



country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Chill Pill

Polar Vortex Blasts ECE Area

Record-setting cold in February drives electricity use. ECE offers service to help

Old Man Winter showed his strength last month when a polar vortex swept through the East Central Electric (ECE) service area. Temperatures dipped to dangerous lows, driving the demand for power and heat upward.

Weather is one of the biggest factors when it comes to electric usage, especially during the coldest months of the year.

“In this case, the extreme low temperatures in February did raise usage for members, but we don’t want them to panic,” said ECE General Manager Tim Smith.

The plunging temperatures arrived on the heels of a billing issue that brought high usage among the membership to the co-op’s attention.

What Can You Do?

If your bill is higher than you can manage:

- **Request more time.** We encourage members who need additional time to pay their bill to call our office at 918-756-0833.

- **Get assistance.** There are times when everyone needs a little help. When your income won’t stretch any further, we will help you find assistance agencies that may provide support.

“We’re hearing that assistance agencies are stretched thin due to the pandemic, but we are committed to our members needs and finding workable solutions,” said Tamara Hawkins, ECE office services director.

The following tips will help you manage your billing and usage, so you can stay comfortable without breaking the bank:

- **Make your bill more predictable.** Levelized billing can help you with your monthly budget. With levelized billing, your energy bills are averaged over a rolling 12-month period, making them about the same amount each month.
- **Customize your billing schedule.** Select a billing cycle that best suits your situation.
- **Pay as you go.** If it is easier to make daily or weekly payments instead of a

larger monthly payment, prepaid services may be right for you.

- **Utilize SmartHub.** Use the SmartHub app to monitor and track usage. SmartHub information is not live data, but you can see your usage faster than waiting on your bill. View and/or download the app at www.ecoec.com.
- **Think long term.** Your cooperative offers the following services free of charge: home energy audits, meter accuracy checks, analysis of usage, power quality monitoring, meter exchanges and comparison of bills over time to identify trends and possible ways to reduce consumption.
- **Take advantage of our high efficiency rebate programs.** These rebates can support you as you weatherize your home and invest in energy-efficient appliances, ground source, air source or mini-split heat pumps.

“Winter bills can be scary,” said Smith. “As a cooperative, it’s important to us that our members are taken care of. We encourage them to reach out to us. We will do whatever we can to help.” ☺

Find out more at www.ecoec.com or by calling the cooperative at 918-756-0833.

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit www.ecoec.com. To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

**notes from
the chair**



by Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees

Pasture Pandemonium

Thank you so much for all the calls, food, and prayers while Donna and I struggled with coronavirus. Donna spent nine days in the hospital. We both were sick for well over 30 days. I was too sick to even answer the phone, so please forgive me if I missed your call. We are both doing quite well now.

Broadband to your home keeps on going in spite of the pandemic. Crews are installing fiber to about 20 homes per day. As the revenue from ecoLINK increases, it should help stabilize our electric rates. I remind you, the board of directors are members just like you, so we share the same concerns of reasonable cost while keeping the co-op financially strong.

All seven of your directors have completed the schooling required for them to serve on the board, and have received their Credentialed Co-op Director (CCD) status. Much like members of a city council or school board are encouraged to learn the rules, your trustees are encouraged to take co-op director training classes so we will know how to govern, and learn new procedures and tools to enhance the co-op's well being.

We also want to be transparent. That's one reason I include my phone number at the end of each article. I continue to receive many positive comments by phone and in person, and I thank you for it.

A few years ago our family had a 160-acre pasture that was open with a big pond in the middle. A neighbor reported to us the cows were going crazy about a pig among them.

I summoned my son, Monty, and his dog, Casey, to come and see if we could catch the pig. Monty and Casey stayed by the pond while my dog, Marlo, and I circled the pig with the pickup.

The pig made a mad dash toward the cows—maybe for

protection—and the cows went ballistic, bawling and running over each other and their calves, trying to smash the pig. Of the 55 cows and 55 calves, at least 40 of them were upside down at any one time.

An amusing scene when it started, it quickly became violent and scary. Fortunately, no animal was injured. We caught the pig and gave it to some people far away. Since then, we refer to the incident as "pandemonium in the pasture!" 🐷

“Of the 55 cows and 55 calves, at least 40 of them were upside down at any one time.”

Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District #2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at 918-695-5289.

What is the Consumer Cost Adjustment?



The consumer cost adjustment (CCA) is a rate mechanism that helps East Central Electric (ECE) delay the need for dramatic rate increases by allowing the co-op to collect revenue when sales aren't sufficient to cover expenses.

