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FreeState
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

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Topeka, KS 66615

East & West District Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tip of the Month

When streaming online content, use the smallest device that makes sense for the number of people watching. Avoid streaming on game consoles, which use 10 times more power than streaming through a tablet or a laptop.

FROM THE CEO

Sometimes We Just Have to Ask

It's been a year and a half, and we've got an annual meeting under our belt as FreeState Electric Cooperative. So now what? The hard part is over, right? Well, not quite. The employees at FreeState are committed to continually improve our programs, service, and the way we serve our members.

We get questions every day, from service and programs to bill inquiries and new construction. Our member-facing staff field all sorts of questions each day. It's what we do. We are here to help, and we want each member to know that we are dedicated to answering your questions.

There are some questions, however, that we don't have the answers to like, "Are we doing a good job serving our members?" or "Is our membership satisfied with the programs and services we offer?"

We think we know the answers, but we know only our members can answer those questions for us. And, there's only one way we can find out. We just have to ask. So, we're asking our members the tough questions to find out what we are doing well, and what we need to adjust to ensure our members are getting the service they deserve.

FreeState is launching a biennial member survey starting April 25 through June 1. We are reaching out to random members in one of three ways. You may get a phone call from

Research Services, the company that is surveying on our behalf, you may get a survey in the mail to fill out and return, or you may get an email with a link to a digital survey. Each survey is the same, just delivered to members differently. The survey will ask questions about your satisfaction level with your service, and what we can do to continually improve.

This survey will help FreeState set a benchmark of service. We would appreciate your input and encourage you to be candid and forthcoming with your feedback. We'll also use the survey results to look at developing programs or services that will assist you in the future, as well as establish priorities.

Our board of trustees had directed us to consistently survey our members on a biennial basis. Every two years, you can expect a cooperative survey that will continually push us to evaluate how we're doing. FreeState members are our No. 1 priority, and there is no better way to get feedback than to go straight to the source. We hope you'll take the time to complete the survey if you are asked and we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at 800-794-1989 or email us at customerservice@freestate.coop.



Steve Foss



Above: Engineering Manager, Matt Magill, meets with Assistant General Manager, Randy Richards, to discuss strategy and projects. Below: Energy Use Coordinator, Matt Lambert, explains FreeState's solar panels and how renewable energy is generated.



Engineering Operations Technician Mark Raines tests meters to ensure reliability and accuracy.

We Are FreeState ENGINEERING

As a member-owner of FreeState Electric Co-op, your knowledge of and engagement with our co-op is our priority. In addition to helping you understand the services we offer, we believe it's important to also introduce you to those who provide you with safe, reliable, and efficient power. To that end, FreeState will be publishing a year-long monthly series that focuses on our departments and the employees who serve our members. Look for the articles in The Outlet, on our social media channels, and on our website www.freestate.coop, where we will feature exclusive web content. Our goal is to help you put faces and names behind those who work on the other end of the line because we are your neighbors who work for you every day.

FreeState Electric Cooperative is consistently working with our members in mind by providing safe and reliable service. While each cooperative employee can speak directly with members to meet their needs, our engineering department takes it a step further by providing quality service to our members face-to-face throughout their membership.

FreeState's engineering department comprises nine individuals who each have a role in providing reliable and safe service to our membership and work closely with the Operation's tree and line crews to ensure reliability. These tasks range from dispatching linemen for outages, mapping meter locations, maintaining substations, staking powerlines, and addressing high bill concerns and renewable resources to members face-to-face.



Above: Engineering Project Coordinator, Jim Holwick, dispatches linemen for outages. Below: Senior Systems Engineer, Eric Wylie, explains water heaters to members.



Engineering Manager

MATT MAGILL, the engineering manager for FreeState, heads the department and provides support to those in his department and assists as needed. He also creates strategies to provide the best service possible.

“The most important aspect of my position is becoming more knowledgeable with our service system and maintaining that familiarity,” Magill said. “Some members require more attention and some require less depending on the nature of their business or home, which is why it is vital to understand each member’s needs. It is vital in providing the best possible service we can to our members.”

