



## TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC CO-OP

# NEWS

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### OFFICE HOURS

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## Be Ready for Storm Season

### Preparedness is the best defense

Spring is on our doorstep and like many of you, I'm looking forward to more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy warmer weather. Springtime brings many of my favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, time spent working in the garden and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

Unfortunately, spring and summer can also create the perfect conditions for severe storms.

Twin Valley Electric crews are always prepared and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines.

I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for additional resources.

► Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars,

peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).

- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from potential power surges and will



Angie Erickson

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### ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

March is the perfect time to service your home cooling system. Routine maintenance, such as cleaning filters, checking refrigerant levels, and inspecting parts, improves energy efficiency and lowers bills. Early maintenance prevents costly repairs and extends your unit's lifespan. Spring servicing helps you avoid the peak-season rush and ensures your home stays comfortable all summer. **SOURCE: NRECA**



# Utility Scams in This Age of AI: How to Spot and Avoid Fraud

Someone calls claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Real utility companies don't do this. But scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you. And scammers are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult for consumers to detect. Learn how to protect yourself.

## BEWARE OF THESE COMMON SCAM TACTICS

- ▶ **DISCONNECTION THREATS:** Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment.
  - ▶ **CALLER ID SPOOFING:** Fraudsters use software to make their calls appear legitimate.
  - ▶ **OVERPAYMENT CLAIMS:** They may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
  - ▶ **SMISHING:** Scammers send fake text messages that seem to come from your utility company.
  - ▶ **PHISHING ATTEMPTS:** Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links.
- If you have any doubt about the status of your electric service, call your utility company using the customer service phone number on their website.

## WATCH FOR THE FOLLOWING RED FLAGS

- ▶ High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action.
- ▶ Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift cards, reloadable cards or cryptocurrency).
- ▶ Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses.

## AI USE ENHANCES UTILITY SCAMS

By leveraging AI-powered techniques, utility scammers can create sophisticated and convincing frauds that are hard for consumers to recognize and avoid.

- ▶ AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of company colors and logos.
- ▶ Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking

utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.

- ▶ AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- ▶ AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- ▶ Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.
- ▶ Scammers use AI to launch large-scale utility scam campaigns quickly and efficiently.

According to Kathy Stokes, AARP director of fraud prevention programs, "the ability of AI to improve and scale scam tactics is the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution for fraud criminals."

## PROTECT YOURSELF

- ▶ Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
- ▶ Verify any communication by calling your utility company directly using the number on your bill.
- ▶ Never share personal information. Legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone.
- ▶ If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification.

If you suspect a scam, report it to your utility company and the consumer protection division of the Kansas Attorney general's office at [www.ag.ks.gov/file-a-complaint/consumer-protection](http://www.ag.ks.gov/file-a-complaint/consumer-protection).

Remember, legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt, let your utility company know so they can take proactive measures to both protect you and others from becoming victims.

# Be Ready for Storm Season

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also help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA weather radio for storm and emergency information, and check Twin Valley Electric's Facebook page for restoration updates.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Planning for severe storms or

other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and lessen the impact of the storm's effects.

Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and follow us on Facebook for the latest power restoration updates. If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 866-784-5500 — this is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out.

I hope we don't experience severe storms over the spring and summer months, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Twin Valley Electric we recommend that you make a plan today — because storm preparedness is always our best defense.

## ARE YOU STORM READY?

Follow these safety and preparation tips during spring and summer storm season.

### BE PREPARED

- ▶ **CREATE AN EMERGENCY KIT WITH POWER OUTAGE ESSENTIALS:** batteries, power banks, flashlights, non-perishable foods, water, medical supplies and prescriptions.
- ▶ **DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY FAMILY PLAN** with meeting points, communication methods and evacuation routes. Share your plan with all family members.
- ▶ **MONITOR WEATHER FOR IMPORTANT UPDATES** that could impact your emergency plan.

### STAY SAFE

- ▶ **ENSURE A SAFE SHELTER.** Stay away from windows and doors. In tornadoes, move to a basement or an interior room without windows.
  - ▶ **USE PORTABLE GENERATORS SAFELY:** operate outdoors in well-ventilated areas, place on a flat, dry surface, do not overload and always read the operating manual before use.
- ▶ **SEVERE STORMS CAN BRING DOWN TREE LIMBS AND POWER LINES.** If you encounter a downed line, stay back. Always assume a downed line is live and dangerous.



## TORNADO SAFETY & Electrical Hazards

### BEFORE THE TORNADO:

- ▶ Prepare an emergency kit and keep your devices charged.
- ▶ Know your utility company's contact information.

