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Members We Serve

BROWN-ATCHISON
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS



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FROM THE MANAGER

'Tis the Season

Everyone says it's the season to be jolly. But if you're not in a festive mood just yet, perhaps you will be after reading this newsletter. Since I'm sort of infamous for these — how about starting with some funny Christmas puns courtesy of *USA Today*?

"How many letters are in the Christmas alphabet? 25 — there's noel."

"What do sheep say at Christmas? Merry Christmas to ewe."

"How did Scrooge win the football game? The ghost of Christmas passed."

"How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born? They had a weigh in a manger."

Not smiling yet? OK — then how about this to make you jolly: a bill credit or check from Brown-Atchison Electric right before Christmas. Surely that is better than holiday fruitcake, no? This month, Brown-Atchison Electric is retiring a whole bunch of capital credits, and if you are reading this newsletter, you might be getting one.

Brown-Atchison Electric retires capital credits after 25 years or more — meaning capital is on a 25-30 year "rotation" and it takes 25 years or more to receive value (read "money") for the capital credits allocated. Brown-Atchison retires capital credits on a first-in first-out (FIFO) basis because many believe it to be the fairest way to return capital to members.

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Michael Volker

**In total — we
are retiring
about \$222,000
in capital credits
this December.**

**From our co-op family to yours, wishing you
a joyous holiday season and a peaceful new year!**

OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON DEC. 25, DEC. 26, AND JAN. 1.

GUARD AGAINST

Utility Service Scams, Fraud and Identity Theft

It is the world we live in today — the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer or respond to someone seeking information. No industry, person or business is off limits to scammers, who even try to con their way into the utility industry.

The Better Business Scam Tracker reports that victims usually lose \$274 in all types of scams and \$500 in a utility scam.

When it comes to power bills, scammers make threatening phone calls to consumers to demand immediate payment, or else their service will be shut off, they threaten. This deceiving claim is often made during the height of summer or winter, when people want to stay comfortable during the extreme heat or cold.

However, utilities typically send initial disconnection notices in writing.

Utility Scams: How They Get You

Scammers request that immediate payment be wired, loaded on a reloadable gift card or debit card or sent using cryptocurrency (a digital money system that does not rely on banks for verification). Only scammers request this type of payment and threaten immediate service disconnection. Do not provide any information (including your utility account number) or agree to immediate payment. Instead, hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your

power bill. Fake numbers and links can appear in emails and texts.

Utility bills that double the amount typically due may be a utility scam. Utilities are closely regulated and may not have the right to raise prices substantially without previous notice. Consumers should trust their gut reaction; if it seems like a fraud, it probably is.

Protect Personal Info

When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a Social Security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information. Additionally, do not give out sensitive information to anyone who calls you. Verify the phone number and call the utility directly to discuss any matter that would involve providing personal information. In general, some companies do have password-protected, secure methods to obtain personal information via an app or portal, but always verify this before using.

At Your Door

The famous song by Paul McCartney, titled “Let ‘Em In,” features the artist’s welcoming plea, “Someone’s knockin’ at the door; Someone’s ringin’ the bell ... Do me a favor; Open the door and let ‘em in,” but that is not great advice these days.

Door-to-door scams may involve impersonators of utility workers saying the meter is broken or offering to perform repairs or an energy audit — all



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at the consumer's cost. Your utility will contact you in advance, prior to arriving at your home for service or for any other reason. Do not let someone in the house without a pre-approved appointment.

Scams in General

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) warns that phishing emails and texts may attempt to convince individuals to make payments or provide personal information. Thieves use this stolen information to open accounts and pass charges on to the victim.

Caller ID Can Fib

Over the phone, calls appearing to be local are not always an accurate assessment of who is calling. AARP has a fraud watch network that provides alerts of new frauds; do an internet search for the fraud watch network to learn more.

