



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1511 14,000 Road, P.O. Box 368, Altamont, KS 67330

866-784-5500

[www.twinvalleyelectric.coop](http://www.twinvalleyelectric.coop)

**TWIN VALLEY  
ELECTRIC CO-OP**

# NEWS

## Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

### Board of Directors

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### Staff

**Angie Erickson**  
CEO

### Office Hours

Monday-Friday  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### Contact Us

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## FROM THE CEO

# Reliable Power for Today — and Tomorrow

Ring in a new year sparks a sense of renewed hope and optimism about the future. As the CEO of Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, for me, it's a time to reflect on where we are and where we're going. At the heart of this reflection, I think about ways we can better serve you, the members of our cooperative.

As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more important. We're committed to powering — and empowering — our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power while adapting to a changing energy landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across our service area. You may not realize it, but TVEC doesn't generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from our energy provider, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo), and from there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community. Our current energy resource mix is 27% nuclear, 20% coal, 18% wind, 15% hydro, 13% natural gas, and 7% solar.

While we use electricity generated from renewable energy sources, we still

rely heavily on the traditional energy sources to ensure reliable power is available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, TVEC is using technology to enhance our local grid, limit service disruptions and improve outage response times.

Proactive vegetation management is another way we limit service disruptions. Scheduled tree trimming and foliar application keeps our power lines clear from overgrowth that often cause power outages.

As technology advancements become more accessible, we anticipate using advanced mapping software to better maintain the environment while providing more reliable service.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric co-ops in Kansas and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model because for us, it's about cooperation, not competition.

As we turn our focus to 2024, TVEC will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable and safe electricity you expect and deserve — for today and tomorrow.



**Angie Erickson**

# GUARD AGAINST

## Utility Service Scams, Fraud and Identity Theft

It is the world we live in today — the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer or respond to someone seeking information. No industry, person or business is off limits to scammers, who even try to con their way into the utility industry.

The Better Business Scam Tracker reports that victims usually lose \$274 in all types of scams and \$500 in a utility scam.

When it comes to power bills, scammers make threatening phone calls to consumers to demand immediate payment, or else their service will be shut off, they threaten. This deceiving claim is often made during the height of summer or winter, when people want to stay comfortable during the extreme heat or cold. However, utilities typically send initial disconnection notices in writing.

### Utility Scams: How They Get You

Scammers request that immediate payment be wired, loaded on a reloadable gift card or debit card or sent using cryptocurrency (a digital money system that does not rely on banks for verification). Only scammers request this type of payment and threaten immediate service disconnection. Do not provide any information (including

your utility account number) or agree to immediate payment. Instead, hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your power bill. Fake numbers and links can appear in emails and texts.

Utility bills that double the amount typically due may be a utility scam. Utilities are closely regulated and may not have the right to raise prices substantially without previous notice. Consumers should trust their gut reaction; if it seems like a fraud, it probably is.

### Protect Personal Info

When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a Social Security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information. Additionally, do not give out sensitive information to anyone who calls you. Verify the phone number and call the utility directly to discuss any matter that would involve providing personal information. In general, some companies do have password-protected, secure methods to obtain personal information via an app or portal, but always verify this before using.

### At Your Door

The famous song by Paul McCartney, titled “Let ‘Em In,” features the artist’s welcoming plea, “Someone’s knockin’ at the door; Someone’s ringin’ the bell ... Do me a favor; Open the door and let ‘em in,” but that is not great advice these days.

Door-to-door scams may involve impersonators of utility workers saying the meter is broken or offering to perform repairs or an energy audit — all at the consumer’s cost. Your utility will contact you in advance, prior to arriving at your home for service or for any other reason. Do not let someone in the house without a pre-approved appointment.

**When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a Social Security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information.**



## Scams in General

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) warns that phishing emails and texts may attempt to convince individuals to make payments or provide personal information. Thieves use this stolen information to open accounts and pass charges on to the victim.

## Caller ID Can Fib

Over the phone, calls appearing to be local are not always an accurate assessment of who is calling. AARP has a fraud watch network that provides alerts of new frauds; do an internet search for the fraud watch network to learn more.

## Scams Are Everywhere

Non-utility-related scams may include the announcement of an inheritance or pop-ups on a computer warning that technical support is needed. There are even puppy purchase cons when cute and often sought-after breeds are offered in all their puppy cuteness, but scammers take your money and run. There are student loan forgiveness scams and one-time password bot scams.

Hackers even prey on the many smartphone users who have cracked screens. It is called the “chip in the middle attack,” and scammers get ahold of a screen replacement and install it on your phone with a spyware chip. Always verify a screen-fix-it phone number or take your phone to a store/servicer you trust. If the company cannot be verified by a search engine, do not trust it.

No matter the scam, the goal of the scammer is to gather personal information. Stay safe: Do not share Social Security numbers, account details, credit card numbers, bank information, death certificates or birth dates. Thieves can use this information to steal their victim's identity.

If you become a victim of a scam, report it to the local police and your bank. Consumers can protect themselves by blocking unknown callers and keeping software updated on phones and computers.

