



Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative

## SEDGWICK COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# currentnews

### Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative

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### FROM THE MANAGER

## Energy Market Under Constant Change

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in more green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever.

The changing energy market has created more options for consumers and, unfortunately, more options for utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations in particular. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating or water service, especially now in these uncharted times. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or inferior products and services.

#### Avoid Phone Scams

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action.

The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

Scammers are taking advantage of the current pandemic by developing new ways to scam co-op members. Kentucky electric cooperatives recently reported scams in which the scammers contact co-ops members telling them they've overpaid their account and will receive a refund. The co-op member is then asked for their bank account information so the "overpayment" can be returned.

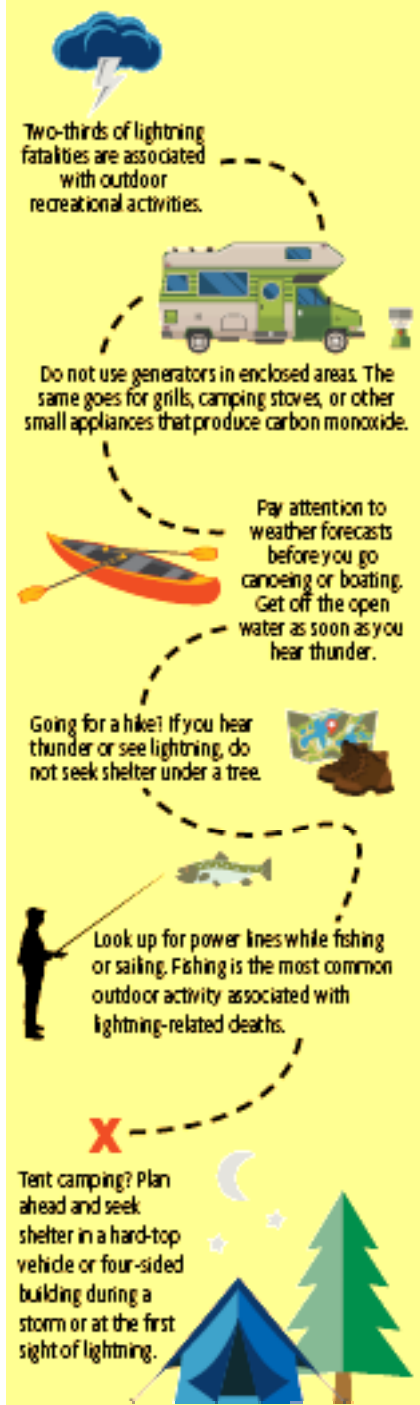


Scott Ayres

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## LOVE THE OUTDOORS? BE SAFE OUT THERE.



## Smart Thermostat Options

### A Comparison of the Market's Smartest and Most Popular

Heating and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8-15%, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule, and some are designed for complex multi-stage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing — using your phone's GPS to determine if you're home — to automatically adjust the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee offer remote sensors for purchase that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can

be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further with occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house, in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those 10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwire installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around \$135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever.

# Energy Market Under Constant Change

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You can combat these scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not initiate a call with. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at 316-542-3131 or Toll Free 866-542-4732. Do not use the return phone number given by the scammer.

## Avoid Solar Scams

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade or extended warranty to their solar array. The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop

solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

## Use Trusted Sources

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy adviser — your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members. We're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills — we're here to help.

# Co-op Sponsors Pedal Tractor Pull

For the 19th consecutive year, Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative will host the Pedal Tractor Pull at the Sedgwick County Fair on July 11.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. at the Sedgwick County Fairgrounds, just east of the open-air arena, and the pull begins at 10 a.m.

Children from ages 4 to 11 are eligible to participate. There is no entry fee. Participants are required to wear shoes and must have a parent or legal guardian present to register. Top finishers will advance to the tractor pull event at the State Fair in Hutchinson.



# Managing Your Electric Bill Just Got SMARTER

SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.

## What is SmartHub?

SmartHub is account management at your fingertips! SmartHub lets you manage all aspects of your electric account online or with your mobile device including viewing your daily usage. Creating a SmartHub account takes less than three minutes. Enter your email address and password to create an account and you're ready to begin.

## How do I sign up for SmartHub?

If you are already enrolled in e-bill, simply enter your current login information and password. If you are new to the system, click on the SmartHub link on our homepage to create a new account or call us during office hours to speak with one of our representatives. We look forward to talking with you!

## How do I get the App for my phone?

Simply look for our name in the Apple Store® or in the Android® Market. Search for SmartHub (not case sensitive but must be all one word); if duplicates appear the correct app is provided by our partner, National Information Solutions Cooperative.



[sedgwickcountyelectric.coop](http://sedgwickcountyelectric.coop)

# SUMMER ENERGY SAVINGS WORD SEARCH

When you save energy at home, you're helping your family save money and protecting our environment.

READ THE ENERGY-SAVING TIPS BELOW, THEN FIND AND CIRCLE THE **BOLDED WORDS** IN THE PUZZLE.



I	D	E	S	N	I	A	T	R	U	C	G	W	W	E
S	F	B	L	J	Z	S	M	H	R	R	B	S	K	S
G	H	G	S	E	B	O	R	V	S	Z	N	O	S	D
G	M	M	C	E	C	K	Z	G	I	D	M	C	L	T
J	A	A	T	G	Z	T	M	Q	I	B	H	M	O	W
T	D	L	X	J	L	H	R	S	I	L	T	E	W	I
M	J	C	O	E	P	Y	H	O	V	E	I	U	C	N
T	X	J	Y	H	G	W	X	A	N	F	A	A	O	J
R	F	K	E	H	A	L	T	A	L	I	L	U	O	D
K	E	S	X	S	H	Q	B	S	L	V	C	Z	K	W
J	C	T	H	G	F	M	X	Z	R	A	O	S	E	T
M	C	E	A	C	Z	I	G	V	Q	E	R	E	R	F
C	R	G	K	W	O	A	T	N	O	Z	F	I	S	T
Y	C	R	I	T	E	B	O	H	E	M	D	Y	F	Q
P	H	O	N	E	C	H	A	R	G	E	R	S	C	H

- ▶ Close blinds and **curtains** on hot, sunny days to block additional heat from entering your home.
- ▶ Turn off lights and **electronics**, like TVs and stereos, when you leave a room.
- ▶ Turn off the **water** while you brush your teeth.
- ▶ Only clean full loads of dishes when you run the **dishwasher**.
- ▶ Cooking with smaller appliances like **slow cookers** and toaster ovens uses less energy than larger appliances.
- ▶ Unplug **phone chargers** when they're not in use — they consume energy even when they aren't charging devices.