



news & views

from **Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Electricity brings everyday value

By **ANNE PRINCE**

EVEN though I work in the energy industry, like most people, I still don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and the coffeemaker to work each morning. Because electricity is so abundant, we don't think much about it. But we expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we really think about electricity is when the power goes out or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our modern lifestyle every day, it's a great value, especially when compared to other common services and expenses. For example, think back to the cost of a gallon of gasoline 20 years ago. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat, unlike most other consumer goods.

Like many of you, I have a cellphone to stay connected, and I subscribe to cable channels so I can enjoy more viewing options. Many of us consider these necessities for modern day life. We can see what we're getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services. In contrast, when we use electricity, we don't necessarily "see" all that we're getting for our money.

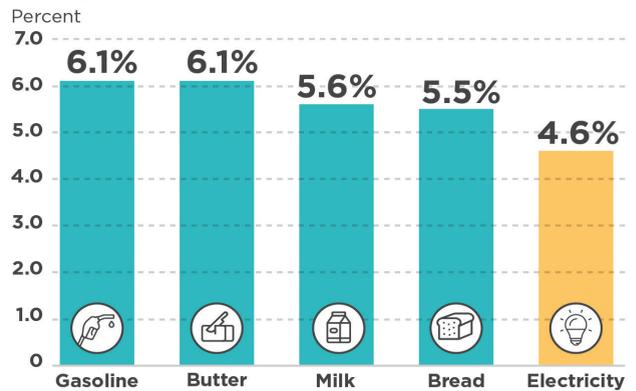
But considering what electricity does for us, it's a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets. For comparison, consider that both gasoline and butter both rose 6.1 percent (from 2017-2022), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of bread and milk also increased substantially, 5.5 percent, during this time. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by only 4.6 percent.

The bottom line: electricity brings everyday value. In fact, Lincoln Electric Cooperative had a reliability rating more than 99 percent for 2022. On average across our system, our members were without electricity less than 1 percent of the year. That's less than 90 minutes on average for each of our members to be without power over the course of 365 days. Considering that electricity is something that we all use around the clock, I'm very proud of our track record. At the same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Consumer Price Index

smarter grid, and exploring more renewable energy options where possible.

Lincoln Electric provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. And as your trusted energy advisor, we want to help you save your energy and money.

We recognize that the past few years have been challenging for many of our members, and we're here to help. If you have questions about your account or are looking for ways to save energy at home, please give us a call at 406-889-3301. Lincoln Electric is *your* electric co-op, and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of our community. That's everyday value. ^{RM}

Anne Prince 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 percent of the nation's landscape.

WE'RE HERE TO SERVE YOU

"We're here to serve our members." You've all heard this phrase countless times. These words may sound generic, but to us – your local electric cooperative – they mean everything.

Lincoln Electric Cooperative was created to serve our community. Back in 1948, our community members banded together and formed LEC for the common good. Due to our rural nature, it was the only way the community could bring reliable electricity to the areas where there was none. In doing so, LEC helped the community thrive. That mission-focused heritage is the golden thread that is woven throughout our history.

Today, we are continuing to power our communities. While our focus has remained steady on providing reliable energy to our members, today's energy landscape and consumer expectations are far different than they were decades ago. That's why we're adapting, to keep pace with changing technology, evolving needs and new expectations.

Serving as your trusted energy advisor means we want to help you save energy (and money) and provide advice and information on a broad range of energy topics. For example, if you're looking for ways to save energy, check out *energy.gov* for energy-saving tips and ideas to increase the energy efficiency of your home. Consider scheduling a free energy audit with one of our



**Manager's Notes
by Telly Stanger**

energy experts to identify ways you can save energy at home. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to modify energy use, and thereby keep more money in your wallet. As the owner of Rural Propane Services, LEC offers another clean, reliable, affordable source of energy to our members. And when RPS succeeds, LEC and our members succeed as well.

Alternative energy is a hot topic right now. From solar energy to electric vehicles, people are re-thinking the way they use energy. In that same vein, LEC is always thinking about how we can be more than an electric provider. We understand our members may not understand everything about some of these new technologies and how they may affect their bills and everyday needs. LEC can provide unbiased answers and help with solutions.

