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## Rates Going Up March 1, 2024

Rates were last adjusted 8 years ago



Beginning March 1, Benton REA will charge members more for electric service. While Benton REA has managed to avoid rate increases for eight years, inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs. There has also been significant cost increases for the material, equipment and fuel required to deliver electricity to members.

To ensure the rate adjustments are appropriate, we had an outside consultant conduct a Cost of Service Analysis. The results of the analysis indicated the amount we are charging members for electric service is not enough to cover the increased costs.

We want to help explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices—and energy bills.

Your monthly electric bill has two primary parts: a base charge and an energy consumption charge. To understand your total energy costs and what impacts your bill, let's unpack one piece at a time.

### Base Charge

The fixed monthly base charge covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes equipment, materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in Benton REA's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment.

Like other businesses, we've experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, a standard residential transformer cost \$1,191 in 2016, but now costs

\$3,416. That is an increase of nearly 200%. Because these type of fixed cost increases are causing the need to increase rates, much of the 2024 rate increase will be included in our fixed Base Charge. As a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. Even after the increase, Benton REA's base charge will be the 2nd lowest in the region.

**Current Residential Base Charge: \$12.00**  
**New Residential Base Charge: \$19.50**

### Energy Charge (kWh)

Another component of your monthly bill is the energy charge, which covers how much electricity you consume. You've likely noticed the amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures. When temperatures significantly drop or rise, your heating and cooling equipment run longer, which increases your home energy use.

**Current Residential Energy Charge: \$.0783**  
**New Residential Energy Charge: \$.0799**

### How Can You Learn More About the New Rates?

Benton REA will hold a series of in-person and virtual public meetings to provide members with information about the new rates and allow you to ask questions. Meetings will take place in January. Dates and times are listed on the next page. We hope to see you there. ■

# Do You Have Questions About the New Rates?

Join us for an informational meeting January 16 or 17

Join us for an in-person meeting where we discuss the rate setting process and answer your questions. Two meetings will be held: one in Prosser and one in West Richland.

## PROSSER:

Tuesday, January 16 at 5:30 pm  
Benton REA Office - Boardroom  
402 7th St, Prosser

## WEST RICHLAND:

Wednesday, January 17 at 5:30 pm  
Benton REA Office - Community Room  
6095 W. Van Giesen St, West Richland

If you can't make it to one of our in-person meetings, please join us for a virtual meeting.

## VIRTUAL MEETING:



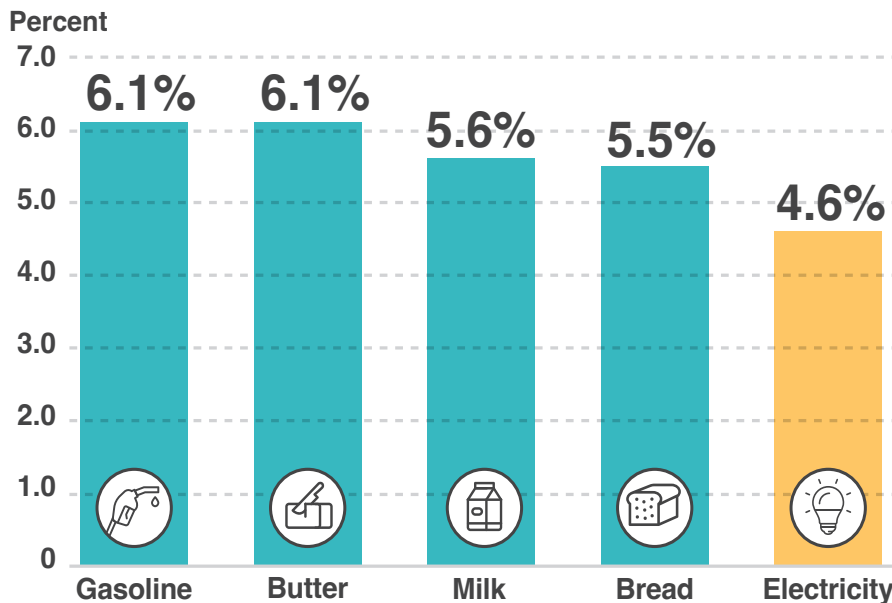
Tuesday, January 16  
5:30 pm

Pre-registration is required to attend the virtual meeting. Email [memberservices@bentonrea.org](mailto:memberservices@bentonrea.org) to receive a link to enter the meeting.

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. If you average out Benton REA's increase of 8% it averages out to 1% per year. Rates were last adjusted in 2016. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

### Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index

## 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. - Thurs. 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
CLOSED FRIDAY

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

Office Hours: Mon.- Thurs., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
CLOSED FRIDAY

Toll Free: 800-221-6987  
[www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org)  
Follow us on Facebook and X

