



CEC **inside your** co-op

Published for members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative

OCTOBER 2017

A supplement to Oklahoma Living.

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Don't Let Your Refund Get Lost In The Mail

Please update your contact information so CEC can send your capital credit check

If you knew a business would send you money in the mail one day, you'd want to make sure they had your most current mailing address. Your electric co-op is that business.

As a nonprofit cooperative, Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) refunds its profits, or margins, to its member-owners through a process known as patronage capital allocation. Members receive these allocations in the form of capital credit checks.

CEC mails each account holder a capital credit check to the mailing address on file in the co-op data system. Many of the checks come back marked "Return to Sender" due to incorrect or insufficient addresses.

Please make sure you receive what is rightfully yours as a CEC member owner by providing the co-op with your current mailing address and telephone number.

CEC must use the 911 address required by the U.S. Postal Service. If your CEC contact information lists an address other than the 911 standard, any mail sent to you by the co-op will be returned.

Please provide an up-to-date address using the following 911 address standards:

Standard Delivery

House # and Street/Farm Road
Town and Zip Code

Example:

2980 East 3110 Road
Town and Zip Code

Remember to provide your current telephone number, too. A working telephone number allows CEC to notify you when your power is restored following an outage.

To update your information, please call CEC at **800-780-6486** or use the instructions printed to the right.



How To Update Your Contact Information

- Drop by any CEC office.
- Call **800-780-6486**.
- Email your info to **info@choctawelectric.coop**. Please provide your account number, the old address, and the new information.
- Visit CEC's Smarthub. Click on Contact Us. From the menu, choose Address Change Request and type in the correct information.

Looking For Annual Meeting Highlights?

Choctaw Electric's newsletter goes to press every month on the 15th. Because of our printing deadline, it is impossible for us to include news from the CEC Annual Meeting in the October issue. Instead, please watch for stories and photos from the meeting in the November issue of CEC *Inside Your Co-op* or check CEC's Facebook page for highlights from our big event.

Thank you for your patience and for your attendance at our 2017 Annual Meeting. Remember, CEC is your co-op. Your participation and interest is important.

A monthly newsletter of
Choctaw Electric Cooperative.

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Jennifer Boling, *Executive Assistant*

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Tiffany Hempsted, *Chief Financial Officer*

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Idabel, Oklahoma 74745

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Toll Free: (800) 780-6486

Local: (580) 298-3201

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

On the Web:

www.choctawelectric.coop



24 Hour Outage Hotline

800-780-6486

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Co-op Members Get The Credit

Check your refund status at www.choctawelectric.coop

Choctaw Electric (CEC) members are responding in droves to CEC's unclaimed patronage refund page. Many of our members have been surprised to discover a refund waiting for them of \$50 to \$100 and even more.

A good share of these refunds are what we call "estate capital credits." These are patronage capital funds owed to co-op members who are deceased. When a co-op member dies, family members often forget to close the CEC account and fill out the certificate of entitlement that designates them as recipients of their loved ones capital credit refund.

We lose track of plenty of living members, too. They move off co-op lines without providing us with their new address; often they move more than once. When our address for them is incorrect, their capital credit check is returned to us in the mail. These unclaimed refunds remain in an account until someone remembers to claim it.

CEC has received hundreds of applications for estate capital credits. Our employees are working hard to process them as quickly as possible. Due to the high volume of requests, our representatives are swamped. If you have applied for an estate capital credit refund, you should be aware that it could take three months or longer for your



BY KOONEY DUNCAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

check to process. I know you are eager to receive what is rightfully yours, but we are working as fast as we can. Your patience is very much appreciated.

Patronage capital is one of the big differences between CEC and an investor-owned utility such as AEP/PSO or OG&E. Those companies return profits to stockholders who are located all over the world. Most of them aren't customers of the company and have no interest in it outside

of stockholder dividends.

Electric co-ops allocate revenue left over after expenses are paid to a patronage capital account for member-owners. Each member's allocation is based on how much electricity they used for that year. Patronage capital funds are retained by the co-op until their board of trustees approves a retirement, or refund, to members.

Like electing local members to serve on your cooperative board, the patronage capital system keeps CEC accountable to those the co-op exists to serve—that's you—our local members.

OFFICIAL



MINUTES

Scan this code with your smartphone or tablet to read the monthly minutes of your co-op board meeting. Minutes are also available at any CEC location.

