



## ROLLING HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE **NEWS**

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#### Contact Us

3075B US Hwy 24 P.O. Box 339  
Beloit, KS 67420  
785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572

#### Like us on Facebook

On Facebook, search for “Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.” and like our page for continued updates, energy efficiency tips, cooperative news and outage updates.



## How Rolling Hills Electric Employs ‘Outage Detectives’

Ever wonder what goes into restoring your power after an outage? The ordeal of losing electricity can be frustrating, but Rolling Hills is always looking for ways to get the power back on as soon and safely as possible.

Whether it's severe summer weather like a tornado, straight-line winds, or a fallen tree, as soon as an outage is detected, Rolling Hills is working to correct the problem. And thanks to new and more advanced technologies, we can restore power outages faster than ever.

Powering up after an outage starts on a larger level and ends up in local areas. First, high-voltage transmission lines are examined, then distribution stations, then main distribution lines. If the outage can't be pinpointed to these areas, tap lines and individual homes are inspected. This process allows Rolling Hills to efficiently help the most

members in the shortest amount of time, and we are working to make this process move even faster.

One of the biggest advancements in technology that Rolling Hills will be installing is Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). These advanced meters allow for two-way communication and work by sending information back to the co-op's operations center. This helps to distinguish between events that affect a single home or multiple outages, which is important because solving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication also provides a way to



**Doug Jackson**

*Continued on page 16B ▶*

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

**COOKING TIP:** When it is warm out, avoid using the oven. Try cooking on the stove, using a microwave or grilling outside instead.  
Source: energy.gov



## Beat the Peak

What is “peak?” Peaks occur when the most electricity is demanded. For instance, in Rolling Hills Electric service territory, peak usually happens on a hot summer afternoon. To help control our rate, large power consumers use load control. When a peak is forecast, these consumers receive a phone call or text advising them that a peak alert is in effect and their services will be automatically controlled.

Our “peak” season is June 1 to Aug. 31. During this time, management carefully monitors the forecast and high temperatures and will load control as necessary.

How can you or I help to “beat the peak?” Easily! We can help stabilize our costs by voluntarily moving chores, such as running the dishwasher and doing laundry to later in the evening rather than doing these chores in the heat of the afternoon. Another simple way to help beat the peak is to set your thermostat at 78 degrees or higher in the summer. Not only will it lower your monthly bill, but it will also help Rolling Hills control our rates.

# Building an Electric System for Our Future Needs

Our nation’s electric system has remained largely unchanged for decades. While it has served us well, it is rapidly running up against limitations. New technology and communication capabilities are essential to maintaining the service our consumer-members expect. Advanced meters and other technology upgrades provide a cost-effective way to ensure efficient and reliable electric service.

Rolling Hills Electric is investing in necessary new equipment, including advanced meters that transmit and receive data automatically and securely with our office. Two-way communication eliminates the need for manual meter reads and enables new programs for outage notification, off-peak pricing and alerts to help with troubleshooting and preventative maintenance. Information coming from the meters will allow us to improve our efficiency during “peak” energy usage periods, which helps keep the cost of electricity lower.

In addition, new tools will help keep electric bills more accurate, affordable

and allow us to diagnose problems that impact service. The benefits of updating our electric grid are widespread. Streamlined operations will improve customer service and automation will provide the information and tools necessary for households to better manage their energy consumption. Rolling Hills Electric will be installing new advanced meters throughout our system for the next several months as part of the advanced grid enhancements to ensure quality and affordable electricity. If you have any questions, please call us at 785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572. We will update you on Facebook, through robocalls and in the *Kansas Country Living* Rolling Hills Electric local pages.

Advanced meters will help Rolling Hills Electric continue to provide affordable energy and reliable service, while providing these improvements:

- ▶ Automatic meter readings
- ▶ Better power quality and reliability
- ▶ Automatic outage notification
- ▶ Lower power costs

## How Rolling Hills Electric Employs ‘Outage Detectives’

*Continued from page 16A ▶*

verify that power has been restored after an outage.

