



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Board of Trustees

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Overbrook

Mark Gratny
Leavenworth

Dallas Caster
Auburn

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Delia

Jeanine Murphy
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Matthew Turecek
Valley Falls

Mark Wulfkuhle
Berryton

Harlan Hunt
Meriden

Staff

Steve Foss
Chief Executive Officer

Christopher Parr
Assistant General Manager

Randy Richards
Assistant General Manager

District Offices

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Topeka Office
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Topeka, KS 66615

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tip of the Month

Spring is nearly here! Now is the perfect time to test your A/C and ensure it's ready for summer. Remember to check the evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually for optimal efficiency. Source: energy.gov

FROM THE CEO

Shaping the Future Board of Trustees

We have arrived at what we at the cooperative like to call annual meeting season. We are preparing to report the financial health of the cooperative, elect trustees, and come together to celebrate another successful year at our upcoming annual meeting. One of the first items of planning is our trustee election.

As part of a cooperative, the trustees guide the business on your behalf. Each month, they examine challenges facing the industry and determine how issues will impact members, including themselves. The decisions made in the board room will determine rates, work plans, and programs. Trustees have a great responsibility, and it requires them to be committed to our members and the communities we serve, taking great care in every decision.

Beginning June 2019, FreeState will move forward with nine trustees.

This decision was made diligently by our board. This year, **DALLAS CASTER** will retire from the board and the term of Mark Gratny—who was completing the term fulfillment for the late Larry Meadows—will end. These two positions will not be filled. The board also considered best practices for cooperatives of this size from across the country. The trustees studied the National Rural Electric Association's assessment and determined that nine trustees

moving forward was in the best interest of the cooperative.

Each year, a nominating committee assists members in finding a pool

of applicants who are up to the task of serving as trustees. The committee members recruit as best they can, but some years there just isn't any interest in running for the board. I can tell you that our committee takes recruitment of trustees seriously, and they work hard to get at least two candidates for each position. But there are some years where that just isn't possible. This was one of those years.

On Feb. 4, the nominating committee gathered to determine the 2019 slate. On Page 16G, you'll find that information.

You can expect your ballots to be delivered the first week of April. The timing of this publication allows us to introduce the candidates to you this month and provide more information next month that will help you decide when it comes to voting for your representation.

As always, if you have questions about this content contact us at **800-794-1989** or **CUSTOMERSERVICE@FREESTATE.COOP**.



Steve Foss

CO-OP OPERATION

New Technology

FreeState Invests in Mobile WorkForce for Efficiency

New technology at FreeState Electric Cooperative is necessary to stay ahead of an evolving industry while working to keep costs down and rates stable.

In 2017, newly consolidated FreeState decided to adopt a Mobile WorkForce that implemented new technology by replacing paper with mobile communication.

Investing in Technology

Before consolidation in 2017, both cooperatives utilized the same system provider—National Information Systems Cooperative (NISC). The consolidation allowed FreeState to merge the two systems into one.

“Two years ago when we got everything together we knew that new technology was going to be available,” said **RANDY RICHARDS**, assistant general manager. “We were able to leverage our position with NISC to test a few of their new products and services, and we took advantage of that.”

“We were also able to cut costs by going to one system or enterprise that would serve the cooperative,” added Richards.

“We worked closely with NISC not only on the operations side but the member services side as well with our billing components and service orders.”

FreeState’s line superintendents and member account coordinators use SmartTracks software to manage tasks, crews, and construction projects by scheduling and assigning work. The second component to Mobile WorkForce is AppSuite that puts the entire FreeState system onto iPads and mobile phones given to crews. Each truck has a mobile device assigned to it.

“It wasn’t just investing in the system,” said Richards, who added that the board of trustees ultimately decided to move forward with implementing new technology for the co-op workforce. “We had to invest in mobile devices, data centers, and training.”

“This technology gives us a leg up,” said Richards. “It allows us to increase accuracy, communication, and efficiency which all goes back to saving money and providing the best service possible.”

FreeState’s mobile workforce has two significant components that assist with the daily operations.

AppSuite Improves Efficiency

FreeState’s adoption of new technologies allows all employees to track and report quickly and efficiently. In the past, the co-op managed with a paper and pencil from the field, but AppSuite allows us to replace the paper with iPads to manage all work from the field or in the office.

Office staff can delegate service orders efficiently, and crews in the field can quickly view, make notes, and complete tasks right from the job site and information is transmitted in seconds back to the office.