Scams are Everywhere

Non-utility-related scams may include the announcement of an inheritance or pop-ups on a computer warning that technical support is needed. There are even puppy purchase cons when cute and often sought-after breeds are offered in all their puppy cuteness, but scammers take your money and run. There are student loan forgiveness scams and one-time password bot scams.

Hackers even prey on the many smartphone users who have cracked screens. It is called the "chip in the middle attack," and scammers get ahold of a screen replacement and install it on your phone with a spyware chip. Always verify a screen-fix-it phone number or take your phone to a store/servicer you trust. If the company cannot be verified by a search engine, do not trust it.

No matter the scam, the goal of the scammer is to gather personal information. Stay safe: Do not share Social Security numbers, account details, credit card numbers, bank information, death certificates or birth dates. Thieves can use this information to steal their victim's identity.

If you become a victim of a scam, report it to the local police and your bank. Consumers can protect themselves by blocking unknown callers and keeping software updated on phones and computers.

'Tis the Season Continued from page 12A

IN TOTAL — WE ARE RETIRING ABOUT \$222,000 IN CAPITAL CREDITS THIS DECEMBER. In addition, we have retired the estates of former members adding many thousands more to that total for 2023. That means returning the excess margins made by this cooperative to YOU — the owners.

Receiving the dollar benefits of retired capital credits is perhaps the most enjoyable part of being a member of an electric cooperative. More than anything else — it speaks to the cooperative advantage and of the principles under which Brown-Atchison Electric exists. In particular, Cooperative Principle No. 3 — Member Economic Participation. Under this principle, the members of the cooperative provide the capital or "equity" a cooperative must have to remain solvent and be able to attract capital on favorable terms. The electric utility industry is the most capital-intensive industry on earth and because of that, access to low-interest capital is critical to ensure the viability of the utility. This is what capital credits are, the retained margins the cooperative has made each year. Eventually, the capital credits are returned to the members or former members through a capital credits retirement. Retaining margins as capital credits and eventually retiring these capital credits is how capital is rotated by the cooperative.

At Brown-Atchison Electric, we are pleased to return some of the capital you have invested in your cooperative over the years — especially right before the holidays. Hopefully THAT will make you jolly!

From all of us at Brown-Atchison Electric, have a safe and happy holiday season, and: *"May your hearth be warm, your holidays grand, and your heart held gently in the good Lord's hand."* **AUTHOR UNKNOWN**

SAFETY TIP

Individuals attempting to steal copper from electrical equipment can lose their lives over what they believe to be "easy" money. If you see suspicious activity, contact your local electric cooperative.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.COM

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Get smart with a better way to heat and cool your home! Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and automatically adjust heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. Smart thermostats learn your temperature preferences and establish a schedule that adjusts to energy-saving settings when you're asleep or away. For maximum energy savings, look for smart thermostat models with the Energy Star® label.

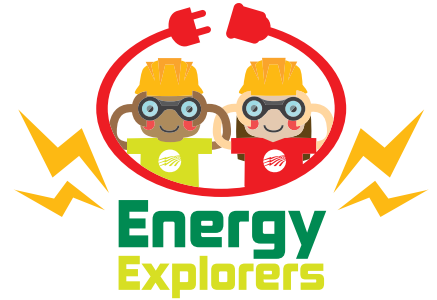
SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV



HOLIDAY EFFICIENCY WORD SEARCH

The holidays are a fun, festive time of year! With more people in our homes and more things to do, we typically use more electricity during the holiday season.

Read the holiday efficiency tips below, then find and circle the **bolded words** in the puzzle.



- ▶ Decorate your tree with energy-saving **LED lights**.
- ▶ Control home heating costs with a smart or programmable **thermostat**.
- ▶ Save energy by using a **timer** to turn off holiday lights when you're sleeping.
- ▶ If you have a **fireplace**, ask an adult to close the damper when a fire is not burning.
- ▶ Open blinds and curtains during the day to let **sunlight** in to warm your home.
- ▶ Lower the thermostat when you invite **friends** and **family** over. (The extra people in your home creates additional warmth.)