your high school counselor **AFTER NOV. 9, 2021**, or call Bluestem Electric at 785-456-2212.

‘Watt’ to Know about Appliance Electricity Use

Become ‘watt’ savvy before purchasing appliances, using generator

Determining how much electricity your appliances and home electronics use can help you understand how much money you are spending to operate them. Electricity is measured in units of power called watts, and one watt is a joule of energy used or produced per second.

The power consumption of small devices is usually measured in watts, while the power use of larger devices is measured in kilowatts (kW) (1 kW equals 1,000 watts). Knowing how much electricity an appliance uses and how much the electricity costs can help you decide whether to invest in a more energy-efficient appliance or make other cost-saving decisions, such as unplugging appliances when not in use. Becoming watt savvy is also helpful if you are considering purchasing a generator.

There are several ways to estimate how much electricity your appliances and home electronics use.

See the Data Plate

Appliances usually have data plates located on the back or inside the door. They tell you how many amps, watts and volts are needed to power the appliance. If your appliance does not

list watts for some reason but does list the number of volts and amps, you can multiply volts times amps to get the number of necessary watts.

Review the EnergyGuide Label

The EnergyGuide label, a yellow-colored sticker or tag found on new products, provides an estimate of the average energy consumption and cost to operate the specific model of the appliance you are considering. The FTC requires the label, and the dollar amount is the estimated yearly operating cost based on the national average cost of electricity.

Use a Monitor or Meter

Wattage meters are affordable instruments that are easy to use and can measure the electricity usage of any device that runs on 120 volts. To put it to work, just plug the monitor into the electrical outlet and then plug the device into the monitor. The monitor will display how many watts the device uses. If you want to know how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity a device uses over a length of time, just leave everything set up and read the display later. Some monitors even

allow you to plug in your utility's cost per kWh rate to determine how much that specific appliance costs you over a certain length of time.

Install a Whole-House System

Whole-house energy monitoring systems provide more detailed data on your home's energy use (as well as the ability to measure the energy use of 240-volt appliances). The features of these systems vary, and the cost and complexity depend on the number of circuits you want to monitor, how detailed the feedback is and the type of features available. The monitors are often installed directly into the main breaker panel of the home, and some require an electrician to install. Some monitors must be connected to your home's wireless network, with data being viewed on a computer or smartphone, while others come with a dedicated display. In addition to providing information on the energy consumption of your appliances, this type of monitoring system helps you understand where and when you use the most energy, allowing you to develop strategies to reduce your energy use and costs.

Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee nominated the following individuals as candidates for the trustee positions whose three-year terms will be expiring:

District 1 & 2

► Position – At Large
MARK DIEDERICH
Greenleaf

District 3

► Position – 2
MICHAEL LEITCH
Westmoreland
DENNIS SCHWANT
Wheaton

District 3 & 4

► Position – At Large
RICHARD RIDDER
St. George
ERIC PECK
Manhattan

The election of all candidates will be held by mail ballot in December. Each member will be mailed one ballot for the candidates in their district. Ballots will need to be returned to the cooperative office by Jan. 1, 2022.

It's a Matter of (Co-op!) Principles Part II *Continued from page 16A* ►

to the future of the co-op and the high quality of service our members expect and deserve. It's a win-win situation.

We also strive to inform our members (that's you!) and the public about the mission and operations of the co-op. In fact, that's why you receive this magazine every month, so we can share the latest co-op news and updates, as well as energy efficiency and safety tips.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperation Among Cooperatives is the sixth principle and fosters the way co-ops work together to address bigger challenges. While this principle applies to all types of cooperatives, it is especially relevant in the energy industry. In our case, we put this principle in action after major storms and disasters that cause widespread power outages. When this happens, we call on nearby co-ops to come to our aid and assist with restoration efforts — and we of course extend the same help to them when they are in need. I can't think of a better example of cooperation among cooperatives.

In addition, because we are part of the national electric co-op network, we can connect and collaborate with other electric co-ops to tackle industry-related challenges, like cybersecurity and an everchanging energy landscape.