“The ability to dispatch a truck this quickly has given us improved response times,” said **ZACH STERLING**, operations manager. “Our line superintendents or member account coordinators can speak to a member, gather information, and pass that along through our entire system, and the ability to share specific information is valuable.”

Sterling says that notes from office staff while on the phone with members can make all the difference when a line crew gets a service order.

“For example, if a member tells the office or dispatcher that there may be a safety issue like trees or wire on the ground



Journeyman Nolan Lewis (left) and apprentice Grant Walker (right) go over the day’s tasks on the iPad before heading out for the day.

then we can make a note of that and when our crew pulls up that service order – it's there," Sterling added. "That information can then be included in any prework safety briefings done and shared with any crew that is there for that job."

The system also documents right to a member's account. Crews can add notes and photos can be attached to a specific location or account. Field notes like these can help assist in troubleshooting and improving communication between crews who may visit a location more than once.

"If our crews see a specific issue that is not typical they can document that using their iPad," Sterling said. "They can snap a photo, scan a meter code, or type in specific notes that may help the next crew that works at that location."

Mobile WorkForce also helps staff communicate with members.

"Providing member and media updates in the event of a large outage is easier by accessing our workflow system," said **SARAH FARLEE**, PR and marketing specialist. "I can easily log on and take a look at a specific job or outage to help communicate where our crews are, and what kind of priorities we're dealing with."

Farlee added that although the system isn't always able to provide intricate details of a job, it does give her an idea of crew location and how long they've been there.

"Members want to know if we have someone on the way to an outage, or if we anticipate a long wait if we have multiple outages," Farlee said. "This helps me answer some of those questions. I can see which crews are out and follow progress by tracking service order movement through the mobile system. I can take the information I gather from my mobile device and pair it with field updates from crews to help provide the most up-to-date and accurate information possible."

Each crew has a number and mobile device with them when they are on duty that allows task management, schedule work, and prioritization.

"We're able to prioritize jobs and sort what work we have tasked out," said Sterling. "If we need to rearrange our crews we can do that using this mobile workforce."

SmartTrack Manages Work & Tasks

SmartTrack is a unique component of FreeState's system that allows our operations staff to manage and schedule service orders for our crews in the field.

SmartTrack provides FreeState with the ability to:

- ▶ Monitor and balance "assigned" work to individual staff.
- ▶ Monitor "completed" work.
- ▶ Monitor "follow up" tasks or messages from field personnel.
- ▶ Monitor "follow up" tasks built into service order workflows.
- ▶ Schedule daily activities for "crews."
- ▶ Schedule individual members of the field staff.
- ▶ Inquiry into the Operations Schedule to see crew and field personnel assignments for any given day.

"The SmartTrack system does improve our efficiency," said Sterling. "It allows for instant communication from the field to the office and vice-versa."

"The management portion allows us to look at the entire workforce and manage service orders, crews, and resources," Sterling added.

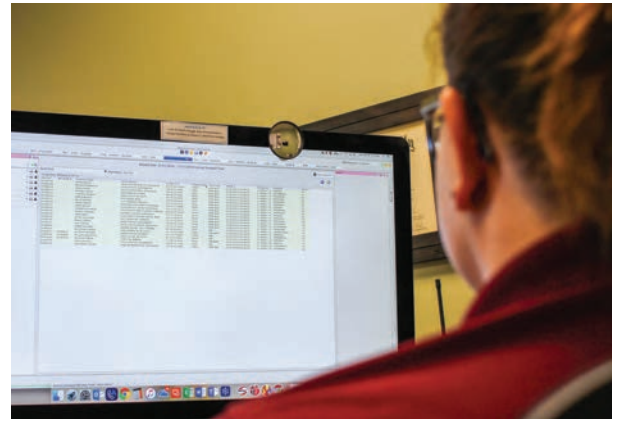
Educating Employees

The idea of Mobile WorkForce was somewhat mind-blowing for veteran linemen, but the ability to use the iPad has been an easy sell to some of the veterans.

"At first it was a challenge," said **RON FORSHEE**, Fort Leavenworth line superintendent. "But now, it's pretty slick."

Forshee, stationed at the outpost at Fort Leavenworth, said the system gives him the ability to communicate easier.

"It shows us which crew guys are on or off and allows us to easily assign work to the guys when something comes in that



Amanda Holloway, member accounts coordinator, can push service orders out from the office and assign them to a specific line crew with the click of a mouse. She can also track the status of service orders and manage her workload with ease.

wasn't previously on the schedule that might be a priority," Forshee added. "The scheduling aspect really has improved and with a couple of clicks or taps, I can have all my tasks out to the crew in moments, or I can request assistance from our engineering staff."

