

## Your Benton REA Board of Trustees

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## Stay Informed, Go Paperless With SmartHub

With convenient access to your Benton REA bill anytime and anywhere through SmartHub, doing your part to care for the environment is easy.

Yet as of December, only 2,836 Benton REA members and PowerNET customers had signed up for paperless billing.

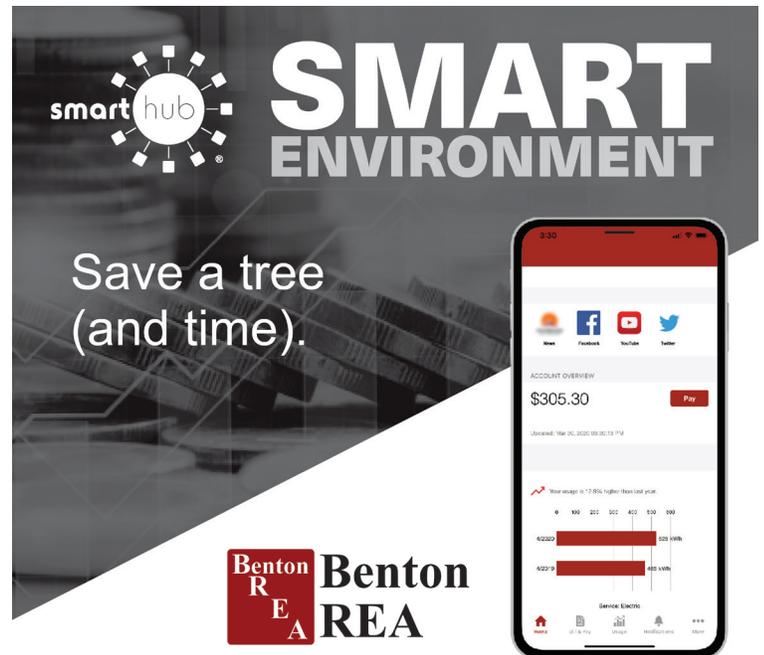
Signing up for paperless billing is simple and has many benefits, including these five.

**1** First, you will receive your billing statement by email on the first of the month—faster than waiting for the mail to arrive.

**2** You can quickly view and pay your bill through the SmartHub app or desktop payment portal—the same website you will use to view your electronic bill.

**3** Reduce your impact on the environment by eliminating the use of paper and ink required for your bill and envelope. Receiving a paper bill also produces carbon emissions from delivery vehicles. And, electronic bills require less electricity to produce.

**4** Help Benton REA keep operating costs down. The average monthly bill costs 71 cents to print and mail. Multiply that by 12 months and the simple act of switching to paperless billing



**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.**

can save the co-op \$8.52 per member each year. This small sum, when applied to the 2,836 members already enrolled, is saving Benton REA more than \$24,000 each year. Every way co-op members work together to save energy and money helps stabilize the cost of electricity and internet services.

**5** You'll continue to receive this newsletter and important co-op information in your email inbox with paperless billing.

Notifications and important information can also be found in the SmartHub app and on BentonREA.org.

### How to Sign Up for Paperless Billing

To sign up for paperless billing, call 509-786-2913 or, sign up through your SmartHub account.

Log in to your SmartHub account online or on the app. Under the "My Profile" tab, go to "My Information" and choose "Update My Paperless Settings." There, you can choose which of your electric and/or PowerNET accounts you wish to go paperless. ■

# Washington Electricity Prices Lowest In Nation

There are many reasons people choose to live in Washington. If you haven't

already, you can add the low cost of electricity to the list.