Magill said his job primarily consists of overseeing his department and ensuring service orders and jobs are completed as safely and efficiently as possible.

Engineering Assistant

FreeState’s engineering assistant **PAULA SPREER** said working for a cooperative is important because she knows she is working with our members in every-

thing she does day-to-day to ensure they receive safe and reliable power.

“As a cooperative, we are member-owned, which means it is our job to serve our members and our goal to provide the best possible service,” Spreer said.

Spreer’s responsibilities include dispatching line crews for outages, signing out materials for projects, keeping the maps up to date, and assisting Magill with projects.

Staking Engineer

For members adding a new service or construction, our staking engineers will be the first point of contact. Meeting directly with members, **LOREN GOSS** and **GARY WILLITS**, design work orders for new construction, power line rebuilds, or pole replacements by staking, or mapping out, to indicate where linemen should place poles and give cost estimates prior to the work.

“My job is to personally meet with our members to give them the best possible service and accurate design for whatever their needs may be,” Goss said. “Without our members we wouldn’t be in the position we are and I am proud to be able to work for them.”

Staking engineers are also responsible for the Dig Safe program to ensure members dig safely on property projects, submitting forms to the Kansas Corporation Commission for new line to be approved, and notifying other utility companies so everyone involved is aware.

“I always do my best to lookout for the company and our members because it is my community,” Willits said. “My grandparents lived on this system and others I have strong ties with so I try to do what is best and with the members top of mind.”

Engineering Project Coordinator

As the engineering project coordinator,

JIM HOLWICK is responsible for keeping maps on the East District updated on the iPads, as well as meter and transformer installations. He also assists linemen working at Fort Leavenworth. Similar to Spreer’s position, Holwick also assists the operations department with FreeState’s outage program and dispatches linemen to restore power.

“I have to work closely with the operations department and management to come up with work plans and efficient systems for FreeState,” Holwick said.

“I also split my time between the East District office and Fort Leavenworth to ensure I am doing my part in providing reliable service to all FreeState members.”

Holwick is also responsible for keeping an inventory of assets and materials and connectivity on the linemen’s iPads to ensure their safety while completing service orders.

Engineering Operations Technician

When gathering information on how much energy members are using, the metering system FreeState relies upon is vital. **MARK RAINES**, FreeState’s engineering operations technician, is primarily responsible for the metering system and ensuring its accuracy.

“My job with checking meters on our systems is important to providing service to our members because the meters read the kilowatt usage in each home, which is then, reported back to FreeState to bill

the member for monthly payments,” Raines said. “Although having a faulty meter is rare, we take care in checking all of our meters are reading properly—especially if a member

has a high bill concern.”

Raines is also responsible for inspecting substations, troubleshooting, and installing new controls.

Energy Use Coordinator

While the majority of the engineering department focuses on the technical

The most important aspect of my position is becoming more knowledgeable with our service system and maintaining that familiarity.

MATT MAGILL, ENGINEERING MANAGER

aspect of maintaining FreeState's systems and technology, one position was created specifically to help bridge the gap between our cooperative and our members. **MATT LAMBERT**, FreeState's energy use coordinator, works one-on-one with members on high bill concerns, efficient energy use, youth education on electrical safety, and renewable energy systems.

"My position is one that was created so that FreeState could send someone out directly to assist our members at their homes with programs and benefits that not only had experience with customer service, but a background in energy usage as well," Lambert said. "I work hard to do whatever I can to help our members with any concerns they may have in regards to their energy usage."

Lambert focuses on the needs of members and provides solutions.

Field Technician

Like many employees in the engineering department, the field technician is one of many trades. **FRANK ORTEGA** splits his time between being in the field locating underground power lines and being in the office programming meters for meter installation.

Ortega's position plays an important role in keeping linemen safe through locating underground power lines. Since underground wires cannot be seen, Ortega takes a locator device to find where they are located, so that linemen can dig safely and avoid hitting an underground wire.

