

February 2022

P.O. Box 1150, Prosser, WA 99350 • 509-786-2913 • 800-221-6987 • www.BentonREA.org

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Power Outage Safety Before, During, After Storms

Weather-related electric outages happen year-round. Be prepared before a flood, snow, ice or wind storm strikes.

Before the Storm

Save 800-221-6987 in your contacts so you can quickly report outages. It's equally important to give Benton REA your current phone number and email address so you can be informed about major outage restoration and planned maintenance outages in your area.

Follow Benton REA on Facebook and Twitter to see up-to-date outage restoration information for large outages.

Keep the following items in your emergency supply kit:

- Water, a three-day supply of 1 gallon per person per day.
- Tools such as a flashlight, batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio.
- A first aid kit.
- Prescriptions.
- Nonperishable foods.
- Blankets.

During an Outage

If a power outage occurs, check fuses and circuit breakers. If the power failure is not caused by something inside your home, report the outage to Benton REA. You

can call 800-221-6987 or 509-786-1626 to report the outage or use the SmartHub app.

Always assume downed powerlines are energized even if they are not sparking. Stay away from them and call 911. Emergency personnel can help others avoid the unsafe area.

Do not drive over downed power lines. Electricity, when uncontrolled, is deadly.

Stay inside where it is safe. Storm conditions can cause flooding, landslides or difficult driving conditions. In winter, if a power outage causes your home to be too cold to remain there, find a local warming center and request safe transportation from emergency officials if needed.

After the Storm

Make sure it is safe to leave the house or drive if needed. Assess any damage to your home or property.

If your power is still out, have patience and use the items in your emergency kit.

Lineworkers first restore power to critical services such as hospitals and schools. They often work long shifts moving from neighborhood to neighborhood until every home and businesses has power again. When your power is restored, thank a lineworker. ■



BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM STRIKES

In the event of a power outage, be prepared by keeping the following items in an easy-to-find emergency supply kit.



■ WATER

Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.



■ TOOLS

Flashlight, extra batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.



■ FIRST AID KIT AND PRESCRIPTIONS

First aid supplies, hand sanitizer and at least one week's supply of prescriptions and medications for the family.

Learn more at www.ready.gov 



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Benton REA will be closed February 21 for Presidents Day

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 a Rural Electrification Administration loan to bring electricity to rural farmers in Benton and Yakima counties.

President Lyndon B. Johnson was an advocate for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Many United States presidents have influenced policy affecting more than 900 electric cooperatives in the nation.

In honor of Presidents' Day, Benton REA will be closed Monday, February 21. Members may call 800-221-6987 or 509-786-1626 to report outages 24/7. ■



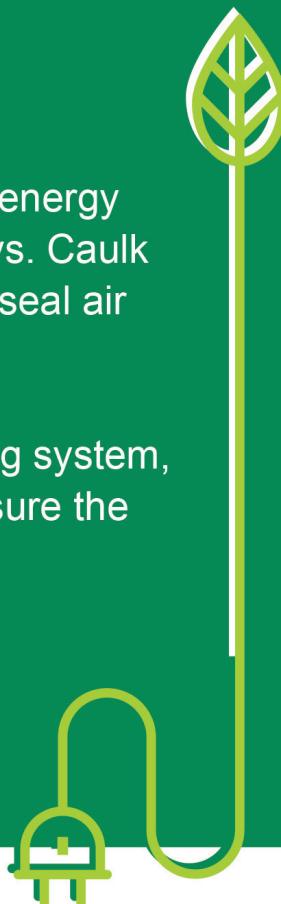
President Franklin D. Roosevelt, center, signs the executive order establishing the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935. PHOTO COURTESY OF NRECA

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip all windows to seal air leaks.

When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: Dept. of Energy



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 509-786-1626 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 W. 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
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

MEMBER SERVICES

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

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Save Energy When Working From Home

Today, more Americans are working from home than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day.

If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home.

1 Use a smart power strip. Plugging in your most-used devices—including computers, monitors and routers—to a smart power strip ensures these devices do not draw power when they are not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in “always on” mode.

2 Unplug your least-used equipment. If your home office includes equipment like printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, go ahead and unplug your least-used electronics and devices, since many of these draw electricity even when they're not being used.

3 Choose Energy Star-certified office equipment. If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the Energy Star label to ensure you're getting the most energy-efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment and other office electronics that receive the Energy Star rating include power management features to make saving energy easy, and most are designed to run cooler and last longer.



Energy Star Printer. PHOTO COURTESY OF NRECA

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4 Flip the switch and use natural light instead. It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains and other window coverings to let natural light in—and don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use.

