

## Your Benton REA Board of Trustees

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# Benton REA 85th Annual Meeting of Members

## ALL MEMBERS INVITED

**Saturday, July 16**

Activities begin at 8:30 a.m.

Business meeting at noon

**Leona Libby Middle School**

3259 Belmont Blvd.

West Richland



- Bingo with prizes
- Tethered hot air balloon rides (weather dependent)
- Breakfast pastries and drinks
- Trucks on display: utility, fire, ambulance and police
- High-voltage electrical safety demonstrations
- Kids activities, prizes
- Electric vehicle showcase
- Energy savings information
- PowerNET internet information



- Face painting
- Hydropower and nuclear energy activities, education
- Free tree giveaway
- Fire safety and preparedness
- Lunch
- Districts 2, 3 election results
- Prizes, \$100 and \$500 electric bill credits, awarded during business meeting
- Free child care during business meeting

## Can't Attend?

At noon, go to [BentonREA.org/YouTube](http://BentonREA.org/YouTube) to watch the business meeting and ask questions. Online attendees cannot receive door prizes nor vote.



**A free event for Benton REA members and their families**  
[www.BentonREA.org/AnnualMeeting](http://www.BentonREA.org/AnnualMeeting)



# ALL BLOOD TYPES NEEDED

## Give Blood, Give Life

### July 27 in West Richland

Police Department  
7920 W. Van Giesen St.  
11 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

### July 28 in Prosser

The Green Room at the Princess  
1226 Meade Ave.  
11 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Use sponsor code "BREA" to schedule your donation  
at [www.RedCrossBlood.org](http://www.RedCrossBlood.org).

**Benton REA offices  
are closed  
Monday, July 4,  
in observance of  
Independence Day.**



### 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](http://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:

Elecia Copenhaver, Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Troy Berglund, Vice President of Member Relations

Shannon Olsen, Assistant Member Relations Manager

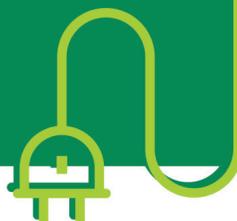
May Hays, Community Relations Coordinator

Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor

Eric Miller, Energy Services Coordinator

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest.



# Know the Signs of A Scam

Consumers have long been targets for utility scams. Fraudsters have changed their tactics since the COVID-19 pandemic began. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers adapted their tactics.

## Imposter Scams

Imposter scams are the No. 1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker for the power company, in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through email, phone or text.

## Disconnection Threat

A scammer may claim you are overdue on your electric bill and threaten to disconnect your service if you don't pay immediately. The scammers want to scare you into immediate payment



Eric Miller, Benton REA's energy advisor always brings his ID badge when visiting a member's home. PHOTO BY ELECIA COPENHAVER

so you don't have time think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you're concerned about your bill, call Benton REA

at 509-786-2913. The Benton REA phone number can also be found at [www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org) and on your electric bill.

If the scam is by email or text, contact Benton REA or log in to your SmartHub account to check your amount due.

Benton REA will never demand immediate payment after just one notice. First, you will receive a billing statement with a past-due balance by mail or email. Then, a Benton REA meter reader will leave a pink door hanger at the property subject to disconnection. If the account is not paid by the date on the door hanger, a serviceman will disconnect the electricity.

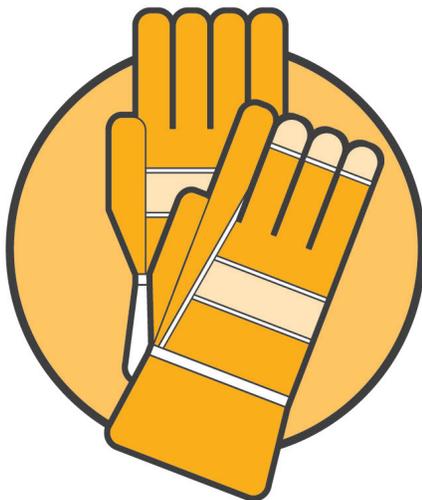
## Refund Scams

Some scammers falsely claim you have been overcharged on your bill and

**SEE SCAM PAGE 4**

## Five Tips for Hiring an Electrician

A licensed electrician can help with a variety of home projects from lighting upgrades to full renovations. Keep the following tips in mind if you're looking to hire an electrician.