To scan the code, install a Bar Code Scanner app, available at the App Store.



What's The PCA on My Bill?

Power cost adjustment explained

If you're wondering about the PCA fee on your monthly electric bill, you're not alone. Many co-op members wonder the same thing and who can blame them. When the PCA increases, so does their electric bill.

Charges		Rate Class: 011
Key Charge		62.26
CEC PCA @ 0.01779		10.70
Tax Charge		19.25
Secured Security Lights		7.99
OK Tax		1.25
CEC Gross Receipt Tax Local Schools 2% \$2.03		

PCA is the short name for the power cost adjustment expense. Every penny collected from the PCA goes to Choctaw Electric's power supplier to pay for wholesale power from the generating plant and the cost to transmit that power to CEC substations. When the cost of wholesale power and transmission services increase, this cost is shared among all members in the form of the power cost adjustment.

Everyone including your co-op would love it if wholesale power costs were as predictable as night and day. Unfortunately, these costs fluctuate in the same manner as bread, milk, and nearly every other product we buy. Many factors affect the cost of wholesale power including the price of coal, natural gas, and other generating fuels. Charges to deliver coal or gas to the power plant, transmission costs to deliver power to substations, and upgrades and maintenance to power plant equipment also play a role.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission initiated the power cost adjustment to prevent utilities from having to make unnecessary rate increases based on the fluctuating price of natural gas or other generating fuels. Sharing the cost among all members prevents co-ops from having to estimate rates based on what might or might not happen in the future.

No Deposit. No Late Fees.

Prepaid billing puts *you* in control.



With prepaid, you pay ahead for your power based on what you can afford. (\$25 minimum to start.)* Alerts tell you when your account is nearing empty.

You decide when and how much to pay. Pay by phone, online, in person, or use one of our 24-hour PaySite kiosks, cash or credit card accepted.

Find out why members appreciate the prepaid advantage. Please call us for details.

800-780-6486

■ *Energy Efficiency Loans.* CEC loans can help you afford a new, more efficient appliance. We also offer loans for energy saving upgrades such as insulation, caulking, windows, and more. Find more details online at www.choctawelectric.coop.



FIND IT ONLINE

NOTICE OF PATRONAGE ALLOCATION

This Notice of Patronage Allocation is issued in accordance with the Bylaws of Choctaw Electric Cooperative, Inc.

After reviewing the 2016 year-end financial statements, CEC allocated \$1,934,360.61 in excess margins. Margins are calculated each year by subtracting total operating expenses from total operating revenues. These margins are allocated to members' capital account based on the total kilowatt-hours (kwh) of electricity purchased from the cooperative during 2016. This allocated patronage capital is combined with total patronage capital that has not been retired (paid) and provides working capital for the cooperative. Members can determine their amount of this allocation by multiplying the allocation factor of 0.0043724153 by their kwh purchased from the cooperative in 2016. The amount of a specific allocation is available from the cooperative upon member request. Refund of this amount, in full or in part, at any time, shall be based on the decision of the Board of Trustees that the financial condition of the cooperative shall not be impaired by making such refund.

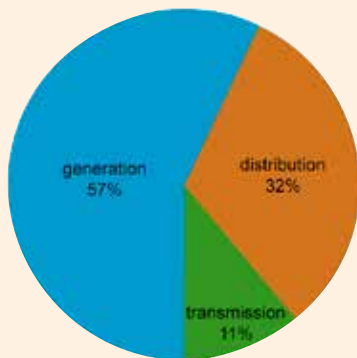
If you have any questions concerning this allocation, please contact the cooperative at **800-780-6486**.

How Generation Costs Affect Your Electric Bill

Fluctuating fuel prices play a big role

Every month, roughly 61 cents of every dollar you pay for electricity goes to cover wholesale power costs. Choctaw Electric Cooperative doesn't keep that money; instead, every dime goes straight to Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC). WFEC generates and transmits electricity to 21 electric co-ops in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Altus Air Force Base.

Major Components of U.S. Electricity Prices, 2016



"The cost to generate and transmit electricity is by far the most expensive portion of our member's electric bills," said Kooney Duncan, CEO of Choctaw Electric.

The same is true for utility customers across the U.S. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports generation

costs make up 57 percent of electricity costs nationwide. Transmitting power from the plant to individual utilities makes up 11 percent of the cost. The remaining 32 percent is the expense in distributing that electricity to consumers.