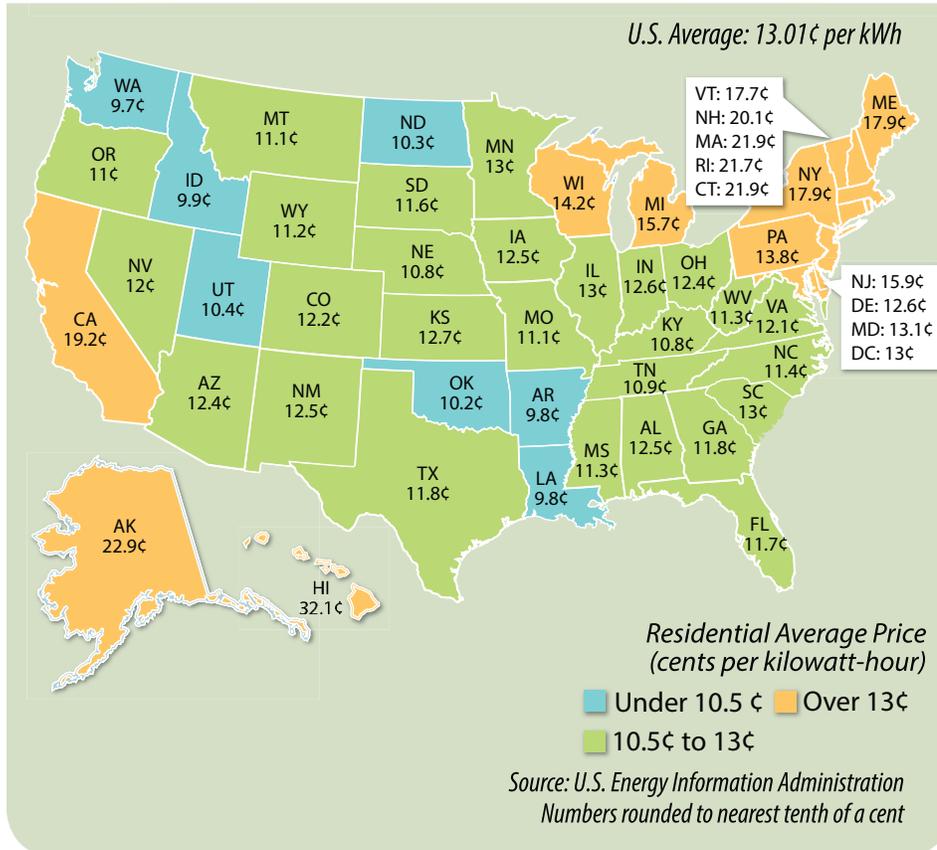
The most recent data available from the U.S. Energy Information Administration compares the average price for residential electricity in each state, as seen on the map to the left. Washington took the lead in 2019 for the lowest cost with 9.7 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Benton REA residential members pay just 7.83 cents per kilowatt-hour. Combining this with the \$12 monthly base charge, the price per kWh for the average home in 2019 was 8.63 cents—1.2 cents less than the state average.

These low prices are due to Washington's abundant, renewable and carbon-free hydropower. ■

## Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2019 figures, in cents per kWh



### IS YOUR POWER OUT?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes:

- Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or use the SmartHub app.

### COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office  
402 7th St. | P.O. Box 1150  
Prosser, WA 99350  
509-786-2913

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office  
6095 West Van Giesen St.  
West Richland, WA 99353  
509-967-2921

Office Hours: Mon.- Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Toll Free: 800-221-6987

[www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org)

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### MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Department:

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- Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor
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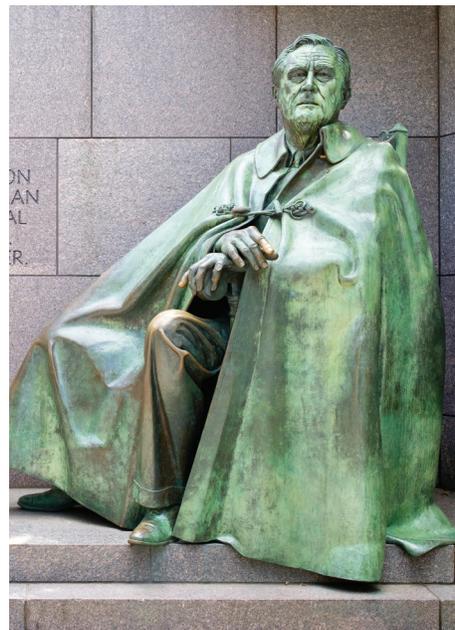
## Presidents Day and the REA

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the executive order establishing the Rural Electrification Administration, now called the Rural Utilities Service, a division of the USDA.

Two years later, Benton REA received an REA loan to bring electricity to rural farmers in Benton and Yakima counties.

Benton REA will be closed Monday, February 15 in honor of Presidents Day. Outages may still be reported by calling 800-221-6987 or through your SmartHub app. ■

A statue of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt rests at his memorial in Washington, D.C. PHOTO BY ELECIA COPENHAVER



# Five Ways to Stay Cozy this Winter

Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways to stay comfortable without turning up the thermostat. Here are five easy ways:

**1** Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temperatures or you simply "run cold," an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth in a way a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, such as timers and dual temperature settings, if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat. This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat and your energy bill will thank you. Make sure you keep safety in mind while using an electric blanket. See our safety tips on page 4.



