

## Staying ready for anything

We can all safely say that 2020 has not been anything close to what we originally planned it would be like as we rang in the new year six months ago. While many things have

changed in our communities, one thing has not: the need for safe and reliable electricity.

Electric cooperatives are built and wired to handle the unpredictable things that come our way. We never really know what may happen, but we are quick to assess the situation, risks and challenges, and then respond accordingly to make sure that we are there when you need us, just as we have always been. Ice storms, tornadoes, thunderstorms, and even global pandemics. We are your trusted energy provider.

Thinking back over the last few months, it made me realize that we choose to live in our community for a reason. We choose to live and work in rural Kansas. The lifestyle and the amenities that the big cities offer is unique, but the lifestyle and quality of life in rural Kansans is different, and has big benefits - especially with everything that has been going on in the world lately. Rest assured that Heartland is here to provide you with the electricity you need to help you achieve your goals in the community you call home.

As 2020 continues, Heartland is still committed to listening to our consumer-members as we learn about how we can address upcoming changes at your cooperative. We originally planned to have in-person district meetings, but those

### KEEPING YOU INFORMED



**MARK SCHEIBE**  
**HEARTLAND CEO**



**Heartland crews work to be ready to adapt for any challenge, from weather-related disasters to the recent pandemic. Pictured here is Lineman Tanner Kepley, helping upgrade powerlines in Cherokee County.**

plans will need to be adjusted. Instead, we will plan to have a multi-faceted approach to ensure we take time to listen in many ways to help make decisions that are fair to all consumer-members over the coming years. These options might include some mail and email surveys, virtual district meetings or town-hall style meetings online. No matter what we do, we will be sure to let you know how each consum-

er-member can choose to participate.

Over the last 10-15 years, everyone's electric needs have changed, and Heartland is ready to discuss evolving our electric rates to better fit our consumer-member's lifestyles. Whether you are thinking about replacing your air conditioner with a more efficient air source heat pump, looking at a

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new electric vehicle, wanting to add solar, or you don't have plans to change your home, farm, or business at all, Heartland wants to provide you with a way to help you control your electric bills based on how and when you use electricity.

Heartland's locally elected Board of Directors and our employees are interested in listening about how the cooperative can best balance the maintenance of an aging electric grid and how that impacts electric rates, and more importantly, how it impacts the reliability of your electricity. Over the last few years, Heartland has emphasized the replacement of poles that are beyond their useful life. In 2019 alone, Heartland replaced about \$1 million worth of electric poles. The good news is this process has already started to pay dividends to Heartland's consumer-members by providing more reliable electricity during this past spring's thunderstorms.

Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative has been built to assess the situations at hand, address the challenges, and make the best decisions that benefit all consumer-members. We remain committed to listening and evolving to continue to be your trusted energy provider. We know that you live in rural Kansas for a reason and we are committed to be here to help you along the way.

# Maintenance work



**Heartland's Lewis Merrell and Adam Koons remove wire and other material from an old utility pole they recently removed from an unused section of powerline.**

## Make your home efficient for summer savings

Soaring temperatures and sultry summer nights can cause electric bills to skyrocket. This summer, take a vacation from high electric bills by making your home—and your family's habits—more energy efficient.

### Beat the Heat

Air conditioning helps most Americans beat the sweltering summer heat. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), air conditioning accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average household electric bill. Proper maintenance and smart use of your home's cooling system will help keep your electric bill in check.

First, make sure your air conditioner's external unit is clean and free of debris. Clear away dead leaves or overgrown plants and weeds to enable

the unit to perform as it should.

Second, change all of the air filters inside your home quarterly, or more often in homes with allergy sufferers or smokers. Fresh filters not only reduce the strain on your cooling system, but improve the air quality in your home.

Third, the DOE recommends that you set your home's thermostat as high as possible, while still maintaining a comfortable environment for your family during the summer months.

Bumping the thermostat up at least two degrees can make a noticeable difference on your power bill.

### Made in the Shade

Windows are not only great sources of natural light in your home, but also great sources of heat during the summer.

Curtains, blinds, and shades are some of the most cost-effective ways to make your windows and home more energy efficient. These window coverings offer low-cost, stylish solutions to shield the sun's rays and keep the interior of your home cool and comfortable.

### Daily Grind

Minimize heat put off by appliances, especially during the hottest time of the day.

When possible, turn off your dishwasher's dryer cycle. This prevents even more residual heat from warming your home. As your summer heats up, call on our energy experts at Heartland REC for more ways to lower your power bill. You can also visit [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com) to find out how little changes around the house can add up to big energy savings.

# We can help with summer projects

As summer rolls on, many people tackle those building projects that have been brewing over the winter... sometimes on paper and sometimes just in the back of a person's mind.

Whether the project is a small garage or a large home, it will probably become necessary to consider the electrical requirements at some point. Here are some helpful tips in getting the necessary power to your new building.

## Building a new home:

Building a new home on previously undeveloped property is an exciting endeavor, and arranging for electrical service to the property is but one of many details that must be arranged.

The first step in the process for the future homeowner (or anyone wanting new service at a location where there is no current electric service) is to contact Heartland REC's Member Services office to request a New Service Application Form, which collects the basic information about what type of building will eventually be built at the site, and the type of heating and cooling system so that Heartland knows the basics about what will be needed at the property. The New Service Application Form needs to be submitted to HREC along with a \$250 engineering deposit, which will be applied to the project costs if service is built within 12 months.