"I like working for the cooperative because I am challenged every day. Problems may arise that you have to solve," Ortega said. "The weather is consistently changing, and I am never doing the same exact thing."

Senior Systems Engineer

Senior systems engineer **ERIC WYLIE** is responsible for overseeing the installations of distributed generation, maintaining the metering systems installed, and planning for future load growth to ensure adequate capacity for members.

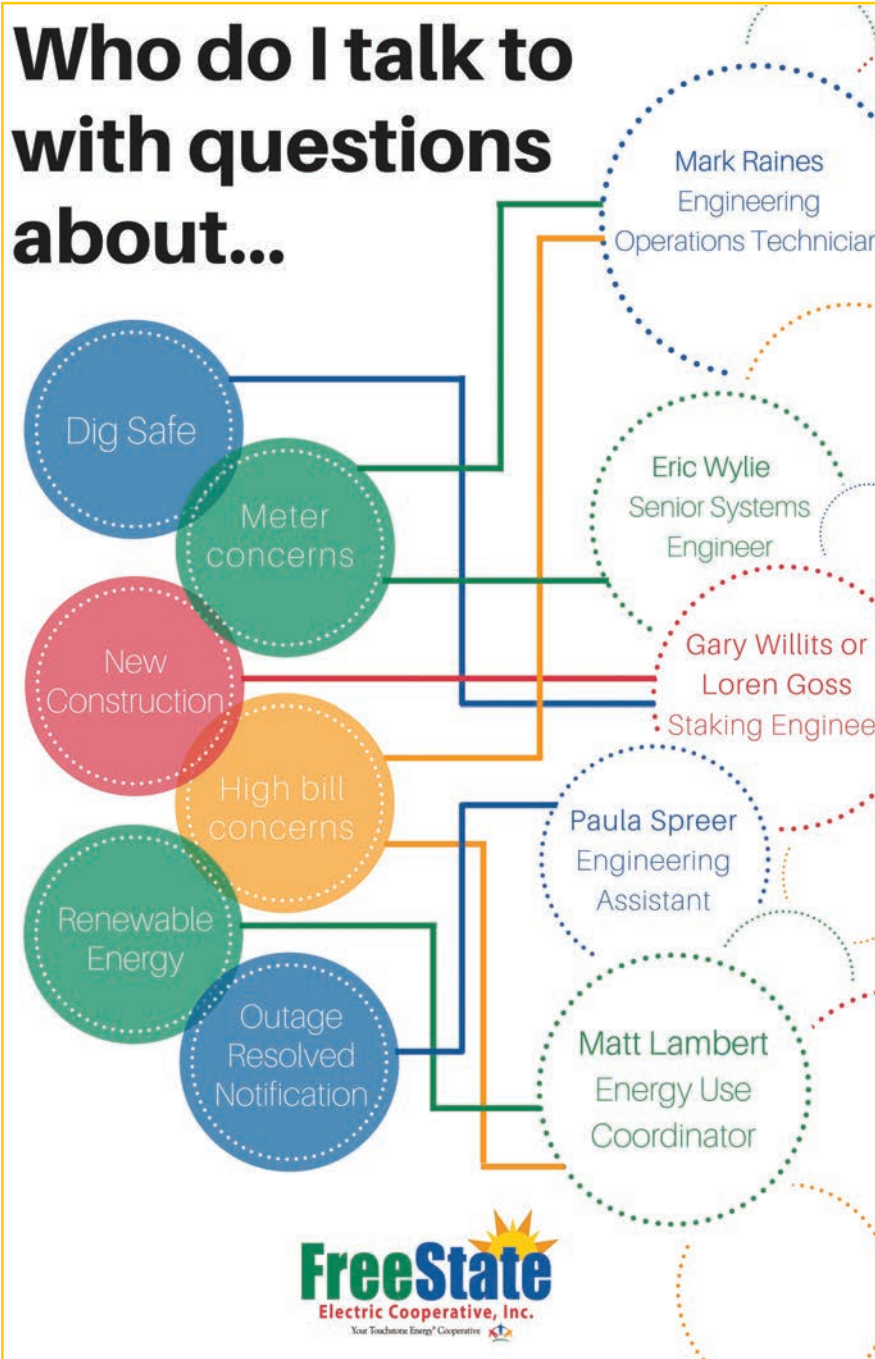
"Overseeing the metering systems and performing load flow analysis regularly helps us make sure our members have

