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**4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

# CURRENTS

**4 RIVERS**  
Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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*This cooperative is an equal opportunity employer and provider.*



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## Know the Signs of a Scam

It's no secret that consumers with a water, gas or an electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams, but scammers have changed their tactics since the COVID-19 pandemic. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers noted these shifts and adapted their tactics to this changed environment.

Imposter scams are the most common types of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker who works for the "power company," in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through an electronic device via email, phone or text.

### Common Types of Scams

A scammer may claim you are past due on your electric bill and threaten to disconnect your service if you do not

pay immediately. Whether this is done in-person or by phone, text or email, the scammers want to scare you into immediate payment, so you do not have time to think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you are concerned about your bill, call us at 620-364-2116 or 800-748-7395. Our phone number can always be found on your monthly bill and at [www.4riverselectric.com](http://www.4riverselectric.com). If the scam is by email or text, delete it before taking any action. Remember, 4 Rivers Electric will never attempt to collect immediate payment without prior notice of a past due bill via mail or phone call. If you are unsure of your account status, you can always call us or use the SmartHub app to double check your account and keep your contact information up-to-date.

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

**Continued on page 12C ►**

## 2021 Capital Credits Allocated

You may have noticed a notification about your 2021 capital credit allocation amount on your June electric bill. As a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative, margins are allocated annually to members based on that member's kWh usage for that particular year. The capital credits allocated to a member reflect their equity in 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative. When the board of trustees approves a general retirement of capital credits for certain years, those allocated funds are distributed back to those who were members during the time frame being retired. Active members typically receive their retirement as a credit on their electric bill, while former members will receive a check in the mail. For this reason, it is important to keep your mailing address current even if you move and are no longer a cooperative member. Please let us know if you have any questions.

# Preventing Costly Copper Theft BY PAUL WESSLUND

Strange things start happening when the world price of copper skyrockets to record levels like it did this year.

An Arkansas hospital faced a possible delay in opening when thieves stole copper wiring at a construction site; hundreds of West Virginia homes and businesses lost phone and Wi-Fi service when a copper-filled cable was stolen from the region's internet provider; and 700 streetlights went out in Los Angeles when thieves made off with 370,000 feet of copper wire.

Copper is incredibly useful. It's flexible and conducts electricity well. It's a staple for utilities and is used to make nearly every type of electronic device. Copper's nontoxic nature and resistance to corrosion also make it useful in plumbing.

## A Risk to Public Safety

So, there's a lot of it around, and over the decades when copper prices have gone up, the thieves have come out. Copper theft can have consequences way beyond just the inconvenience of stolen property.

According to a 2008 FBI report, copper thieves threaten critical infrastructure by targeting electrical substations, cellular towers, telephone land lines, railroads, water wells, construction sites and vacant homes for lucrative profits. Copper theft from these targets disrupts the flow of electricity, telecommunications, transportation, water supply, heating and security and emergency services. It also presents a risk to both public safety and national security.

Copper crimes can result in death, with regular reports of thieves being electrocuted while removing wire from utility poles or substations. Stealing copper also threatens the lives of utility workers by disconnecting critical safety devices.

Copper theft has been a regular problem for utilities and even private

homes under construction. Theft cases started increasing dramatically in 2001 when the construction boom in China sent demand, and prices, for copper shooting skyward.

## Copper is the New Oil

The copper price and theft rate has fluctuated since then but started going up again a year ago for two reasons: the economic recovery from the pandemic and demand for renewable energy.

As the use of solar energy and wind power grows, more copper wiring will be needed to carry the electricity it produces. There's a lot more copper wiring in an electric vehicle than one that runs on gasoline. Copper's value to greener power has led some observers to refer to it as "the new oil."

Last year, copper prices hit a record high. In March of this year, they went even higher. Copper's continued importance to utilities, the economy and to criminals, has led to a greater focus on preventing thefts.