5 Lower the thermostat. Home heating is a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills.

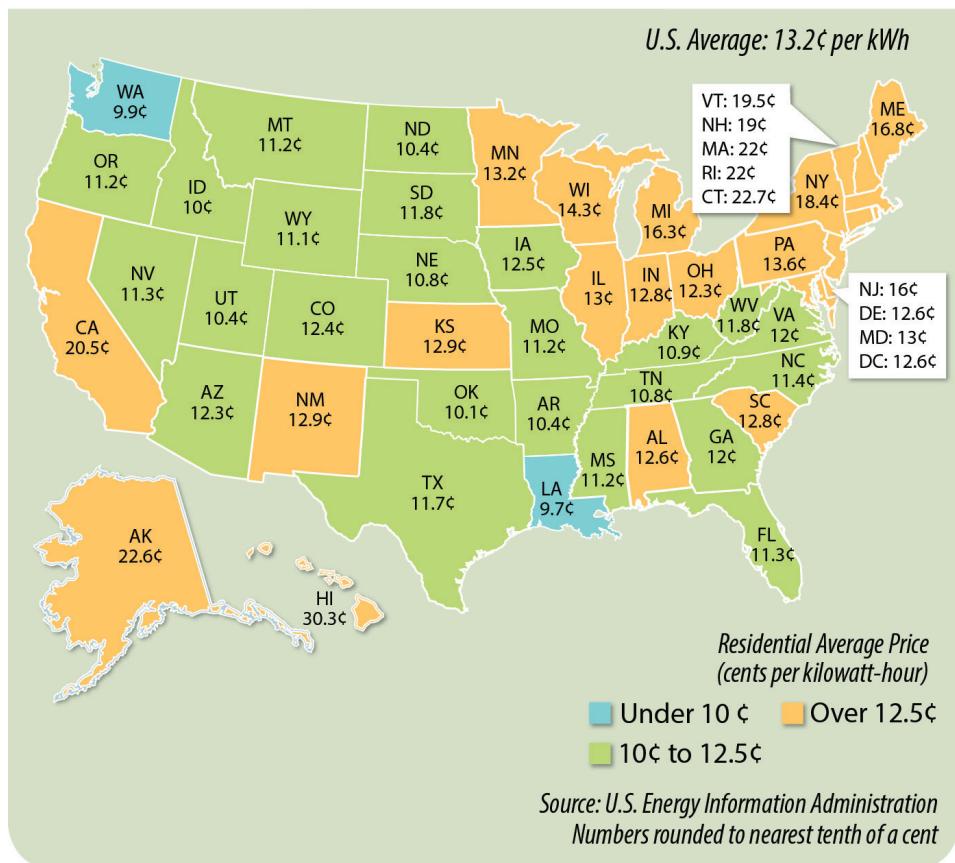


Natural light at your home office desk saves electricity by keeping the lights off. PHOTO BY VERA PETRUNINA

Whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use. Contact Benton REA if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home. ■

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2020 figures, in cents per kWh



Benton REA Buys Land for New Administration Building in West Richland

After years of research, the Benton REA Board of Trustees approved the purchase of 17.79 acres on Keene Road in December 2021. The land will be home to a new Benton REA administration building, with room to add operations facilities, truck bays and storage.

"Due to recent and anticipated growth of the West Richland community and the age of our current facilities, Benton REA is expanding our administrative presence in the community where most of its members live," says Mike Bradshaw, Benton REA general manager.

The Prosser office will remain open to the public. Employees from many departments—including operations—will remain working in the current Prosser facilities while improvements to these buildings are made.

The current West Richland office and facilities will remain fully open while the new building is designed and built.

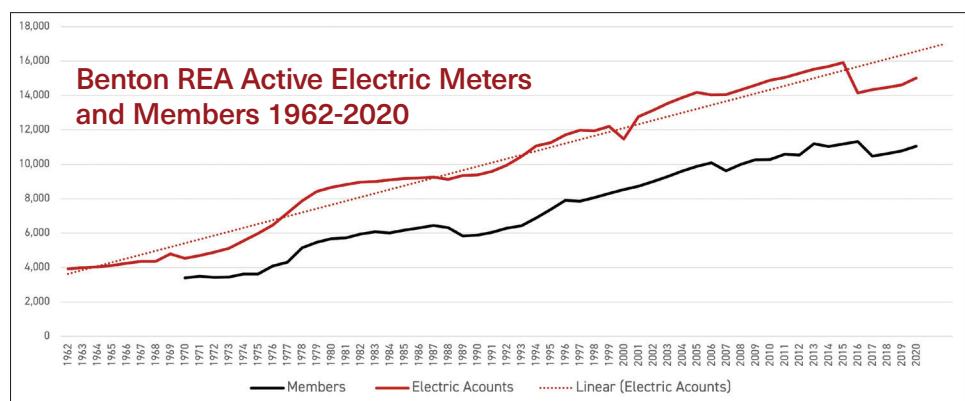
Impact to Members

Members will not see an increase in their price of electricity from Benton REA due to the purchase of land and facility improvements.

"We are adding and remodeling our facilities in a phased approach over many years so we will not require a rate increase to members' electricity bills," Mike says. "Spreading the costs of a major construction project over several years is a financially wise approach."

Growing Pains

Benton REA is outgrowing its current facilities in both Prosser and West Richland. The Prosser office was bought in 1962 when Benton REA served 4,504 accounts with 30 employees. The co-op built the West Richland office in 1997 after it grew to 12,396 accounts and 55 employees.



Benton REA began in 1937 with 80 members. Eighty-five years later, the co-op is still growing. The red line and dotted trend line show the growth of accounts (active meters) from 1962 to 2020. The black line shows the number of Benton REA members over time.

Today, Benton REA employs 73 and provides electricity to 15,828 accounts.

More than 60% of Benton REA electric members reside in the West Richland area. Based on projected growth, the West Richland population may double by 2030. As the co-op grows in membership, it will require more employees to maintain member satisfaction regarding power outage response and all member services.

"A new facility will help attract and keep the best local talent," Mike says.

Sixteen Benton REA employees plan

to retire by 2032 and will need to be replaced.

The building's design is not complete, but members can expect it to include a lobby for member payments and business, offices for Benton REA employees from all departments, up-to-code accessibility and security features and a parking lot. Construction is not expected to begin until 2023.

Benton REA will provide more information to members as the co-op's administration building progresses. ■