The biggest factor driving generation costs is the cost of generating fuels. WFEC relies on a mix of fuels to generate electricity including natural gas, coal, hydro power, and renewables such as solar and wind power. Fuel prices, especially the price of natural gas and coal, fluctuate almost constantly. These fluctuations affect the price of electricity and explain why the power cost adjustment on your monthly electric bill changes from month to month.

The demand for power also affects generation costs. When demand climbs due to system growth or extreme weather temperatures, generation prices also increase. That's why Choctaw Electric encourages members to conserve energy during periods of high usage, or "peak" periods.

Reducing systemwide usage during peak periods is one of the only ways your co-op can manage wholesale power expenses. Choctaw Electric experiences system peaks during the summer and winter months. You can help by watching for peak alerts on your co-op website, Facebook, and Smarthub, and reducing your usage during the suggested time frame, 4 pm to 6 pm.

If you have questions about generation and transmission costs, visit <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained>, or call your co-op at 800-780-6486.

POWER OUTAGE?

Stay informed about your service status by signing up for alerts via Smarthub.

With Smarthub, you can choose the alerts you would like to receive and how you'd like to receive them—by text or email.

Select from the following:

- Billing Change
- Planned Power Outage
- Power Outage (if you report the outage through Smarthub or app)
- Power Restored (if you report the outage through Smarthub or app)
- Peak Time Alerts
- Planned Outage Message

To sign up for alerts, visit www.choctawelectric.coop and click on Smarthub.



CEC employees spray a stretch of single-phase line northeast of Hugo.

Clearing The Way For Better Service

Choctaw Electric's push for improved service reliability for members begins with right of way maintenance

If you notice a truck cruising your area firing a spray gun out of the window, please don't be alarmed. Those are co-op employees and they are treating the right of way with herbicide to control growth. Their work is important to you and your neighbors.

"CEC kicked off a very proactive right of way maintenance program with the goal of reducing costs and improving reliability," explained Kooney Duncan, CEO of the co-op.

For electric utilities, a combined program of herbicide treatment and tree trimming is the best method available for improving system reliability and reducing costs.

"We can spray six times the amount of area it takes to cut and save thousands of dollars every month," Duncan said.

CEC's maintenance program includes spraying with growth inhibitors and trimming to effectively maintain the right of way.

CEC's focus on debt reduction over the past four years resulted in less money for right of way maintenance. As a result, trees and brush in certain sections of the right of way grew vigorously. CEC's renewed commitment to system maintenance will target problem areas first, Duncan explained. Spray

Cont'd next page ➡



"We can spray six times the amount of area it takes to cut and save thousands of dollars every month."

—KOONEY DUNCAN, CEO



Community Events

Help us promote your event by sending event details in advance. Please send event information to Jennifer Boling/Inside Your Co-op/ PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743; or e-mail info to jboling@choctawelectric.coop. Events and dates are subject to change.

OCTOBER

- 5 – 8 Winter Creek Reunion
Dulcimer Festival, Bennington
- 5 Push Co. Glo-Run
Antlers Big People's Park
- 6 – 7 Honobia Big foot Festival
- 6-7 Deer Festival & Outdoor Show. Fairgrounds, Antlers
- 7 Fall Festival, Idabel
- 9 Columbus Day
- 14 – 15 Push Co Gun Show
Fairgrounds, Antlers
- 14 Lumberjack Festival
Wright City
- 20-22 Rally & Bike Show, Idabel
- 28 Fall Fest & Chili Cookoff,
Main Street, Soper
- 31 Halloween Carnival
Fairgrounds, Ant 31 Halloween

NOVEMBER

- 5 Daylight Savings End
- 10 Veteran's Day Observance
CEC offices closed
- 11 Veterans Day
- 23 Thanksgiving

💰 Lucky Account # 38856262 (\$50 Bill Credit). If the account number above belongs to you, contact your co-op by the 10th of the month to claim your \$50 bill credit. Call Jennifer Boling at **800-780-6486**, ext. 207, or contact CEC via email or in person.

Right Of Way

Cont'd from pg. 5

crews will continue to treat right of way throughout CEC service territory.

"Once these areas are under control, it will allow us to shift to a consistent maintenance cycle for the entire right of way system," he added.

In preparation for the right of way initiative, every member of the CEC right of way crew attended the commercial herbicide applicator course. The program is sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and teaches participants safe handling and application methods for commercial herbicides.

