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4 RIVERS
Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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FROM THE MANAGER

Smart Strategies for Energy Savings

Summer is just around the corner. As usual, I am writing about how you can help the cooperative save money, which thereby saves you — our member-owners — money.

A large component of our summer energy costs are the demand charges — how much energy is needed during the peak hour each month. To control this cost, moving energy usage away from that hour helps us lower our overall demand charges. Our challenge is that we can only predict in which hour our demand will peak each month, but typically the late afternoon to early evening during the summer.

What can you do to help? My wife and I use a programmable thermostat. The air conditioner cools the house down in the late morning to early afternoon and then the thermostat setting moves up from the middle afternoon until early evening.

We use ceiling fans to help keep cool during the peak. Ceiling fans create a wind chill effect, making one feel cooler without significantly impacting the room temperature.

Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not rooms, so turn off fans in rooms that are not being used. Always ensure you have them set to push air down in summer and reverse rotation to push air up in the winter.

We also get our air conditioner serviced. Just like a car needs regular maintenance, air conditioners benefit greatly from annual tune-ups. A qualified technician can clean dirty coils, check refrigerant levels and ensure all components are operating optimally. These seemingly minor adjustments can significantly improve your AC's



Dennis Svanes

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices. With smart plugs, you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smart phone app, your home assistant or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy — and money!

SOURCE: WWW.ENERGYSTAR.GOV



THE HEADER PHOTO ABOVE, HIGHLIGHTING THE BEAUTY OF OUR COOPERATIVE TERRITORY, WAS TAKEN BY MEMBER KIMBERLY STITHEM OF RURAL FREDONIA.

4th Annual Meeting

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024

Highlights

The Annual Meeting of Members of 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative was held March 25 at the Fredonia High School at 7 p.m. There were 87 members registered at the time of the meeting. Dinner was catered by Londa Tindle of Fredonia before the meeting. Three rounds of door prizes were given away during the meeting.

Board President Larry Felts opened the meeting by welcoming the members. Trustee Gene Huston lead the invocation, followed by the National Anthem sung by Shelby Smith of the Fredonia High School's Select Singers and one of 4 Rivers' 2023 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp representatives. Trustee Stacy Heins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting agenda and 2023 meeting minutes were approved. Treasurer Loren Dickens gave his report. President Felts spoke on the importance of youth in the

communities we serve and the co-op's support through lineworker scholarships and opportunities for leadership, education and team building at the Cooperative Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Last year, scholarships for lineworker school were awarded to **BRADEN BLAUFUSS** and **GRANT HELTON**.

This June, **BRODY ANDERSON** and **DERGAN TRUE** will represent 4 Rivers at the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour; while **ELI ERVIN** and **MARISA GHRAMM** will represent 4 Rivers at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in July.



4 Rivers General Manager Dennis Svanes discusses 2023 statistics and events and what 2024 has in store.

After thanking the members for attending, 4 Rivers General Manager Dennis Svanes spoke on 2023 statistics and events and what 2024 has in store, along with sharing key information about the cooperative's SmartHub tool and how it can be used by members to better understand and control their account.

Kansas Representative and 4 Rivers member Doug Blex also spoke briefly on the benefits of being a cooperative member.

President Felts called on 4 Rivers General Counsel Tim Larson to announce the election results. In all districts candidates were unopposed and declared the winner: District 1, **GENE HUSTON**; District 2, **WARREN SCHMIDT**; and District 3, **LARRY FELTS**. Larson noted more than 800 votes were cast by mail.

President Felts recognized outgoing board members Nick Frankenbery and Michael Springer for their years of service on the board.

President Felts called for any new business from the members and thanked them for attending. A motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn the 2024 annual meeting.



Members enjoy the catered meal by Londa Tindle of Fredonia at the annual meeting on March 25 at Fredonia High School.



Members interact with cooperative linemen during a tabletop safety demonstration.



Fredonia's FCCLA group helps serve members a meal before the meeting.

Do Not Overlook Overhead Power Lines

It can be easy to overlook things that we see every day, including overhead power lines. However, failure to notice overhead lines can be deadly. If you or an object you are touching contacts or gets too close to a power line, you could be seriously injured or killed. Overhead power lines require 20 feet of clearance in all directions. This distance rule applies to the power lines draped from pole to pole that line roads (distribution lines), as well as the drop-down lines that service homes or other structures.

If your job requires you to operate equipment in the vicinity of large transmission lines and towers, they require even more clearance than distribution and drop-down lines. That clearance is determined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA mandates line clearance distances for all types of power lines.

Be mindful of overhead power lines when completing the following tasks:

HOME MAINTENANCE

Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long tools, such as ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles. Lower long tools and equipment before moving or transporting them. Other safety tips include:

- ▶ Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible.
- ▶ Be careful when working on or around your roof.
- ▶ Never go on a roof in windy or bad weather.

YARDWORK

When trimming trees, do not allow yourself or trimmers to come within 20 feet of overhead power lines, including service lines to your home or out-building. Also:

- ▶ Do not trim trees near power lines; instead, leave this to certified line clearance tree trimmers.
- ▶ Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines.

FARMING

Review power line locations and other potential electrical hazards with all workers at morning safety meetings. Equipment that could get too close or contact a power pole or line includes sprayer tips, tall equipment, dump trucks, augers and other extensions.