enough voltage to power their homes and businesses," Wylie said. "Whether we are in a position where we meet with members one-on-one or not, no decision is made without asking ourselves 'how does this affect the members now and in the future?'"

Wylie said he enjoys working for the cooperative because it allows him to use his strengths in systems technology while seeing his efforts serve members.

FreeState is proud to serve our members to provide the power and service they deserve. If you have any questions regarding this article or the benefits offered through our engineering department, call us at 800-794-1989 or e-mail us at customerservice@freestate.coop.

For more in-depth and exclusive content on our engineering department visit our website at www.freestate.coop/WeAreFEC.



Federal Taxation Bill Explained For Members

As the Kansas Legislature was working toward adjournment, a number of political headlines were made regarding utility rates and taxes.

When the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was signed into law on Dec. 22, 2017, there was an almost immediate focus across the country on lower income tax rates for utilities. Kansas has been no different with political and regulatory leaders immediately calling for the savings to be passed on to ratepayers.

While action was swift to make headlines, affected utilities already had a precedent from the 1986 Tax Reform Act to return those savings. The impact of the reduction in federal tax rates from 35 to 21 percent is projected to cut Westar's tax bill by at least \$65 million. KCP&L has indicated approximately \$35 million in savings could be allocated to Kansas customers. While a refund isn't in question, some in the Legislature have expressed frustration that the return may be bundled with other rate adjustments and/or won't occur until later this year.

Will My Co-op Be Affected by the Tax Law?

The impact on FreeState Electric Cooperative is much different. Like most of the 30 electric co-op entities headquartered in Kansas, we are IRS tax exempt entities and therefore have no federal income tax liability. Co-op members won't receive a tax-related refund because there is no federal income tax expense included in your electric rate.

Your electric co-op operates as a not-for-profit entity and rates are designed to recover the cost of operation. We do not have stockholders demanding a return on investment. We have member-owners who elect directors to determine the co-op's course. Changes to our cost of operation from generation and transmission, vendors, regulatory agencies, and property and income taxes are reflected in rates set by members rather than the Legislature or the Kansas Corporation Commission.

This regulatory framework fits two of the seven important cooperative principles – democratic member control and member economic participation – and helps FreeState meet its mission to deliver affordable and reliable electric service.

Proper Tree Trimming

Trees provide curb appeal, shade and a space for kids to play. However, when trees grow and interfere with power lines, they become safety hazards and are common causes for utility outages.

Out of the millions of miles of electric lines distributing power, there are many trees growing into lines that require trimming. Usually, it's because a tree was planted under, or too close, to the line. It is crucial trees stay a safe distance from powerlines and are properly pruned.

Only trained professionals should trim trees near power lines. Trees growing in utility right of ways are maintained by the electric utility, while trees growing into power lines on private property are the responsibility of the owner.

Most tree care workers are not qualified to work around energized power lines. According to the Utility Arborist Association (UAA), utility line clearance professionals who meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) qualifications are the only ones permitted to work within 10 feet of lines or on a tree with branches within 10 feet of a line.

Trees are cut at the growth points for tree health. Some require directional pruning to keep them from growing back into lines. Trees directly underneath may be pruned in a "V" or "U" shape with lines passing through the opening in the mid-

When trees grow and interfere with powerlines, they become safety hazards and are common causes for utility outages.

dle. Trees growing alongside a power line may be pruned in an "L" shape or may need one side removed. While the shape may change, trees are pruned to maintain health while increasing the safety and reliability of the power lines.

