

The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

VOLUME 65

January 18, 2022

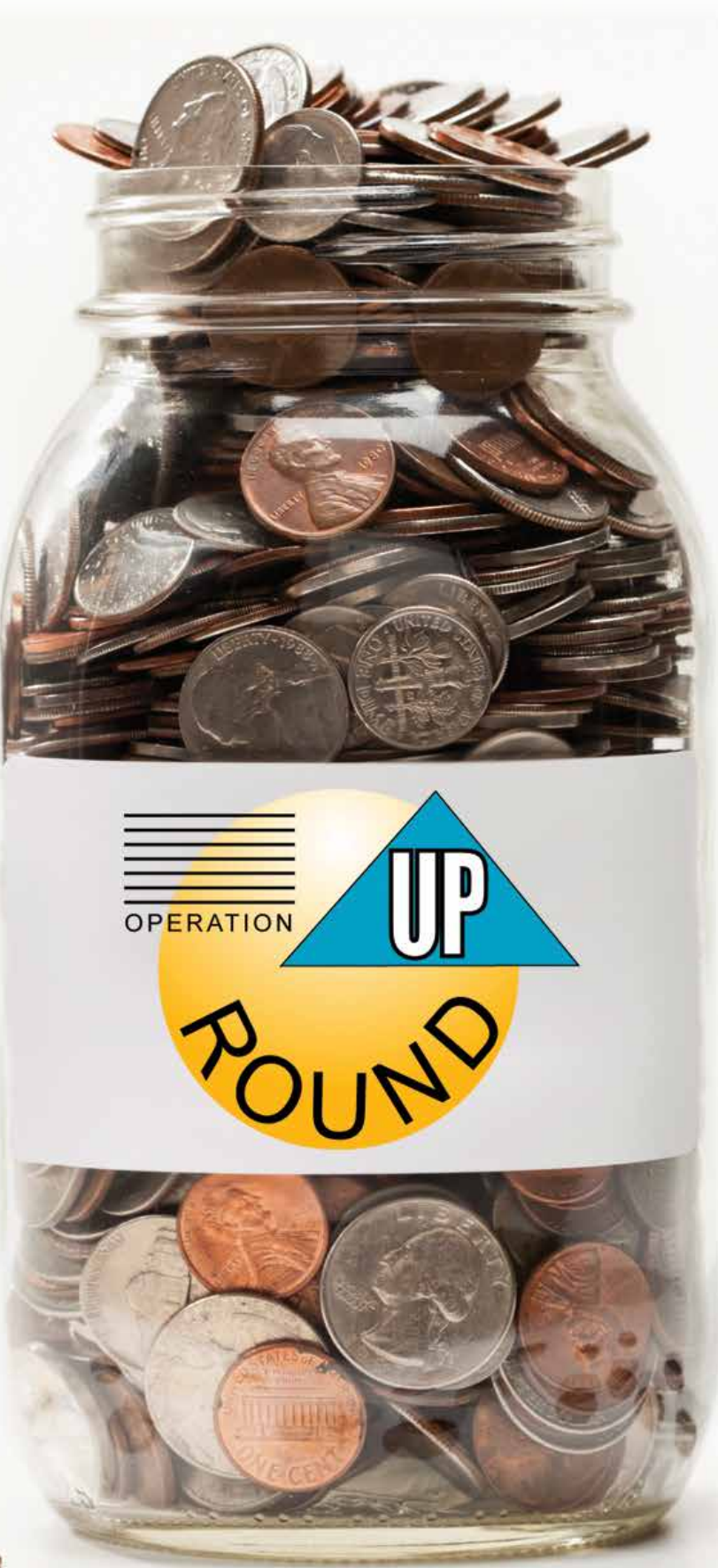
NUMBER 5

Members contribute \$75,761 in 2021

Since 2004, CECF contributions have been made to a variety of efforts:

- Volunteer Fire Departments \$326,623.00
- Communities \$294,971.08
- Youth \$215,188.58
- Services \$103,694.98
- Schools \$229,857.33
- Individuals \$65,250.00
- Public Safety \$84,642.72
- Seniors \$48,843.64
- Total \$1,369,071.33

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program. Members may opt out at any time by calling or sending a letter or email stating the account holder's name, account number and the request to be removed.



Turn out the change in your pocket or coin purse and count it up. Often, the pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters add up to less than a dollar. Now, imagine if most of the people you know did the same, making one big pile of change. It would add up to quite a bit.

Cotton Electric members do something similar every month by participating in Operation Round Up. Power bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar and all of those partial dollars are pooled. It adds up to some significant funds that can make a significant difference in the quality of lives throughout the Cotton Electric service area.

In 2021, Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) issued 27 grants for a total of \$76,261.55. Grant recipients included schools and youth programs, volunteer fire departments, non-profit organizations and communities.

Since its beginning in 2004, CECF has distributed \$1,369,071.33 to assist the needs of more than 200 organizations and individuals in our community.

2021 grant recipients include:

- Cache Ag Boosters
- Central High Public Schools
- Chattanooga Public Schools
- Chisholm Trail Heritage Center
- Cotton County Sheriff's Office
- Douglass Eastside Senior Citizens Center
- Duncan Area Literacy Council
- Duncan Public Schools
- Duncan Police Dept.
- Empire Public Schools
- Gabriel's House, Inc.
- Grandfield Fire Department
- Medicine Park Economic Development Authority
- One True Light, Inc.
- Porter Hill VFD
- Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
- Safe Center
- Sterling Public Schools
- Town of Chattanooga
- United Methodist Women, Duncan
- Walters Police Dept.
- Walters Public Schools
- Waurika EMS District Association

Download CECF grant applications at CottonElectric.com. Deadline for first-quarter 2021 grant applications is Feb. 8.

Former cooperative board trustee passes away



Dewayne High

Longtime Cotton Electric trustee Dewayne High passed away Dec. 30, 2021 in Walters. He was 82.

A lifelong Cotton County resident involved in farming and ranching, High had been served by Cotton Electric nearly all his life. In turn, the Cotton Electric Board of Trustees was served by the benefit of his insight for 18 years.

High was raised in Walters, received higher education at Cameron College and Panhandle A&M College, and served in the Oklahoma National Guard.

In addition to his farm and cattle business, High was involved in the

auction business, eventually partnering with two of his sons in High's Auction and Real Estate. High was an entrepreneur, and partnered in other businesses through the years.

Cotton Electric members in District 8 chose High as their representative on the Board of Trustees through an election in late summer 1999. Members retained him on the board until he stepped down at the end of his sixth term. During his tenure, High supported cooperative initiatives such as an aggressive approach to vegetation management and pole inspections, which promoted improvement in the quality of electric-

ity delivery for all members.

High served as the board president from December 2006 to October 2009. He represented Cotton Electric for three years beginning in 2011 as a director on the board for Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Dewayne High is survived by his wife of 61 years, Lavonne Mason High. They are the parents of three sons who gifted them with five granddaughters. In addition to six great-grandchildren, survivors include the couple's siblings and their spouses, and many beloved nieces and nephews, cousins and friends.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Jan. 1, 2022, is \$0.01573 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$20.45 on the January bill.

December 2021 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	75	33	54	16	64	44	54
2	79	33	56	17	69	42	56
3	77	38	58	18	50	27	39
4	57	40	49	19	46	14	30
5	78	33	56	20	56	28	42
6	53	25	39	21	63	22	43
7	53	22	38	22	64	28	46
8	59	26	43	23	72	30	51
9	75	35	55	24	86	40	63
10	83	45	64	25	76	42	59
11	54	31	43	26	83	38	61
12	64	25	45	27	67	38	53
13	69	26	48	28	72	41	57
14	76	43	60	29	70	36	53
15	81	52	67	30	70	28	49
Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/				31	60	42	51
Average Daily High: 68				Average Daily Low: 34			

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Monday, Feb. 21 for Presidents' Day. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on Feb. 14, 2022.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for The Current or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know. We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

What's Inside

Operating Stats.....2
Co-op News.....2
Community..... 3, 15
Co-op News..... 4-7
Co-op Connex8
Co-op News9
Recipes 10-11
Puzzles 12
Classifieds 13-14
Parting Shots..... 16
More news at cottonelectric.com

From the CEO

Working with local legislators

“All politics is local.” This observation by the late Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill, Jr., former Speaker of the House of Representatives, means that even national politics have a local impact, and people care most about issues that directly affect them. Indirectly, this famous adage underscores the importance and value of local politics.

At Cotton Electric Cooperative, we know it’s critical to develop and cultivate relationships with local legislators because they craft, introduce and vote on legislation that impacts the local business climate, the environment and quality of life for our community. That’s why we work closely with our local elected officials. After all, our purpose is to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy, but our mission is to help our community

thrive.

