

April 2015

Hot Watts

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Inside

Call before you dig.
Page 2

High bill concerns.
Page 3

High bill concerns
Continued. Page 4

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Summer is right around the corner! Have you changed your home's air filter? Filters get loaded with more and more particles as they do their job. Clogged, dirty filters block normal airflow and reduce a system's efficiency significantly. Remember to check filters once a month.

Source:
EnergySavers.gov

Congratulations!

Mike Taylor

is our online survey winner.

New Substation on the Horizon

Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC) and KAMO Power Inc., our generation and transmission cooperative, are in the initial construction stages of a new substation in Sequoyah County. The new substation is located approximately eight miles northeast of Sallisaw, in the Akins community.

Substations are a vital part of our infrastructure here at CHEC. CHEC purchases wholesale electricity from Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AECI), a generation and transmission cooperative. AECI generates or purchases the electricity and transmits it over long distances through KAMO transmission lines to our substations. Our substations are the point at which power grid infrastructures become ready to distribute power to our members. Distribution substations step down the voltage coming in from the transmission lines in order to begin the process of sending power to your home.

A lot of work goes into planning new substations or even substation upgrades. CHEC uses long-term forecasting to plan for new substations. Our substations have a direct impact on reliability of electric service. When you sign up for service, no matter what your intentions are for the meter, we have to factor in your current



Site of new substation at Akins

and future needs for power into these forecasts. Siting and building a substation is no simple process. In fact, from the planning phase to implementation, it takes many years to complete the construction of a substation.

The Akins substation will transfer some of the electrical load from the Sallisaw and Muldrow substations. The new substation should be in operation this summer. The Akins substation will better serve the areas of northern Sequoyah County, and will allow for future growth and expansion.

Easter Sunday, April 5th



Youth Tour Winners Announced!

The 2015 Youth Tour essay contest finalists have been announced and they are as follows: Hannah Holt of Gans High School, Jessica Magie and Shadow McCain of Central High

School, and Kaylee Childers of Muldrow High School. A complete story will follow in the next issue of the Hot Watts.



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Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. welcomes members to submit photos, and articles which will be subject to editing. Cookson Hills reserves the right to publish or modify any article. Companies and individuals featured in the Hot Watts newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policy, position, or view of Cookson Hills.

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If You Find Your Account Number
Hidden in This Issue of the *Hot Watts*
You'll Receive a \$25 Credit on
Your Electric Bill

Plan Ahead to Call Before You Dig

Digging without locating underground utilities, even the smallest digging projects, could leave neighborhoods in the dark, cause thousands of dollars in damages, or cause severe electrical shock. To help stay safe, make use of the national underground utility locating service for free by calling 811.

The 811 "Call Before You Dig" number will route you to your local utility locating service. Make sure to tell the operator where and when you plan to dig and what type of work you will be doing. From there, it takes a few business days for a professional to come mark your public utilities with flags or spray paint. So make sure to plan ahead and call in advance.

There are different colors of paint and flags that mark the underground utilities, and each color is universal to what utility is buried.

- Red – Electric
- Orange – Communications, Telephone/CATV
- Blue – Potable Water
- Green – Sewer/Drainage
- Yellow – Gas/Petroleum Pipe Line
- Purple – Reclaimed Water
- White – Pre-mark site of intended excavation

Even if you previously had utilities located by calling 811, it is best to call before every digging project.

Underground utilities can shift, and it is important to be certain of where they are before ever putting a shovel in the ground.

It is important to understand that 811 locators do not locate privately installed facilities. If you have any private utilities,



you will need to hire a private utility locator. Some examples of private utilities include: underground sprinkler system, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.

Once all of your underground utilities have been located, it is time to start digging, but be sure to wear all of the proper protective gear before putting the shovel into the earth.

For more information about 811 and digging safety, visit Call811.com and SafeElectricity.org.



HIGH BILL CONCERNS:

Members may have concerns with electric bills especially during periods of extremely hot or cold weather. High bills are a direct result of usage. The primary contributor of power usage during the colder months is heating. Heating alone accounts for over 40% on average of power consumption during colder periods. For typical residential homes the weather and more specifically the temperatures are a key factor for higher bills.