Often, pruning a tree solves the safety and reliability concern, but in some cases the tree must be removed. Those include tall or fast growing species that are directly under power lines, large previously topped trees under the power lines, saplings with potential to grow in or around lines, and hazardous trees that may be leaning, cracked, or split.

Property owners may choose to replace a problem tree with a new one. There are many varieties of shorter-growing trees that provide beauty and shade that won't grow to interfere with powerlines. A local tree nursery can help with selecting trees for landscaping around power lines and electrical equipment.

For more information, visit www.freestate.coop.



Tree Trimmer Dan Mehrhoff trims trees to prevent further growth into power lines.

2018 Youth Program Winners Selected

Congratulations to FreeState Electric Cooperative's 2018 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp winners! This year, applicants were asked to write an essay about the cooperative difference and why electric cooperatives matter.

The youth representing FreeState in Washington, D.C., are **ADAM DEMARANVILLE** and **BRAXTON SHUPE**. Representing FreeState in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, are **BLAKE PHILLIPS**, and **LAURA HESKETT**. Read excerpts of each winner's essay submitted in their application below.

As part of our cooperative commitment to education and our communities, FreeState participates

in these annual youth programs. Each summer, high school juniors throughout FreeState's territory with a parent or legal guardian who is a member are eligible to apply through an essay competition. These all-expense-paid trips are awarded to four youth, two of whom will travel to Washington, D.C., and two of whom will travel to Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Electric Cooperative Youth Tour

DeMaranville and Schupe will begin their trip by meeting approximately 37 other delegates from across Kansas and Hawaii. Before departing from Topeka, FreeState will host the youth for breakfast,



ADAM DEMARANVILLE
TONGANOXIE HIGH SCHOOL

There are many other principles that the co-op exhibits including honesty in which business is done in an honorable manner, aiming to advance the common good for all, continuous education of members to have the ability to make informed decisions about the co-op and general cooperation

to serve the best interests of their members. Being so transparent allows for understanding and trust. As a member, you know that you are being treated with respect and because of this, the relationship you establish with your co-op has longevity. This, in turn, offers comfort knowing you can look to the future with peace of mind.

Another important aspect to the co-op family is their desire to share their vision internationally. Electricity has become a common staple in modern society and sometimes we forget that there are still areas of the world that suffer due to lack of access to it. Because of this, things such as health care, proper food storage and preparation, clean water, education and numerous other issues plague these people and impact their quality of life. However, NRECA has worked diligently to bring electricity to more than 120 million people in 43 developing countries. The forward thinking and compassion for others exemplifies why co-ops have been so successful throughout the years.

As you can see, our co-op is so much more than just a place to get electricity. Through adversity they have faced many challenges to be able to serve you and rural areas. Being a member of a co-op empowers you to take an active role. You may be just one member, but you can join with so many other co-op family members to collectively make the future of rural electric strong and vibrant with the ability to serve generations to come.



BRAXTON SHUPE
TONGANOXIE HIGH SCHOOL

There are many reasons why electric cooperatives matter, but the most important reason is because cooperative members are not just customers—they are partners. When you partner through an organization it means that you work together for the betterment of everyone. That working relationship

is key to providing effective electric resources.

Working together is what co-op members do. Members of cooperatives can vote, elect board members, and help participate in policy-making processes. Through this working relationship, co-ops do not just place an emphasis on making a profit They invest in their members and their service needs.

The need for rural electric co-ops began in the 1930s when residents needed affordable electricity. Co-ops answered that call and have been effectively serving rural customers ever since. Today it is difficult for us to imagine a world without electricity. It is hard to imagine lighting our home with kerosene lamps, reading by candlelight, or cooking our food on a wood stove. Our need for electricity to power our televisions, computers, and phones is extremely important to our daily lives. With a small flip of a switch, our homes are lit and within a few minutes our phones are charged. Many times, we use electricity without thinking about where it comes from and the manpower it takes to make it possible.

