



POWER-GRAM

November
2016



A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Photo to Left: Taken by Bill Denney; Cloudcroft.

Cloudcroft

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www.ocec-inc.com

LOBBY HOURS

8 AM - 4 PM

Monday - Friday

**TO REPORT AN
OUTAGE, CALL
1-800-548-4660**

**FOR BALANCE
INFORMATION
OR TO PAY YOUR
BILL, CALL
1-844-846-2695**

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Take the Chill Out of Winter Electric Bills

Between holiday houseguests and shorter, colder days, electric bills tend to climb in the winter. Read on for ways to save energy when the temperature drops.

Lower your thermostat to 68 degrees: If you decrease the temperature by just one degree, you can save up to 5 percent on heating costs. Consider a programmable thermostat that you can set to lower the temperature when away from home and increase before you come back.

Adjust blinds and curtains: Keep them open to let in sunlight during the day, and close at night to keep heat inside and protect from drafts.

Seal and insulate: This is the best way to keep heat in and air out. Areas that may need sealing include corners, cracks, door frames, and windows.

Consider replacing old appliances, doors, and windows with ENERGY STAR-rated models: You can save about 15 percent of your normal energy use with these appliances and get better insulation on doors and windows for the price you pay. ENERGY STAR-rated items meet special efficiency standards

set by the federal government.

Free your vents: HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems will have to work twice as hard if vents are blocked by rugs, furniture, or doors. Keep vents clear for proper air flow.

Unplug electronics: When you are away, unplug those kitchen appliances, DVDs, TVs and computers to save energy and money. These electronics, when plugged in, use up energy even when they are turned off.

Keep food cool: Don't make your fridge work too hard. A temperature set between 34 and 37 degrees Fahrenheit is usually sufficient.

A special holiday tip: Use LED lights to decorate. They're up to 75 percent more energy efficient than traditional incandescent lights and last much longer—but check for an ENERGY-STAR rating before you buy. Cheaper LEDs tend not to last as long or be as durable.

Don't forget about the Energy Efficiency Program. Purchasing new ENERGY STAR appliances and LED lighting could qualify you to receive a rebate from OCEC.

Happy Thanksgiving!

OCEC Offices will be closed for the
Thanksgiving Holiday
Thursday & Friday, November 24-25.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Heating your living space uses more energy than any other system in your home—typically making up about 42% of your utility bill. By combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save on your energy bill.

Source: energy.gov

Utilities Ramp Up Efforts to Protect Customers from Utility Scammers

Electric and gas utility companies across the United States and Canada are joining forces to protect customers from the long-running scam targeting customers of utility service providers.

The Utilities United Against Scams collaboration have designated November 16th as “Utilities United Against Scams Day.” This day will be supported by a week-long campaign with content focused on exposing the tricks scammers use to steal money from customers, and how customers can protect themselves.

The collaborative encourages the public to share these messages to help guard against scam activity.

Recently, some OCEC members were targeted by scammers using some of the same techniques listed below.

Under this scam, a customer receives an unsolicited phone call from an individual who falsely claims to be an OCEC representative. The scammer warns that OCEC will disconnect the customer’s electric service if the customer fails to make a payment – usually within a short timeframe.

Scammers have even duplicated the Otero County Electric’s upfront Interactive Voice Response system, so when customers call back phone numbers provided by the scammer, it sounds like a legitimate OCEC phone number. Some of these criminals also use caller ID spoofing to replicate the co-op’s customer service number.

Red flags for scam activity

- The thief becomes angry and tells the customer his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment isn’t made – usually within less than an hour.
- The thief instructs the customer to purchase a pre-

paid debit or credit card – widely available at retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment to OCEC.

- The scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card’s receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the card’s funds.

How to protect yourself

- OCEC never asks or requires a customer with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Customers can make payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person at a local OCEC office or at one of the payment kiosks located in several locations across the service territory.
- Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification with the regular monthly billing – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.
- If you suspect someone is trying to scam you, hang up and call the local police then notify OCEC of the situation. **Never** dial the phone number the scammers provide.

Customers who suspect or experience fraud, or feel threatened during contact with one of these thieves, should contact local authorities, and then the phone number listed on their bill.

OCEC continues to enhance its efforts to educate the public. Previous communications aimed to combat scammers and protect customers include bill messages and alerts, customer letters, online content, and email messages generated to OCEC members.

UTILITIES UNITED

AGAINST SCAMS