# Mini-Split Systems Are Gaining Traction

A ductless air conditioner, also referred to as a mini-split system or air source heat pump, offers a variety of options for heating and cooling, particularly for older homes and buildings. Several years ago, mini-split models were thought to be inefficient for colder climates, but these systems have made great strides, making them a more viable option for most U.S. regions.

Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home is the most attractive feature.

An indoor air-handling unit (evaporator) and an outdoor compressor/condenser make up the two major components of a mini-split system. In many ways, mini-split air conditioners operate like conventional air conditioning systems. In cooling mode, the system transfers heat from inside the home to the outside. With a central air system, cold air is blasted throughout all the ducts in the home from a single air handler, such as a large fan in an attic or basement. Because a mini-split can blow air from up to six independent air handlers, it can regulate temperatures for different rooms or areas inside the home.

Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or for homes where a duct system may not be practical. When a duct system is too expensive to install, a mini-split system can efficiently heat and cool a space while keeping installation costs down.

A mini-split can also settle thermostat disagreements in a home or business for those with different comfort preferences. For example, to give teachers control over the temperature in their spaces, mini-split systems are frequently installed in classrooms.



**Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home is the most attractive feature.**

Compared to conventional HVAC systems, mini-splits can significantly reduce energy consumption and have the potential to save up to 30% on cooling costs and 50% on heating costs. Additionally, inverter technology, which enables variable-speed operation, is frequently included with mini-split systems. This results in increased energy efficiency and a cheaper cost of operation as the system adjusts its output based on the actual heating or cooling demand.

In addition to greater control over heating and cooling, mini-splits can also be managed with a mobile app, smart thermostat or remote control. They provide better air quality, and homeowners can easily replace the filters themselves, saving money on the pricey duct cleanings needed for conventional air conditioners. Reheat dehumidification is a common feature of mini-split systems to maintain a steady room temperature while lowering humidity.

A few factors should be considered before installing a mini-split system. Determining the right size and quantity of units is a key first step. The location of the system is another important factor to consider. A mini-split should be installed where it will help maximize air distribution throughout the home. A qualified contractor can offer advice on these factors. Additionally, your home should be properly sealed for the mini-split system to operate efficiently.

For many homeowners, a mini-split ductless heating and cooling system can be a fantastic alternative for heating and cooling. Contact your local electric cooperative if you have questions about mini-split systems.

## REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY



### Stealing copper has a huge cost

Thieves like to steal and sell the soft, reddish orange metal to make quick cash. However, they may sacrifice more than they gain, since stealing copper can cause serious injuries or death. Copper thieves could also face hefty fines and prison time.

The FBI attributes copper theft to disruptions in the flow of:

- ▶ electricity.
- ▶ telecommunications.
- ▶ transportation.
- ▶ emergency services.

It presents a risk to both public safety and national security.

Common targets for copper theft include:

- ▶ farm equipment.
- ▶ air conditioners.
- ▶ abandoned buildings.
- ▶ construction sites.
- ▶ electric utility equipment, including substations and power poles.

The majority of copper theft occurs at night or on the weekends. Detecting and reporting suspicious and illegal activity could help save a life. To report copper theft, call your local electric co-op or the non-emergent law enforcement phone number.



SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.COM

## Help Prevent Copper Theft

Thieves sometimes think of it as a crime that won't hurt anybody. The truth is that tampering with electrical equipment or attempting to steal copper can harm many people.

Those who steal copper (or power) are not only risking their own lives but also the safety and well-being of others.

Common targets for copper theft include farm equipment, air conditioners, vacant buildings, construction sites and electric utility properties, including substations and power poles.

### How Homeowners Can Help

- ▶ If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire and so on, contact your electric utility immediately.
- ▶ For empty homes, install lighting systems that operate using a timer to make the property a less likely target. For all homes, install motion-sensor lights on the outside of the house to deter possible thieves.
- ▶ Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while away.

### How Businesses Can Help

- ▶ Report suspicious activity.

- ▶ Eliminate or secure all external access to buildings and roofs.
- ▶ Remove items that allow for easy access to buildings, such as ladders, scaffolds, trees, dumpsters and accumulated materials, such as pallet piles.
- ▶ Install security cameras and alarm systems. The location and the type of object will determine what kind of surveillance is needed. For example, for heating and cooling units, install alarms that are triggered if the unit stops working.
- ▶ In areas that contain valuable objects such as air conditioners, install fences and lighting fixtures around them. The amount of copper in most commercial air conditioners is never worth a great amount, but the real cost is paid by the owner of the unit.
- ▶ Most copper theft takes place during nights or weekends. Hiring staff or security personnel to monitor your facility during these periods can greatly reduce the chances of a serious loss.

Copper theft can affect more than the person stealing; in fact, it can cost a life. Detecting and reporting illegal activity could help save a life.

For more electrical safety information, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Get smart with a better way to heat and cool your home! Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and automatically adjust heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. Smart thermostats learn your temperature preferences and establish a schedule that adjusts to energy-saving settings when you're asleep or away. For maximum energy savings, look for smart thermostat models with the Energy Star® label. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



Merry  
Christmas

From our co-op family to yours, wishing you  
a joyous holiday season and a peaceful new year!

OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON **DEC. 25, DEC. 26, AND JAN. 1.**