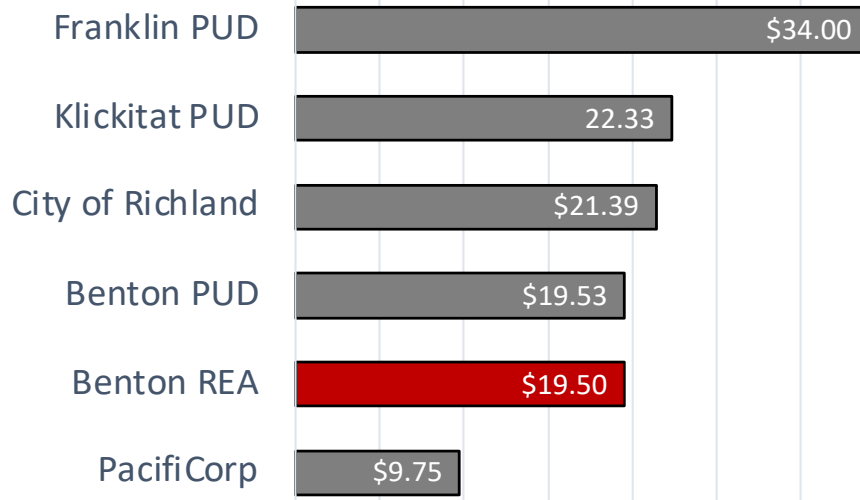
## MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services Department:  
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Troy Berglund, Deputy General Manager & VP of Member Experience  
Shannon Olsen, Member Services Manager  
Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor  
Chad Smith, Energy Efficiency Manager  
Leandra Chavez, Administrative Assistant

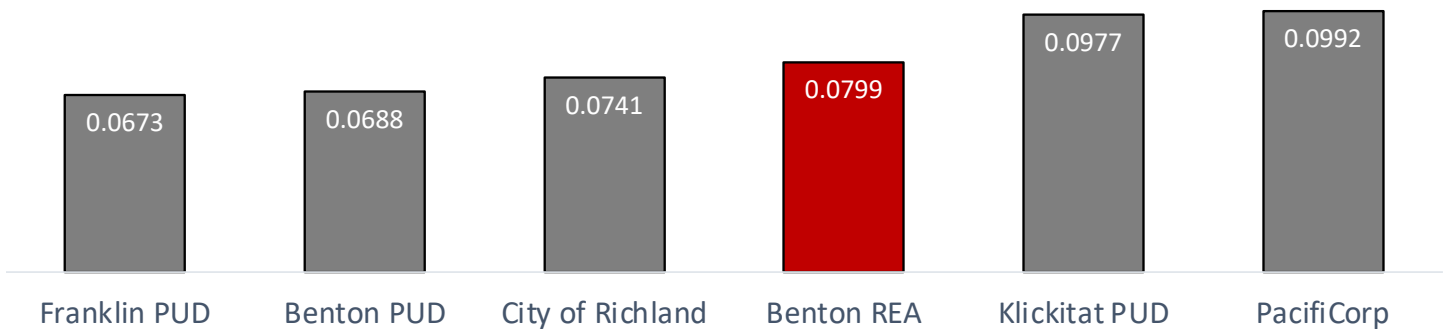
# How Benton REA's Rates Compare



## Base Charge **New Residential Base Charge: \$19.50**



## Energy (kWh) Charge **New Residential Energy Charge: \$.0799**



## What to Expect on Your Bill

Because this rate increase does not go into effect until March 1, 2024 you won't see a difference until you receive a bill in April.

Below is a comparison using an average members' energy use of 1500 kWh. The chart on the left shows what your bill would look like today. On the right is the calculation showing the increase in

the Base Charge and the Energy Charge (taxes are not shown).

Using this scenario of 1500 kWh of energy use, a member's bill will increase \$9.90 per billing cycle.

Benton REA does not bill its residential members a demand charge. Rates are the same all year long.

Average Household Use of 1,500 kWh	
Current Rates	
Base Charge	\$ 12.00
Energy Charge	\$ .0783
Base Charge	\$ 12.00
Energy Charge (1500 x .0783)	\$117.45
	<b>\$129.45</b>

Average Household Use of 1,500 kWh	
Beginning March 1, 2024	
Base Charge	<b>\$ 19.50</b>
Energy Charge	<b>\$ .0799</b>
Base Charge	\$ 19.50
Energy Charge (1500 x .0799)	\$119.85
	<b>\$139.35</b>

Additional rate schedules are available by calling our member experience representatives at 509-786-2913 or emailing [memberservices@bentonrea.org](mailto:memberservices@bentonrea.org).



# Programs to Help You Pay Your Electric Bill

Benton REA has programs available to help you pay your electric bill. We understand that life can be tough and it's easy to fall behind. We want to make sure you can get back on your feet, by offering financial assistance and guiding you to the right services.

Please contact a member experience representative to find out what services are best for you. They are available Monday - Thursday from 7am to 5pm at **509-786-2913** or **memberservices@bentonrea.org**.



## Senior Discount Program

To ease the financial burden caused by energy costs on low-income senior residential members, Benton REA offers a discount of \$24 each month to qualifying members.

### Qualifications:

- Combined annual household income that is equal to or less than 200% of the Washington State Poverty guideline for two-member households.
- Applicants must be 62 years of age or older.

## Disability Discount Program

If you are a disabled residential member and meet the income guidelines you can receive a discount of \$24 each month.

### Qualifications:

- Combined annual household income that is equal to or less than 200% of the Washington State Poverty guideline for two-member households.
- Applicant must provide proof of disability through a current "Social Security Administration Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance Statement" for the applicable periods.

## Power to Care

Residential members who have a past due balance on their electric account or have received a disconnection notice may qualify for assistance through our Power to Care fund.

To receive Power to Care funds you must:

- Have electric service under our residential rate schedule.
- Have a combined annual gross household income equal to or less than 200% of the federal poverty guideline income level based on the number of people in the household.

Bill assistance will be granted as a credit on the qualifying members' electric account once per calendar year. The amount received depends on the family size, household income and amount due on the electric account.



## Washington 2-1-1

Dial 211 from anywhere in Washington State and you will reach a highly-trained information and referral specialist who will assess your needs and provide a list of referrals to available resources in your community. Washington 211 has a database of over 27,000 resources to help you find the right services.