

The CIRCUIT

Ark Valley Electric Cooperative



*** Proudly Serving Rural Kansas for Over 84 Years

February 2024

Drawing Winner

GARY BLACK is the winner of our \$25.00 readership drawing.



Gary, to claim your prize, please contact Ark Valley by February 29, 2024 & give us the account number from your electric bill.

Do You Qualify for LIEAP?

Do you qualify for help with your electric bill? The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded utility assistance program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit. The application period began December 18, 2023 and ends March 29, 2024.

Persons Eligible

In order to qualify, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. An adult living at the address must be personally responsible for paying the heating costs incurred at the current residence, payable either to the landlord or the fuel vendor.
2. Applicants must demonstrate a recent history of payments toward purchase of the primary heating energy.

The combined gross income (before deductions) of all persons living at the address may not exceed 150% of the federal poverty level.

Additional information may be obtained by calling 1-888-369-4777 or by applying online at: <https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ees/Pages/EnergyAssistance.aspx>

Billing Questions

We began printing a monthly series in December to address questions that members have asked about their bills. The previous two newsletters answered questions about the recent billing changes that increased the basic service and demand charges. The question for this month is "What is energy cost adjustment?"

Like some of the members we have heard from since the rate change, you may also be wondering what the Energy Cost Adjustment (ECA) is on your electric bill. This is not a new charge. The ECA is an adjustment that allows Ark Valley to adjust the monthly bills either upward or downward to reflect our cost of purchasing power that is either above or below the base rate of 6.913 cents/kWh that is already included in your monthly bill.

The calculation for the ECA did not change with the recent rate change. When the kilowatt-hour cost to Ark Valley is lower than the base cost of power, the ECA is applied as a credit on your bill. However, most months the kilowatt-hour cost is higher than the base cost of power, so the ECA is applied as a charge.

The ECA varies monthly depending on the wholesale cost Ark Valley pays to purchase electricity to meet all the energy needs of our members. Since we do not own electric generation resources, we depend on power contracts through Kansas Electric Power Cooperative to deliver the electricity for our members.

Instead of having to continually restructure electricity rates, the ECA allows the cooperative to cover the varying cost of wholesale power, which fluctuates for a variety of reasons. During hot summer months and extremely cold winter months when the demand for electricity is much higher, power may need to be purchased from more expensive sources at market price, which includes additional generation costs.

We know times are tough as costs for nearly everything has increased over the past few years. Ark Valley is doing what we can to keep costs down, but we can't control rising fuel costs that are impacting the country. However, Ark Valley uses a diverse mix of fuel sources for electricity, which helps to keep costs steady. In 2023, our energy was generated from nuclear (33.2%), coal (18.6%), wind (18.2%), hydro (16.2%), natural gas (13.6%), and solar (.2%). This balanced fuel mix helps reduce dramatic fluctuations in generation costs.

Outages Caused by Winter Storm



The January blizzard caused some widespread extended outages across Ark Valley's service territory. At one point during the storm, nearly half of the services were without power which was mainly due to broken poles, cross arms, jumpers, and some fallen trees. The extreme weather conditions made it very difficult for the linemen to restore power, so we appreciated the patience and understanding of the members that experienced an outage.

We needed to call on members a few times to tow our line trucks when they were stuck, so we are very grateful for that assistance. We are also thankful for the assistance we received from Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative that came to help us replace some broken poles. And last but not least, we want to say thank you for all of the nice comments and gestures of appreciation we received from our members.



Ark Valley Electric Cooperative
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Board Meeting Highlights

The Board of Trustees for the Ark Valley Electric Cooperative Association held its regular meeting for the month of December on December 18, 2023.

General Manager, Jackie Holmberg, made a presentation to the Board concerning the accrued property taxes assessed by county for 2023 and compared them to the 2022 and 2021 assessments. On average, the system-wide property taxes increased five and twenty-four hundredths of a percent (5.24%) from \$594,660.14 to \$625,793.86. The largest percentage decrease was Saline County at twenty-two and two hundredths of a percent (-22.02%). The largest percentage increase in property tax assessment was Reno County at seven and forty-one hundredths of a percent (7.41%). It should be noted that the method used by the Property Valuation Division of the Kansas Department of Revenue to value rural electric cooperatives' property in Kansas has been appealed, and the case is going to be set for oral arguments before the Kansas Supreme Court during the spring.

The Board also reviewed the 2024 workers' compensation and liability premium costs for Federated Rural Insurance Exchange, which increased four and one-quarter of a percent (4.25%) overall, or from \$101,437.00 in 2023 to \$105,753.00 in 2024. The 2024 health insurance premium costs for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, which decreased five and twenty-four hundredths of a percent (-5.24%), or \$307,116.36 in 2023 to \$291,012.12 in 2024.

Annual Meeting April 16th



- Vote for Board Members
- Learn about your Cooperative
- Enjoy a night out with your neighbors
- Win prizes donated by Vendors

Generator Safety

Reliable electricity is a service we all expect and take for granted, until we lose power due to an outage. Typically, power outages are restored within a few hours, but during major storms like we just experienced, it could take longer than typically expected for crews to restore power to everyone.

Some members keep a backup generator around for use when the power goes out, but they can create a dangerous situation if not connected properly to your home's electrical wiring. If not done correctly, then the generator can feed power onto Ark Valley's power system and can electrocute linemen who are working to restore power.

For the safety of everyone, generators should only be connected to the home through what is called a double throw switch or is sometimes called a two-way transfer switch. A qualified electrician can properly do this work. Ark Valley's responsibility for electric service ends at the meter, so we cannot know when or if you have installed a generator and we cannot know if the installation was done in accordance with the National Electric Code.

Electric generators can provide you with peace of mind and convenience as long as you don't take chances with your safety or the safety of others. Be sure to follow these safety guidelines and installation codes so you don't put yourself or the lives of others in danger. Improper use or installation of an electric generator can cause property damage, serious injury, and even death.

2024 Scholarship Winners

Ark Valley Electric Cooperative would like to congratulate Kassie Regehr, Claire Meng, and Kaden Lohrentz, winners of the Scholarship Contest.

Kassie will receive a \$3,000 scholarship to use in attending the college of her choice. She is the daughter of Roger and Patti Regehr of Inman. If you would like to hear the winning essay, Kassie will be presenting her essay to the membership during the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Members on April 16th.



Kassie Regehr
1st Place Winner



Claire Meng
2nd Place Winner

Claire Meng will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to use in attending the college of her choice. She is the daughter of John Meng of Pretty Prairie.

Kaden Lohrentz will receive a \$500 scholarship to use in attending the college of his choice. He is the son of Randy Lohrentz of Buhler.



Kaden Lohrentz
3rd Place Winner

Ark Valley would like to thank all the applicants for their time and effort put into the 2024 Youth Competition.

The Ark Valley Electric Cooperative Association, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.