### 1. Hire a licensed, qualified electrician for the job.

Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.

### 2. Make sure the electrician is insured.

Seasoned electricians know the importance of protecting themselves in case of an accident.

### 3. Read *all* the reviews.

Hire an electrician that has several positive reviews – not just one or two. Read reviews on different sites, like Nextdoor, Yelp and HomeAdvisor, and consider asking your neighbors for recommendations.

### 4. Determine your budget. Get two quotes.

Knowing your budget upfront helps move the process along. Prices can greatly vary, so get multiple quotes (at least two).

### 5. Talk timeline.

Some electricians accidentally overbook projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.

# Protect Your Home

## 7 Ways Residents Can Reduce the Risk that their Homes & Property Will Become Fuel for a Wildfire

# Scam

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

offer a refund. It sounds easy. All you have to do is click or press a button. If you proceed, you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. Instead of money going into your bank account, the scammers can drain your account and steal your personal information such as your Social Security number.

If this refund scam happens over the phone, hang up and block the phone number to prevent future robocalls.

If this scam attempt occurs via email—known as a phishing attempt—or by text, do not click any links. Instead, delete it, and if possible, block the sender.

If you overpay on your bill, Benton REA will automatically apply the credit to your next billing cycle.

### Defend Yourself Against Scams

Be wary of calls or texts from unknown numbers. Be suspicious of an unknown person claiming to be a utility worker who requests banking or other personal information.

Never let anyone into your home that you don't know unless you have a scheduled appointment. Benton REA employees wear apparel with the cooperative's logo and carry photo ID badges. If you are suspicious, ask to see identification and call Benton REA to verify their employment.

Benton REA wants to help protect the community against utility scams. You can help create the first line of defense. Please report any potential scams to Benton REA so the cooperative can spread the word to prevent others in the community from falling victim. ■

### #1 Clear

Clear off pine needles, dead leaves & anything that can burn from your rooflines, gutters, decks, porches, patios & along fence lines. Falling embers will have nothing to burn.

### #2 Store Away

Store away furniture cushions, rattan mats, potted plants & other decorations from decks, porches & patios. These items catch embers and help ignite your home if you leave them outside.

### #3 Screen & Seal

Wind-borne embers can get into homes easily through vents & other openings and burn the home from the inside out. Walk around your house to see what openings you can screen or temporarily seal up.

### #4 Rake

Embers landing in mulch that touches your house, deck or fence is a big fire hazard. Rake out any landscaping mulch to at least five feet away.

### #5 Trim

Trim back any shrubs or tree branches that come closer than 5 feet to the house and attachments, and any overhanging branches.

### #6 Remove

Walk around your house and remove anything within 30 feet that could burn, such as woodpiles, spare lumber, vehicles and boats – anything that can act as a large fuel source.

### #7 Close

If ordered to evacuate, make sure all windows & doors are closed tightly, and seal up any pet doors. Many homes are destroyed by embers entering these openings and burning the house from the inside out.



NFPA has many more tips and safety recommendations on its websites, including [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).

## Your Benton REA Payment Options



**Online** Click "Pay My Bill" at [BentonREA.org](http://BentonREA.org) to log in to your account.



**Mail** Mail your payment stub and check to P.O. Box 1150, Prosser, WA 99350.



**Mobile App** Download the SmartHub app in your mobile device app store.



**Drop Box** Deliver your payment to our secure drop box at either office.



**AutoPay** Schedule your auto payment on the 8th or 20th of the month.



**In Person** Visit us in West Richland or Prosser, Monday through Friday.



**Phone** Call 844-255-3685 24 hours a day, seven days a week to pay by phone.



**Off-Site Kiosks** Pay with cash, card or check—visit [BentonREA.org](http://BentonREA.org) for locations.