

WHEATLAND  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS



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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Back to School

## Continual learning improves service for members



**Bruce W. Mueller**

It's a new school year and kids of all ages are getting ready for a fresh year of learning. From kindergarten through college, students attend school to gain

knowledge about a variety of subjects and learn new skills that will prepare them for the future. In a similar vein, Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc. (WECI) is continually learning to advance technology that improves electric service, reliability and safety and in turn, enhances the quality of life for the members we serve in our local communities.

With the energy sector rapidly changing, WECI keeps well-informed of industry trends. Innovations in technology and energy types are fueling

demand for more options. On the consumer front, people are looking for more ways to manage their energy use with smart technologies. Consumers expect more convenient payment methods — whether through automatic bill pay, prepay, online or in person.

We're working to help sift through the options for our members in ways that benefit the greater community. At the same time, we never lose sight of our mission: **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE.**

### Technology Improves Operational Efficiency

For example, advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is an integrated system of meters, communications networks and data management systems that enable two-way communication between utilities and consumers. In the event of an

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## SAFETY Tip of the Month

School starts this month! Please make sure to drive carefully and watch for school buses stopped for children on the roadway!



# Get SMART About Energy Savings

August means it's time to head back to school — the perfect time to GET SMART about energy savings in your home!

Thanks to the widespread availability of wireless technology, smart home gadgets have become more affordable and easier to use than ever before. These devices are great because they automate tasks that you would normally handle multiple times a day.

## Dialing in on the Savings

Reaching for the dial to adjust your thermostat is one key example. Because heating and cooling costs inside your home can account for about half of your energy bill, reducing energy use and cutting costs usually starts here. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings between 8%-15%. Smart new technology makes it easier than ever before to reach those results!

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and can be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone, or even voice control in some cases. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences, and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule. There are even systems out there designed for complex multi-stage systems which will control heating, cooling, and dehumidifier and ventilation systems, too.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular on the

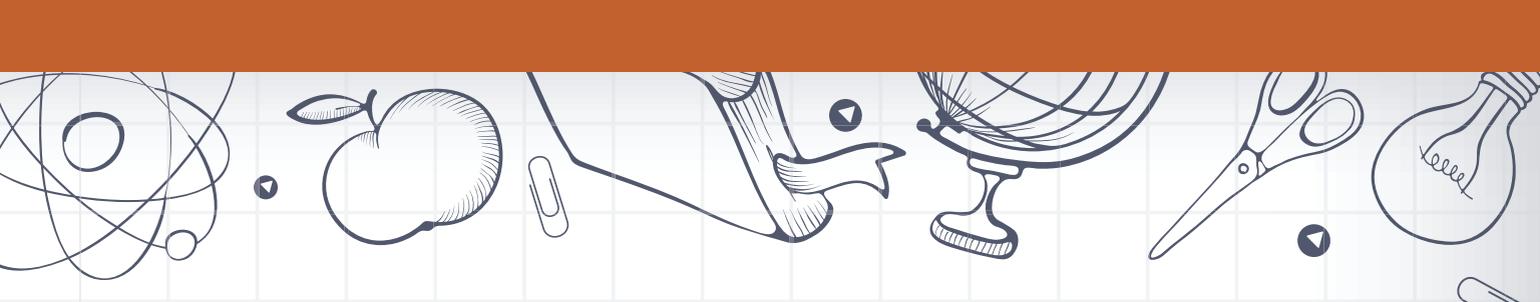
market right now. Depending on the features and capabilities, these devices are usually priced between \$100 and \$250.

That might seem like quite the price tag for fixing something that's not broken. However, users can recoup that money in energy cost savings, not to mention the added benefits of convenience, user-friendliness, and sophistication when it comes to your home's heating and cooling. Both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing, which uses your phone's GPS to determine if you're home and then automatically adjusts the temperature for you.

For those looking for fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is another popular option, priced around \$100. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system, too.

Ultimately, the smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money — making you one smart cookie!



## Smart Lighting is a Bright Idea

First thing's first — energy-saving LEDs are the way to go. They come in a variety of colors and brightness levels and last 15-25 times longer than incandescent bulbs!

Next, level up your LED lighting with smart lighting systems, which offers not only cost and energy savings, but mood and security enhancements, too.