**2** One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature. When your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.

**3** On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open curtains, drapes and blinds on windows facing the sun. You will be able to feel the difference. Remember to close them at night to keep warmth inside.

**4** Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air. By adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.

**5** Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs provide extra insulation and a warm



**Adding humidity inside your home can make the air feel a little warmer.** PHOTOS BY ABBY BERRY, NRECA

surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You will enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate. ■

**Electric blankets deliver quick warmth and include a variety of features, such as timers and dual temperature settings.**

## Members, Know Who Represents You

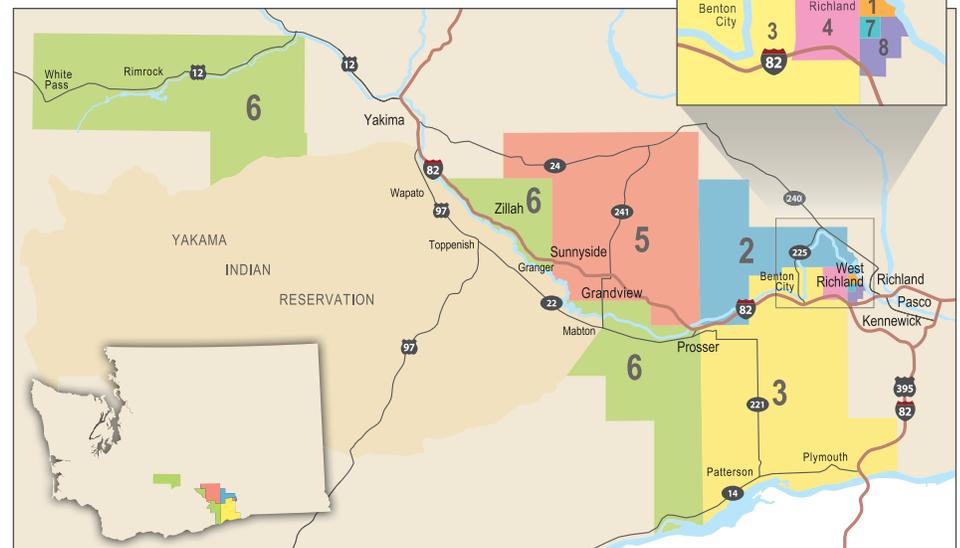
Benton REA members occupy eight districts within the cooperative's service territory. Each district elects a representative to serve on the board of trustees.

Trustees serve three-year terms. They are responsible for the overall direction and affairs of the business through the adoption of policies, budgets and providing direction to the general manager.

Trustees must be members of Benton REA and reside for at least one year within their district. As consumers of electricity from Benton REA, they are subject to the rates and policies they approve at the monthly board meetings.

This map gives a rough outline of each Benton REA district. To learn

more about or to contact your trustee, visit [BentonREA.org/Trustees](http://BentonREA.org/Trustees). If you do not know which district you live in, call 509-786-2913. ■



# Winter Electrical Safety Tips

It's no surprise winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. During the coldest months, consumers use additional electrical devices and appliances, such as space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage.

Safeguard your loved ones and home with these tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

## Don't Overload Outlets

Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires.

Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections. They should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

## Never Leave Space Heaters Unattended

If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least 3 feet away from flammable items.

Space heaters take a toll on your

energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

## Inspect Electric Blankets

These items cause nearly 500 fires a year. Electric blankets more than 10 years old create additional fire risks.

Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads. Look for dark, charred or frayed spots. Make sure the electrical cord is not damaged.

Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket. Never fold them when in use.

## Use Portable Generators Safely

Winter storms can cause prolonged

power outages. If you use portable generators during a power outage, never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system.

For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator before you plug in appliances. Run the generator in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

For year-round electrical safety tips, visit [BentonREA.org/safety](http://BentonREA.org/safety). ■



## Let's Keep Small Businesses Thriving.

It's time to power a Small Business Comeback across America.

Co-op Connections is a free member benefit program brought to you by **BENTON REA**. Download the free Co-op Connections app to find discounts from your local merchants and nationwide. We can support our neighborhood businesses and reopen safely if we all work together and practice smart social distancing.

Visit [www.SmallBusinessComeback.coop](http://www.SmallBusinessComeback.coop) for more information.