The communication aspect of showing a calendar has been helpful for the office staff taking calls and assigning work. Amanda Holloway, member accounts coordinator, says assigning work after member's call has made her job much more efficient.

"I'm able to answer a call from a member who might need trees trimmed or a light replaced, and as I'm on the phone I can gather all the information I need and then assign that out quickly," Holloway said. "The work order gets to a crew member in minutes, and then that work order can then be managed and followed."

Holloway added that tracking orders is more accessible and this allows her to communicate with members on the status of jobs and allows her also to put in specific scheduling requests to accommodate members.

"If a member asks for a specific time that the work is done, for instance, if they want to be on site—then I can take care of that easily," said Holloway. "With a few clicks, I can communicate that request, and it's sent right to the

Continue to page 16H ▶

COMMITMENT TO ZERO CONTACTS

Overhead Safety

Farm Safety and Overhead Clearance Safety Notice for FreeState Members

FreeState Electric Cooperative's priority is safety. We want to keep everyone safe from electrical hazards. Whether you are working in the field, moving oversized items, or building something new, include FreeState as part of your safety plans.

Overhead power lines are necessary to deliver electricity, but they can also be deadly if not treated with caution and respect. FreeState urges everyone to watch out for these potential electrical hazards.

It is the members' responsibility to let FreeState know if power lines or electrical equipment need to be moved to accommodate oversized equipment. Contact the cooperative at 800-794-1989 or customerservice@freestate.coop to speak to someone about line clearance, safety, and projects that require oversized equipment, digging, or moving.

Be Aware

- ▶ **FARMERS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT SHOULD ALWAYS BE 10 FEET AWAY** from power lines on all sides. Field cultivators and sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air. Practice extreme caution and use a spotter to make sure you stay far away from power lines when you use tall equipment.
- ▶ **IF YOU HAVE PURCHASED NEW EQUIPMENT, BE AWARE OF ANTENNAS OR OTHER ATTACHMENTS THAT MAY POSE NEW HAZARDS.** A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year-to-year.
- ▶ **POWER LINES ALSO MAY SAG OVER THE YEARS.** If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.
- ▶ **OVERHEAD POWER LINES ARE NOT THE ONLY ELECTRIC HAZARD ON THE FARM.** Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are

grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself.

Follow These Other Tips

- ▶ **LOOK OVER WORK AREAS CAREFULLY FOR OVERHEAD POWER LINES AND UTILITY POLES.** Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment. Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.
- ▶ **BE AWARE OF INCREASED HEIGHTS OF EQUIPMENT,** especially new equipment with higher antennas.
- ▶ **AVOID MOVING LARGE EQUIPMENT ALONE.** Have someone watch as you move equipment to make certain you are clear of power lines.
- ▶ **BE EXTRA CAREFUL WHEN WORKING AROUND TREES AND BRUSH;** they often make it difficult to see power lines.





ASK Matt

Energy Use Coordinator **MATT LAMBERT** will answer questions about energy efficiency, renewables, co-op programs, and everything in between. Email Matt your question at askmatt@freestate.coop.

Dear Matt,
How often should I change my furnace filter?
I have been trying to remember to do it every 30 days, but the filter looks clean. Am I just wasting a filter by doing it that frequently? Also, what type of filters should I be buying? Are the expensive filters worth the money?

My rule of thumb is if the filter looks dirty change it! I have read anywhere from every one to three months filters should be changed, but that also depends on how often your furnace ran and how dirty the filter looked when you checked it. It's a good idea to at least check the filter every month, and if it is dirty go ahead and swap it with a new one.

Dirty filters can restrict air flow moving through your heating or cooling unit. This results in your HVAC unit running more often to make up for the lack of air flow. The Department of Energy indicates that a dirty furnace filter can increase HVAC energy consumption by 10 to 15 percent, and with heating and cooling accounting for half a home's energy usage that will increase energy costs.

It is also important to remember that air filters protect your HVAC system from dust and other particles that can cause your system to work

harder if it becomes plugged. Keeping the filters changed can extend the life of one of the most expensive components of your home.

The question of filter quality gets a little more complicated because it gets into air quality concerns. Most any quality filter protects your HVAC system and keeps energy costs lower as long as you change them regularly. However, different filters protect against different particles. Take a look at the graphic provided and the Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of the filters. MERV ratings are relatively simple to understand. Higher MERV ratings mean smaller filter holes allowing less through. These are typically higher in cost. A lower MERV rating is still a great filter, but it has bigger holes and can be cheaper to purchase but not catch all things.