Concern for Community

The seventh principle, Concern for Community, is essential to who we are as cooperatives. We serve our communities not only by being an essential service, but by helping to power our local economy. Whether through economic development, volunteerism, or donations to local causes, we invest in these communities because it's our home too.

I think you'll find that most cooperatives bring good people together to make good things happen in the community. We hope you feel that way about us, your local electric co-op.

On behalf of everyone at Bluestem Electric, we are thankful for your membership, and we hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving.



Our office will be closed Thursday, Nov. 25, and Friday, Nov. 26, for Thanksgiving.

We hope you have a safe and happy holiday.



BE SAFE DURING THE HOLIDAYS



10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY JOLLY

- 1 Do not toss light strands into the air when decorating outside. They could come into contact with a power line.
- 2 Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.
- 3 Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.
- 4 Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.
- 5 Do not use staples, nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.
- 6 String together no more than the number of strands (or fewer) recommended by the manufacturer.
- 7 Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.
- 8 Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.
- 9 Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.
- 10 Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.



Is Your Home's Envelope Well Sealed?

Energy audits can save you money

When we think of the word “envelope,” we think of the outer covering our mail comes in or we might push the envelope when attempting something radical or risky.

The term also refers to your home's outer walls, windows, doors and other openings. A well-sealed envelope, coupled with the right amount of insulation, can reduce your energy use — and, in turn, your utility bills. According to EnergyStar.gov, a whopping 9 out of 10 homes in the U.S. are under-insulated. Home-owners can save an average of 15% on heating and cooling costs (or an average of 11% on total energy costs) by air sealing their homes and adding insulation in attics, floors, crawl spaces and basements.

To determine if your home's envelope is in good shape, Safe Electricity recommend having a home audit conducted to pinpoint the leaks that allow energy to escape your home — air-conditioned air in the summer and heated air in the winter. A qualified energy auditor will include an insulation check as part of a whole-house energy assessment and will identify areas of your home that need air sealing or insulation repairs.

DIY Home Energy Audit

If you would like to complete your own audit, find out the following:

- ▶ The type of insulation in your home.
- ▶ The R-value (rate of thermal resistance) of your insulation. Typically, the higher the R-value, the more effective it is at insulating. Depending on where you live, you do not necessarily need the highest value; it depends on your local climate.
- ▶ The thickness or depth (inches) of the insulation you have.

In a newer home, the builder can help identify the type of insulation used and where it is located. In an older home, you will need to perform the inspection yourself. To complete a DIY energy assessment, you will need to check the following items.

In the Attic

- ▶ A general rule of thumb when inspecting the attic insulation is that if the insulation is level with or below the attic floor joists, you probably need to add more insulation.
- ▶ If you cannot see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you probably have enough, and adding more insulation may not be cost-effective.
- ▶ Insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots; be sure to check throughout the attic to determine if there are any thin spots.
- ▶ Make sure the insulation in your attic has the appropriate R-value for where you live. Check the value printed on your existing insulation. If you cannot find the value, measure the depth of the insulation in inches.

Multiply the depth by the insulation type. Then check EnergyStar.gov's recommended R-values. If your calculated value is less than the recommended levels for your region, you should consider adding more insulation to your attic. Insulation types include:

- ▶ 3.2 for fiberglass batting,
- ▶ 2.5 for loose fiberglass,
- ▶ 2.8 for rock wool and
- ▶ 3.7 for cellulose.

Behind the Walls

- ▶ Turn off the power to the outlet before beginning this check. Then use a voltmeter or voltage tester to confirm there is no power at the socket before beginning work.
- ▶ Remove the outlet cover and shine a flashlight into the crack around the outlet box. You should be able to see if there is insulation in the wall and possibly how thick it is.
- ▶ Pull out a small amount of insulation if needed to help determine the type of insulation.
- ▶ Check outlets on all floors, as well as old and new parts of your home. Just because you find insulation in one wall does not mean it is uniform throughout your home.