So, the next time you hear Lincoln Electric use the phrase "we're here to serve you," we hope you know that we mean it. Service is deeply ingrained into who we are. We continue to evolve with the times, and in return, we've found additional ways to serve you and provide more options for you to power your life.

We're here whenever you need us. Connect with us online, in person, over the phone, or through the SmartHub app. However you choose to connect, please let us know how we can serve you better. 

Telly

LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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www.lincolnelectric.coop
Secure Payments: 1-833-890-6258

ALWAYS REPORT OUTAGES TO:

1-406-889-3301

OFFICE

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PO BOX 628
Eureka, Montana 59917

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tina Taurman
President

Becky Evins
Vice President

Michael Garner
Secretary-Treasurer

Myra Appel
Joel Graves
Sandi Mason
Rick Peterson
Marianne Roose
Ethel White

Telly Stanger
General Manager

Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings at the boardroom in the cooperative office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. Members are encouraged to attend. If you have any items of interest, please contact the general manager prior to the meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

MONDAY, JULY 17, 2023



**Lincoln Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

memberservices@lincolnelectric.coop

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2023	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2022
KWh SALES	56,231,540	54,695,035
REVENUE	\$5,130,590	\$4,858,691
COST OF POWER	\$2,331,351	\$2,561,657
OPERATING EXPENSE	\$1,674,979	\$1,444,106
MARGINS	\$612,543	\$317,245
NUMBER OF MEMBERS	5,111	4,990
NUMBER OF METERS	6,442	6,399
MILES OF LINE	1,005	995
TOTAL UTILITY PLANT	\$38,706,464	\$37,282,792
MEMBER EQUITY	\$13,721,169	\$12,380,710
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL USE (KWH)	1,345	1,518
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL BILLING	\$145.02	\$146.96

BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on May 15, 2023. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:

- Approved changes to the Rules and Regulations.
- Approved changes to Policy 514 – Absence from Workplace.
- Approved creating new Policy 517 – Security Awareness Training and Testing.
- Authorized changing the August board meeting time to 3 p.m.
- Appointed Tina Taurman as the voting delegate for the NCSC/CFC Annual Meeting.
- Approve a donation of \$850 to Shakespeare in the Park.

UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

As part of a cooperative, our members are entitled to a return of margins in the form of capital credits for years they had economic participation in the cooperative. However, when members move, they sometimes fail to notify Lincoln Electric Cooperative (LEC) of their address change, and the checks are undeliverable.

To make every effort possible to find those former

members who have capital credits due to them, we are asking our current members to lend us a hand. Please look over the 2022 unclaimed capital credit list of names below, and look at the full list at lincolnelectric.coop. If you have a way to contact any of these folks, please contact us at 406-889-3301 or info@lincolnelectric.coop. Thank you for being great members! ^{RM}

ALEXANDER, JACQUELN
 AMERICAN TIMBER,
 ANDERSON, CYNTHIA
 ARNST, GARY and ARNST, ESTHER
 BAKER, LOWELL
 BARTELS, A.E.
 BOWERS, AMBER
 BREGA, JOSEPH and BARNES, ESTHER
 BURLINGHAM, ETHAN
 BUYE, RYAN
 CHAPPELOW, MARY
 CORDARA, JOHN
 DOXEY, HEATHER and SCANLAN, RYAN
 EISEL, ALICE and EISEL, JACOB
 ERICKSEN, KIRK
 FOSS, ALMA
 FRANK, ALISSA
 GARCIA, RUBEN and CARLON, TRAVIS
 GIACOMO, CHASE and STOCKHAM-BALLER,
 KRISTIN
 GOTT, JULIE
 HELLWIG, MARIA
 HIGH TERRAIN CORPORATION,

HOSSACK, MANDY
 IVERSON, ROBERT
 JOHNSON, ALLISON
 JOHNSTON, PETER and AVEY, CHRISTINE
 JUNEAU, STEPHANIE and SALSGIVER,
 KENNETH
 KLASSEN, SUSAN
 KROOSHOO, MICHAEL and KUZIO, CORINNA
 LEGGETT, JEFF and LEGGETT, NIKI
 LEONARD, KEVIN
 LUIF, JEFF
 MAJOR, BRAD
 MCNEAL, ROBERTA and GRANT, ISHMAEL
 MEEKER, JAYLEN
 METZ, PATRICIA and METZ, BRIAN
 MILLER, CRISTA
 NEILS, GRIGORI
 NIEHAUS, CHAD
 O'HARA, COLBY
 OMIE'S THIS 'N THAT,
 PIDA, TIMOTHY
 RAGUSO, SERAFINO
 RAINIER, RUTH

