


P.O. Box 1335, 3230 N. 14th Ave.
Dodge City, KS 67801
620-227-2139
victoryelectric.net
facebook.com/victoryelectric
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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Electronews

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CEO MESSAGE

Unplug to be More Connected



Shane Laws

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.” Author Anne Lamott cleverly captures the benefits of

unplugging in today’s device-driven, multi-tasking world. Keeping up with work, family and school activities or the latest trends on social media makes most of us feel compelled to constantly check our devices.

Summer is a great time to take a family vacation, but it’s also a good opportunity to unplug from our devices and enjoy the great outdoors with family and friends. Research has shown that we all need downtime after a busy day to recharge—even though we may resist it. Take a moment to slow down and enjoy some peaceful hours away from technology.

While unplugging from devices, take a look around your home for electronics consuming energy even when they are not in use (known as “vampire” energy loss). TVs, computers, gaming consoles, and phone chargers are some of the biggest culprits.

If your summer plans include a staycation, take time to recharge your relationships and be more present with

those you love. Stop by the farmers market, the Long Branch Lagoon, local parks, or attend a Dodge City Days event. Enjoy our beautiful surroundings with your family and friends.

Speaking of spending time outdoors, you can also enjoy energy savings by incorporating LED products and fixtures for outdoor use, such as pathway, step and porch lights. Many include features like automatic daylight shut-off and motion sensors. You can also find solar-powered lighting for outdoor spaces.

Save energy by keeping warm summer air outside where it belongs. Add caulk or weather stripping to seal air leaks around doors and windows. You can also employ a programmable thermostat to adjust the settings a few degrees higher when no one is home.

In our connected world, we have forgotten how to slow down. We multitask and text. We check email, then voicemail, then Facebook. Do yourself and your family a favor. Put down the device and smell the fresh air.

While Victory Electric can’t help you recharge your relationships, we can help you save money and energy by connecting you with our energy-saving programs and services.

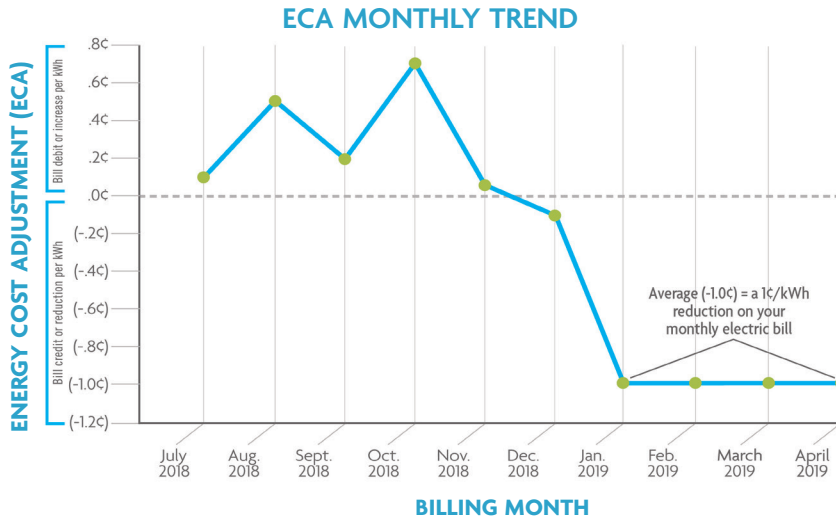
We also work diligently behind the scenes on a local, state and national level to ensure we continue to provide

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affordable electric rates to our members. While prices seem to be on the rise for many other utilities, Victory Electric is extremely proud to pass on a rate decrease to our members.

We hope it is a welcome relief that offers some light at the end of the tunnel for our members, and ultimately helps keep our communities economically viable and strong.



On average, in the first four months of 2019, electric bills for Victory Electric members decreased by 8%. This 1¢/kWh energy charge adjustment (ECA) credit was a direct result of our combined efforts to decrease the cost of wholesale power, which is approximately 70% of your total electric bill. To put it into perspective, the average residential electric bill is \$116.50, which meant a savings of almost **\$10 PER MONTH**.

We hope you do take the opportunity to unplug and recharge this summer, and know Victory Electric will continue to fight for affordable rates and keep the best interests of our members at heart.