Cotton Electric is a local business that powers economic development and prosperity for our region. As a cooperative, we have deep roots here, and we listen closely to our members to better understand the needs of the community. Our leadership, board members and employees live and work right here in the community we serve.

We strive to be an advocate for our community, ensuring that local legislators know, understand and act on the issues that are important to our area.

Providing industry guidance and expertise

As a practical matter, we recognize that most legislators are “generalists,” and they vote on a wide range of issues. Their expertise may not include the changing energy industry, which is why Cotton Electric



Jennifer Meason, CEO provides guidance and expertise from subject matter experts who’ve been in the energy industry for many years. We also work closely with our statewide association, the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives, to serve as another source of information for our legislators.

Today’s energy landscape is an increasingly complex topic covering not only the traditional engineering and vegetation management aspects of the industry, but also encompasses technology, cybersecurity, the electrification of the transportation sector and more.

Our experts provide briefings and back-grounders to legislators, committees and staff, and we offer expert testimony for hearings and other legislative or regulatory meetings or gatherings. And because we’re involved in economic development and we know local community leaders, we can provide insight on how issues and policies under discussion might impact our region.

Co-op as a convener

In addition, we periodically invite legislators and their staff to the co-op for tours so they can see first-hand how we operate and can view our operations center, substations, and community solar installation at Devol. We also host town hall meetings at our Community Center so our community members also have an opportunity to meet with legislators.

Representing your best interests

We strive to be a trusted resource on energy issues. Because of our deep roots in the community, we have a firm understanding of local issues and needs. We will continue looking after the long-term interests of our consumer-members. This means we are able to cultivate and foster positive, productive relationships with legislators who know and trust us, because we’re advocating on behalf of the community we serve.

We’re proud to power your life and bring good things to the community. As we prepare for the beginning of the next Oklahoma legislative session on Feb. 7, we hope you’ll continue to advise Cotton Electric on matters of importance so we can continue to advocate on your behalf and improve the quality of life for all.



Heath Morgan, Safety and Efficiency Coordinator for Cotton Electric, checks out communication equipment at the Duncan tower.

Generator ensures tower power continues to flow

Communication between Cotton Electric field crews and dispatch center recently received an upgrade. The co-op installed a propane-fueled Generac generator to the communications tower that facilitates crews working on the east side of the Cotton Electric service territory.

“In order to maintain communication for our area, it is important our communication towers have power. We have to ensure we have backup power available in the event the distribution electrical system is impacted with outages. This backup power is crucial during storm events and is the time we would experience the most damage and would most need to be able to communicate,” explains Chace Penn, System Engi-

neer for Cotton Electric.

“Our members benefit by having crews able to communicate during power restoration. This allows the crews to work faster and safer, therefore getting power restored quicker for all members affected,” adds Penn.

It’s not just Cotton Electric members and staff who benefit from the generator. The tower hosts communication equipment for the area’s first responders. Having reliable power from the generator means that during power outages, staff from those entities will not need to man battery packs to keep their communication systems operable. This means they’ll have more personnel available to respond to emergency calls.

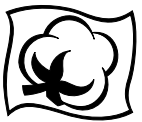


Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Maximize your heating system’s performance by inspecting, cleaning or replacing air filters once a month or as needed to reduce energy costs and prevent potential damage to your system. Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers aren’t blocked so air can flow freely.


Source: Dept. of Energy



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Mission Statement
Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

November 2021 Operating Stats			
	2021	2020	
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,393,703	\$5,031,727	
Cost of Purchased Power	4,193,264	3,220,270	
Taxes	121,748	94,351	
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,091	923	
Average Farm and Residential Bill	134	135	
Average Farm and Residential kWh	955	1,157	
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	19,090	18,779	
Miles Energized	5,219	5,208	
Density Per Mile	3.66	3.61	
New Service Connects YTD	448	377	
Services Retired	144	147	

TheCurrent

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Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the February 2022 issue, please submit information by Feb. 2 by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com. Events that occur before Feb. 14 will not be published in the next issue.

Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.

Three States One Trail art to be featured

Chisholm Trail Heritage Center, 1000 Chisholm Trail Pkwy., Duncan, will feature artists from Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas in 2022. "Three States One Trail" will explore the diversity of art and artists along the legendary Chisholm Trail. Artists Polly Thurston and Kelly Yarbrough will be featured through Feb. 27.

Seniors aged 55 and older receive free admission on the second Sunday of each month. More information at www.onthechisholmtrail.com.

Tai Chi classes offered

The Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative offers Tai Chi classes 11 a.m.-noon, Mondays and Wednesdays starting January 24 at the Lawton Public Library.

Tai Chi helps older adults reduce their risk of falling while also increasing balance and flexibility. Participants learn ways to improve their overall mind, body and spirit through a series of slow, continuous movements. It does not matter how strong, flexible or active you are, Tai Chi is designed for people at all levels of health.

Register at www.ohai.org.

Lawton Community Theatre presents musical, hosts auditions

Musical theatre fans will delight in Lawton Community Theatre's presentation of "Nunsensations! The Nunsense Vegas Review" Jan. 27-30 and Feb. 3-6. Since 1985 theatre audiences have delighted in the zany Nunsense line of musicals.

In "Nunsensations! The Nunsense Vegas Review," the sisters take on Las Vegas in the most feather-filled, sequin-studded Nunsense show yet.

Auditions for the dynamic drama "Steel Magnolias" take place 7-9 p.m. Feb. 7 and Feb. 8 at Lawton Community Theatre, 1316 NW Bell, Lawton. Production dates will be Mar. 31-Apr. 3 and Apr. 7-10. More information at www.lawtoncommunitytheatre.com.

Wichita Mountains Classic begins Jan. 28

The Wichita Mountains Classic Steer and Heifer Show showcases many of the most promising youth in agriculture. Participants come together at the Comanche County Fairgrounds from several states Jan. 28-30.

This popular classic is the result of decades of rich traditions in agriculture, animal husbandry and generous payouts.

Week of polar plunging, music and festivities in Medicine Park

Polar Plunge Week in Medicine Park runs Jan. 30 through Feb. 6. Seventeen different events take place during the week including live music, educational lectures, family events, parties, and dance and theatrical performances.

The week culminates with the 23rd Annual Polar Bear Plunge. Daring dunkers take a chilly winter dip in Bath Lake and costumes are encouraged. For more information visit medicinepark.com/festivals.

See more Community Spotlight on page 15.

Alzheimer's Association hosts online education Feb. 8

Communication is more than just talking and listening – it's also about sending and receiving messages through attitude, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language.

As people with Alzheimer's disease progress in their journey and the ability to use words is lost, families need new ways to connect. Explore how communication takes place when someone has Alzheimer's, learn to decode the verbal and behavioral messages by someone with dementia, and identify strategies to help you connect and communicate at each stage of the disease.

This program was designed to provide practical information and resources to help dementia caregivers learn to decode verbal and behavioral messages from people with dementia. The presentation is held via Zoom.

To register for this event or the many other educational presentations for caregivers, visit alz.org/crf or call 800-272-3900.

RV and boat show returning to Lawton

The Lawton RV, Boat and Outdoor Leisure Show returns to the Comanche County Fairgrounds Feb. 11-13. Showcased will be the latest models and makes of new recreational vehicles and boats. Adult admission \$5, military/seniors \$1 with ID and children 12 and under admitted free.

Lawton Philharmonic to perform

Pianist Andrew Staup returns to the Lawton Philharmonic to play the scintillating showpiece Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3., 7:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at McMahon Auditorium, 801 NW Ferris in Lawton.

The Lawton Philharmonic will also perform, playing Glinka's Russlan and Ludmilla Overture, and Braham's Symphony No. 1. Ticket information available at www.LawtonPhil.com

Coin show to be held at Stephens County Fairgrounds

The 53rd annual Stephens County Coin Show takes place 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Feb. 18 and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Feb. 19 at the Stephens County Fairgrounds in Duncan. Guests will receive appraisals on gold, silver, currency coins, tokens and supplies.

The event includes free parking and free admission. For information, call Ed at 580-475-4570 or Dan at 580-467-0168.

Duncan Little Theatre presents Seussical: The Musical

See beloved children's book characters come to life as Duncan Little Theatre performs "Seussical: The Musical" at the Simmons Center, 800 Chisholm Trail Pkwy., Duncan. Seussical features favorite Dr. Seuss characters including Horton the Elephant and The Cat in the Hat, as they musically transport the audience from the Jungle of Nool to the Circus McGurkus and to the invisible world of the Whos.