RHODES, TASHA and RHODES, ELMER
 RICE, TOM and O'BRIEN, KASEY
 RUSNACK, MILES and RUSNACK, TANNIS
 SEARS, DANNY
 SESCO, MICHELLE
 SMITH, ZAC
 SPANBURGH, THEODORE
 SPARKS, STEPHANIE
 SWANSON, ALAN and SWANSON, CATHYJO
 THE RANCH HAND INC,
 THOMPSON, MARK
 TILLEMANN, RYAN
 TREECE, AGNES
 TWEED, MICHELLE and TWEED,
 CHRISTOPHER
 VAUGHAN, ELIZABETH
 WASATCH PANEL SOLUTIONS, LLC,
 WHITE, MARK and JENNINGS, DOROTHY
 WHITFORD, DON and WHITFORD, MAVIS
 ZANDBEEK, RAYMOND and ZANDBEEK,
 MICHELLE

DIY ENERGY-SAVING PROJECTS

By **ABBY BERRY**

ARE you a weekend warrior? If you're considering home improvement upgrades that save energy and money, we've got a few project ideas for you — all of which can be completed in a day or less!

Here are three energy-saving projects that you can easily tackle whether you're a weekend warrior pro or a DIY dabbler.

Get smart about home cooling and heating.

Cooling and heating your home typically accounts for a large portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats can help keep your cooling and heating costs in check, with ENERGY STAR®-certified models saving about 8 percent on annual energy costs.

Now that smart thermostats are more affordable (as little as \$70!), this simple upgrade makes for a fun, efficient weekend project. Smart thermostats offer a variety of bells and whistles, but the average model will allow you to set custom temperature schedules, adjust the settings from anywhere (from your phone), and over time, learn your cooling and heating preferences.

Your new smart thermostat will come with step-by-step instructions, but this project typically involves shutting off your HVAC at the breaker panel, disconnecting/removing the old thermostat, installing the new smart thermostat and connecting it to your home Wi-Fi.

Play it safe: remember to carefully read the installation instructions before you get started.

Go green and boost your greenery with a rain barrel.

If you've got a green thumb, you already know that rainwater is the best water for your outdoor plants. Rainwater is free of minerals, salts and treatment chemicals found in tap water or groundwater. It also contains helpful



macronutrients to foster healthy plant growth.

Installing a rain barrel is an easy way to harvest large amounts of rainwater and reduce home water use — it's a win-win. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one rain barrel can save a homeowner 1,300 gallons of water annually.

Most residential rain barrels range in size from 50 to 90 gallons, so the size you purchase will depend on your watering needs.

The simplest way to install a rain barrel is positioning a plastic or wooden barrel directly under your gutter downspout. Basic piping may be required, but this is an easy way to harvest rainwater, and the barrel won't take up much space. Consider a cover for the top of your rain barrel to keep insects and small debris out of your harvested water.

Create fresh savings with a DIY clothesline.

If you have enough outdoor space available, installing a clothesline is a great way to save energy. Not only will you save on dryer costs — in the summer, you can also save on cooling



costs since unwanted heat from the clothes dryer won't be added to your home (which makes your air conditioner work harder). Additionally, air drying is much gentler on fabrics and will keep your clothes and linens looking fresh longer.

You can create your own clothesline with two T-posts, wire and hook-and-eye turnbuckles. Depending on your soil, you may need a small amount of Quikrete to set the posts. Another option is installing the line between two trees. A typical load of laundry requires about 35 feet of line, so keep this in mind as you're determining the best location.

If an outdoor clothesline isn't an option, no sweat! You can easily create an indoor drying rack that folds to save space. Home improvement websites such as *thespruce.com* and *hgtv.com* offer step-by-step tutorials for a variety of indoor clothes racks.

These are just a few simple ideas to help you save energy and money. So, get out there, roll up those sleeves and tackle a few projects. RM

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.