Another technology is the Outage Management System (OMS), which can predict the location of the issue and how many members are impacted. Especially when used with the AMI system, the OMS can be extremely useful in resolving an outage. As the AMI collects and sends data, the OMS analyzes the data using mathematical functions and models the electrical network to assess the impact of the outage.

One more recent technology being tested by electric co-ops is capable of predicting outages before they happen. Distribution Fault Anticipation (DFA) technology was developed by researchers at Texas A&M University and can detect tree branches hanging on power lines, damaged equipment

and unusual, unrecognized events. By identifying these issues, co-ops can more efficiently dispatch crews and prevent outages before they happen.

One of the major benefits from improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is understanding where the outages are located, which helps to reduce risk for our co-op crews out on the road during weather events. These technologies also clearly benefit our members with improved outage response times.

Power outages are inevitable, but as technology continues to improve, disruptions are becoming shorter and easier to resolve and Rolling Hills Electric is dedicated to using those technologies that make the most (dollars and) sense for our cooperative.

# Did You Know?

**Did you know if you have your account registered on the SmartHub app, you can open the app on your smartphone and see if you are part of an outage in your area?**

When service has been restored, the app will also show that. If it shows that service has been restored and you still don't have power, you will need to call in and report your outage if you have not already done so.

**Did you know you will have to convert to SmartHub by July 31?**

If you have been paying your electricity account by phone with Paymentus, you will need to convert to SmartHub by the end of July as Paymentus will no longer be an option.

**Did you know SmartHub has no fee to pay over the phone or online?**

Registering your account(s) is quite simple. Go to [HTTPS://ROLLINGHILLS.SMARTHUB.COOP](https://rollinghills.smarthub.coop) to set up your account and password. Once set up, you can update your phone number, address, email, see past bills, opt for paperless billing, view current kilowatt-hour usage, set up checking account, debit or credit cards for automatic payment and more.

**Did you know we can answer your call 24/7?**

We have employees in the office from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays to answer your call. Our dispatcher is available to answer your call 24/7 after-hours. To get in touch, be sure to update our phone numbers to 785-534-1601 and 800-530-5572. Our Belleville, Ellsworth and Mankato numbers will be discontinued soon.

**Did you know there are several reasons for keeping your phone number updated?**

If we have a planned outage, we will attempt to contact you prior whenever possible. Also, we prefer to place a courtesy call regarding a past due account to save you the expense of a collection visit. Last but not least, when we have several outages, we like to make contact with the member before our linemen complete the work to make sure your power is restored.

**Did you know we still have payment drop boxes?**

We still have drop boxes in Belleville, Ellsworth and Mankato for your convenience. Payments are retrieved by Rolling Hills employees by 7 a.m. weekdays and delivered to Beloit for processing.

## Learn More About SmartHub



### What Is SmartHub?

SmartHub is a tool that provides convenient account access on your computer, tablet or mobile device.

- ▶ Make payments, access payment history, print statements and sign up for automated payment.
- ▶ View daily, monthly and average energy use.
- ▶ Update account information. Set text or email notifications for energy use or account and billing information.

### How do I Sign Up for SmartHub?

If you already use E-Bill, you can log in to SmartHub using the same e-mail and password you have always used.

Are you a new user? Sign up for SmartHub at [HTTPS://WWW.SMARTHUB.ROLLINGHILLS.COOP](https://www.smarthub.rollinghills.coop) or go to [WWW.ROLLINGHILLS.COOP](http://www.rollinghills.coop) and click the SmartHub button in the upper right corner of the screen. To get started you will be required to enter your account number, last name or business and email address.

### Where do I Find the SmartHub App Download for my Smartphone?

The SmartHub app is available for iOS and Android users. Install the SmartHub app on your mobile device.

