



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

**TWIN VALLEY
ELECTRIC CO-OP**

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Electricity Brings Everyday Value



Angie Erickson

Even though I work in the energy industry, like most people, I don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and the coffee maker to work each morning. Because electricity is so abundant, we don't think much about it. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the past few months, we have likely been using more energy. And yet, we still 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 consumer goods.

Like many of you, I have a cell phone 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.

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Installing a smart power strip is a quick and easy way to start saving money while making your home more energy-efficient. Smart power strips actually cut power off to save energy since they are able to detect when a device is in standby mode.

Source: energy.gov



Double-Check Your Solar Checklist

Considering purchasing a photovoltaic (PV)/solar power system to help supply your home's energy needs?

Just as you would for any major home improvement project, doing your own research and finding the right contractor is key to a successful outcome. Will the end product be of high quality and will it perform as it should? What, exactly, is the company promising and has it proven to be true with past clients?

Beyond those obvious questions, here are some other aspects to consider before signing on the dotted line:

- ▶ Know all the costs, not just those for equipment and installation. There are also "soft costs," which can set you back for more than the system itself according to Energy.gov. Those soft costs include permitting, financing, and "pass along" costs for marketing, advertising and research.
- ▶ What are the pros and cons of solar versus electric energy?
- ▶ Thoroughly research the solar installation company you are considering. Is it a local company? Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? How long has it been in business? Is it contracted to do business in Kansas?
- ▶ Are the people installing the system employees or subcontractors? Have they been properly trained and are they certified in solar installation?
- ▶ Will there be a master electrician on-site?
- ▶ Does the company hold at least a \$1 million general insurance policy for possible workers' compensation and liability claims, among other types?
- ▶ Is the company skilled at and does it have a solid track record of advising the appropriate/most advantageous type and size of system needed?
- ▶ If there are incentives, who completes the paperwork for the potential tax credits, rebates and other incentives? What are the tax credit requirements?
- ▶ How much energy will the system provide and is it enough? Too much?
- ▶ How will the installer consult staff from my electric cooperative? Does the installer have experience coordinating/integrating solar systems with the electric grid?
- ▶ What does the bid include, exactly? Is it just for equipment? Does it include labor and installation? What about other costs?
- ▶ Does the bid and contract include breakdown costs for every component/part, as well as labor and other fees, and projected start and end dates?
- ▶ What are the complete short- and long-term costs and what will it save in the long run?
- ▶ What do objective reviewers say about their experience with the company?
- ▶ What happens to my power supply when it's cloudy?
- ▶ Do savings vary depending on geographic location?
- ▶ Does the company promise savings that sound too good to be true?
- ▶ Who maintains the equipment and how much does that cost?
- ▶ What are the safety issues surrounding solar? How is the power safely disconnected if needed?
- ▶ Should I buy or lease the system and what is the difference?
- ▶ What happens if I move?
- ▶ Does your electric utility require any additional insurance for operating a solar array?
- ▶ What happens with the renewable energy credits produced from your solar array?

These are only some of the details to consider. Be sure to do your homework before agreeing to any major home project, including a solar/PV system installation.

Please contact us at Twin Valley Electric Cooperative prior to signing up for solar install so we can coordinate energy grid hookup and answer any questions you may have.

Electricity Brings Everyday Value

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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 the average rent increase was nearly 4% from 2014-2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of medical care increased 3% during this time, and education was not too far behind at 2.6%. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4%.

The bottom line: electricity brings everyday value. In fact, 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 smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options where possible.

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

We recognize that the past few months 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 call us. Twin Valley Electric Cooperative is your electric co-op and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of our community. That's everyday value.