Thanks, Shane

Help Us Better Serve You with the Member Survey

High levels of member satisfaction have always been the hallmark of electric cooperatives. This accomplishment reflects our recognition that enhancing member satisfaction is a never-ending service opportunity.

To provide us with continuous and actionable feedback from the membership on the cooperative's service performance, Victory Electric contracts with TSE Services, an independent research company, and Data Decisions Group, a survey call center, to conduct quarterly member satisfaction surveys via phone and email. The feedback provided from the surveys allows us to target improvements, measure progress, and help achieve higher levels of performance in serving members.

We want to know you're satisfied with Victory Electric. To help us better serve you, we encourage you to take a few minutes to participate in the survey. Surveys will be ongoing and a randomly selected group of Victory Electric consumer-members is contacted by phone or email on a quarterly basis. Having real-time and instant feedback—both good and bad—helps us identify issues we need to address to better serve our membership. We can address a member's concerns quickly, and that is important to us.

For years, telephone surveys represented a cost effective and efficient way to collect our consumer-members' opinions and evaluate satisfaction. However, with the growth in cellphone use and the rise in unwanted calls there has been a declining response rate. Recently, we began a survey giving consumer-members the option of a phone call or an online

survey. Our ultimate goal is to give all consumer-members a voice. Some members are increasingly hard to reach by phone and the online/email option gives them an equal chance to be heard. Telephone surveys will continue for those with no internet access.

While our surveys are conducted as part of legitimate public opinion research, be aware there are scammers who pretend to conduct surveys as part of fraud schemes designed to rip people off. Reputable survey company representatives such as ours, Data Decision Group, will never ask for your personal information such as Social Security number, birthdate, account number, bank account information, or for payment of any kind. Representatives from the contracted survey call center, Data Decisions Group, will likely call from an out-of-state area code.

Part of our job is to ensure all members feel they have a voice in the future of their cooperative. If you are called or emailed for the survey, we would appreciate your participation. Your input will help us improve service and plan for the future.



Tips for Maintaining an Efficient HVAC System

Ah, summer. Cookouts, swimming pools, camping—it's the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends. And when it's time to come back indoors, there's nothing better than the cool blast from your home's air conditioning unit.

Your heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system is essential to keeping your home comfortable during summer months, and if it breaks down, it's also the most expensive equipment to repair or replace. Luckily, there are simple steps you can take to lengthen the life of your HVAC system.

CHANGE OR CLEAN FILTERS. Dirty filters block airflow, which can greatly decrease the efficiency of your system. The Department of Energy recommends changing or cleaning filters every month or two during the cooling season. If your unit is in constant use or is subjected to dusty conditions or pet hair, consider checking filters more frequently.

CLEAN THE HVAC UNIT. Outdoor condenser coils can become clogged with pollen, dirt and small debris. Use a hose to spray the HVAC unit once each season to ensure maximum airflow. (Warning: Do not use a pressure washer as it can damage the equipment.)

CLEAR SPACE AROUND THE HVAC UNIT. Dryer vents, falling leaves and grass left behind from the lawnmower can create buildup. Remove any debris around the HVAC unit. If you have foliage near the unit, trim it back at least 2 feet around the condenser to increase airflow.

If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your HVAC system, try this quick test. The outdoor temperature should be above 80 degrees, and set your thermostat well below the room temperature to ensure the system runs long enough for this test.

▶ Using a digital probe thermometer (about \$12), measure the temperature of the air being pulled into your HVAC filter.

▶ Measure the temperature of the air blowing out of your A/C vent.

▶ Subtract the A/C vent temperature from the HVAC filter temperature. You should see a difference between 17 to 20 degrees. If the difference is less than 17 degrees, you may need a licensed technician to check the coolant. If the difference is greater than 20 degrees, your home's ductwork may need to be inspected for airflow restrictions.

You should also have your HVAC system periodically inspected by a licensed professional. The frequency of inspections depends on the age of your unit, but the Department of Energy recommends scheduling tuneups during the spring and fall, when contractors aren't as busy.

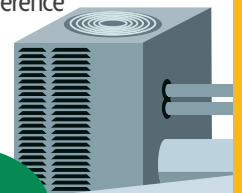
When HVAC equipment fails, it's inconvenient and uncomfortable—especially during the dog days of summer. Remember, your HVAC system runs best when it's regularly cleaned and serviced. With a little maintenance along the way, you can add years to your system's life span.

3-Step HVAC Test

As summer temperatures rise, so do electric bills. Follow these steps to test your HVAC unit efficiency.

The outdoor temperature should be above 80 degrees, and set your thermostat well below room temperature to ensure the system runs long enough for a proper test.

1. Using a digital probe thermometer (about \$12), measure the temperature of the air being pulled into your HVAC filter.
2. Measure the temperature of the air blowing out of your A/C vent.
3. Subtract the A/C vent temperature from the HVAC filter temperature. You should see a difference of about 17 to 20 degrees. If the difference is less than 17 degrees, you may need a licensed technician to check the coolant. If the difference is greater than 20 degrees, your ductwork may need to be inspected for airflow restrictions.



Deadline Approaching for CoBank Sharing Success Grant

Apply by July 25 at 5 p.m.

One of Victory Electric's unique and exciting community programs is the CoBank Sharing Success program, a matching grant opportunity, capped at \$15,000, open to local nonprofit organizations. Aimed at supporting local communities and people, the grant is made possible by Victory Electric's governing board of trustees, in partnership with CoBank—a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it services.

"Rural communities and cooperatives like Victory Electric are lucky to have the generous support of CoBank and we are thankful for the contributions enabling us to help make our communities a better place to live and work," said Jerri Whitley, Victory Electric vice president of communications. "In the last seven years, Victory Electric awarded \$70,000 in Sharing Success grants and we are excited to offer the program again this year. Applications are available on our website and due July 25."

CoBank's \$4 million Sharing Success fund matches charitable contributions made by its cooperative members to local nonprofits in their individual communities. The matching grant

program is designed to celebrate the vital role that cooperatives play in individual communities across the country. CoBank states that collaborating with their customers to support worthy causes they care about is a great way for them to make a positive difference and fulfill its mission of service to rural America.

Since its inception in 2012, the program generated more than \$36 million in total charitable donations, primarily in rural areas across the country. In early 2019, CoBank announced the board of directors increased the size of the annual Sharing Success charitable giving program from \$3 million to \$4 million per year and raised the maximum matching amount from \$5,000 (\$10,000 total grant) to \$7,500 (\$15,000 total grant).

"Thanks to Victory Electric's board of trustees and CoBank, the Sharing Success Grant enables us to give back to the communities we serve," said Shane Laws, CEO of Victory Electric. "We urge all eligible nonprofits to take advantage of Sharing Success and together we can make a meaningful impact in rural Kansas."

This year will be the eighth year for Victory Electric to award a Sharing Success grant. The Bucklin Library received a \$10,000 grant in 2012 to help fund the construction of their new library building. In 2013, the Mission of Mercy dental clinic in Dodge City was awarded \$10,000. The grant funded the Stauth Memorial Museum in Montezuma for the 2014 "Suits in Space" Smithsonian exhibit. In 2015, local shelter and food bank, the Manna House, was awarded the grant to repair and improve their facilities. The Depot Theater upgraded their theater sound system in 2016. In 2017, the Ford Country Historical Society made repairs to preserve the history in the Home of Stone - Mueller Schmidt House. And last year the Ford County Sheriff's Office received \$10,000 for security upgrades.

Any organization interested in applying for the 2019 CoBank Sharing Success grant must be a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The application is available on our website at victoryelectric.net/content/cobank-sharing-success-grant and due to Victory Electric's office no later than July 25 at 5 p.m.

Howieson Hired as Groundsman



Sam Howieson

Victory Electric welcomes **SAM HOWIESON** as the newest hire on the line crew. Originally from Sedalia, Missouri, Howieson graduated from Pratt Community College's Electrical Power Technology program in 2018. He interned for Central Missouri Electric Cooperative in Sedalia, Missouri, before accepting a position with Tessco Energy Services in Midland, Texas, where he provided electrical services for oil fields.

"I wanted to become a lineman because I like working outdoors and I like helping people," Howieson said. "It is satisfying to see people's reaction when you restore power after an outage."

When the position opened at Victory Electric, Howieson was excited for the opportunity to move from the oil field to working in residential areas. "When I went to college in Pratt, I always heard Victory Electric was a great place to work," Howieson said.

Howieson joined Mike Shewey's line crew as a groundsman. In Howieson's free time, he likes to hunt, fish and spend time at the lake.

Victory Electric is excited to have him as part of the team. Congratulations, Sam!