Laws have been toughened over the past 20 years, and now all 50 states have statutes in place to reduce copper theft. Many of those laws, including the Scrap Metal Theft Reduction Act in Kansas, focus on making sure that scrap metal dealers know the source of the copper they're buying. Companies

have developed ways to secure wiring in air conditioning units and come up with coatings that can identify stolen property. Some copper products are being stamped with identifying codes, and video surveillance is being added to areas with a lot of copper.

Electric utilities, including cooperatives, have placed special emphasis on preventing copper theft. Over the years, utilities have launched public awareness campaigns, offered rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of thieves, marked copper wire for easier recovery from scrap metal dealers and collaborated with stakeholders. In addition, law enforcement has become more responsive to electric utilities facing copper theft and collaborate with utilities to recover more stolen copper and arrest those responsible.

You can also help. Many copper thieves have been captured when observant citizens saw something suspicious and called 911.

**PAUL WESSLUND** writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

## Did you know?

Copper's properties make it a major industrial metal. It ranks third in consumption after iron and aluminum.

- ▶ High flexibility
- ▶ Conformity
- ▶ Thermal and electrical conductivity
- ▶ Resistance to corrosion.

SOURCE: NATIONAL MINING ASSOCIATION



# Know the Signs of a Scam Continued from page 12A ▶

and say they want to give a refund. All you must do is click or press a button to initiate the process — sounds simple enough. If you proceed, you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. However, instead of money going into your bank account, the scammers can drain your account and use personal information such as a social security number for identity theft.

If this “refund” scam happens over the phone, just hang up. While you may feel compelled to block the phone number, scammers may be spoofing legitimate phone numbers and blocking that number could potentially block the legitimate business. If this scam attempt occurs via email, known as a “phishing” attempt, or by text — “smishing”; do not click any links. Instead, delete it, and if possible, mark the contact as spam. When in doubt, simply contact our office.

## Defend Yourself Against Scams

Be wary of calls or texts from unknown or unexpected numbers. Be suspicious of an unknown person claiming to be a utility worker who requests banking or other personal information. 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative employees will never ask for banking information over the phone.

Never let anyone you do not know into your home unless you have a scheduled appointment, or you have reported a problem. 4 Rivers employees wear uniforms with the co-op logo and always identify themselves when performing field work.

We want to help protect our community against utility scams, and you can help as the first line of defense. Please report any potential scams to us so we can spread the word to prevent others in the community from falling victim.

## Increased Energy Efficiency Reduces Consumption Lowering Energy Bills

As temperatures spike, there are steps you can take to save money on energy bills this summer.

According to the Department of Energy, a typical home uses 48% of energy expenditures on the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Though a majority of that figure is spent on heating, Americans still spend \$29 billion annually to power air conditioners.

Aside from replacing your central air conditioner with a newer, high-efficiency model, there are things you can do to increase efficiency and reduce your energy bills.

Besides weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors in your home (always a good idea regardless of the time of year), consider the following:

- ▶ Close curtains, blinds and shades during the hottest part of the day. About a third of a home's energy is lost around windows, and about 76% of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters the home to become heat, according to energy.gov.
- ▶ Install a programmable or smart thermostat. You can save up to 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day, according to energy.gov.

- ▶ Clean the filter and have your unit inspected by a HVAC professional.
- ▶ In your landscaping, incorporate shade trees and plants that insulate the foundation to reduce energy costs.
- ▶ Ventilate the attic and check insulation. Adequately sized vents and an attic fan can help prevent hot air from building up. If your attic has less than 6 to 8 inches of insulation, consider adding more. By addressing air leaks around your home and adding insulation, homeowners can save around 10% annually on energy bills, according to energystar.gov.

Get a pre-season checkup by a professional HVAC technician and make sure your outdoor condenser unit is clean and free of debris.

Use your clothes dryer and oven during the cooler parts of the day.

Consider a professional energy audit to reveal where your home is inefficient, including air leaks and exposed duct work.

As mentioned in last month's CEO article, helping your cooperative shave the summer demand peak has a direct impact on power costs, which is reflected in the power cost adjustment on consumer-member bills. You can help beat the peak by reducing electricity consumption from 3-6 p.m. on hot days.

