

NEWS

**ROLLING HILLS
ELECTRIC CO-OP, INC.**

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STAFF

Jason Rabe
CEO/General Manager

CONTACT US

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P.O. Box 339
Beloit, KS 67420
785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

For outage updates,
energy efficiency tips and
cooperative news.

FROM THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Tackling Rising Costs With Efficiencies and Innovation

In last month's article we highlighted some of the cost headwinds your cooperative is facing — the same headwinds we are all facing in our businesses and personal lives. The high cost of capital, service, materials and equipment have been negatively impacting all of us during the last four to five years. So, what actions is Rolling Hills taking to tackle these challenges?

Let's roll the clock back to the early 2000s as there have been several key actions that have kept your cooperative viable during the challenges of the last 25 years.

In 2002, Jewell-Mitchell Electric

Cooperative, NCK Electric Cooperative and Smoky Hill Electric Cooperative consolidated to form a larger and more efficient operation. In 2016, Rolling Hills built on this consolidation to gain further efficiencies by centralizing offices, which enabled a leaner and more strategically located workforce. This saved the cooperative nearly \$2 million in wages and benefits in 2024 alone, not to mention or tabulate the other efficiencies gained — including trucks, equipment and facilities.



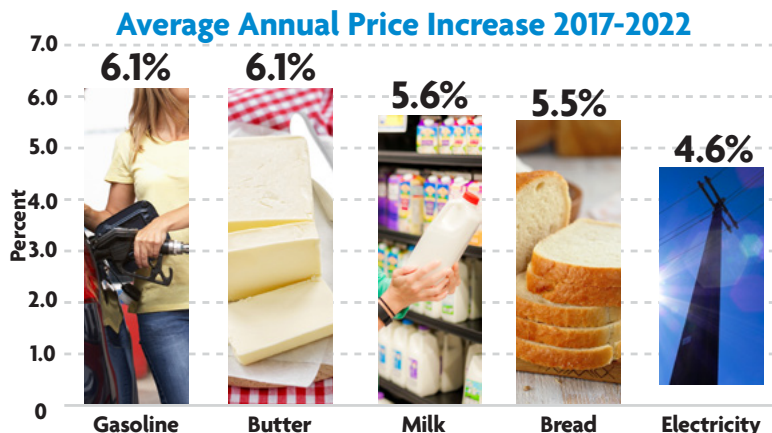
Jason Rabe

Other measures taken in the last

Continued on page 12C ▶

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.



SOURCES: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS & CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

ACCEPTING BIDS FOR MOWING SUBSTATIONS

Rolling Hills Electric is accepting sealed mowing bids for four areas. The frequency of mowing each substation is dependent on the weather to keep the areas well maintained.

TO SUBMIT A BID, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

- ▶ Total cost to mow all substations listed in that area.
- ▶ Ability to provide proof of \$3 million in liability insurance at start of mowing season.
- ▶ Current W-9 form.

Sealed bids will be accepted through

MARCH 31, 2025. Complete and submit your bid online at <https://rollinghills.coop/form/substation-mowing-bid>. You can also print and return the form by mail or deliver to the dropbox at:

ROLLING HILLS ELECTRIC
3075B US 24 HWY
P.O. BOX 339
BELOIT, KS 67420

For more information, call 785-534-1601 or email lcolson@rollinghills.coop.



Ellsworth Area	Beloit Area
Bunker Hill	Esbon
Ellsworth	Gilbert
Glendale	Hunter
Holyrood	Ionia
Kanopolis	Jewell
Lucas	Lovewell
Vesper	Mankato
Wilson — City	Mankato Radio Tower
Wilson — Rural	Solomon Rapids
Belleville Area	Osborne Area
Ames	Alton
Aurora	Bellaire
Clifton	Cedar
Cuba	Covert
Jamestown	Osborne
Republic	
Rice	
Scandia	

Need Assistance Paying Your Bill? Apply for LIEAP by March 31

Rolling Hills Electric receives requests for assistance with member electricity bills throughout the year. The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally-funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit.

THE 2025 LIEAP APPLICATION PERIOD ENDS MARCH 31, 2025, AT 5 P.M. To qualify, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- ▶ An adult living at the address must be personally responsible for paying the heating costs incurred at the current residence, payable either to the landlord or the fuel vendor.
- ▶ Applicants must demonstrate a recent history of payments toward purchases of the primary heating energy.
- ▶ The combined gross income (before deductions) of all persons living at the address may not exceed 150% of the federal poverty level according to the guidelines listed in the table.

The benefit levels vary according to the following factors:

- ▶ Household income.

2025 INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES			
Persons Living at Address	Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Persons Living at Address	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1,882.50	5	\$4,572.50
2	\$2,555	6	\$5,245
3	\$3,227.50	7	\$5,917.50
4	\$3,900	8	\$6,590
+1	\$672.50 for each additional person		

- ▶ Number of persons living at the address.
- ▶ Type of dwelling.
- ▶ Type of heating fuel.

For more information and to apply, visit **WWW.DCF.KS.GOV**, select the **SERVICES** tab at the top, then scroll down and click on **ENERGY ASSISTANCE (LIEAP)**. Applications must be received at the DCF office prior to 5 p.m., **MARCH 31, 2025**. Late arrivals will not be considered for assistance.

The state will contact Rolling Hills Electric to verify payments are being made on the account and the account is active in the applicant's name. LIEAP payments will come directly to Rolling Hills Electric and be applied directly to the account.

For more information or assistance in completing the application, please contact the LIEAP office at 888-369-4777.

COLD WEATHER ACCOMMODATION ENDS MARCH 31

Spring is just around the corner and with it, warmer weather. As a friendly reminder, the Cold Weather Accommodation for residential members ends March 31. For more information about Rolling Hills' cold weather accommodation policy, please call 785-534-1601.