As a co-op member, you have a vested interest in the well-being of the organization. As a member, you play a primary role in the future of the co-op. Everyone must work together to make the co-op successful. You have a say in the future of electric energy. The answer to the most important question: Why do co-ops matter? The co-op system is established so that each member matters. That's why co-ops matter.

safety demonstrations, and bucket truck rides.

Youth will then travel to our nation's capital to explore the city and the history of our nation through museums, monuments, memorials, and meetings with state senators. More than 1,800 youth from across the country will attend this year's Youth Tour June 7 through 14. This experience is an opportunity of a lifetime full of opportunities.

Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

Phillips and Heskett will join nearly 100 other youth from Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Wyoming in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, for a week long camp featuring activities demonstrating the cooperative business module and leadership skills through daily "membership" meetings where the youth elect established committees, a general manager, and a board of directors. Campers will also visit the Trapper Mine and Craig Power Plant.

Among the learning opportunities, the youth will also experience white-water rafting, a volley-

ball tournament, a talent show, swimming, and a high voltage safety demonstration presented by the Yampa Valley Electric linemen. This year's camp will take place July 13 through 19.

FreeState continues to be a participating cooperative in these annual programs, hosted by our statewide association, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., to promote and build on local youth's leadership, growth, and education on cooperatives, electricity, politics, and history. Throughout the years, many Youth Tour and Camp alumni have reiterated the impact their personal experiences with these programs had on their involvement and current careers.

Through the assistance of our members, FreeState is able to continue sponsoring youth each year. Applications are open to all high school juniors with a parent or guardian who is a FreeState member.

To read more about our winner's experiences, check out our features in future *Kansas Country Living* issues and at www.freestate.coop/youth.



BLAKE PHILLIPS
TONGANOXIE HIGH SCHOOL

Electric co-ops are democratically based which means members are elected as representatives to make decisions on behalf of the co-op; the fact any member can become a representative of their co-op means members have an extraordinary amount of power in decisions. Unfortunately, ac-

ording to a national study by the Democratic Energy Initiative, 72 percent of electric co-ops have less than 10 percent voter turnout at elections. Just as in political elections, voting within an electric co-op ensures members' voices are heard on decisions that impact them. Members should utilize the power of their membership to elect representatives they think will best represent their co-op and put members first.

When paying for electricity, any money first goes to running the co-op so that all members receive quality service. However, if there is any surplus in the amount of money acquired by the co-op, that money goes into further developing the co-op to better serve its members or goes back into the pockets of the members in the form of capital credits. Having a member-owned co-op ensures no money is wasted, and all is used to benefit the members first.

Unfortunately, many members of electric co-ops do not know about the advantages that accompany their membership. Electric co-ops, like FreeState, are member-owned organizations that are democratically run to benefit their members. Cooperation among members is essential for both co-op and community to flourish. While some will continue to only have the "pay and receive" relationship with FreeState, members should investigate the power of their membership and the benefits that come with it. Electric co-ops are more than organizations providing electricity; they provide a crucial service and empower communities to prosper.



LAURA HESKETT
TONGANOXIE HIGH SCHOOL

Electric cooperatives are designed to serve and be governed by its members to bring the rural communities in which they operate both reliable power, and a sense of ownership within their community. Annual meetings are held for all of the members to vote on board positions and other business

strategies, and they are running democratically to ensure that all members get a vote in the development of their business. Electric cooperatives were started to give rural citizens easy and affordable access to power, and use the policy of voluntary, open membership allowing anyone into the cooperative regardless of race, religion, or gender.

When you start paying for your electric bill, you invest in the cooperative. That money then goes toward cooperative expenses, a little is set aside for emergencies, and the rest that is leftover goes back to the members in the form of capital credits. Members of the Board of Trustees, which consists of our local leaders, help to ensure that the members of FreeState communities are getting the best possible service for their area.

