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Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative

**SEDGWICK COUNTY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

currentnews

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FROM THE MANAGER

Affordable Electricity Powers Quality of Life



Scott Ayres

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, at almost all times. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything that is powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer "just the light bill."

Electricity Powers Quality of Life

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones and computers, and powering your TV and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. At home, in schools and business, and in commercial sectors such as transportation, the need for electricity is increasing.

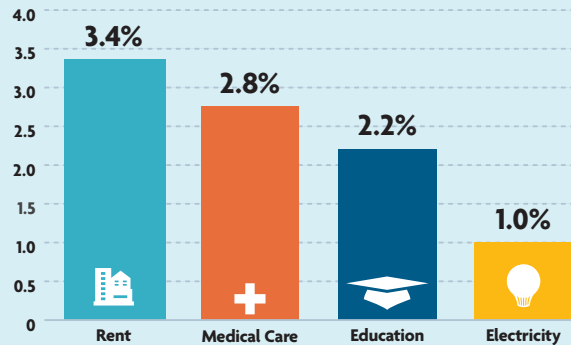
Typically, when demand goes up, so too does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity. Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses.

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!

Average Annual Price Increase 2015-2020

Percent



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

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Managing Rights-of-Way from Top to Bottom

There's more than one way to look at vegetation management. The work electric cooperatives and their contractors do to help keep electric lines and other equipment separated from plant overgrowth plays a major role in service reliability.

From mowing and brush work at ground level to tree trimming near or above power lines, Kansas electric co-ops regularly inspect and manage the landscape in and around their equipment. Doing so prevents outages, minimizes the threat of fire damage and maintains access and serviceability.

Utility providers, including electric cooperatives, have worked with local, state and federal foresters to develop integrated vegetation management practices aimed at reducing the need for chemicals, costly manual and mechanical control measures and controlled burning.

These techniques establish low-growing vegetation that out-compete taller-growing species, according to experts at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA worked with utility industry associations and other federal agencies to develop Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) practices.

An IVM approach can help create sustainable ecosystems such as a meadow transition habitat. The techniques, used for both roadside and cross-country rights-of-way, encourage the growth of native plant species and increase plant diversity. They also create or restore habitat for local and migrating wildlife, including insects, birds and mammals.

"Trees and other vegetation grow relentlessly," said Randall H. Miller, a vegetation management consultant, based in Des Moines, Iowa.

While weather conditions can affect seasonal activities related to right-of-way work and vegetation management, electric co-ops and other utilities regularly conduct maintenance to mitigate risks.

"Vegetation management that is deferred one year has to

be done in the future, and the cost accrues much faster than inflation," said Miller, who serves on the ROW Stewardship Council. "As biomass develops due to growth and trees encroach on, or even engulf power lines, they become increasingly more difficult and less safe to work."

While some of the work might be done with brush hogs, mowers and chain saws, electric co-ops also rely heavily upon planning, seeding and strategic plantings, often supported by their consumer-members and other stakeholders. Youth and community groups regularly work with co-ops on plans to enhance or adapt rights-of-way to support and sustain wildlife or provide forage and habitat for migratory species.

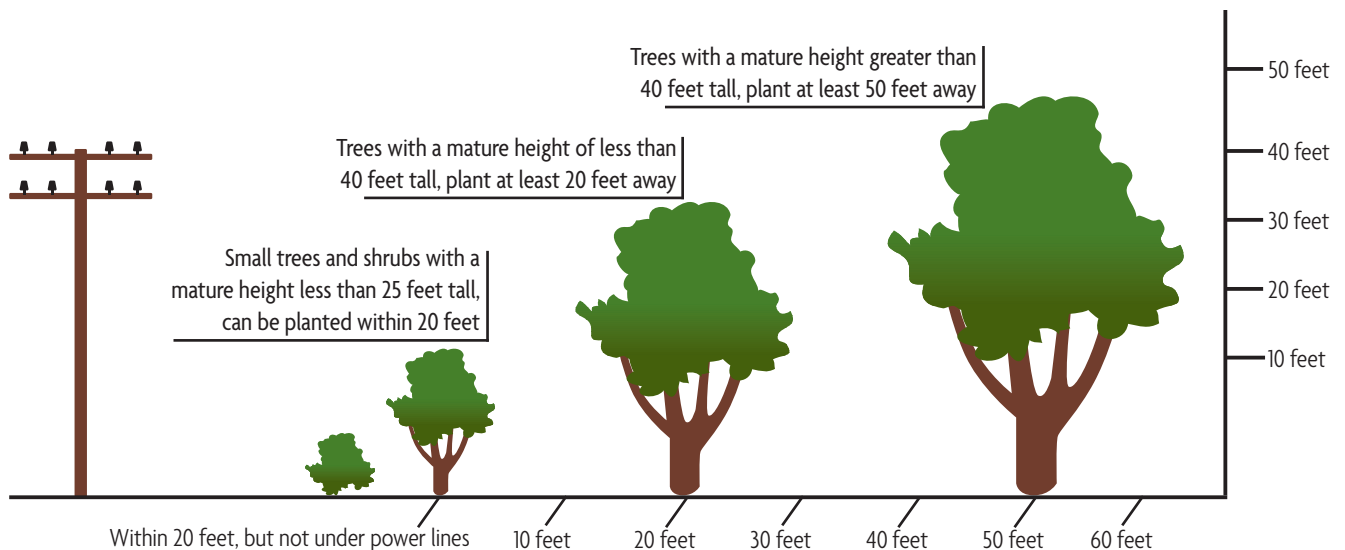
Kansas electric co-ops regularly share information and updates on local vegetation management efforts to keep the public safe and communicate how tree and plant growth trimming increases service reliability.

