

## Outage Reporting

Avoid the wait by using CEC's outage reporting options.

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## Go Paperless

Switch to paperless and you could win a \$100 bill credit!

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## CEC Efficiency Loans

We make it easy to make the most energy efficient choice.

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For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

MARCH 2023

# CEC *inside your* co-op

Spotlight

## Tax Credits For Homeowners

Earn a valuable tax credit—up to 30% of the cost of purchase—to make your home more energy efficient.

**G**ood news, co-op members! If you're serious about lowering your energy bills, there's a way to upgrade your home and do it more affordably.

Thanks to the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, federal tax credits for energy efficient home improvements increased and will extend until 2032. This means you may claim credit for qualifying home improvements made last year on your 2022 return, and save on future home improvements!

"The tax credits will help make a number of improvements more doable for our members. And these are the type of things that will make a big difference in their monthly energy bills," said Brad Kendrick, Choctaw Electric energy use advisor.

Tax credits starting this year will save you up to \$3,200 a year on energy saving upgrades for your primary residence—including projects such as super efficient heat pumps and water heaters, solar systems, roofing, insulation, energy efficient windows and doors, shutters, blinds, and more. The credits also apply to smaller items such as caulking and weather stripping. There are credits for homebuilders, too, to ensure new homes are more energy efficient.

To qualify, products must meet certain energy efficiency standards, so be sure to get the details at [www.energystar.gov/taxcredits](http://www.energystar.gov/taxcredits)



before you buy, or contact Kendrick at CEC. He's happy to help.

Because there's a limit to how much you can claim each year, homeowners may want to plan ahead and stagger their improvements to reap the most benefits. Kendrick can help you determine the most cost effective upgrades for your home based on a free energy use evaluation.

"With that information in hand, a member will know what to do first," he said. "Maybe a new HVAC system this year, then a new door, or a new water heater the next."

Choctaw Electric wants to make it as painless as possible for members to make their homes more efficient, Kendrick explained. To help members with upfront costs, CEC offers loans on a wide range of energy saving appliances and improvements. (See page 4 for details.)

## How The Tax Credit Works



- 1. Purchase Qualifying Products.** Purchase qualifying products between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023. For a list of qualifying products, please visit [www.energystar.gov/taxcredits](http://www.energystar.gov/taxcredits).
- 2. Save Your Invoice.** Save your original purchase invoice and/or proof of payment. (Installation charges are only eligible for renewable energy systems —geothermal heat pumps, solar panels, etc.)
- 3. Print Out Your Manufacturer's Certificate and Meet With Your Tax Professional.** Download the Manufacturer's Certificate Statement from the manufacturer's website or request it at time of purchase. Take the certificate, along with your sales invoice and/or proof of payment, to your tax professional. You will need to complete the IRS Form 5695 and submit it with your return.

"If you're worried about the purchase price, please talk to us before you talk yourself out of it," Kendrick said. "We want to help you build an energy saving plan that works for you." ☺

If you have questions about the federal tax credits, or would like more information on CEC's energy efficiency loans, please contact Brad Kendrick at 800-780-6486, ext.209, or email [bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop).

MANAGER'S REPORT



# No Waiting

Outage reporting options minimize delays

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

When it comes to waiting, my patience has its limits. For that reason, I understand how quickly frustrations can mount during a major outage when your co-op lines are flooded with calls.

At Choctaw Electric, we have 24 phone lines available to take your calls. After a major outage, every one of them is ringing. When that happens, calls are routed to a third party answering service that can handle a higher call volume and input your outage report into our system. Still, that is no guarantee your call will be answered on the first ring.

Thankfully, we have refined our outage response over the years and we continue to assess it with the end goal, always, to restore your power as safely and quickly as possible. With that in mind, we've added new ways for you to report an outage. These methods eliminate waiting and busy signals, and assure your report is received and processed most efficiently.