Performances at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 25, Feb. 26, Mar. 4 and Mar. 5 and a matinee at 2 p.m. Feb. 27. Ticket prices and more information at www.duncanlittletheatre.com.

Blessings Boutique open monthly

Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



While visiting the OKC zoo with his grandchildren, Cotton Electric member Michael Lindsay snapped this WILDLIFE photo of a rainbow lorikeet.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for February is FAMILY TIME. Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

DALC offering classes

Can you read this? One in five adults in America can't. Duncan Area Literacy Council (DALC) has started free classes for Adult Basic Education (ABE), Citizenship, and English Language Learners (ELL) to help those who want to read.

Learners pay nothing for tutoring. It is confidential, and attendees can walk

away with confidence to fill out a job application, pay bills, understand prescriptions, follow a recipe or help their children with homework.

Tutors are available in the morning, afternoon or evening and most tutoring takes place at The Duncan Public Library. If you or someone you know are in need of these services, please contact Mary or Joy at 580-736-1170.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY



At Cotton Electric, we're proud to be a part of it, bringing people together by providing energy for all the things you love.

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

February		March		April	
Ad Sales	Jan. 28	Ad Sales	Feb. 25	Ad Sales	Mar. 25
Classified	Feb. 2	Classified	Mar. 2	Classified	Mar. 30
Publish	Feb. 14	Publish	Mar. 14	Publish	April 11

Mobile home residents have options to address efficiency

On a national scale, manufactured homes account for approximately 6% of all homes. On an electric cooperative scale, that number jumps to 25%. On a Cotton Electric scale, one-quarter of all residences served is about 4,770. That's a lot of manufactured homes, many chosen as an affordable path to home ownership for members.

Home buyers often avoid efficiency upgrades in order to meet their price point. As a result, these homes are often equipped with inefficient heating and air conditioning systems, lower insulation values, and significant air leakage that can lead to high energy bills for the new owner.

The same is true for members choosing to rent a manufactured home. Although the rent may be lower than that of a traditional home, the energy consumption can be significantly higher.

Research provided by cooperatives around the country outline a number of efficiency improvements that can be made to existing manufactured homes to help reduce energy bills. Much like in traditional site-built homes, the improvements center around heating and cooling efficiency and the structure's envelope (thermal and air barriers). Manufactured homes present unique challenges that can be solved through less traditional paths to efficiency.

During a new home purchase, upgrading to a heat pump system from the traditional resistance heater can cost below \$1,000, and have a payback period as short as one year. The problem existing owners may face is the ductwork system of their manufactured home. This ductwork's restrictiveness can limit your options for equipment replacement and even the effective efficiency of a new system.

A less than traditional option to consider is a multi-head ductless mini-split system. Mini-split systems have become very affordable and can offer a number of benefits to owners of manufactured homes. They can eliminate the need for the restrictive, leaky,



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

and poorly-insulated ductwork system present. This means you can truly benefit from the higher efficiency of your new system.

Multi-head units allow for more functionality in the home. You can operate each indoor unit independently. This means you can leave an area of the house off when not in use, saving energy.

These indoor units are available in a floor console model which would allow for all of your piping and wiring to be contained under the structure. Traditional and mini-split heat pump upgrades, for new or existing homes, may qualify for cooperative rebates based on their efficiency.

The envelope of a manufactured home also presents significant challenges. Consideration should be taken at the time of purchase to upgrade the insulation in the walls and ceilings. The lack of accessibility to these areas makes them difficult and costly to address later.

An area that can be more easily addressed on existing homes is the underbelly. In a manufactured home, each water line, drain line, and electrical run enters the home through the floor. These penetrations allow for uncontrolled air movement between conditioned and unconditioned spaces.

Heating and Cooling Tips for Manufactured Homes

If you own a manufactured home, take measures to ensure you have an efficient heating and cooling system. You can also make simple improvements that save energy and make your home more comfortable.

\$ Install ceiling fans
Install ceiling fans throughout your manufactured home. Ceiling fans are energy efficient and can be used to keep warm or cool air moving throughout your home. Be sure to turn them off when you're away. Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not rooms.

\$ Option for smaller budgets
\$\$ Option for flexible budgets

\$\$ Efficient roof color
Choose a light-colored roof if you live in the southern part of the U.S. and a dark-colored roof if you live in the northern U.S.

\$\$ Install a mini-split system
Eliminate unnecessary heating and cooling by installing a multi-zone system throughout your manufactured home. A zone system allows you to save energy by only heating or cooling rooms that are occupied.

\$ Seal air leaks
Caulk around doors and windows. Check seals.

\$ Insulation
Replace damaged or missing insulation and belly wrap to reduce any heat loss. Consider spray foam.

\$ Install awnings
Install awnings over windows to keep sunlight from overheating your home during the summer.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Along with the holes made through the floor assembly, there are also a significant amount made in the underbelly insulation and vapor barrier. Each break in the insulation barrier drops its effectiveness. Breaks in the vapor barrier can invite moisture intrusion leading to problems like mold and high humidity.

Both issues can be solved by spray foaming the underbelly of the home. The properties of spray foam allow it to seal air leaks while providing higher thermal resistance compared to traditional insulation. Special attention should be paid to water and drain piping. These pipes also need to be insulated to prevent freezing during low temperatures.

Cooperatives have a history of supporting and investing in energy efficiency. Every improvement in how efficiently we utilize produced power benefits our membership as a whole. One of the priorities for doing so lies within improving the efficiency of the manufactured homes we serve. While protecting the affordability of this housing is important, it is also important that we make energy-conscious decisions related to this major investment. These choices will be reflected in your monthly energy bills for the lifespan of your new home.

CHISHOLM TRAIL ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS

CHISHOLM TRAIL ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS

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Co-op announces rebate standards for 2022

Cotton Electric has announced standards for the 2022 Rebate Program for the purchase and installation of certain energy-efficient equipment and fuel conversion measures. Shifting focus from only ground source heat pumps, the program expanded in recent years to include rebates for air source heat pumps, mini-splits and water heaters installed under certain conditions.

Rebate funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Once rebate funds have been exhausted, the program will end for the year. The maximum rebate in 2022 will be \$4,000 per residence.

Heat pumps and mini-splits must be installed by a licensed contractor. Indoor and outdoor equipment must be replaced at the same time. Members will need to provide a copy of their itemized invoice and, from the HVAC contractor or supplier, AHRI certification and Manual J calculation in order to qualify for the program. Manual J calculation is not required for same size replacement units.

Verification by Cotton Electric

Rebate applications are available online at www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program

personnel and an Energy Efficiency Home Evaluation are also required to receive the rebate.

Ground source heat pumps (GSHP) – Rebates are paid on new installations or GSHP to GSHP replacements. A desuperheater is not required but additional rebates are available if one is part of a GSHP installation.

Minimum standards vary for closed and open loop installations and apply to the full load operation of a GSHP, not the partial load. The amount of rebate is determined by the size of each unit, its Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) and Coefficient of Performance (COP).

Qualifying units can receive a rebate of up to \$750 per ton installed if the unit meets the minimum specifications, which are 15.9 EER and 3.3 COP for closed loop systems and 18.0 EER and 3.6 COP for open loop.

To qualify for a rebate when replacing an existing GSHP system with another GSHP system, the new in-

stallation must increase the EER by at least 3.0. The minimum specification for COP is 3.3 for closed loop systems and 3.6 for open loop. Rebates are \$300 per ton.

Air source heat pumps / Mini-splits – Rebates are paid on replacement of existing heat pumps, new construction or conversion from natural gas or propane furnaces to total electric heat pumps. Rebates are per unit, not per ton.

To qualify, units must meet standards that vary with the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating.

A unit with a 16.00 to 16.99 SEER must have an EER of 12.0 or greater and a Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) of 9.0 or greater. Rebates are \$400 per unit for a replacement and \$650 per unit in the case of fuel conversion or new construction.

A unit with a 17.00 to 17.99 SEER must have an EER of 12.3 or greater and a HSPF of 9.0 or greater. Rebates are \$500 per unit for a replacement

and \$750 per unit for fuel conversion or new construction.

A unit with 18.00 or greater SEER must have an EER of 12.5 or greater and a HSPF of 9.5 or greater. Rebates are \$600 per unit for a replacement and \$850 per unit for fuel conversion or new construction.

Water heaters – Rebates are offered for water heaters installed in new homes or as part of a home expansion project. Conversion from natural gas or propane to an electric water heater also qualifies for a rebate. Water heaters should have a minimum 40-gallon capacity, an energy factor of .95 or greater and a manufacturer's warranty of 5 years or greater. Tankless water heaters are not eligible.