Smart lighting can begin with as simple a move as purchasing smart bulbs, the most popular brands of which include Philips Hue and C by GE. Smart bulbs require a smartphone, tablet, or other home automation hub to operate. Once installed, you can turn your lights on and off remotely, set timers, adjust brightness and even color in some cases, and create lighting schemes depending on the time of day or task you have planned.

A step up from smart bulbs are smart outlets, smart strips, and smart light switches. Smart light switches also allow you to remotely control your lights, but in this case that includes your basic, non-smart bulbs.

If your home is powered by a lot of lamps, consider smart power strips or outlets, which are quick and easy ways to start saving money while making your home more energy-efficient. That's because many smart power strips cut power off to save energy since they're able to detect when a device is in standby mode.

All in all, if you're serious about smart lighting, consider a smart hub home system, since setting up a coordinated lighting schedule is easier from

a single interface. You can then set the mood in individual rooms or the whole house, and for security purposes, implement settings that gives your home a lived-in look — day or night.

## Monitor the Meter with SmartHub

Not ready to invest in smart, home technology? Good news! There's already an easy-to-use smart tool available to you, for free!

As a Wheatland Electric Cooperative member, you can review your energy usage — down to the hour — to make smart, cost-saving decisions via SmartHub.

This mobile-ready tool is available on any of your internet-connected devices, no matter where you're physically located — at home or abroad. It's fully integrated with our cooperative, delivering account information, mobile payments, and more in a safe and secure environment.

To make smart decisions about your energy use you need data. SmartHub allows you to see how outdoor temps affect your heating and cooling use, compare usage between months, and set usage markers, thresholds, and alerts.

In addition, you'll never miss a bill with bill reminders, and you'll stay connected to our digital and social platforms, where we're constantly sharing energy-saving tips and tricks for every season.

As always, if you have questions about your SmartHub data, our consumer service representatives are only a phone call away, and we're here to address your concerns, discuss possible cost-savings, and much more.



## Win a Google Nest!

The Google Nest Learning Thermostat 3rd Generation is a highly sophisticated machine — that could be all yours! We're giving away this smart thermostat, valued at \$200, to one lucky cooperative member.

To enter, email [sdonecker@weci.net](mailto:sdonecker@weci.net) or write to Shajia Donecker, social media specialist, Wheatland Electric, 2005 W. Fulton St., Garden City, KS 67846, by Aug. 20, 2021. Include your name, address, telephone number, and a request to enter the "NEST THERMOSTAT GIVEAWAY." One winner will be selected at random and announced the week of Aug. 23 on our website and social media channels.



## WHAT IS AMI?



Cooperatives like ours were early adopters of advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). Transitioning to this advanced technology, which we completed in 2017, reduced the need for on-site meter reading and brought with it a host of other benefits: more accurate billing, automated outage reporting, pre-payment options (with no required deposit) and hourly meter data for members.

AMI meters provide faster, more efficient outage detection and diagnosis. System operators can ping meters to get a clearer picture of what is happening in the field and deploy crews more efficiently. In many cases the AMI system identifies the outage, a crew is dispatched, and power is restored — all before you call in to report the outage to us!

Advanced metering infrastructure has helped us streamline our operations and improve customer care — all for the benefit of members like you!

## Back to School

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outage, AMI helps distinguish between events that impact a single home or multiple outages. This is critical because resolving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication is integral to AMI because it provides a means to verify that power has been restored after an outage. However, one of the biggest benefits of improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is pinpointing the outage location, which helps reduce the risk for crews out on the road during severe weather events.

In addition to providing essential information during major outages, Wheatland Electric analyzes AMI data for anomalies including faults, damaged meters or energy theft. Detecting these problems early helps our cooperative save money and improves reliability for the WECEI service territory.

Wheatland Electric is always exploring how emerging technologies can help us better serve our members. For WECEI, our “school year” is never over. We will continue to learn from our members their priorities for the future, and we will continue to study and research the issues so that we can better serve you, now and in the future.

**UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.**

**Now there's a better way to budget.**

**AVERAGE MONTHLY PAYMENT**

- Level out your electric bill.
- Know what to expect.
- Take control.

Visit [www.weci.net/AMP](http://www.weci.net/AMP) to learn more, or contact your local Wheatland office today!

# Don't Become a Victim!

Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages, online or in person.

These scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for members like you to stay on top of the latest scam reports from local and national news outlets, as well as your local utility companies.

Our consumer service representatives at Wheatland Electric receive calls from our members almost daily about scammers (both automated calls and live persons) who request immediate payment and threaten to shut off power if payment is not received. Oftentimes, these scammers will use threats and claim that your account is delinquent or past due to try to confuse or scare you.

We want our members to know that we NEVER call members directly asking for payment. In the event of a delinquency, notices are made only by mail or email (and text message, if you're signed up through SmartHub).

As a consumer, it's incredibly important that you arm yourself from utility scams, which are almost always on the rise.

At this time, we want you to be aware of two trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account.

Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, we will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to your next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). Many of us know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. But scammers are getting trickier. You should always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility.

These are just a couple examples of trending scams, so it's important to watch for any red flags. Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

▶ **TAKE YOUR TIME.** Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so that you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially

over the phone. Take a moment to think about the situation before acting.

▶ **BE SUSPICIOUS.** Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.

▶ **CONFIRM BEFORE YOU ACT.** If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent Wheatland Electric or another utility but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call us directly.

At Wheatland Electric, we will only send you important updates via text if you've signed up for them through SmartHub. Any other notices, by mail or email, are typically information-based and do not require you to click any links.

Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. And these bad actors are relentless. As always, if you're unsure about a communication from us, we're only a phone call away! We encourage you to contact your local office to talk to a real-life consumer service representative who is here to answer all your questions and address your concerns.

Be vigilant! We encourage you to share this information with your friends and family. Together, we can help protect ourselves and the ones we love from becoming a victim!



## AVOID UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers will threaten you with anything from shutting off your power to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- ▶ Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- ▶ Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- ▶ Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- ▶ If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let us know as soon as possible.

## Mueller Wins Board of Directors' Seat with National Cooperative Services Corporation

General Manager and CEO of Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc., **BRUCE W. MUELLER**, has won a seat on the National Cooperative Services Corporation Board of Directors, which provides specialized financial services to electric cooperatives across the nation.

Mueller, who joined Wheatland Electric in 2012, has joined the 10-member board following his election to the position by fellow NCSC voting members, including cooperative leaders across the country.

NCSC has helped cooperatives, including Wheatland, expand their services to meet community needs and save more than a billion dollars in financing costs through tax-advantaged financings.

The organization's board of directors provide the knowledge, leadership and commitment necessary to establish effective policies and goals and sets the organization's corporate policies, identify strategic initiatives, and approve financing services.

"I am looking forward to working with the NCSC board on their continuance of the NCSC mission: to bridge the financial needs of the rural electric network with expectations of the



**Bruce W. Mueller will serve as a director for National Cooperative Services Corporation, which provides specialized financial services to electric cooperatives across the nation.**

global capital market, one cooperative at a time," Mueller said.

As CEO/general manager of Wheatland, Mueller is responsible for directing the cooperative's overall operations. Prior to Wheatland, he worked in the electric utility industry at Central Power and Light (now American Electric Power) for 18 years and San Bernard Electric Cooperative in Texas for 10 years in executive management roles.

He holds a B.B.A. in finance from Texas State University, an M.B.A. in management from the University of Houston-Victoria and is also a graduate of NRECA's Robert

I. Kabat Management Internship Program. He currently serves on the board of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, Wheatland's power supplier, and is an alternate board member for Kansas Electric Cooperatives.

During his three-year term at NCSC, Mueller will represent District 4, an expansive region comprising the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. For more information about NCSC, visit [www.ncsc.coop](http://www.ncsc.coop).



**3rd Annual**

# CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Hosted by:



**FRIDAY,  
SEPT. 17, 2021**  
THE GOLF CLUB AT  
SOUTHWIND  
GARDEN CITY, KS

**8 A.M.**  
**Registration**  
**9 A.M.**  
**Shotgun Start**  
**4-Man Scramble**  
**\$100/Player**  
**\$400/Team**

**BENEFITING:**



**REGISTER NOW @**  
**WWW.WECI.NET/COOPS-CARE**  
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*To date, we've  
collected 127,700  
pounds of food  
or 64 tons  
for our local  
food banks!*



Donate online to YOUR local food bank or  
come see us at a community event near you this fall!

Visit [www.weci.net](http://www.weci.net) or follow us on social!

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