Using the Smarthub app, you can relay your outage information in seconds on your smartphone, tablet, iPad, or computer. Or, you can go straight to our website at [www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net) and click on the Smarthub link in the middle of the page.

Whichever method you choose, your electronic outage report is automatically entered into our system in seconds. This immediately triggers the next steps in our restoration process and ensures your life returns to normal in the shortest amount of time possible.

I can assure you, reporting your outage online is way faster than calling. Once you use it, you'll wonder why you ever reached for the phone. Give it a try.

If you find you still prefer the traditional, dial-in method, don't worry. Some members are simply more comfortable reporting their trouble to an actual person. We understand and we will continue to man the phones and take your outage calls, just as we've always done.

Meanwhile, the march of technology will continue to improve our outage response in nearly every way. We hope to add outage texting to our list of services soon. When that happens, you'll be able to text your outage details like any other message. Again, this is easy, fast and reliable outage reporting that eliminates waiting and eases your frustrations.

To keep you posted on the restoration progress, we urge you to check the online outage map on our website, or sign up for outage alerts through Smarthub. We also post updates on our Facebook page, but we discourage you from reporting your outage there.

Instead, please use the options I've mentioned above. Your report will be processed and placed on the fastest track to resolution. Thank you for your cooperation!

## Choctaw Electric Cooperative

Serving members in Choctaw, Pushmataha, Atoka, McCurtain, Bryan and Leflore counties.

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

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and  
On the Web:

[www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net)



24 Hour Outage Hotline  
**800-780-6486**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## New Address Or Phone Number?

Please notify CEC if your contact info changes.

If you changed your mailing address, your name, telephone number, or email address recently, please make sure your Choctaw Electric records contain the most current information. Keeping your contact information up to date ensures that Choctaw Electric can notify you of upcoming maintenance-related outages and other situations.

It also assures that important information on co-op meetings, trustee elections, bylaw changes, and capital credit payments reach you in a timely fashion.

You can update your contact information in seconds using CEC's Smarthub, or call **800-780-6486** and we will be happy to change it for you.



CHOCTAW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## 2023 Board Meetings

The Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) board of trustees meets at 9 am on the last Tuesday of every month at co-op headquarters in Hugo. Meetings are open to the public. Meeting minutes are available at [www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net) or at any CEC location. To read the minutes on your smartphone or tablet, please scan the bar code to the right.



- March 28
- April 25
- May 30
- June 27
- July 25
- August 29
- September 26
- October 31
- November 28
- Thursday, December 21

### Oops, We Goofed!

The February issue of *Inside Your Co-op* contained an error. The deadline to apply for Energy Camp is March 10, 2023, not March 30, as printed on page 1. We're sorry for the error.

### Life Support Deadline Approaching

Members who rely on life support are reminded to turn in their CEC Life Support Form by March 31. It's important for your safety. Thank you!

### Member Matters

## Postage Increase Prompts Push For Paperless Bills

Please choose the paperless option. It's good for you and your co-op!

An increase in postage costs is making it more expensive for Choctaw Electric (CEC) to mail its monthly electric bills. CEC mails bills to over 12,000 members every month at a cost of nearly \$9,000.

Because CEC looks in every corner to find ways to control rising costs, the co-op is encouraging members to enroll in paperless billing. For members who make the switch to paperless, there are several advantages, including convenience and simplicity.

Plus, electronic bills rarely get lost in the mail or overlooked on the kitchen table.

When you switch to CEC's paperless option, you receive

### The Paperless Plus

- Less paper means less clutter— on your desk, table, couch, etc.
- Make payments fast from anywhere, anytime.
- It's free! No stamps required.

## Sign up for PAPERLESS BILLING

and you could find a

**\$100**

credit on your electric bill!



