

Bluestem NEWS

BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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CONTACT US

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P.O. Box 5, Wamego, KS 66547
800-558-1580

FROM THE CEO

Reflecting on Progress, Planning for the Future



Michael Leitch

As we close another year, I want to pause and express gratitude — for you, the members of Bluestem Electric — for your continued trust

and support. Our cooperative was built on the promise of people coming together to improve the quality of life in their communities, and that promise still guides everything we do today.

Each decision, whether it's about delivering reliable electricity, innovating for the future or advocating for smart energy policies that impact our local community, comes back to one simple question: How will this benefit the members we serve?

This past year has been marked by

meaningful progress, both in strengthening our local system and in working at the national level to influence energy policies that directly affect reliability, affordability and resilience. While the details of federal regulations may seem distant, they significantly impact our daily operations here at home.

Over the past year, electric cooperatives across the country have come together for advocacy efforts on the EPA's Power Plant Rule. As originally written, the rule would have forced a rapid shift away from always-available power generation resources, threatening the accessibility of a diverse fuel supply that keeps electricity reliable. Renewable energy sources are an essential and growing part of our energy future. However, we also recognize that the demand for electricity is rising rapidly, and natural gas, coal, and nuclear power

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TRUSTEE ELECTIONS THIS MONTH

In the next few days, you will be receiving a voting packet for the Bluestem Electric Cooperative trustee elections. 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, 2026. The teller committee will meet on Jan. 7, 2026, 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 results of the election of trustees 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 1

STEVE OHLDE
Linn, Kansas

DISTRICT 2, POSITION 2

PATRICIA BLOOMDAHL
Clay Center, Kansas

DISTRICT 3, POSITION 3

MATTHEW REZAC
Onaga, Kansas

DISTRICT 4, POSITION 2

DONALD CLASSEN
Manhattan, Kansas

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remain essential for ensuring power is available around the clock. As we collaborated and engaged with policymakers, we pressed for a more balanced approach to generating power — one that supports clean energy innovation while still recognizing the role of traditional resources. Our efforts are helping to shape a more workable path forward that better protects reliability and keeps costs in check for members of Bluestem Electric.

Another area of ongoing progress came through advocacy work on federal permitting reform. For too long, outdated rules and lengthy delays have stood in the way of building critical infrastructure, including new transmission lines and generation projects. Modernizing this process is essential if we are going to strengthen the electric grid and keep pace with growing demand. This year, electric co-ops helped move the needle on permitting reform, advocating for policies that make the process faster, more predictable and more efficient. Investments we make in infrastructure will reach communities sooner, improving reliability and preparing us for the future.

We are also seeing progress with bipartisan support for the FEMA Act of 2025, which would expedite the disaster recovery process for electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. Severe storms are a fact of life, and their impact on the electric system can be devastating.

The December 2021 windstorm seriously impacted Bluestem's system. Poles and wires had to be replaced due to the significant damage.

FEMA is a crucial partner for electric co-ops in efforts to restore power after disaster strikes, but currently, the federal reimbursement process after a major storm is slow and full of red tape. If passed, the bill would make FEMA a stronger, more responsive agency to help strengthen rural resilience, protect taxpayer dollars and ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible after a natural disaster.

Achievements like these are not just wins in Washington — they are wins for Bluestem Electric members like you.

In addition to advocacy efforts, we are proactively addressing our communities' needs for the future by investing in new technologies and programs that improve service for our members. Through advanced monitoring systems and AI tools that improve daily operations, we are better equipped to identify power delivery issues or challenges before they occur.

As we look ahead to a new year, I see both challenges and opportunities on the horizon. The energy industry is undergoing significant change driven by the rising need for more electricity, new tools and technologies, and federal energy policies.

The path forward requires innovative thinking and member-focused solutions. I am confident that with the dedication of Bluestem Electric Cooperative employees and the continued support of our members, we are well-positioned to adapt to and meet the challenges head-on. Through it all, our promise to you remains steadfast: reliable power for today — *and tomorrow*.

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.



TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Beware of "energy-saving device" scams. Whether sold on social media platforms or through random emails, consumers have fallen victim to scams where products claim to reduce or even eliminate energy bills by "balancing" or "cleaning" the power in your home. There is no such device that can simply be plugged in to lower energy use.

SOURCE: UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS

STAY ALERT when driving in winter weather.

Do not drive over downed lines or over snow and debris that could be covering downed lines. It could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG
PHOTO BY WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

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









ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

To maximize your fireplace's efficiency, always keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper is like an open window, allowing warm indoor air to escape and cold air to enter. Consider installing a fireplace insert, which improves heat output by circulating warm air into the room rather than letting it escape up the chimney. Also, burn only seasoned hardwood to ensure a hotter, cleaner burn. Regularly clean and inspect your chimney to maintain safe and efficient operation. SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV



Bright Lights, Safe Nights

OUTDOOR HOLIDAY LIGHTING SAFETY

-  Use outdoor-rated lights with UL safety labels.
-  Plug into GFCI outlets for shock protection.
-  Stay at least 10 feet from power lines when hanging lights.
-  Don't hang lights with tacks, nails or screws — use clips instead.
-  Keep cords away from water and snow.
-  Inspect for damage like broken sockets or frayed cords.
-  Don't overload extension cords or outlets.
-  Turn off lights before bed or when away; a timer makes it easy.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

Holiday travel safety tips

- ▶ Inspect your car before you leave.
- ▶ Pack an emergency kit.
- ▶ Check the weather before you go.
- ▶ Buckle up and slow down.
- ▶ Avoid distractions — put that phone away.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG



SMART TIPS FOR USING SPACE HEATERS

In 2022, space heaters accounted for 88% of deaths caused by home heating equipment.

To avoid a fire, space heaters should be kept at least 3 feet away from blankets, curtains, paper and other flammable materials.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

CHRISTMAS TREE FIRE SAFETY

Keep the Christmas merry and bright this holiday season by safely maintaining your tree with the following tips.

- ▶ **PICK FRESH:** Choose a tree with green needles that don't fall off easily.
- ▶ **TRIM BASE:** Cut 2 inches before placing in the stand.
- ▶ **WATER DAILY:** Keep the stand full and the tree fresh.
- ▶ **PLACEMENT MATTERS:** Keep at least 3 feet from heat sources; don't block exits.
- ▶ **LIGHT IT RIGHT:** Only use UL-listed lights; replace damaged strands.
- ▶ **NO CANDLES:** Never decorate with a flame.
- ▶ **TURN OFF LIGHTS:** Unplug when sleeping or away.
- ▶ **USE SMOKE ALARMS:** Test monthly.
- ▶ **DITCH WHEN DRY:** Remove promptly; don't store near the home or garage.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG