

CMS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# The Enlightener

**CMS ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

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**LIGHTBULB WINNERS**

Congratulations to this month's lightbulb winners:

- ▶ Bobby McMullen
- ▶ Michael Morris
- ▶ Mike McCarty
- ▶ Loyd Nightengale
- ▶ Ana Moore
- ▶ Wally Myers

Contact us today for your free lightbulbs!

**NONDISCRIMINATION**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Understanding Your Electric Bill

August is typically one of the warmest months of the year, and that means air conditioners across our community are working overtime to keep homes comfortable. During periods of extreme heat, many members may see an increase in their electric bills and wonder what factors contribute to the cost of electricity.

At CMS Electric, we believe understanding your electric bill is an important part of being an informed member. While the total amount due may seem like a single number, it actually reflects several different costs associated with delivering reliable electricity to your home or business.

The largest factor is often the amount of energy you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), and the more energy your household consumes, the higher your bill will be. During the summer, air conditioning is typically the largest driver of increased

energy use. When temperatures climb into the 90s or higher, our cooling systems run longer and more frequently, consuming significantly more electricity than they do during milder weather.

Another major factor is the cost of generating or purchasing electricity. Like many cooperatives, CMS Electric purchases power from Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo). The cost of producing electricity fluctuates based on fuel prices, including natural gas, coal and other energy resources used to generate power. Changes in wholesale power costs influence the price of electricity delivered to members.

Transmission costs also play a role. Before electricity reaches your home, it must travel across a network of high-voltage transmission lines that connect power plants to local distribution systems. Transmission equipment requires ongoing maintenance

*Continued on page 12B ▶*

**H A P P Y  
LABOR DAY** 

In observance of the holiday,  
our office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7.

## Understanding Your Electric Bill Continued from page 12A ►

and upgrades to ensure reliability, especially as electricity demand continues to grow.

Closer to home, CMS Electric maintains the local electric distribution system — utility poles, power lines, transformers, substations and other essential equipment that safely delivers power to members. Maintaining this equipment is covered through the monthly service charge. This is a flat monthly fee all members pay, regardless of how much electricity they use. This fixed fee ensures all members pay a fair share of the basic, operational costs required to keep the power grid reliable and ready to serve your home or business. Whether a member uses a little electricity or a lot, we must

maintain infrastructure and have crews, equipment, and resources available to provide electricity around the clock.

Summer temperatures can also influence costs in less obvious ways. When the demand for electricity is high across a region, wholesale power prices can increase. Utilities and grid operators must ensure enough generation is available to meet peak demand, and those costs can be reflected throughout the electric system.

The good news is that simple steps to lower energy use can make a meaningful difference. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher when you're away, replacing dirty HVAC filters, using ceiling fans, sealing air leaks, and avoiding the use of major appliances

during the hottest parts of the day can help reduce energy consumption, lower your bill, and reduce strain on the local grid during peak demand.

CMS Electric's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity while being transparent about the factors that impact energy costs. We understand every dollar matters, and we are committed to making smart investments that keep the lights on and support the communities we serve.

If you ever have questions about your electric bill or co-op programs designed to help you save, please reach out. We're here to help you make informed decisions that work for your household.

Thank you for allowing CMS Electric to serve you.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

August heat can push your air conditioner hard, making now a good time to check the air filter. A dirty filter restricts airflow, reduces efficiency and increases wear. Inspect it monthly during heavy use and replace it when dirty to help your system run better, improve indoor air quality and keep your home comfortable. SOURCE: NRECA

### DID YOU KNOW?



SOURCES: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION;  
NATIONAL RURAL UTILITIES COOPERATIVE FINANCE CORPORATION

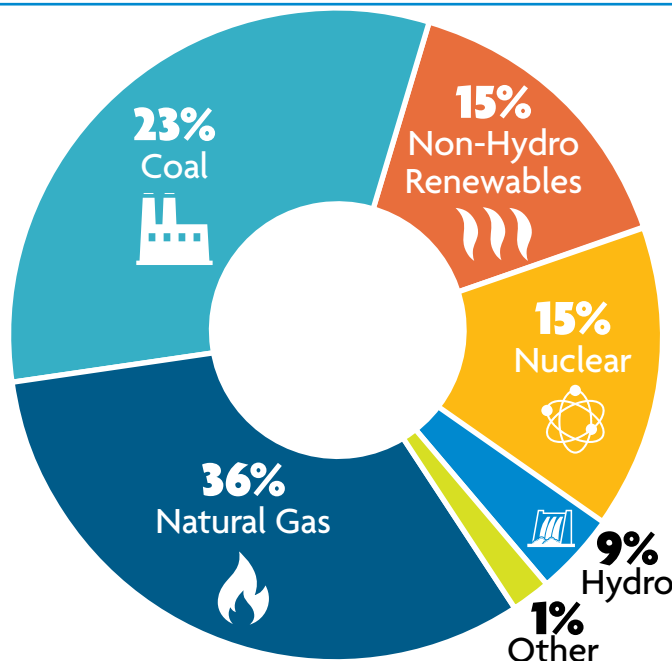
For every dollar you pay your electric co-op, **60% or more goes directly to wholesale power costs**. Bucket trucks, poles and wire, right-of-way trimming, payroll and other operating costs are covered by the rest.