Tackling Rising Costs With Efficiencies and Innovation

Continued from page 12A ▶

decade include installing automatic metering infrastructure (AMI), the use of field digital tablets and mapping software, upgraded equipment for linemen, converting to battery-operated hand tools, and engaging a call center service — these all helped reduce staffing needs and allowed existing staff to work safer and more efficiently.

What actions are we taking right now to improve efficiencies? We continue to find ways to run leaner. We serve over 100 members more per employee than we did in 2012. However, thanks to our outpost model, we are still just as responsive. Our operations staff continue to find ways to improve voltage efficiencies and lower line loss, decreasing from 8.5% in 2014 to just a tick over 5% in 2024. This means we can purchase 3.5% less electricity to serve the same load. In 2024, this eliminated over \$500,000 in power costs.

We have worked to fully leverage Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster funds when impacted by severe storms and are improving our ability to pursue applicable grant funding to improve our system with less impact on members.

Additionally, our team has continued to invest and improve our peak shaving/load control program, which benefits all members by reducing demand expense on our cooperative's power bill. This program alone saves an average residential member over \$20 per year and all members collectively nearly \$400,000 per year. Our team also leverages forecasting tools, capital planning, and truck/equipment rotation planning to help us more effectively allocate resources and better predict trends in our operation.

While costs continue to be challenging, that is only part of the story. The way we are billed for energy has also continued to evolve due to changes in the way energy is produced and delivered. In December 2024, the board of trustees authorized a cost-of-service and rate design study to look at ways to modernize our rate structure, more accurately capture costs, and provide more tools to the member to control their utility bill while also meeting the aforementioned cost increases. In the coming weeks, we will know the results of those studies and begin to communicate what those changes, opportunities and impacts might be.

Rolling Hills Electric is member driven and not profit motivated. We were created to serve those who investor-owned utilities are not interested in serving. We will continue to provide reliable power as affordably as we can, while providing our members with more opportunities to have control over their utility bill. We work hard for you, rain or shine, not because we have to, but because our members are worth it.

UPCOMING BOARD ELECTIONS

The election process is not only a privilege, but also a civic duty and a responsibility that we, as citizens of the United States of America, should take seriously.

As a consumer-member of Rolling Hills Electric, you also have this privilege and responsibility. You have a voice in choosing who serves on the board. Trustees are elected representatives and act in the best interest of you, the cooperative's consumer-members.

A trustee candidate submits a nominating petition that contains at least 20 signatures of current members of the cooperative who reside within the candidate's district. The petition had to be filed at the Rolling Hills office in Beloit on or before Nov. 30. Nominating petitions are submitted to the secretary who determines if candidates meet the qualifications to be nominated and the petitions were valid.

Your 2024 annual report and board of trustees ballots will be included in the April issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine. Upon receipt of the ballot, please mark your choice or write in a candidate, sign the back of the ballot envelope (certificate of membership), and return your ballot immediately. **BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED IN BELOIT BY 6:45 P.M. ON APRIL 25, 2025.**

The nominees listed above will appear on your ballot. A complete biography along with a picture of each candidate will be included with the ballot. If you have any questions or need a replacement ballot, please call our office at 800-530-5572 or 785-534-1601.

2025 BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOMINEES

DISTRICT 1

MICHELLE BROKES, Wilson

DISTRICT 2

JOHN GEORGE, Lebanon

DISTRICT 3

MIKE BRZON, Courtland

Look for your ballot
on the April issue of

Kansas
COUNTRYLiving

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

ANNUAL MEETING IS

APRIL 25

5:30 P.M. Registration and Meal

6:30 P.M. Meeting



UTILITY SCAMS IN THIS AGE OF AI:

How to Spot and Avoid Fraud

Someone calls claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Real utility companies don't do this. But scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you. And scammers are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult for consumers to detect. Learn how to protect yourself.

BEWARE OF THESE COMMON SCAM TACTICS

- ▶ **DISCONNECTION THREATS:** Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment.
- ▶ **CALLER ID SPOOFING:** Fraudsters use software to make their calls appear legitimate.
- ▶ **OVERPAYMENT CLAIMS:** They may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
- ▶ **SMISHING:** Scammers send fake text messages that seem to come from your utility company.
- ▶ **PHISHING ATTEMPTS:** Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links. If you have any doubt about the status of your electric service, call your utility company using the customer service phone number on their website.

WATCH FOR THE FOLLOWING RED FLAGS

- ▶ High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action.
- ▶ Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift cards, reloadable cards or cryptocurrency).
- ▶ Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses.

AI USE ENHANCES UTILITY SCAMS

By leveraging AI-powered techniques, utility scammers can create sophisticated and convincing frauds that are hard for consumers to recognize and avoid.

- ▶ AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to

be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of company colors and logos.

- ▶ Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.
- ▶ AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- ▶ AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- ▶ Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.
- ▶ Scammers use AI to launch large-scale utility scam campaigns quickly and efficiently.

According to Kathy Stokes, AARP director of fraud prevention programs, "The ability of AI to improve and scale scam tactics is the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution for fraud criminals."

PROTECT YOURSELF

- ▶ Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
- ▶ Verify any communication by calling your utility company directly using the number on your bill.
- ▶ Never share personal information. Legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone.
- ▶ If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification.

If you suspect a scam, report it to your utility company and the consumer protection division of the Kansas Attorney general's office at www.ag.ks.gov/file-a-complaint/consumer-protection.

Remember, legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt, let your utility company know so they can take proactive measures to both protect you and others from becoming victims.



TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS

Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar. If you're ever unsure, call your utility company using the official phone number listed on your bill to verify payment or account details.

SOURCE: NRECA