The CCA fluctuates because it is determined by the previous month's electricity sales and is prorated on a member's usage.

“We don't want to over-collect, but we also don't want to operate in the red or jeopardize the quality of our services. The CCA lets us collect what we need when we need it to cover expenses,” said Tim Smith, ECE general manager.

When mild temperatures lower electricity sales beyond the budgeted amount needed to pay the co-op's fixed costs, the result is a calculated CCA on your next electric bill.

During extremely hot or cold weather when electricity sales cover the fixed costs, the CCA is not applied.

“The CCA is a small amount, usually less than one tenth of one cent per kilowatt-hour,” Smith explained.

While the impact on member's bills is minimal, it helps ECE avoid frequent rate increases based on unpredictable weather patterns.

“When it comes to setting rates, betting on what the weather will do is a big gamble,” Smith said. “The CCA removes the weather component and allows for more stable rates.”

To visit with an ECE billing representative about the CCA, please call 918-756-0833, or email info@ecoec.com.

BRIGHT LIGHTS BIG SAVINGS

ECE Lighting Rebate Helps Local Business Save Thousands On Lighting

Tye Wilks, manager of Pilot Travel Center in Muskogee, never dreamed she'd get a call that would change her place of business in such a positive way. But that's exactly what happened when East Central Electric (ECE) notified Wilks that the Travel Center would receive more than \$14,800 through ECE's business lighting rebate program.

The program is available to schools and businesses on co-op lines that replace ten or more lights with energy efficient LEDs. The travel hub applied for the rebate after replacing 295 lights with LED bulbs. Wilks said they plan to use the funds to continue making updates to their store.

According to the Department of Energy, LEDs use six to seven times less electricity and last 25 times longer than standard bulbs. They also burn brighter and generate less heat, which makes them safer to use.

The new lights at the Travel Center are expected to save the Travel Center more than \$8,000 on their annual electricity costs. The brighter LEDs also enhance the safety and security of their customers and employees around the clock.



Lowell Hobbs, president of the East Central Electric board of trustees, presents the business lighting rebate check to Tye Wilks, manager of Pilot Travel Center. PHOTO/ECE.

"The new lighting is so much brighter than what we used to have. We've received a large amount of feedback from truck drivers who feel more safe with the brighter lights," Wilks said.

Wilks, who lives on ECE lines near Oktaha, said the updates to the Travel Center have inspired her to try similar energy saving measures at home.

"I have been with East Central Electric for 10 years and it's exciting to be a part of this program. East Central Electric has always been there when I needed them, and they do such a wonderful job keeping on the lights." ❄️

To learn more about ECE's business lighting rebates and other energy-saving rebates, please call your co-op at **918-756-0833** to speak to a member service representative.

Attention!

Business Owners and Schools!

*Isn't it time
you made
the switch?*

East Central Electric's business lighting rebate pays you to save money. To qualify, you must

1. Be a member of East Central Electric Cooperative.
2. * Replace ten or more lights on your property with energy saving LEDs.

For more details, please call **918-756-0833**.



**Some restrictions may apply. Please check with ECE for details before purchasing LEDs.*

operation roundup

MONTHLY UPDATE



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at www.ecoec.com.

Applications reviewed.....	1,196
Applications granted.....	815
Applications denied.....	357
Applications tabled.....	12
Scholarships awarded.....	\$265,500
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Total Disbursements.....	\$1,977,438.96
Average member contribution.....	48¢



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Lights flickering? Often it means the fixture or the circuit has loose wires somewhere, or the bulb has come loose and there isn't a consistent flow of electricity. Tighten the bulb. If that doesn't fix it, call an electrician.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONALZ

RECIPES



Salisbury Steak

INGREDIENTS

1 (10.5 oz) can condensed French onion soup	1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 1/2 pounds ground beef	1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1/2 cup dry bread crumbs	1/4 cup ketchup
1 egg	1/4 cup water
1/4 teaspoon salt	1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
	1/2 teaspoon mustard powder

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, mix together 1/3 cup condensed French onion soup with ground beef, bread crumbs, egg, salt and black pepper. Shape into 6 oval patties.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, brown both sides of patties. Pour off excess fat.

In a small bowl, blend flour and remaining soup until smooth. Mix in ketchup, water, Worcestershire sauce and mustard powder. Pour over meat in skillet. Cover, and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Source: allrecipes.com



East Central
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Pay online at www.ecoec.com using SmartHub, or download the app.
- Pay by phone using VISA, Mastercard or Discover at **866-999-4584**. Available 24/7.
Convenience fee associated with payments.
- Pay with cash or credit/debit card at participating Moneygram or Pay Site locations.
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