Electric meters are tested and calibrated at the factory before CHEC installs a new meter for a member. It is physically impossible for a meter to turn without an electrical current or energy going through it. Power companies cannot push power through the meter. Power surges that can occur will make virtually no difference in usage. They typically last less than a second. If power is registered on the meter, it is being used somewhere. The process in determining the causes of high bills is to find where the current or energy is going. The energy will serve all electrical appliances in the home, but you must determine which ones are using the most energy. Appliances may perform exactly how they should, but could be running more often than one may think. There could also be problems with electrical appliances in the home that are causing them to use more energy than they should. This is not to say that there is never a time when something is wrong with Cookson Hills Electric's meter. Electric meters in general are very accurate and reliable. Statistics have estimated that only 0.1% of meters, or 1 out of every 1000, that are tested will have something wrong with them or will be reading inaccurately. Of the 0.1% that are inaccurate, the majority of those will be reading too slowly as opposed to too fast. The contributing factors that cause them to read too slowly are worn gears, corrosion, moisture, and dust, as well as insects that cause friction in the mechanical meters causing them to spin slower than they should. Meters can be damaged, and while it is possible this damage could cause them to spin too fast, it is extremely rare.

Items to check and recommendations to assist members with high electric usage includes:

- Determine how many billing days are on your current bill. Electric bill billing days should be similar from bill to bill but can fluctuate a day or two.
- Look at the low temperature values for the billing period as well as the number of days with very high or low temperatures.
- Heating:
 - Lowering your thermostat even a few degrees will impact your electrical usage.
 - Heat lamps, space heaters, stock tank heaters, heat tapes, waterbed heaters, heaters for engine blocks for tractors/vehicles can have a substantial impact to electrical usage as well. If possible make sure they do not run continuously.
 - Heat pumps:
 - While heat pumps can be a very efficient and reliable way to heat and cool your home, they do not work as well during very low temperatures. Heat pumps generally use strip heat as a backup or supplement to the heat pump itself. During very cold times heat pumps will not run as efficiently because of strip heating so the usage will be higher than one might expect. If there is an emergency heat option on your thermostat and it is set to emergency heat, you are using strip heat exclusively and will not get any of the benefit from the heat pump itself. Using strip heat exclusively can cause extremely high electrical usage depending on the temperature settings and how long it runs.
 - Check to make sure your heat pump is performing properly. Make sure the unit has proper refrigerant levels, clean coils, and that your filters are clean.
 - A programmable thermostat can aid in reducing electrical consumption by adjusting the temperature automatically when you are gone and when you are at home during winter or summer months.
 - In some extreme circumstances a heat pump could be wired incorrectly and be cooling when it is supposed to heat. This may cause the strip heat to come on more frequently to heat the home.

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 3

- Electric hot water heating can account for up to 20% of your total electricity use. Leaks, bad thermostats as well as heating elements that have failed can increase your electricity use. Lowering the temperature on electric hot water tanks can help lower your electrical usage.
- Turn off the main breaker to your home as well as any other breakers the meter is serving. Check to make sure the meter is not turning. If it is still turning this can indicate a problem with any underground service conductors that are serving the home or other installations (barn, shop, well, etc.)
- Keep in mind that many electronics (computers, TVs etc.) will still consume power even when they are turned off. They can go into standby mode.
- Lifestyle changes can have a drastic effect on electric bills. Kids returning home, or friends or relatives staying with you can have an effect. Adding or using electrical appliances such as tools, pumps, additional refrigerator or freezer, or anything with an electric motor will affect usage.
- CHEC does offer an Average Monthly Payment Plan to qualified applicants. This payment plan uses an average of your previous 12 month billing. This takes most of the fluctuation out of your electric bill. Your bill will fluctuate but typically by only a few dollars. This can help with budgeting for your electric bill.
- Adding insulation and energy efficient windows will help make your home more energy efficient. Also make sure no duct work has separated in your attic. This can cause your heat pump to run much longer due to much of the hot or cold air blowing directly into the attic. Also, if you live in a mobile home, check the duct work underneath to ensure the duct work is still intact.
- To help determine where most of the electrical power is going, turn off all your breakers in the panel except the main breaker. Turn on each individual breaker one at a time and see if the meter is spinning faster. When you turn on a breaker that makes a substantial change in the speed of the dial, this will signal the circuit that should be checked. You will need to be sure you leave on all the electrical appliances that you normally use. This will help you determine your high usage appliances or circuits.
- CHEC also has a free app called SmartHub. SmartHub will allow you to check your KWH usage yearly, monthly, or daily as well as hourly. It will also overlay temperatures for the time periods that are selected. The hourly report can help determine what times of the day your usage is the greatest. This can help narrow down specific electrical equipment being used during those times, and if possible adjustments can be made.

As always please feel free to call CHEC at 1-800-328-2368 to discuss any concerns you have with your electric bill. We are willing to help and assist in any way possible. If after examining your usage/equipment as well as speaking with CHEC, and you still feel there is something wrong with your meter, you can request to have it sent in for testing. The meter is sent to an independent meter testing facility, and a report is provided. If the meter test is within acceptable industry standards, you will be charged \$25 for the test. If the test results indicate the meter was not in compliance, CHEC will pay for the test.