Higher MERV rated filters do have the smaller

Continue to page 16H ►

What Do Different Air Filters Block?

Air filters are rated by Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). Filters with a higher MERV block more dirt, but also reduce airflow and system efficiency. Use this guide to find the right filter for your home or business.

	1-4 MERV \$2-\$10	5-8 MERV \$10-\$20	9-12 MERV \$18-\$25	13-20 MERV \$\$\$
Blocked Items	Pollen, sanding dust, large insect bodies 	Pet dander, mold, spores, dust mites, hair spray 	Lead dust, milled flour, car emission particles 	Bacteria, virus, face powder, smoke, sneezes, paint pigments, oil, carbon dust
Filter Types	Disposable, washable	Pleated, disposable, electrostatic	Pleated, disposable, electrostatic	High efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA), box 6-12 inches thick, flexible 12-36 inches thick
Common Uses	Homes, window air conditioning units	Better homes, general office buildings	Superior homes, better office buildings, businesses	Hospitals, drug and electronic labs

Source: epa.gov/iaq

2019 ANNUAL MEETING

Voting Information

Trustee Candidate Profiles and How to Cast Your Vote Starting April 2

Join us at the annual meeting of FreeState Electric Cooperative on April 23, 2019, at Perry-Lecompton High School. Members attending the annual meeting will receive a \$10 bill credit on their electric bill. There will also be a chance to win great door prizes. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. with a meal and the business meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

At-Large Trustee Election

On Feb. 5, 2019, members of the FreeState nominating committee, appointed by the board of trustees, met to present candidates for election to the FreeState board. The candidates listed are to be presented to the membership for consideration at the upcoming annual meeting on April 23.

During the annual meeting, two board members will be elected. FreeState members will vote by an at-large system. Members can vote for any of the nominees in any district.

The 2019 trustee positions up for election are as follows:

East District, Position 1

- ▶ HARLAN HUNT (INCUMBENT)
- ▶ MICHAEL MCNARY

West District, Position 1

- ▶ MARK WULFKUHLE (INCUMBENT)
- ▶ UNOPPOSED

The board of trustees elected to eliminate two positions due to a retirement and the fulfillment of a term. This will make nine trustees total moving forward. This number is now aligned with the national recommendation for a cooperative of comparative size. FreeState's trustees considered recommendations and best practices before a decision was finalized.

FreeState is governed by the policies set by our board, all of whom are FreeState cooperative members. Our board provides a vital connection with our membership and the community at large.

How Can I Vote?

We understand that not every member can attend the annual meeting, but we want to make sure you can participate in the election.

Each FreeState member gets only one vote and every member has three voting options available.

- ▶ Vote at the annual meeting
- ▶ Vote by mail
- ▶ Vote by proxy

Vote by Mail

Ballots will be mailed beginning April 2, 2019, and will need to be returned to FreeState by April 19 to ensure they are counted. It is simple to vote by mail. Simply complete the ballot using the instructions listed and return as directed in the postage paid envelope provided.

Please return the ballot using the postage paid envelope. Do not bring ballots to the office.

Vote at the Annual Meeting

The annual meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 2019, at Perry-Lecompton High School Theater. Members will be issued a ballot when they register if they have not voted by mail prior to the meeting.

Vote by Proxy

If you cannot attend the annual meeting and you forget to mail your ballot in time, you can vote by proxy. Complete the proxy form online at www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting and give it to another FreeState member or adult relative in the same home and they can cast the vote for you.

Candidate biographical information is printed on the next page and will be reprinted in the April magazine. It will also be included with mailed ballots. For more information, visit

WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/ANNUALMEETING.

2019 Trustee Election: Candidate Profiles

EAST DISTRICT



Harlan Hunt
Meriden (I)

HARLAN HUNT has been a trustee for the past 19 years and

a member for more than 40. Hunt retired after 37 years at Goodyear.

Hunt enjoys meeting members face-to-face, as well as the opportunity to learn more about the industry and how to better serve the membership. Being involved in decision-making that helps cooperative members is something Hunt has enjoyed while serving.

He would like to continue working to keep the cooperative financially viable with stable rates.

"We have an opportunity to provide rate stability," said Hunt. "We are also continually looking at ways we can improve and continue our member satisfaction by keeping customer service a priority.

"We do all of this by making sound decisions based on facts, best practices, and comparative recommendations."

Hunt is Director Gold Certified by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, completing the education requirements for Credentialed Co-op Director and Board Leadership credentials. He has also served on the board of FreeState's power supplier, Kansas Electric Power Cooperatives (KEPCo).