When you enroll in paperless billing, your name will be entered in our monthly drawing for new paperless accounts. Sign up today using Smarthub's payment options, or enroll by phone at **800-780-6486**.

a bill alert via email or text message. Your electronic bill includes the balance due, plus quick links that make it easy for you to pay your bill in seconds. If you'd like to review your bill in greater detail, simply click on the Smarthub link where you will find usage comparisons and more.

To encourage members to give paperless billing a try, CEC will

hold a monthly drawing for those who sign up. You could win a \$100 bill credit! (See details, above.)

After going paperless, you may wonder why you waited this long to make the switch. But if you find you miss the old way, you can simply turn off the paperless payment option through Smarthub, or by calling CEC at 800-780-6486.

*Watt Wise*

## CEC Loans Make Energy Efficiency Upgrades Affordable

Loans available for residential members

Old appliances, aging HVAC systems, leaky windows, and poor insulation can add big bucks to your monthly electric bill. But upgrading to newer, more efficient models can be expensive.

To help members make the most energy efficient choice, Choctaw Electric offers loans on new appliances, as well as important home upgrades. Homeowners can reap the benefits. Check it out!

### Appliance Loans




To help budget-conscious members purchase Energy Star-rated appliances and enjoy more energy savings, CEC offers loans up to \$2,500 for the following appliances:

- Refrigerator/freezer
- Dish washer
- Range/oven/cook top
- Dishwashers
- Washing machine
- Dryer
- Water heater
- And more

To qualify for an appliance loan, you must be a member of Choctaw Electric Cooperative for at least one year. Your CEC account must be in good standing and you must have a B credit rating or higher.

For details and applications, please visit [www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net). Click on Applications and Forms, scroll to the Appliance Loan link at the bottom of the page.

### Old vs. New: Compare The Costs

Appliance	Energy Cost/Yr
 Old Refrigerator.....	\$368
*Energy Star Fridge.....	\$158
<i>*Savings over 10 years = \$2,100</i>	
 Old Freezer .....	\$398
*Energy Star Freezer.....	\$157
<i>*Savings over 10 years = \$2,410</i>	
 Old Oven.....	\$182
*Energy Star Appliance.....	\$79
<i>*Savings over 10 years = \$1,030</i>	

### Energy Efficiency Loans

CEC energy efficiency loans make big ticket energy-saving improvements more affordable for homeowners.

Loans are available from \$250 up to \$7,500 and cover such improvements as:

- Insulation - ceiling, floors, walls, duct or pipe
- Windows and doors— storm or thermal
- Heat pumps, water heaters, and HVAC systems
- Caulking or weather stripping
- Programmable thermostats
- Attic ventilation fans and more

Find details and applications at [www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net). Click on Applications and Forms and scroll to the Energy Efficiency Loan Application link at the bottom of the page.

Questions about your energy use? CEC offers free energy audits and other services that can help you. Please call 800-780-6486, ext. 209, for more details.

*Safety First*

## Don't Become Electricity's

# PATH TO GROUND



When electric utility equipment becomes damaged, the ground and objects can become energized.

If you are in a situation where there could be downed power lines or a damaged pole, guy wire or padmount transformer (green box), know what to do to save your life and the lives of others:

### CAR ACCIDENT



Stay inside your vehicle or cab since the ground or objects could be energized.

Call 9-1-1 and report that there are downed or damaged power lines or a dislodged green box.

Wait for the utility crew to arrive to deenergize the power.

Do not exit until someone from the utility says it is safe to do so.

### ONLY EXIT IF THE VEHICLE IS ON FIRE

Cross your arms over your chest and make a clean jump out.

Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

Make solid hops with your feet together as far away as you can.

Do not return to the vehicle.



### IF YOU ARE A BYSTANDER

Do not approach the scene to try and help.

Stay at least 50 feet away and do not lean on or touch anything, including fences or guardrails.



Learn more at:



Or contact Choctaw Electric Cooperative for information on electrical safety and free safety programs. 800-780-6486 • [www.choctawelectric.net](http://www.choctawelectric.net)