Right of way maintenance is a huge job that requires a great deal of time and money. The payoff is increased safety for members and employees, fewer service calls, blinks and surges, and faster outage response time and power restoration .

UNDERSTANDING RIGHT OF WAY EASEMENTS

A right-of-way (ROW) is a strip of land that an electric utility uses to construct, maintain and repair its power lines. An easement contract between a utility and a landowner is a legal restriction on land use that allows the utility to build, operate and maintain a power line. It also allows the landowner to retain general ownership and control of the land. Right of way easements give a utility the right to survey, construct, operate, maintain, upgrade and repair a line located on the defined ROW. The easement includes the right to clear and trim vegetation and trees from within the entire easement area once the line is built, and remove danger trees adjacent to the ROW in order to ensure the safe and reliable distribution of electricity.



You can help CEC in its effort to improve reliability by making sure crews can easily access right of way located on your property. Your cooperation is appreciated.

If you have questions about CEC's right of way maintenance program, please call Darin Kirkes, right of way supervisor, at **800-780-6486** or email dkirkes@choctawelectric.coop.

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

PAYING IN PERSON
Has Never Been Easier

- Immediate payment posting
- Easy-to-use payment system
- Convenient location
- FREE cash/check/card
- Leave with a receipt
- Available after office hours

FREE
cash/check/card

CHOCTAW
TRAVEL PLAZA

SAVE-A-LOT

COMING SOON!

Pay Site kiosks in Smithville and Clayton!
Please watch your newsletter or CEC's Facebook page for more details.

ATOKA
Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza
OPEN 24 HOURS

ANTLERS
Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza
OPEN 24 HOURS

BROKEN BOW
Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza
OPEN 24 HOURS

IDABEL
Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza
OPEN 24 HOURS

HUGO
Save A Lot Grocery
OPEN SUNDAY, 9 AM- 8 PM
MONDAY-SAT., 7:30 AM-9 PM

PaySite kiosks are available at the following locations, or use the online paysite kiosk locator at <http://paysitekiosklocator.com/>.

Beware the Dreaded

VAMPIRE LOAD

Fight back with simple tricks—no garlic necessary

There is an energy problem lurking behind all those seemingly harmless electronic devices we rely on so much these days. It's known as "vampire load." Vampire loads come from devices that use electricity even when they appear to be off. Primary culprits are chargers, set-top television boxes, instant-on televisions and gaming systems. There are others, but these four represent the major offenders.

The Environmental Protection Agency reports vampire loads are approaching 10 percent of our average household electric use. A closer look at why and how these loads occur shows surprising facts.

For instance, television set-top boxes consume energy when they appear to be off. Anytime the set-top box's lights are on, it is using power. Like chargers, they use more when the television is on, but they are always working – even when the TV is off. This is especially true for devices with a DVR function that records your favorite TV shows.

The instant-on television is another culprit. The "instant-on" feature provides instant gratification for the viewer, meaning no waiting for the TV to turn on and warm up. Unfortunately, for that convenience, the TV must be on at nearly full power, which drains energy.

The typical gaming console is an energy hog that can consume as much energy as a regular refrigerator even when it's not being used. To stop this vampire, check the console settings and disable automatic updates, which is where the energy drain comes from. Games on the console are frequently updated, which requires a lot of electricity.

So how can the average family combat these dreaded vampire loads? No garlic necessary. Just change how you handle these energy-sucking electronics with the following suggestions:



- Unplug chargers when not in use.
- Invest in smart power strips. These look like normal power strips but have a twist; one of the outlets is the "master" that receives power all the time. The others are off. When the device connected to the master outlet turns on, the rest of the outlets receive power too. Ingenious and perfect for entertainment set ups. Have the television in the master outlet and when you turn it on, the set-top box, speakers, streaming devices, etc. will turn on too. They are also ideal for PCs and their peripherals.
- Turn off the instant-on function on your TV. Turn off set-top boxes that do not contain the DVR functionality or use a smart power strip.
- Disable automatic updates in gaming consoles and turn the console completely off when you finish using it.
- When replacing any device or appliance, look for an EnergyStar rated product.

Vampire loads are a problem that will only continue to grow as the digital age advances. To prevent them from draining your energy budget, fight back by adhering to the recommendations above.

For more energy saving suggestions or to learn more about CEC's energy saving services, please call your co-op at **800-780-6486** or visit www.choctawelectric.coop.