Collecting the rebate requires an AHRI reference sheet, invoice or receipt dated after Jan. 1, 2022, and an inspection by Cotton Electric.

To arrange an inspection or for information to make sure your purchase is eligible, please contact Heath Morgan, Cotton Electric's energy efficiency coordinator, at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.



Employee of the Year
Karen Kaley

Karen Kaley was named 2021 Employee of the Year in December. As Director of Marketing and Communications, Karen's nominator pointed out that she keeps Cotton Electric members in mind in everything she does. "She continually strives to keep the members informed with what is happening" and "she is always diligent in the performance of her duties" are

some of the compliments her nominator gave. Karen came to Cotton Electric in 2008 as the editor of The Current, producing well over 100 issues. She held that role until December of 2017 when she became Director of Marketing and Communications. Kaley retired from Cotton Electric earlier this month.

Congratulations, Karen!



Josh Belcher
Leadership in Health/Safety

Employees also nominated co-workers for Leadership in Safety and Leadership in Health/Safety.

Josh Belcher, Apprentice Field Meter Technician, received the Leadership in Health/Safety award.

His nominator said Josh "provides an example for other employees to follow" and "is a good communicator during jobs." Congratulations, Josh!



Dillon Wiygul
Leadership in Safety

Dillon Wiygul received the Leadership in Safety award.

The journeyman lineman's nominator said of Dillon: "He follows through on projects and asks real questions with genuine interest to make him and his apprentice more knowledgeable."

Congratulations, Dillon!



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Prepare for winter weather

Assembling supplies before a storm arrives is one of the keys to weathering a winter storm emergency. Make sure your supply kit includes:

- Flashlights with fresh batteries.
- Matches for lighting gas stoves or clean burning heaters.
- Wood for a properly ventilated fireplace.
- First aid kit, prescription medicines, and baby supplies.
- Food that can be kept in coolers.
- A non-cordless telephone and/or fully charged cellular phone.
- Bottled drinking water.
- Battery-powered emergency lights and radio.

Maintaining warmth is a priority during a winter storm. Loss of body heat or hypothermia can be life threatening. To stay as warm as possible, try the following tips:

- Stay inside and dress warmly in layered clothing.
- Close off unneeded rooms.
- When using an alternate heat source, follow operating instructions, use fire safeguards, and be sure to properly ventilate.
- Stuff towels and rags underneath doors to keep the heat in.
- Cover windows at night.
- Keep a close eye on the temperature in your home. Infants and people over the age of 65 are more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you cannot keep your home warm.

Knowing how to keep your home and loved ones safe is also important:

- Switch off lights and appliances to prevent overloading circuits and damaging appliances when power is restored. Leave one lamp or switch on as a signal for when your power returns.
- To prevent water pipes from freezing, keep faucets turned on slightly so that water drips from the tap. Know how to shut off water valves just in case a pipe bursts.

• Never use a charcoal grill to cook with or heat inside the home. Burning charcoal gives off deadly carbon monoxide gas. Charcoal grills should only be used outdoors.

When outside, stay away from downed power lines.

- A power line does not need to be sparking or arcing to be energized, even if it is sagging close to or on the ground. Be aware that other utility lines can also become energized by being in contact with an electrical line.
- Lines that appear to be “dead” can become energized as crews work to restore power or, sometimes, from improper use of emergency generators. Assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous. If you see a downed or sagging line, contact us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.
- Motorists should never drive over a downed line, as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.
- Be careful when approaching intersections where traffic or crossing lights may be out.

• If you plan to use a generator, know how to operate it safely.

Be safe when using backup generators

When the electricity goes out, generators can help you get through until power is restored. However, before ever starting a generator, it is vital that you have educated yourself on how to use one safely.

A portable generator is usually gas powered and is movable. You can power appliances by plugging them into it. Your generator should have more output than the wattage of the electronics you will plug into it. This way, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure there is nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on.

When you refuel a generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire, should the tank overflow. Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.

Generators pose elec-

trical risks especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary during moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it.

Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on the generator can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors at least 10 feet from your home.

If you are not careful with the installation of a portable or standby generator, you can put the lives of others in danger away from your home because of backfeed—a situation where a generator is feeding electricity back through your electrical system and meter into the power lines. To prevent backfeed, standby generators should have a transfer safety

switch installed by a professional. Portable generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system; use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator for power.


It is recommended that a generator be operated once a month for 10 minutes to ensure it is running properly. Store a standby generator in an easily accessible, weatherproof area. Have enough fuel for at least 24 hours in case of a power outage.

Normal power line


Lines weighed down by ice

Top line melted after bottom line

ICE ON POWER LINES IS A WEIGHTY SUBJECT



When it comes to getting electricity across power lines and into homes, ice can be a force to be reckoned with.



ICE ON DISTRIBUTION LINES

Ice can quickly lead to broken power poles and other pole equipment. Ice can also make falling tree branches 30x heavier and much more likely to break power lines.

ON A 300-FOOT SPAN OF 1-INCH-THICK POWER LINES


- 1/2 inch of ice adds 281 pounds of weight
- 1 inch of ice adds 749 pounds of weight
- 2 inches of ice adds 2,248 pounds of weight

WHEN ICE MELTS

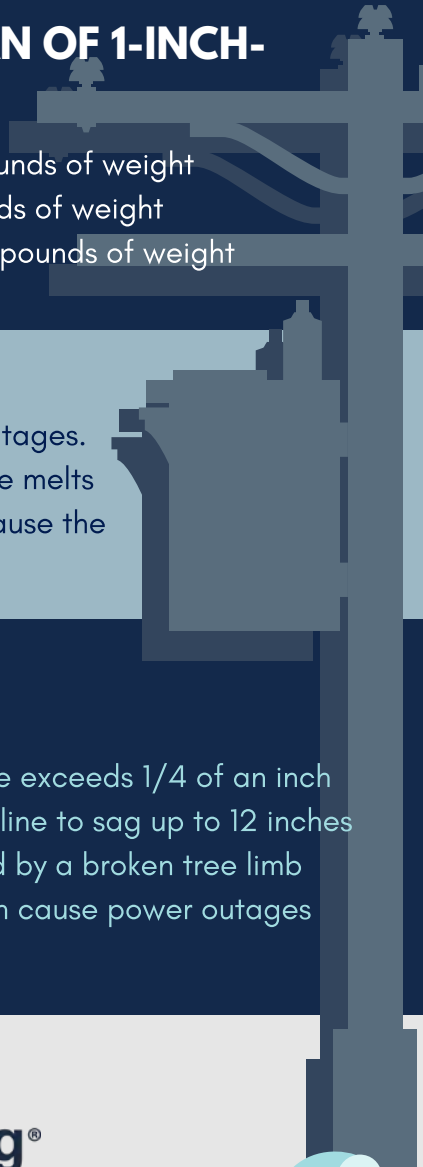
Melting ice can cause power outages. If ice on the bottom (neutral) line melts before the lines above, it can cause the lines to touch.

OTHER ICE FACTS

- Damage can begin when ice exceeds 1/4 of an inch
- 1/2 inch of ice can cause a line to sag up to 12 inches
- Pressure can also be caused by a broken tree limb
- Both ice and melting ice can cause power outages



Source: Jerri Imgarten-Whitley and Victory Electric Cooperative




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Southwestern Medical Center

Spin Class for Parkinson's

Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:00pm
Lawton YMCA, 5th and Gore

Rock Steady Boxing

Tuesdays & Fridays, 1:30pm
Lawton YMCA, 5th and Gore

Lawton Support Group


Monthly, 1st Tuesday, 6:00pm
The Christian Center-Lawton
2405 SW Lee Blvd
Teri Andrade, 580-280-0114

Central Lawton Support Group

Monthly, 2nd Thursday, 2:00pm
Western Hills Church of Christ
1108 NW 53rd Street
Rob Rooker, 580-699-2204

Duncan Support Group

Monthly, 1st Thursday, 3:00pm
The Christian Center-Duncan
720 E. Plato Road
Rob Rooker, 580-699-2204



United Way of Southwest Oklahoma

Avoid the most common email mistakes

Email is still one of the primary ways we communicate, both in our personal and professional lives. However, quite often we can be our own worst enemy when using email. Here are the most common mistakes people make with email and how to avoid them.