After the paperwork has been submitted, Heartland REC representatives will arrange to meet with the applicant at the new site to discuss the options, take measurements, and provide the applicant with a firm price for the construction of the new line needed for the home. If it is a short distance from Heartland REC's distribution line to the eventual location for the meter pole, the price for a project may be \$1,000 to \$3,000. For longer distances, the cost can easily run from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Permanent services such as new homes (buildings with foundations and a well or water system) qualify for a maximum contribution of \$2,000. The maximum contribution is raised to \$3,000 if the facility is a total electric facility.

Small services such as barns, signs, shops, outbuildings and others qualify for a matching contribution by Heartland, with a maximum contribution of \$1,000. The construction cost will need to be paid before work will begin.

Those who are new customers of Heartland REC will also need to become members. The basic cost for membership is \$5. An additional deposit may be required, depending on the results of a credit check.

Home construction decisions are the best opportunity to save money down the road. Cutting corners to save money now, will become very expensive down the road.

Investing in additional insulation and choosing an efficient heating and cooling system, such as a heat pump, will pay for itself many times over.

Heartland's Member Services department can provide advice to those who want their homes to be efficient.

## Adding a barn, shop or garage:

Adding another building is a common summer project in this part of the country, and most people will need power in that building for lights and tools.

Contacting Heartland REC isn't always necessary in situations like this. Heartland provides and maintains the connections up to the meter, but most meter bases include a removable panel that allow members or their electricians to make the necessary connections to provide power to their buildings.

An underground trench is a popular way to get power from the meter pole to the building. It is the property

owner's responsibility to get this work done. Sometimes overhead line is the better option, and many local electricians have the equipment and knowledge to make this happen as well.

Usually, an additional new meter isn't necessary when adding an outbuilding. Keeping everything on a single meter avoids the additional monthly service availability fee that comes with another meter.

If circumstances do make it necessary to add a meter, construction is handled in the same manner as the New Service procedure described above for new homes.

## Service upgrades

The additional power requirements on the service are another thing to consider. Most Heartland REC members have either 100 amp or 200 amp service. Generally, all-electric homes will have 200 amp service due to the additional power needs of their heating systems. Smaller homes and those that use propane typically have 100 amp service.

A garage or barn probably won't require enough electricity to justify upgrading the service, but if usage is unusually high, those with 100 amp service may want to consider upgrading to 200 amp service. The cost for this is often under \$500.

## Call 811 to know what's below

Spring and summer is an optimal time of year to dream up and achieve your landscaping masterpiece. Perhaps you're planning to build a new deck to enjoy those perfect summer days. If any of your projects require digging—such as planting trees or shrubs, or setting posts—remember to dial 811 first.

Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust away from turning a fall project into a disaster.

Play it safe by dialing 811 to find out where utility lines run on your property. Your call will be routed to a local "one call" center. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, and affected local utilities will be notified.

In a few days, a locator will arrive to designate the approximate location

of any underground lines, pipes and cables. These areas will be marked with flags or paint so you'll know what's below. Then the safe digging can begin.

Although many homeowners tackling do-it-yourself digging projects are aware of "Call Before You Dig" services, the majority doesn't take advantage of the service. A national survey showed that only 50 percent of homeowners called to have their lines marked before starting digging projects, according to the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), a federally mandated group of underground utility and damage prevention industry professionals. CGA data also shows that an underground utility line is damaged every six minutes in the U.S. because someone decided to dig without first dialing 811.



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# Peak Savers program starts July 1

In July and August, many Heartland members join together to reduce their use of electricity during peak hours, saving money for them and lowering power costs for the cooperative.

Those enrolled in the Peak Savers program receive alerts the evening before predicted peak days, giving them time to prepare to take action to reduce their use between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. on those peak days.

Each year since 2013, more than 2,000 Heartland members participate in the program. Most seasons, between five and ten Peak Alerts are issued, and members are able to take action and reduce the cooperative's peak load significantly and lower Heartland's power costs. That savings is passed on to program participants, who are issued bill credits. Most members receive about \$30, but some get back more than \$300! Over the past seven years Peak Savers has paid back Heartland Members more than \$250,000. We are looking for more members to join our Peak Savers program in 2020. If you're interested in participating, call our office at 1-800-835-9586.

Here are the five best ways to save with Peak Savers.

- Raise your thermostat at least three degrees. Summers in Kansas are hot and humid. Most of us escape the worst of it by retreating to an air-conditioned home in the summer. But air conditioners also make up the bulk of our summer

electric bills. You'll save the most by turning your air conditioner off from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on peak days, but raising your thermostat is the next best thing.

- Prepare dinner that doesn't require the stove. It's too hot to cook. Dinners of sandwiches, salads, refrigerated pasta dishes, and other meals that don't require the stove will reduce your use of electricity, keep your home cool, and keep you cool as well. Another option is to head outside and use the grill instead!

- Don't use home appliances (washers, dryers, dishwashers) during a peak. Not only do they use a significant amount of electricity, but they also add heat to your home, making your air conditioner work harder.

- Turn off televisions and computers. Today's big screens and home theaters are also big users of electricity. Turn off unneeded televisions, video game consoles, computers, and other electronics.

- Turn off the lights.

Heartland will send Peak Alerts at 5 p.m. the day before we expect peak usage to take place. This will happen in July and August this summer. Most participants in the Peak Savers program will receive this peak day alert announcement as a text message on their cell phone or as an email. The peak alert message will also be posted on our Twitter feed, which is @HeartlandREC, and on Facebook.