Still have questions? Call the office weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. at 785-534-1601 or 800-830-5572.



# Stay Back and Stay Safe

Working with electricity can be a dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. USA Today lists line repairers and installers among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. That's why safety is the No. 1 priority at Rolling Hills Electric. This is not empty talk. We have created a culture of putting our crews' safety and that of the community above all else.

Our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, our consumer-members. Equally important, we want our employees to return home safely to their loved ones. This requires ongoing focus, dedication, vigilance—and your help!

## Distractions can be deadly.

While we appreciate your kindness and interest in the work of our crews, we ask that you stay back and let them focus on their task at hand. Even routine work has the potential to be dangerous, and it takes full attention for linemen and their colleagues, who are also responsible for the team's safety.

Distractions can have deadly consequences. If a lineworker is on or near your property during a power outage, for vegetation management or for routine maintenance, please allow them ample room to work. These small accommodations help protect our crews and you.

If you have a dog, try to keep it indoors while lineworkers are on or

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near your property. While most dogs are friendly, some are defensive of their territory and can't distinguish between a burglar and a utility worker. Our crews work best without a pet "supervising" the job.

We recognize for your family's safety, you want to make sure only authorized workers are on or near your property. You will recognize Rolling Hills Electric employees by the logo on their uniforms and the service trucks with our name and logo on them. You may also recognize our lineworkers because they live right here in our local community. If you are ever unsure a worker is authorized to be handling electrical equipment on or near your property, please call us. We are happy to let you know if our crews are working in your community.

## Slow down and move over.

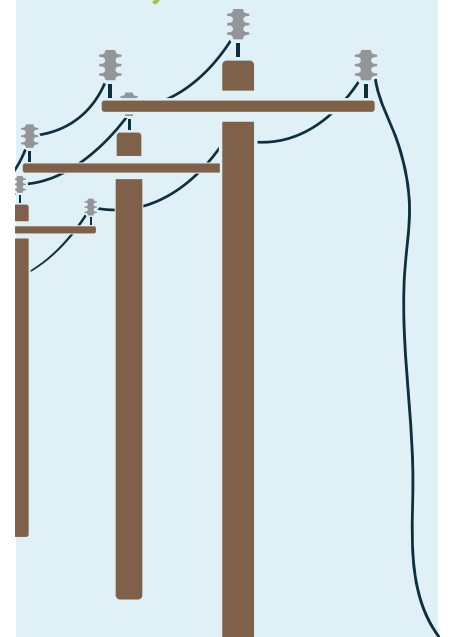
In addition to giving lineworkers some space while they are near your property, we also ask that you move over and slow down when approaching a utility vehicle on the side of the road. This is an extra barrier of safety to help those who help all of us.

## KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE A DOWNED POWER LINE

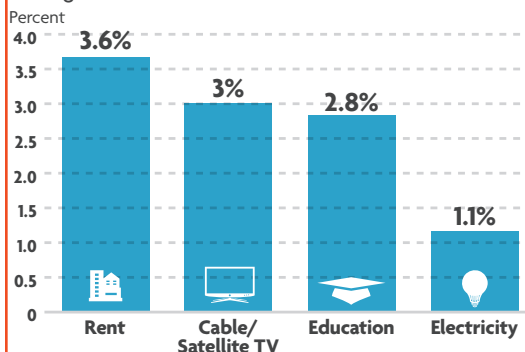
**When power lines go down, take these precautions to stay safe:**

- ▶ Call 911 to report fallen or downed power lines.
- ▶ Know that power lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live.
- ▶ Stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- ▶ If the line is down because a vehicle has struck it, remain in the vehicle until emergency crews say it is safe to exit.
- ▶ If there is a fire or you smell gasoline, hop out of the vehicle without touching the vehicle and DO NOT WALK, but hop to safety at least 50 feet away.

**Always treat a downed power line as live and never touch any wire that is down.**



Average Annual Price Increase 2013-2018



## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index