Auto Complete

Auto-complete is a common feature in most email clients. As you type the name of the person you want to email, your email software automatically selects their email address for you. This way you do not have to remember the email address of all your contacts, just their names. The problem is when you know people that share similar names, it is very easy for auto-complete to select the wrong email address for you. For example, you may intend to send a very sensitive work email to “Janet Roberts”, your co-worker, but instead auto-complete selects the email address for “Janice Rodriguez”, your child’s basketball coach. You end up sending a sensitive work email to someone you barely know. Always double check the name and the email address in any sensitive email before you hit send. Another option is add

the recipient’s email after you have drafted your message, ensuring you selected the intended individual.

Reply-All

In addition to the “To” field when you create an email you also have a “CC:” option. “CC:” stands for “Carbon Copy,” which allows you to copy additional people on your email and keep them informed. When someone else sends you an email and has CC’ed people on the email, you have to decide how you want to reply: Just to the sender, or to everyone that was included on the email via Reply-All. If your reply is sensitive, you most likely want to reply only to the sender. However, be careful as it’s very easy to mistakenly hit “Reply-All,” which means you would reply to everyone on the email. Once again, whenever replying to a sensitive email, always double check who you are sending the email to before you hit send.

Emotion

Never send an email when you are emotionally upset – it could harm you in the future, perhaps even costing you a friendship or a job. Instead,

take a moment and calmly organize your thoughts. If you need to vent your frustration, open up a new email (make sure there is no name or email address in the To section) and type exactly what you feel like saying. Then get up and walk away from your computer, perhaps make yourself a cup of coffee or go for a walk.

When you come back, delete the message and start over again. It may even help to have a friend or co-worker review your draft response objectively before you send it. Or better yet perhaps once you have calmed down, pick up the phone and simply talk to

the person, or speak face-to-face if possible. It can be difficult for people to determine your intent with just an email, so your message may sound better on the phone or in person. Remember, once you send that email, it exists forever.

Attachments

If you’re attaching documents to your message, double-check that you’ve attached the correct versions of the correct files before sending.

Privacy

Finally, email has few privacy protections. Your email can be read by anyone who gains access to it, similar to a postcard sent in the mail. Your email can easily be forwarded to others, posted on public forums, released due to a court order, or distributed after a server was hacked. If you have something truly private to say to someone, pick up the phone and call them. If you are using your work computer for sending email, remember that your employer may have the right to monitor and perhaps even read your email when using work resources.

Source: SANS.org



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Watch Out For Tax Scammers

Sadly, identity theft happens throughout the year – but some identity thieves are particularly active during tax-filing season. How can you protect yourself?

One of the most important moves you can make is to be suspicious of requests by people or entities claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service. You may



receive phone calls, texts and emails, but these types of communication are often just “phishing” scams with one goal in mind: to capture your personal information. These phishers can be quite clever, sending emails that appear to contain the IRS logo or making calls that may even seem to be coming from the IRS. Don’t open any links or attachments to the emails and don’t answer the calls – and don’t be alarmed if the caller leaves a vaguely threatening voicemail, either asking for personal information, such as your Social Security number, or informing you of some debts you supposedly owe to the IRS that must be taken care of “immediately.”

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In reality, the IRS will not initiate contact with you by phone, email, text message or social media to request personal or financial information, or to inquire about issues pertaining to your tax returns. Instead, the agency will first send you a letter. And if you’re unsure of the legitimacy of such a letter, contact the IRS directly at 800-829-1040.

Of course, not all scam artists are fake IRS representatives – some will pass themselves off as tax preparers. Fortunately, most tax preparers are honest, but it’s not too hard to find the dishonest ones who might ask you to sign a blank return, promise you a

big refund before looking at your records or try to charge a fee based on the percentage of your return. Legitimate tax preparers will make no grand promises and will explain their fees upfront. Before hiring someone to do your taxes, find out their qualifications. The IRS provides some valuable tips for choosing a reputable tax preparer, but you can also ask your friends and relatives for referrals.

Another tax scam to watch out for is the fraudulent tax return – that is, someone filing a return in your name. To do so, a scammer would need your name, birthdate and Social Security number.

If you’re already providing two of these pieces of information – your name and birthdate on social media, and you also include your birthplace – you could be making it easier for scam artists to somehow get the third. It’s a good idea to check your privacy settings and limit what you’re sharing publicly. You might also want to use a nickname and omit your last name, birthday and birthplace.

Here’s one more defensive measure: File your taxes as soon as you can. Identity thieves often strike early in the tax season, so they can file their bogus returns before their victims.

To learn more about tax scams, visit the IRS website (irs.gov) and search for the “Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft.” This document describes some signs of identity theft and provides tips for what to do if you are victimized.

It’s unfortunate that identity theft exists, but by taking the proper precautions, you can help insulate yourself from this threat, even when tax season is over.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

Edward Jones. Member SIPC.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

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NEW YEAR

NEW LOOK

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GREAT

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*Older Co-op Connections cards still work! No need to get a new card.

Understanding your electric bill

Your monthly Cotton Electric bill includes a lot of information. The example below shows a typical residential bill and explanations of expanded information.

Call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to get help with:

- Discontinuing paper bills through the mail and having them delivered via email instead.
- Signing up for automatic bank drafts, or switching from traditional to prepaid billing.

Account information

A member's account number, contact information, service address and statement date for this bill. In the case of a bill for multiple meters, there will be a member number and invoice number listed here.

Account Detail

This area will list your meter(s), bill type, service dates, readings and energy use recorded by the meter.

Energy Use Graph

Shows energy use history over the past 24 months. Members can spot their energy use trends at a glance.

Monthly Comparisons

Compares this month's energy use with the previous month and also the same month from the previous year.

Contact Us

General information about our business hours and phone numbers is located in the upper right corner. The Pay By Phone number can be used to make electronic check or credit/debit card payments.

Current Amount Due

We know most members want to know only two things: What do I owe and how soon do I need to get it paid? That's why we made this big and put it at the top, so you can tell at a glance. If an account has an outstanding balance, the outer circle will be in red. Avoid a late fee and pay before the delinquent date.

Kiosk Bar Code

Unique to each member account, this bar code will automatically pull up the account when exposed to the code reader of a payment kiosk at the Cotton Electric office at 1101 W. Oak in Duncan. Cash or credit/debit card payments can be made at any time at this outside kiosk.

Service Detail

This shows a detailed breakdown of charges. ***There are no increases or additions to the fee structure;*** we're just breaking everything out for you. This section shows the previous balance, payments, and the components of current charges.

Depending on the type of service a meter provides, the Service Detail box may include some of this information:

Facility Charge A cooperative member's equal share of fixed costs so power can be available at your location. This includes the cost of poles, wires, trucks, billing, vegetation management, meters, transformers and substations. This is a fixed cost attached to all meters.

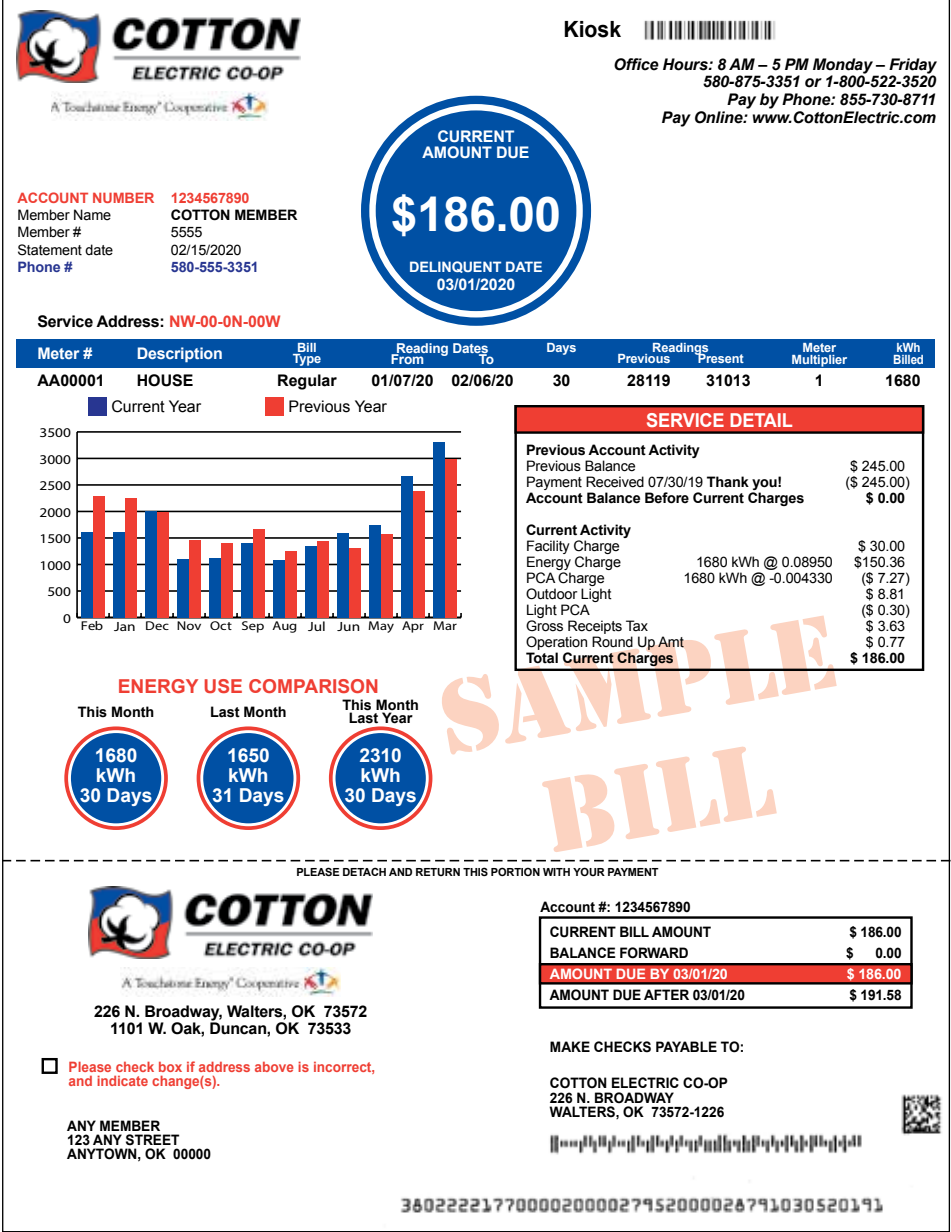
Energy Charge The amount of electricity used as measured in kilowatt-hours, multiplied by the current rate. The amount of electricity used is controlled by you, the member.

Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) This can be a decrease or increase, depending on the true cost of wholesale power purchased from our energy supplier. PCA is applied to kWh consumed and to fees for lights.

Outdoor Light Charges vary according to the type of light installed.

Gross Receipts Tax Cotton Electric is required to collect a 2% state gross receipts tax on all power bills. This is NOT a sales tax and is not eligible for exemption.

Operation Round Up Participants in Operation Round Up can see how much the bill is rounded up to the nearest dollar, an amount that will never be more than 99 cents.



2022 Electrical Rates

General Service

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$30.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$35.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.08950 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to general service customers for farm, home and residential use subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase, at available secondary voltage or three-phase at the discretion of the Cooperative.

Minimum Charges:

- A charge of \$30.00 per month for single-phase service and \$35.00 per month for three-phase service; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.
- A charge of \$30.00 per month for single-phase service and \$35.00 per month for three-phase service, plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a 12-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

General Service HD

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$25.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$30.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.07690 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to residential consumers in franchised municipal areas with a line density of 11 customers per mile or greater, subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase, at available secondary voltage or three-phase at the discretion of the Cooperative.

Minimum Charges:

- A charge of \$25.00 per month for single-phase service and \$30.00 per month for three-phase service; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.
- A charge of \$25.00 per month for single-phase service and \$35.00 per month for three-phase service, plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

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Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Commercial Service

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$40.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$45.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.08620 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in the base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available for commercial and industrial consumers up to fifty (50) kVA of transformer capacity, subject to the rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Available for commercial and industrial consumers to one hundred fifty (150) kVA of transformer capacity at the discretion of the Cooperative. Service under this rate is not available wherein transformer capacity requirements exceed one hundred fifty (150) kVA. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three-phase at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- A charge of \$40.00 per month for single-phase and \$45.00 per month for three-phase service plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Commercial Service HD

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$35.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$40.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.07940 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available for commercial and industrial consumers up to fifty (50) kVA of transformer capacity, in incorporated areas with a line density of 11 customers per mile or greater, subject to the rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Available for commercial and industrial consumers to one hundred fifty (150) kVA of transformer capacity at the discretion of the Cooperative. Service under this rate is not available wherein transformer capacity requirements exceed one hundred fifty (150) kVA. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three phase, at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- A charge of \$35.00 per month for single-phase service and \$40.00 per month for three-phase service plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA for transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Irrigation Rate

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge \$32.50 per month
Energy Charge \$0.06650 per kWh
Horsepower Charge \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per month

Available To:

Available to Members for pump irrigation service subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Service under this rate shall be under the standard Cooperative contract. Motors shall be ten (10) horsepower or greater. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three-phase, at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- \$32.50 plus a charge of \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per year; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Interruptible Irrigation

Monthly Rate

Customer Charge \$32.50 per month
Energy Charge \$0.06650 per kWh
Horsepower Charge \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per month

The Interruptible Irrigation Rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in the basic charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to Members for pump irrigation service subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Service under this rate shall be metered with "Time-of-Day" metering or shall have "load interrupting" devices installed on the service. Electric power and energy usage under this rate is prohibited from June 20 through Sept. 9, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Each year, Members will be given credit for horsepower charges, applied toward but not to exceed energy charges, if no power was used during the prohibited time period. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Minimum Charges:

- \$32.50 plus a charge of \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per year; or
- Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the

customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Large Power Rate

Large Power Rates are available for large industrial loads with a transformer capacity of more than 50 kVA. For details about LP Rates, contact the cooperative at 580-875-3351. Special rates also are available for Cotton Gins.

Outdoor Lighting

Monthly Rate

- Where an approved Outdoor Light is installed on an existing pole; and (a) where the Outdoor Light is installed on the Cooperative's side of the meter, the monthly charge per light shall be \$8.81 for 175-Watt Mercury Vapor, 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium or LED; and \$20.87 for 400-Watt Metal Halide; or (b) where the Outdoor Light is installed on the consumer's side of the meter, the monthly charge per light shall be \$2.60 for 175-Watt Mercury Vapor; \$3.12 for 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium or LED; and \$5.98 for 400-Watt Metal Halide.
- Should the Member desire a location other than an existing pole, the cost of installation shall be determined by figuring the total cost of labor, materials installed, plus digging and hauling charges, and will be incurred by the consumer. The wire, pole and material will become the property of the consumer.

Available To:

Available to all Members of the Cooperative for illumination of outdoor areas at any point on the distribution or service lines, subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative.

Vandalism:

In the event the Outdoor Light is damaged by vandalism, such as gun shots, rocks, or any other type of vandalism, the Member shall be responsible for the cost of repairing the Outdoor Light.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Cotton Electric is required to collect a 2% state gross receipts tax on all power bills.

Power Cost Adjustment:

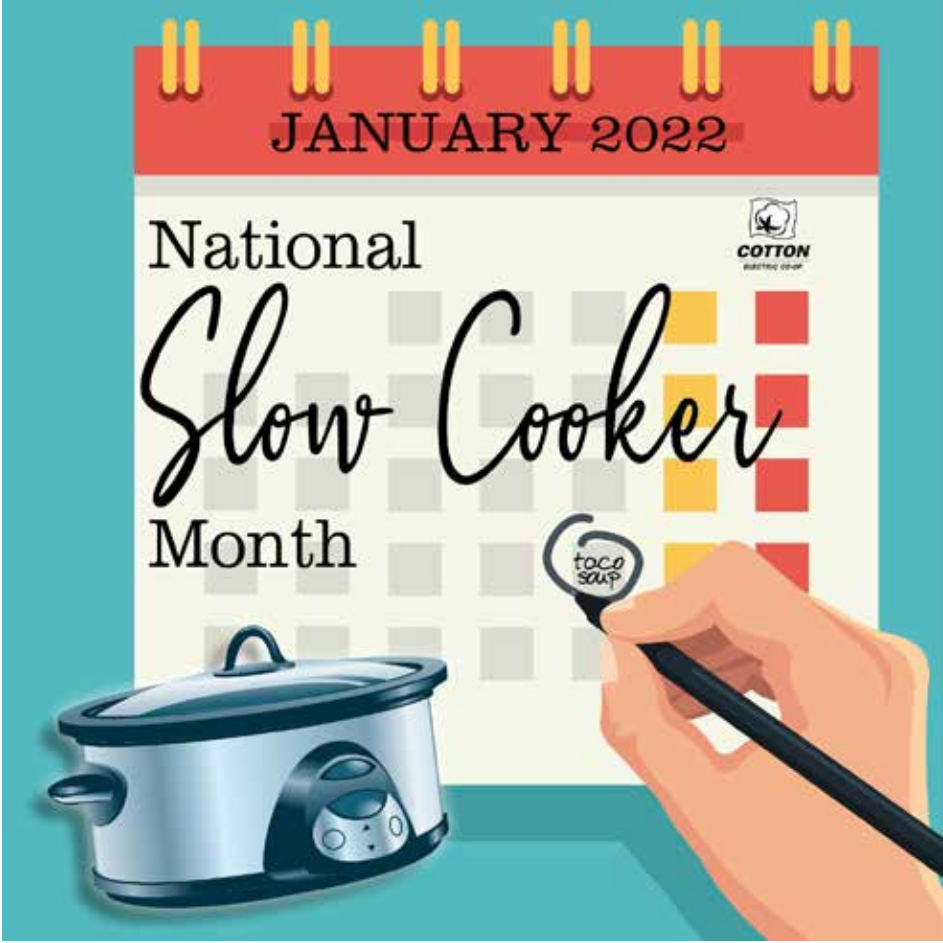
Due to fluctuations in the cost of fuel for generating wholesale power, it is impossible to buy electricity at the same cost per kWh each month. The base rates include 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power cost. Any variation above or below 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power cost must be computed as Power Cost Adjustment. The actual PCA factor is indicated on each power bill and is reported in your monthly Cotton Electric Current. Occasionally, when hydro or other low cost generating power is available, a credit is shown on your bill.