"Communication is indispensable to successful vegetation management programs," said Miller. "Stakeholders need to understand how vegetation management will benefit them, and that includes education on how a vegetation management program minimizes the risk of tree-caused power outages."

According to industry research, about 20-30% of all power outages are vegetation related. Removal of tall trees and limbs near power lines also reduces the risks of injuries caused by accidental contacts with energized power lines.

"It should include the concept of 'right tree, right place' and that there is no room for tall trees to develop under power lines," said Miller.

"Planting them there means those trees cannot be allowed to reach their full potential and will have to be either removed or, if retained, continually pruned to keep the clear of the conductors," Miller said.



Understanding Power Surges and Blinks

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade, or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts — this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers. Sedgwick County Electric Co-op encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line, tree branches touching a power line, or lightning and other similar events. In fact, when it comes to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme. In 2019 alone, squirrels were responsible for more than 1,200 outages.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault.

Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage. And you can help too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling 316-542-3131.



**Share
the Road**

KEC Brought to you by the electric cooperatives of Kansas.

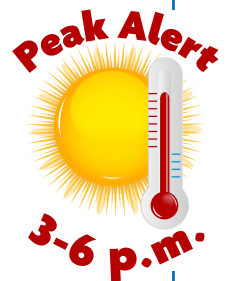
Help keep our linemen safe and remember to share the road. Move over when it is safe to do so and slowdown in designated work zones. Driving too fast or not moving over can endanger workers on the ground and lineworkers elevated in bucket trucks by causing the bucket to move or sway.

Help Your Electric Co-op Control Cost

Avoid Using Energy from 3-6 p.m.

August and September are the last two months of our load management season. It is still important to monitor your usage during peak times between 3 and 6 p.m. on days where the temperature reaches 95 degrees or more.

Please consider using major appliances, such as the washer and dryer in the morning or later in the evening. When preparing dinner, remember that slow cookers and other small appliances consume less electricity. Grilling on those hotter days is another way to reduce your electrical usage. Working together and using energy wisely will help to keep our costs down and the electric rates stable.



128 Kids Participate in Co-op Sponsored Pedal Tractor Pull



On July 10, 128 children participated in the pedal tractor pull with the top three winners in each age group qualifying to compete at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson on Sunday Sept. 12, 2021.

Sedgwick County Electric Co-op would like to thank everyone who watched or participated. We would also like to thank our prize sponsors, Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative, Killco Appliance and Border States Electric for their prize donations.

Pedal Pull Winners

4 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Keagan Kampling
- SECOND PLACE Zac Albers
- THIRD PLACE Josie Lehner

5 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Dierks Oller
- SECOND PLACE Ben Holder
- THIRD PLACE Locke Ewertz

6 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Calvin Stuhlsatz
- SECOND PLACE Addyson Benn
- THIRD PLACE Ryan Shafer

7 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Gabe Scott
- SECOND PLACE Hazel Weber
- THIRD PLACE Gavin Masterson

8 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Mikey Dickens
- SECOND PLACE McKynlie Benn
- THIRD PLACE Andrew Albers

9 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Jacob Dietz
- SECOND PLACE Quintin Wyant
- THIRD PLACE Quentin Meng

10 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Seth Schomacker
- SECOND PLACE Theo Casper
- THIRD PLACE Dylan Boyd

11 Year Old

- FIRST PLACE Alaina Smith
- SECOND PLACE Isaac Dietz
- THIRD PLACE Brian Williams



Affordable Electricity Continued from page 16A ►

Over the last five years, the cost of rent increased 3.4%, medical care increased 2.8%, and education increased 2.2%. But the cost of electricity only increased 1%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie,

consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

We care about you, the consumers we serve, and understand that electricity is more than a commodity — it's a necessity. That's why Sedgwick County Electric Co-op will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably.