By bringing power to thousands of rural citizens, and providing numerous opportunities for its members, FreeState has established itself as essential part of the communities in Northeast Kansas. They continually show this by: having employees that are local Kansans who help directly lead the cooperative to ensure the best service towards its members; giving back to students through youth programs like Youth Tour, and creating the FreeState Community Foundation, which helps to benefit the surrounding community with Operation Round-Up; keeping the lights on and providing members with money and power saving ideas through sponsoring the *Kansas Country Living* magazine; and capital credits.

Surveying to Understand Members' Needs

FreeState Electric Cooperative is conducting a member survey that kicked off on April 25, 2018. The purpose of this survey is to better understand the needs of our member-owners and how FreeState can further meet your needs. This survey will consist of questions regarding your service, your experiences with FreeState, and how FreeState communicates with our members.

The survey is brief and should only take members about five to 10 minutes to complete via phone or email, and the written survey should not take more than 20 minutes. Members have been chosen randomly and have a chance to participate in one of three ways.

► MAIL-IN SURVEY

Selected members can expect to find a survey in their mailbox by May 1. These can be filled out and returned in the envelope provided.

► PHONE SURVEY

Research services will directly contact selected members on behalf of FreeState Electric Cooperative.

► ONLINE SURVEY

A survey link will be emailed to select members directly from FreeState Electric Cooperative. The link will direct members to participate in the independent, third-party survey online.

Participation in the member survey is completely voluntary and all of your responses will be gathered by our third-party vendor, Research Services. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses.

The FreeState Board of Directors has approved this survey. Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact the cooperative at 800-794-1989.

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Feedback from our members is very important to us.

Change Habits to Beat the Peak

As warmer weather sets in, our thoughts on keeping the house comfortable switch from heating to cooling. As temperatures rise and air conditioners are switched on, ways to improve energy efficiency at home can help you reduce demand, saving energy and money.

Making small adjustments in when, where and how you use electricity will help control your energy costs, and it can also help keep temperatures in your home more pleasant on sultry days.

Love 78

Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system or heat pump can play a large part in controlling your energy use year-round.

Most people are not sensitive enough to notice much of a difference in air temperature whether the thermostat is set at 73 or raised to 78. The closer your air conditioner or heat pump setting is to the outdoor temperature, the less your unit will run.

Each degree of temperature difference represents a percentage of the total cooling load, meaning when temperatures are in the high 80s, you could reduce your cooling demand by 10 to 15 percent for each degree above 75 degrees.

Fans offer an economical alternative to air conditioning on mild days. At lower settings, a little air blowing across a room helps to bring down humidity levels.

Central air conditioning can use as much as one kwh of electricity for each 12-minute cycle of cooling. A ceiling fan can operate for about 13 hours on the same amount of electricity. However, turn off fans when you leave a room, because they cool people, not space.

Kitchen comfort

When it comes to heat and humidity, changing kitchen activities present opportunities to reduce your household energy demand throughout the day.

All the things that make the kitchen a favorite gathering place in winter can help send your electric meter into overdrive



Full loads mean fewer cycles, and washers and dryers running in the late evenings add less heat to the home. Energy can cost less outside of peak hours of 3 to 6 p.m..

from late spring through early fall.

Appliances on your countertops or stashed in your pantry could keep you cooler and use less energy. Microwaves use about 60 percent as much energy as full-size ovens, and a toaster oven or induction cooker consumes about half as much power.

Share the space

Today, it is common for everyone to retreat to separate spaces, turn on their electronics, adjust their ceiling fans or window unit air conditioners and close their doors to cocoon in their own environments.

Getting control of your energy use to reduce your home's overall demand can be really challenging when you consider the entire home, so bring back family time to beat the peak.

LCD televisions generally use 60 percent as much electricity as comparably sized plasma models. One laptop uses about 20 percent as much power as a desktop computer and today's home assistant devices can play music using about 17 percent of the energy on a component stereo system.

Energy-efficient LED fixtures, a couple sets of headphones, and a few rechargeable power boosters for the family's handheld devices and you have a cool and fun place to share with the family.