## CO-OP ENERGY SOURCES

Nationally, electric cooperatives use a variety of fuels to power consumer-members' homes and businesses.

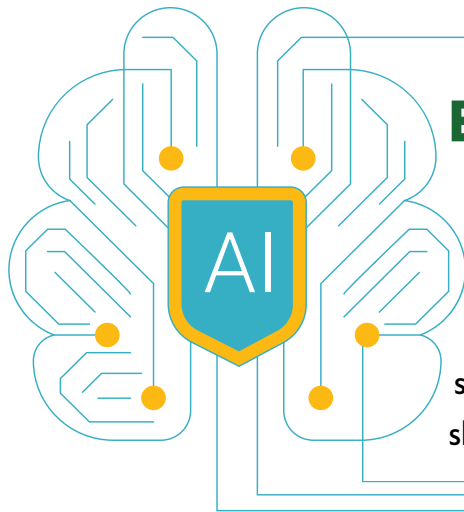
This diverse fuel mix supplies co-op members with the safe, reliable and affordable power they depend on.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION (2024 DATA)



Understanding your energy bill is key to managing household energy use and expenses. Your billing statement provides a summary of your electric service, including the amount of energy you used during the billing period, the rates that apply to your account, and the total amount due. By becoming familiar with the sections of your bill, you can better track energy usage, monitor changes from month to month, and make informed decisions about your energy consumption.

- ▶ **A. WHO DO I CALL IF I HAVE A QUESTION?** Call CMS at 620-873-2184 or stop by the office.
- ▶ **B. IMPORTANT MESSAGES:** Issues pertaining to you and your cooperative will be found in this area.
- ▶ **C. MONTHLY USAGE GRAPH:** Up to 12 months of history for each service.
- ▶ **D. BILL PAY OPTIONS:** Be sure to return the bottom portion of the bill with your payment.
  1. Mail your payment in the return envelope provided.
  2. Pay in person at one of our offices.
  3. Place your payment in the drop box at one of our offices.
  4. Pay by bank draft or recurring credit/debt card at [www.cmselectric.com](http://www.cmselectric.com).
  5. Pay by phone by calling 855-960-3064.
- ▶ **E. CUSTOMER NAME/ACCOUNT NUMBER:** Listed at the top followed by the statement date.
- ▶ **F. BILLING SUMMARY:** This section contains the beginning balance, payments, adjustments, current charges and the account balance.
- ▶ **G. WHAT HAVE I BEEN BILLED?** The details of the charges for this meter are shown here, along with total electric charge.
- ▶ **H. PAYMENT REMITTANCE STUB:** This stub should be sent in with your payment.
- ▶ **I. THE TOTAL AMOUNT DUE:** By 5 p.m. on the due date.



## Exploring AI's Potential for Improved Service and Reliability BY ABBY BERRY

Whether we welcome it or not, artificial intelligence seems inescapable. Even a quick Google search produces an AI-generated smorgasbord of results, rather than a simple list of links. AI is even shaping conversations about the future of energy.

While news headlines often focus on the rapid growth of AI, electric cooperatives are taking a measured approach to understanding how these tools might help improve service for the local communities they serve.

For CMS Electric, our goal is not to adopt AI technology simply because it's new. Instead, any tool or innovation must provide a clear benefit to our members, whether that's improving power reliability, increasing operational efficiency or helping our team make better-informed decisions. As we explore AI tools, we are doing so cautiously, evaluating where it can add value while maintaining a strong focus on member needs, privacy and system reliability.

One area where AI shows promise is electricity load forecasting. Electric demand changes throughout the day and fluctuates significantly during periods of extreme weather. Advanced forecasting tools can analyze historical data, weather patterns, and additional factors to help predict when electricity use is likely to increase. Better forecasts allow us to prepare for higher demand, manage resources more effectively, and support reliable service during peak periods.

AI tools are also being used to identify potential problems along the local grid before they lead to power outages. By analyzing information from automated meters and other equipment across the electric system, AI-powered tools can detect unusual patterns or anomalies that might otherwise go unnoticed. These early warnings could help our crews investigate issues sooner, potentially reducing the likelihood or duration of outages.

Maintaining power lines is another critical area where AI technology may offer benefits. Trees and overgrown

vegetation are one of the leading causes of power outages. Many electric utilities, including co-ops, are exploring image recognition tools that can help monitor vegetation growth near power lines more efficiently. Rather than replacing the expertise of our field crews, these tools can help identify parts of the system that need attention, allowing crews to prioritize work areas and make the best use of their time.

Beyond the electric system itself, AI could also improve day-to-day operations. For example, AI tools can assist office employees by summarizing lengthy reports, organizing member feedback and analyzing large amounts of data. These types of tools could help our team spend less time on repetitive administrative tasks and more time focusing on members and addressing our community's energy needs.

Even with these potential benefits, we recognize that AI is not a cure-all. Human oversight remains essential, and decisions that affect our members will never rely solely on automated systems.

As AI tools evolve, CMS Electric will continue exploring their potential. But as with any new technology, adoption will be guided by a simple principle: If an AI tool helps improve reliability, efficiency or services for our members, it's worth considering. If it doesn't, we will continue exploring solutions that do.

**ABBY BERRY** writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

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