EAST DISTRICT



Michael McNary

Michael McNary
Meriden

MICHAEL MCNARY has been a FreeState member for 20

years and a Farmers Insurance Agent for the past 22.

As a business professional and former employee of Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (1990 to 1997), McNary understands the importance of safe and reliable electric service to rural areas and communities.

McNary wants to help the cooperative in their continued efforts to improve technology and education and says that being available to all members to listen and work together is crucial to solving problems and addressing challenges.

"By working together, the cooperative will be stronger and continue to be successful for years to come," said McNary.

He is a past Meriden City Council member and now serves as the chairperson for the Meadowlark Extension District of Jefferson, Jackson, and Nemaha counties. He also serves on the 4-H Program Development Council.

McNary is vice president of Vawter, Vauter, and Vaughter Family Association, and is a member of Knights of Columbus at St. Aloysius Catholic Church assisting with fundraising and community activities.

WEST DISTRICT



Mark Wulfkuhle

Mark Wulfkuhle
Berryton (I)

MARK WULFKUHLE has been a cooperative

member since 1980 and a trustee for the past 10 years.

Wulfkuhle has completed management, analysis and strategic think programs, as well as the Premier Governance Series for Farm Credit Services. He also earned Credentialed Cooperative Director status through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

A Berryton native and area farmer and rancher, Wulfkuhle knows the members he serves.

"As a member of the cooperative, the decisions I help make impact not only my neighbors, but my own family," said Wulfkuhle. "This is why the board of trustees is diligent and considers options and best practices. We want the decisions we make to make sense."

Wulfkuhle is involved in many organizations. He is a Douglas County 4-H leader, and serves in leadership positions for Frontier Farm Credit, Kansas Farm Bureau, Farm Credit Services of America, Douglas County Farm Bureau, Douglas County Livestock Association, Douglas County Planning Commission, and the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Development.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc., is not subject to the jurisdiction, regulation, supervision and control of the Kansas Corporation Commission, except as specified in K.S.A. 66-104d(f).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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New Technology Investment *Continued from page 16C*

Mobile WorkForce, and our crews can see all the information.”

Sterling and Holloway both say the ability to be efficient and more accurate are benefits of the implementation of the mobile workforce.

“It’s so much easier to see notes that our crews make on certain jobs,” Holloway said. “I don’t have to worry about inaccurately inputting information from a hand-written work order from the field.”

In the past, paper work orders from the field would come into the office illegible, or damaged due to the nature of the work. Working with the mobile workforce and the iPads eliminates those issues, and it makes communication immediate.

“When we make adjustments in the office those are communicated immediately to our iPads in the field,” said Holloway. “That means our work

orders can go out much quicker and allows us to be much more efficient.”

“Not only can I make changes to service orders, but our line superintendents can also make adjustments to crews, or reroute tasks that are higher priorities, and that’s all done from the office,” Holloway added. “Each truck has an iPad, and that work shows up right there on site.”

Along with communication, enhanced safety is possible with this technology.

“We’re able to pinpoint our crew locations from the office in the event of an emergency,” said John Malone, FreeState’s safety and resource manager. “If we ever have a problem we can get help to that crew quicker.”

The adoption of this new technology has not only kept FreeState ahead of the curve, but also improved efficiency and communication—two areas important to members.

Ask Matt

Continued from page 16E

holes, but manufacturers have found a workaround to keep them from clogging quicker. They add pleats to filters, and this adds more surface area for air to pass through.

Many of the lower number MERV filters are flat with no pleats while higher and more expensive MERV rated filters have even more pleats.

I also want to point out that not all filters display a MERV rating. Brands like 3M use a micro-particle performance (MPR) rating instead. Home Depot uses a filter performance rating (FPR). On every filter, numbers go up as expense goes up.

As to which filter to buy? That decision

is unique to your family, home, and HVAC system or manufacturer specifications.

Your system may recommend a specific filter or indicate a range of filter ratings that are acceptable. Always defer to the manufacturer’s recommendations. There may also be other factors to consider. If you live on the north side of a dusty county road, then perhaps you would want to consider cheaper filters that need to be replaced more often. Alternatively, maybe you have someone in the house that needs allergens filtered from the air. Don’t be afraid to mix and match depending on seasons. Perhaps a cheaper filter works for some parts of the year, but during allergy season you may need a more expensive filter. It depends on your needs.

Snap a photo or write down the size and any other details of your filter before heading out to stock up. Also, don’t forget to note how the filter fits.

**PRO
TIP**