## Welcome Summer Interns

Completing an internship is a standard part of an electrical lineworker program. 4 Rivers welcomed two interns this summer.

**CODY BEAL** is from Burlington and attends school at Manhattan Area Technical College. He is working with crews in the north district this summer.

**FORREST DOWELL** lives in Fredonia and attends the lineworker program at Coffeyville Community College in conjunction with Pratt Community College.

He is working with crews in the south district this summer.

4 Rivers Operations Supervisor Larry McVey says that internships with the cooperative are a win-win.

“The students receive valuable hands-on training with real-world applications as they primarily work with the construction crews doing pole replacements, line maintenance and new service installations; and the cooperative has extra help in the field during the busy summer months, while training a new generation of lineworkers,” McVey said. “We are happy to be a part of that.”



Cody Beal



Forrest Dowell

## 4 Rivers Youth Attend KEY Leadership Conference

**HAYDEN SIDES** and **SHELBY STARBUCK** were among 17 Kansas student delegates to attend the Kansas Electric Youth (KEY) Leadership Conference, held June 5-8 in Topeka. Sides, a senior from Burlington High School, and Starbuck, a senior from Fredonia Junior Senior High School were selected to represent 4 Rivers at this exclusive leadership conference through a competitive application process that evaluated the leadership ability, community involvement and academic accomplishments of each candidate. The KEY Leadership Conference was created as an alternative to the long-standing Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., as a safer alternative during the pandemic.

"4 Rivers Electric is honored to sponsor our co-op's youth in developing their leadership capabilities at the KEY Leadership Conference," said Member Services Representative Austin Birk. "We continue to look to programs like these to provide our future leaders tools to advocate for their cooperative communities throughout their professional lives."

The four-day conference focused on the fundamentals of leadership and hands-on engagement with students representing Kansas communities. Activities included a night tour of the State Capitol, electric safety demonstration at FreeState Electric, and tour of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Site. The students attended interactive workshops to help

prepare them for success as future leaders, including seminars on online reputation management, budgeting and investment, energy efficiency, and the transition between high school and higher education.

Student leaders explored how to be a force for political action with state legislators Rep. Steven Johnson and Rep. Kyle Hoffman, alumni of the electric cooperative youth programs. They answered questions from the students ranging in topics from describing a typical day in the life of a legislator, why they decided to enter public service, and school and career advice.

Other speaker highlights included Kansas City Chiefs mascot Dan Meers with an inspiring presentation titled Wolves Can't Fly.

For Hayden, attending the conference as a representative of his cooperative was a motivating experience.

"I was affected hearing from all the speakers and co-ops about how much faith they have in us to lead our generation," Hayden said.

Shelby also appreciated meeting with legislators and learning about cooperatives, saying, "This conference has inspired me to lead in my community, not only through my school and clubs, but as a person."



Shelby Starbuck reads about the history of the Brown v. Board of Education court case.



Students representing co-ops around the state toured the Kansas State Capitol on June 6.

At the conclusion of the conference, Landry George sponsored by Heartland Electric Cooperative, was announced as the 2023 Kansas representative to the NRECA Youth Leadership Council based on a vote from the KEY Leadership student delegation.

After attending the KEY Leadership Conference, students are eligible to apply for the KEC Auxiliary Scholarship and the NRECA Glenn English Scholarship. For more information about the KEY Leadership Conference or other cooperative youth programs, contact Austin Birk at 620-364-2116 or visit [www.4riverselectric.com](http://www.4riverselectric.com).



## Budget Billing

Members enrolled in budget billing received a biannual adjustment on their most recent bills issued in June. The bills issued in May noted the new budget amounts that would be coming the following month.

Budget billing is one of many payment options the cooperative offers. Some may have heard this type of billing called "even payment plan" or

"level billing". This option gives members a more consistent payment each month by considering an account's usage history and fees. The accounts are reassessed twice per year, and the payment amount is updated to reflect any changes to the usage/fees and avoid a large credit or balance on any accounts. Call us if you are interested in signing up for budget billing.