Cyber Hygiene Checklist

Clip and save this cybersecurity checklist to keep your computer and devices secure.

- Passwords are complex, using a mix of upper and lower-case letters and special characters.
- All software is up to date. *(Check for automatic updates.)*
- Anti-virus software is installed and up to date.
- All devices are backed up to an external storage system. *(Back up devices every few weeks.)*
- Preset passwords on all internet-connected devices, like smart TVs and fitness bracelets, have been changed to passwords only I know.
- Parental controls have been set on hardware and software to keep kids safe while browsing the internet.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. For more cybersecurity tips, visit www.staysafeonline.org.



october

Best days according to Moon phases.



Best planting days

Above ground crops . . .	2-3, 19-21, 24-26, 29-31
Root crops	6-7, 10-12, 17-18
Seed beds	10-12, 19-21
Kill plant pests	1, 4-5, 8-9, 13-16, 22-23, 27-28

Best fishing days

☞ Best	2-3, 10-12, 29-31
☺ Good	1, 6-7, 27-28
☹ Fair	4-5, 8, 15-16, 19-21, 24-26
☹ Poor	9, 13-14, 17-18, 22-23

Best days to do other stuff

Quit smoking	7, 12, 16
Begin diet to lose weight	7, 12, 16
Begin diet to gain weight	3, 31
Cut hair to encourage growth	3-4, 30-31
Cut hair to discourage growth	7-8
Go to the dentist	18-19
Start projects	20
End projects	18
Go camping	22-24
Plant above ground vegetables	3-4, 30-31
Plant below ground vegetables	11-12
Destroy pests and weeds	5-6
Graft or pollinate	11-12
Prune to encourage growth	22-24
Prune to discourage growth	13-14
Harvest above ground vegetables	25-26
Harvest below ground vegetables	15-17
Make sauerkraut, can, or pickle	11-12
Cut Hay	5-6
Begin Logging	25-26
Set Posts or Pour Concrete	25-26
Breed Animals	20-21
Wean animals or children	7, 12, 16

—from the *Old Farmer's Almanac*

Good Eats

IN SOUTHEAST OKLAHOMA

Spooky Halloween Punch

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (13 oz) envelope unsweetened grape soft drink mix
- 1 (13 oz) envelope unsweetened orange soft drink mix
- 2 cups white sugar
- 3 quarts cold water
- 1 liter ginger ale



DIRECTIONS

Stir together grape soft drink mix, orange soft drink mix, sugar and water until solids are dissolved. Combine with chilled ginger ale just before serving. Tip: Make a spooky frozen hand to float in the punch. To make: Wash a disposable glove, fill with water, seal with a rubber band and freeze until hard. Before placing it in the punch, dip the frozen hand briefly in warm water, then peel off the glove.

■ swap shop

FREE CLASSIFIED ADS FOR CEC MEMBERS

■ LIVESTOCK & PETS

Show and Meat rabbits for sale. 580-982-8267.

Ark of McCurtain County offers discount spay/neuter services +mobile spay/neuter services. We also have dogs and cats ready for adoption. 580-236-2275.

HAVN low cost spay and neuter clinic in Fort Towson. To make an appt., please call 580-873-2771. Your call will be returned.

■ MISCELLANEOUS

Sewing machine parts for Husqvarna serial #33049877, it's a 990SLE, Limited Edition H10. Model year '84 or '86. 281-639-1629. Please text first.

Beautiful solid oak church pews \$3200, nice piano \$300, flashing arrow sign \$75, Indy Race Car go-cart \$200, cement mixer \$100, Nordic

Type exerciser nearly new \$175, metal office desk \$40. 580-212-6666.

Volunteer Your Time to Change a Child's Life. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children, a volunteer-powered network of committed people from all walks of life who believe society has an obligation to these children. We believe every child has the right to be treated with dignity, to be safe, and to thrive in the embrace of a loving family. For more information, call 580-298-2921. Address: LDCAA, 603SW B Street, Antlers, OK, 74523.

■ RVs

1984 Coachman travel trailer. Good condition. Must see to appreciate. New spare tire. Everything works. \$3,000. 580-271-2620 or 580-298-7322

SWAP SHOP ads are free for CEC members. Submit ads online at www.choctawelectric.coop, email to jboling@choctawelectric.coop, or mail ads to CEC *Inside Your Co-op*, PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743. Ads must include a telephone number or email address. Please provide your name, mailing address and CEC account number when submitting an ad.