AT WORK

Follow all OSHA distance requirements when operating dump trucks, cranes, concrete pump truck extensions and when working on a roof or in a bucket.

OTHER REMINDERS

- ▶ Do not come within 50 feet of a downed or damaged power line. Warn others to stay away. Call 911 to report it.
- ▶ Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, they could come in contact when weight is added to the branch. Look up and look out for overhead power lines. Contact can happen in an instant. For additional electrical safety tips, go to www.SafeElectricity.org.

STEER CLEAR OF OVERHEAD AND UNDERGROUND POWER LINES



- ▶ Look up and look out for overhead power lines.
- ▶ Keep a 20-foot minimum clearance between you or an object you are holding and a power line.
- ▶ Remember, power lines can be buried too. Call 811 or visit www.call811.com before digging to get underground public utilities marked.

BE MINDFUL OF POWER LINES WHEN COMPLETING THESE TASKS:

- ▶ **HOME MAINTENANCE** Cleaning gutters, being on the roof or using extended tools to wash windows or skim a pool.
- ▶ **YARD WORK** Trimming trees, carrying ladders and digging.
- ▶ **TRANSPORTING TALL OBJECTS** Ladders are not the only extended objects people use outdoors. Be careful anytime you are moving a tall object or tool.
- ▶ **CONTRACTED AND DIY PROJECTS** If you are planning any project that requires digging, ensure underground utilities are marked.

Look up and out for overhead power lines. **CONTACT CAN HAPPEN IN AN INSTANT.** If there is a damaged/downed power line or pad-mounted transformer (green box), do not go within 50 feet.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.ORG



Smart Strategies for Energy Savings Continued from page 12A ▶

efficiency, potentially reducing energy consumption by up to 15%. Think of it as an investment — the upfront cost of a HVAC tune-up can easily be recouped through lower electricity bills over the summer months.

Drafty windows and doors can significantly increase your cooling load. Regularly check for air leaks around windows, doors and electrical outlets. Seal them with caulk or weather stripping to keep cool air in and hot air out. Also, switch incandescent bulbs to LED alternatives. LEDs use significantly less energy and last much longer, saving you money in the long run. They also generate less heat which lowers the cooling load.

Some may consider home solar panels, but it's important to understand how they differ from utility-scale solar farms. Large-scale solar systems are specifically designed to generate peak power during the high-demand hours even when the

sun is lower in the sky. Home solar panels typically produce the most energy earlier in the day, when the sun is directly overhead, which would not coincide with peak demand times. Plus with the utility scale, our solar farms have a positive return for our members and lower everyone's costs. However, in most cases, home solar panels may not provide the cost savings you expect, even with tax incentives and especially considering the time value of money.

Make sure to use your energy wisely and, when possible, shift electrical consumption to avoid late afternoon. Invest in long-term energy improvements like energy efficient appliances, improved insulation, and updated exterior doors and windows to lower your energy bills.

We are here to help our members, so let us know if you have any questions on how to lower your energy consumption.

10 Simple Tips for Spring Energy Savings

As the days grow longer and the weather warms up, spring brings a fresh opportunity to enhance energy efficiency and save money. Whether you're a seasoned energy-saver or just starting out, these simple tips will help you make the most of the season:

SERVICE YOUR AIR CONDITIONER

- ▶ Regularly replace or clean air filters to improve your cooling system's efficiency. A well-maintained air conditioner can consume up to 15% less energy.
- ▶ Don't forget to clean the evaporator coil annually to ensure optimal performance.

OPEN WINDOWS FOR NATURAL COOLING

- ▶ Take advantage of mild spring temperatures by opening windows. Cross-ventilation creates a refreshing breeze without relying on air conditioners.

HARNESS THE POWER OF CEILING FANS

- ▶ Use ceiling fans to cool your home. By raising your thermostat just four degrees, you can lower electricity bills without sacrificing comfort.

COOK OUTDOORS

- ▶ On warmer days, opt for outdoor grilling instead of using indoor ovens. This keeps excess heat outside and reduces the need for air conditioning.

INSTALL ENERGY-EFFICIENT WINDOW TREATMENTS

- ▶ Blinds, shades and window films can significantly reduce heat gain when temperatures rise. Not only do they improve your home's appearance, but they also cut energy costs.

SEAL AIR LEAKS

- ▶ Use low-cost caulk to seal cracks and openings in your home. Keeping warm air out helps you save both energy and money.
- ▶ Ducts that leak air contribute to high electricity costs. Properly sealed and insulated ducts can significantly lower your bills.

EMBRACE NATURAL LIGHT

- ▶ During daylight hours, switch off artificial lights and rely on windows and skylights to brighten your home. It's an eco-friendly way to save energy.

PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTATS

- ▶ Set your thermostat higher when you're away from home. A programmable thermostat can reduce energy costs by approximately 10%.

PLANT SHADE TREES

- ▶ Strategically plant trees near windows and the sunny side of your home. The shade they provide can reduce indoor temperatures, minimizing the need for air conditioning.

UPGRADE TO LED BULBS

- ▶ Replace incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs. LEDs use significantly less energy and last longer, saving you money on electricity bills.

Remember, these small changes add up over time. By implementing these energy-saving practices, you'll not only reduce your environmental impact but also enjoy cost savings. Happy spring!