### DURING THE TORNADO:

- ▶ Take shelter in a basement or windowless room.
- ▶ Unplug appliances to avoid power surges and leave one light on to signal power return.
- ▶ Avoid power lines if outside or driving; seek shelter immediately.

### AFTER THE TORNADO:

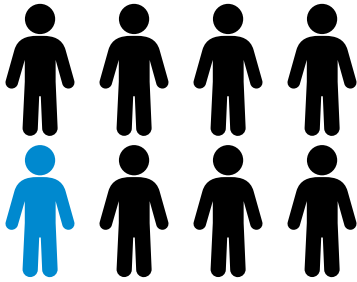
- ▶ Avoid basements and other flooded areas that are in or near electrical outlets or appliances.
- ▶ Do not use water-damaged electrical items until a qualified electrician has inspected them and ensured they are safe.
- ▶ Stay at least 50 feet away from downed power lines and any debris they touch.
- ▶ Call 911 for electrical injuries; don't touch victims of electrical contact.

### GENERATOR SAFETY:

- ▶ Use outdoors, 20-plus feet from the home and away from windows and doors.
- ▶ Keep the generator dry by placing it under a canopy.
- ▶ Never plug it directly into wall outlets. This could energize power lines and injure yourself, neighbors or utility workers.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES Who We Are



Co-ops serve **one in eight** U.S. residents in rural and exurban communities.

SOURCE: NRECA

## SAFETY TIP

Stay safe around floodwater.

Do no enter flooded rooms until power is off, since water

could be charged by electrical outlets, appliances and power cords. Never stand in water to turn off power — call your utility for help.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG



## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar. If you're ever unsure, call your utility company using the official phone number listed on your bill to verify payment or account details.

SOURCE: NRECA



# Using the Clock to Save Energy

Did you know the time of day you use energy can impact electricity rates? Think of times of high energy demand like rush hour traffic. These are times when a lot of people in our community are using electricity — whether getting ready for work, which involves showering and making breakfast, or coming home in the evening to cook dinner, wash clothes, bath the kids or wash dishes. During these times of high energy use, your electric cooperative strives to ensure there is enough electricity available to meet the needs of all consumer-members. This often results in buying energy at higher costs (because of higher overall demand) as well as ensuring that grid infrastructure can deliver enough electricity when use is highest. This is especially true when extreme winter or summer weather pushes energy use even higher.

There are several ways consumers can help lower energy demand by thoughtfully timing energy-intensive activities at home. Peak energy hours are typically in the morning and in the evening after people return from work and school. Weekends and holidays are typically considered off-peak.

**There are several ways consumers can help lower energy demand by thoughtfully timing energy-intensive activities at home. Peak energy hours are typically in the morning and in the evening after people return from work and school.**

You can reduce its energy burden by moving showering and bathing to an off-peak time or lowering the temperature on the tank. Some models include the ability to place the water heater on a timer to turn it off during hours it won't be in use.

- ▶ **DURING SUMMER, CONSIDER GRILLING OUTDOORS TO KEEP THE OVEN OFF DURING PEAK HEAT DAYS.**
- ▶ **UNPLUG CHARGING CABLES AND SMALL APPLIANCES WHEN THEY'RE NOT IN USE.** For bigger items like TVs, try plugging them into a power strip that can be flipped on and off.
- ▶ **IF YOU HAVE AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE, CHARGE IT AT NIGHT WHEN ELECTRICITY RATES ARE TYPICALLY LOWEST.**

Check with your local electric co-op to see if they offer rates that are directly related to peak energy times and seasonality through special opt-in programs. These programs can include notification of peak hours, either through text or email. Even without these programs, lowering your energy use during peak times allows your co-op to save money on peak demand fuel costs, ultimately saving consumer-members money by keeping rates lower.

Timing energy use to avoid "rush hour" is a great way to keep costs down and practice better efficiency habits. Check with your electric co-op for more information on time-of-use rates and programs.

## HERE ARE FEW SIMPLE WAYS YOU CAN BEAT THE ENERGY PEAK:

- ▶ **ADJUST THE THERMOSTAT.** Move the temperature up to 78 degrees in summer and down to 68 degrees in winter. Bump it further up or down when you're away from home for extended periods of time.
- ▶ **POSTPONE THE USE OF MAJOR APPLIANCES.** Move laundry loads to later in the evening or weekends. Delay running the dishwasher until well after dinner or use the delay cycle function if your dishwasher has one.
- ▶ **YOUR WATER HEATER USES A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF ENERGY.**