This adjustment shall be based on 70 kWh per month per 175-Watt Mercury Vapor Light, 40 kWh per month per 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium Light or 160 kWh per month per 400-Watt Metal Halide, applicable to Rate (1), Plan (a).

Adjustment for the recovery of

Winter Storm Uri costs:

For rate classes with a Power Cost Adjustment, an adjustment for the recovery of Winter Storm Uri costs will apply. Charges for these rate classes shall be increased by \$0.0045 per kWh for the costs associated with Winter Storm Uri in February 2021. This charge shall remain in effect until the entire cost obligation has been recovered, but in no event longer than December 31, 2027.



Slow cooking is a popular way to prepare hearty meals. Slowly cooked stews can make for the perfect meal on cold winter days. In addition to helping craft meals that stick to your ribs, slow cookers fill a home with enticing aromas all day long, and that can make everyone hungrier and more eager to try the finished product by dinnertime.

Slow cooking aromas wafting through the air heighten anticipation, and cooks can exceed expectations by employing a few strategies to increase flavor.

- Let fat do the flavoring. Fatty cuts of meat fare best in slow cookers, as the excess fat ensures the meat won't dry out. The thought of flavoring with fat may not appeal to everyone, and those who prefer lean cuts will likely have to shorten the cooking time and add more liquid than the recipe calls for to ensure the meat doesn't dry out before it makes it to the

dinner table.

- Brown the meat. Slow cooking experts tout the importance of browning meat prior to placing it in the slow cooker. According to AllRecipes.com, searing meat with a little oil in a hot skillet will help the meat develop more complex flavors. Ground meats also should always be browned before slow cooking, as this prevents the meat from clumping up and can ensure the finished product is not excessively greasy.
- Avoid overfilling the cooker. Foods cook differently when the cooker is too full. In such instances, the dish may end up tasting more like steamed food than simmered food. That's especially so when too much liquid has been placed in the cooker. In such instances, steam hits the lid of the cooker and creates condensation, which then drips back into the pot. That can make everything inside more soggy and less ten-

der. The owner's manual of the slow cooker may recommend how much to fill it, but it's generally best to fill the cooker somewhere between halfway and two-thirds of its capacity.

- Cut ingredients evenly. Uniformity of flavor is a goal when slow cooking, as slow cooked meals tend to be served when hosting a crowd and cooks will want everyone's meal to boast the same amount of flavor. One way to ensure that is to make sure ingredients are cut evenly. Evenly cut carrots and potatoes will finish cooking at the same time, ensuring everyone's meal will benefit from the same flavor profile.

Slow cooking is simple, but veteran slow cookers know that a few simple tricks can make meals that much more flavorful.

New labeling requirement for foods with GMOs

Starting this month, you will see a new term and new symbol on the label of foods containing GMOs or genetically modified organisms. This is a result of the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard which was passed in 2016 and fully implemented January 1, 2022. Food manufacturers may still use the term GMO on labels, but they must also use the term "bioengineered" if an ingredient meets the definition.

Under the new standard, a bioengineered food "contains detectable genetic material that has been modified through certain lab techniques and cannot be created through conventional breeding or found in nature." This is a change in semantics - different term and new definition, but the science remains the same. As with any change related to food labeling, there are groups who applaud and groups who oppose. The intent was to provide more clarity for consumers without undue burden on food manufacturers.

A list of bioengineered foods can be found at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/be/bioengineered-foods-list>. Also contained on this website is an overview of the new labeling standard, pictures of the new symbols that can be applied to food labels, information for consumers and covered entities, and a "disclosure determination tool."



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

Bioengineered foods were first introduced to US consumers in 1994 with the Flvr Svr tomato, where genetic modification was used to increase shelf life. Bioengineering is used to increase crop yield, reduce need for pesticides, improve tolerance of changing environmental challenges, and improve nutritional quality.

What should consumers do? If you previously made food buying decisions based on the inclusion or exclusion of genetically modified organisms, just be aware of the new terminology and definition. The science has not changed. There is still no scientific evidence that foods containing GMOs or "bioengineered" ingredients are harmful or should be avoided.



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A HALL OF FAME FEAST FOR HOMEGATING FANS



FAMILY FEATURES

Gathering your team to plan for a truly memorable game day at home starts with almost everyone’s favorite part of the festivities: the food. From meaty meals and zesty appetizers to sweet, long-lasting snacks, fuel your crowd with recipes that keep them coming back from kickoff to overtime.

One superstar of the menu at many homegating parties is salsa, whether it’s used as a finishing touch in recipes or as a standalone snack to enjoy with chips, veggies or other pairings. In fact,

according to the Game Day Eats Report from Fresh Cravings, 22% of guests would insist on running out to pick up salsa if it wasn’t available for the feast; 18% would even be devastated and consider leaving.

Chef Anthony Serrano recommends these all-American recipes he makes for his family on game day. Pulled Beef and Slaw Sliders are perfect for piling high with delicious toppings before hitting the couch just in time for kickoff. Snacking throughout the action is a preferred approach for many fans, making Cast-Iron Smoked Queso

Dip and Hummus Deviled Eggs go-to options for armchair quarterbacks.

These crowd-pleasers make game day worth celebrating, especially if you use a salsa with high-quality ingredients like vine-ripened tomatoes, crisp vegetables, zesty peppers and spices found in Fresh Cravings Salsas. Their flavor-packed, vibrant recipe offers a homemade-tasting alternative to the softer, duller blends of jarred salsa.

To find more championship-level game day recipe inspiration, visit [FreshCravings.com](#).



Cast-Iron Smoked Queso Dip

Recipe courtesy of chef Anthony Serrano

2 cups cheddar cheese
1 cup Monterey Jack cheese
1 teaspoon almond flour
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup Fresh Cravings Restaurant Style Salsa
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon sea salt

1/4 cup cooked chorizo
1 teaspoon liquid smoke
cilantro, for garnish
diced bell pepper, for garnish

In cast-iron pan, mix cheddar cheese, Monterey Jack cheese and almond flour. Pour in heavy cream and salsa; bring to gentle simmer. Whisk while simmering 5-7 minutes, or until queso dip begins to thicken. Add paprika, salt, chorizo and liquid smoke; adjust seasoning as necessary.
Garnish with cilantro and bell pepper.

Pulled Beef and Slaw Sliders

Recipe courtesy of chef Anthony Serrano

Pulled Beef:
2 pieces (about 3 pounds each) beef chuck roast
2 tablespoons taco seasoning or barbecue rub
1 cup beef bone broth
16 ounces Fresh Cravings Chunky Mild Salsa

Salsa and Queso Slaw:
16 ounces Fresh Cravings Chunky Mild Salsa
16 ounces broccoli slaw blend
1/4 cup green onions, sliced
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup crumbled queso fresco
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 cup mayo
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons cilantro (optional)

slider buns
Fresh Cravings Salsa
barbecue sauce
pickles

jalapenos
sliced cheese
roasted peppers
onions

To make pulled beef: Season both sides of beef with taco seasoning. Wrap with plastic wrap and place in fridge 2-12 hours before cooking.

Place meat, beef bone broth and salsa in pressure cooker; seal according to pressure cooker directions. Cook on high 60 minutes. Once pressure cooker is safe to open according to instructions, open and let meat rest in liquid 15 minutes.

Remove meat from liquid and place in large bowl. Carefully shred meat. Pour liquid, up to half, over meat while shredding to keep it juicy.

To make salsa and queso slaw: In large bowl, mix salsa, slaw blend, green onions, salt, queso fresco, Dijon mustard, mayo, apple cider vinegar and cilantro, if desired. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.

To assemble sliders, place pulled beef and salsa and queso slaw on buns. Top with salsa, barbecue sauce, pickles, jalapenos, sliced cheese, roasted peppers and onions.

Hummus Deviled Eggs

Recipe courtesy of chef Anthony Serrano

6 hard-boiled eggs, peeled
1/4 cup Fresh Cravings Classic Hummus
1/4 cup smoked cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 teaspoon yellow mustard
1 teaspoon salt

smoked Spanish paprika, for garnish
parsley, for garnish

Cut hard-boiled eggs in half lengthwise. Remove yolks and place in bowl. Using fork, mash yolks into fine crumble.

Add hummus, cheese, bacon, mustard and salt; mix well.

Evenly disperse teaspoons of yolk mixture into egg whites. Sprinkle with any remaining bacon, paprika and parsley.



Bill Robinson



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☐ High utility bills?

☐ Thermostat wars with your spouse?

☐ High humidity in summer?

☐ House just never seems comfortable?

☐ There doesn't seem to be enough airflow?

☐ Dust buildup within 2 days of dusting?

☐ Problems with your system since it's been installed?

☐ Anyone with allergies or asthma?

☐ AC starts and stops frequently or runs all the time, and house is still not cool?

☐ Have been told by other contractors that the problem cannot be fixed?

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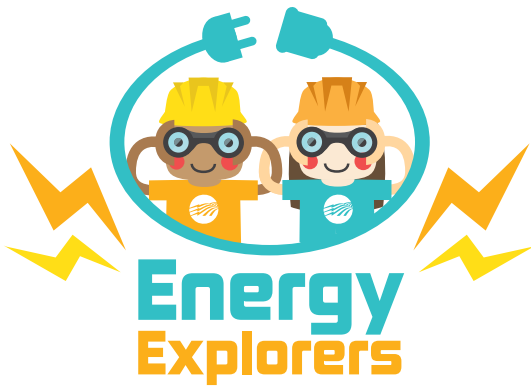
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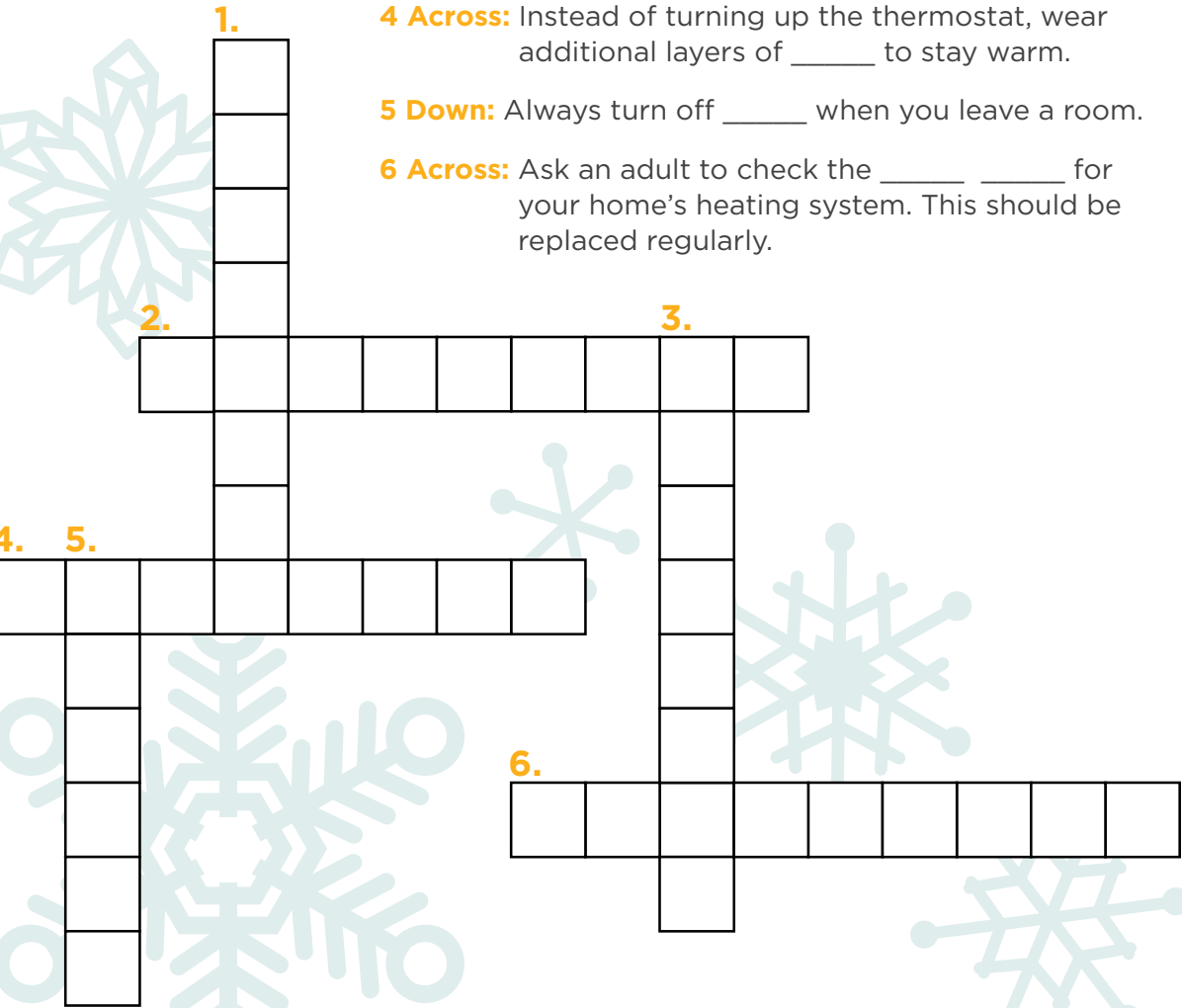


WINTER ENERGY EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD

Did you know there are several ways you can fight the winter chill *and* save energy at home? Complete the crossword puzzle below to learn how to save energy during winter months.



- 1 Down: Open curtains and blinds during the day to allow _____ in to warm your home.
- 2 Across: If you have a _____ at home, ask an adult to close the flue when a fire is not burning.
- 3 Down: Unplug phone and tablet _____ when they're not in use.



Answer Key: 1 Down) sunlight 2 Across) fireplace 3 Down) chargers 4 Across) clothing 5 Down) lights 6 Across) air filter

- ACROSS
1. Struck firmly
6. Shirt part
12. Nevertheless
16. Article
17. Adornment
18. Educator’s helper
19. Healthcare pro
20. Atomic number 28
21. Extinct flightless bird
22. Mystic syllable
23. College sports decision maker (abbr.)
24. Edible mushrooms
26. Venerable English monk
28. Surrounded by
30. Forming fractional numbers from 4 onwards
31. Eastern France river
32. Short cry or yelp
34. Brew
35. Ornamental box
37. In a way, surfaced
39. Attired
40. Peculation
41. Netted
43. It shows you paid (abbr.)
44. Payroll firm
45. Antidiuretic hormone
47. Japanese classical theater
48. The first two
50. Ancient burial chamber
52. Type of card
54. Expression of sorrow or pity
56. Hectoliter
57. Morning
59. NYC subway dweller
60. Law enforcement
61. Sodium
62. Elevated subway

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	
12						13	14						15
16			17									18	
19			20			21			22			23	
24		25			26			27		28	29		
	30			31			32		33		34		
		35	36					37		38			
	39							40					
41					42			43					
44				45		46		47			48	49	
50			51		52		53			54			55
56			57	58		59			60			61	
62			63		64			65				66	
67		68									69		
	70							71					

63. Facility where wild animals are kept

66. Integrated circuit

67. Seaman’s tool

70. Drink to

71. Small group

11. Involved as a necessary part

12. 2002 Liotta, Patric film

13. Living thing

14. Type of gin

15. Moved around in pursuit of fun

25. Makes light bulbs

26. Story of one’s life

27. Small island in a river

29. A type of bliss

31. Genus of large herons

33. A way to make dry

36. One’s grandmother

38. Vocal style

39. Pronunciation mark

41. American Indian chief or leader

42. Insecticide

43. Go bad

46. Capital of Zimbabwe

47. Polish river

49. Cast out

51. People of India and Sri Lanka

53. Cleaning fabrics

54. Very skilled

55. Pouches

58. Restaurant must-have

60. Native Americans from Arizona

64. Remaining after all deductions

65. Fleece

68. Dorm official

69. It cools your home

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