

# NEWS



## Pass the RURAL Act

Congress created a problem for electric co-ops when it made changes to the tax code in 2017. The changes were targeted at for-profit companies in an effort to end federal tax-free treatment of state incentives.

The statute has a provision that classifies federal, state and local grants to co-ops as non-member income. These grants were previously classified as capital. Federal law has long required co-ops get 85% of their income from members. Assistance from government and other nonprofits wasn't counted in

the remaining 15%, but the revised tax code changed that, making it more difficult for co-ops to meet the requirement.

The 2017 tax law inadvertently put nonprofit co-ops in the position of having to decide whether or not to risk their tax-exempt status to accept grants, including those from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to restore power after storms, floods, fires, earthquakes or other disasters.

The loss of tax-exempt status could have stuck co-op members with the cost of paying taxes had Congress not fixed the problem by passing legislation known as the RURAL Act, making it clear electric co-ops won't lose their tax-exempt status just because they receive government grants. At press time, the bill had passed through the U.S. House of



Keath and Ashley Christy

Representatives and the Senate and was awaiting President Trump's signature.

The bill, introduced by Reps. Terri Sewell (D-Ala.) and Adrian Smith (R-Neb.) and Sens. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Tina Smith (D-Minn.), in April ensures co-ops do not jeopardize their tax-exempt status when they accept government grants.



Tom Huber and Jace Winder



Sondra Kats



Dean Wiseman



Monica Kats



Jeff Hardiek

## 2019 County Tax Distribution

Prairie Land Electric paid more than **\$2.5 MILLION** in property taxes in 2019. This amount is an increase of **\$126,308.36** from taxes paid last year. The details below show the amount of taxes paid to each county.

Although your cooperative signs the check that pays for the property taxes, we realize that you, our members, actually pay the bill. We want to report where your money goes when you make a payment each month. A fair portion of that check goes to pay property taxes and that in turn helps the communities in our area.

### 2019 Property Taxes

County	2019	2018	% Change
Cheyenne	\$157,229.08	\$159,376.48	-1.35%
Clay	\$7,751.20	\$7,103.34	9.12%
Cloud	\$327,641.82	\$309,394.98	5.90%
Decatur	\$162,061.98	\$161,473.45	0.36%
Graham	\$144,581.66	\$135,437.60	6.75%
Jewell	\$102,302.81	\$95,378.21	7.26%
Mitchell	\$74,707.45	\$68,840.51	8.52%
Norton	\$390,424.58	\$375,729.80	3.91%
Osborne	\$72,368.42	\$66,702.94	8.49%
Phillips	\$412,302.95	\$383,581.66	7.49%
Rawlins	\$120,355.18	\$119,414.41	0.79%
Republic	\$126,439.14	\$120,418.52	5.00%
Rooks	\$174,719.58	\$160,983.44	8.53%
Sheridan	\$29,775.01	\$30,909.73	-3.67%
Sherman	\$564.88	\$516.34	9.40%
Smith	\$184,104.25	\$171,222.09	7.52%
Thomas	\$190.78	\$176.62	8.02%
Washington	\$121,800.88	\$116,353.17	4.68%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$2,609,321.65</b>	<b>\$2,483,013.29</b>	<b>5.09%</b>

## Hespe Completes 20 Years

Congratulations to **MARSHALL HESPE** for completing 20 years of employment with Prairie Land.

Hespe was hired on Jan. 17, 2000, working with the construction crew in Bird City. In 2005, he advanced to construction crew foreman, the position he currently holds.

Hespe and his wife, Kendra, have five children: Gus, 17; Nellie, 16; Isabelle, 13; Maximus, 10; and Magnus, 5.

In his spare time, he enjoys hunting, fishing and spending time with family.



**Marshall Hespe**  
20 Years

## Apply Now for 2020 Youth Tour Contest

Deadline to Apply is Jan. 10



During the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., students meet with elected officials. Next year's tour will be June 18-25, 2020.

If you are a high school junior and would like to increase your leadership skills, meet new friends and travel, apply for an all-expense-paid trip to the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., or to the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, sponsored by Prairie Land. **THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, JAN. 10.**

For more information and an application, contact Anna Foley at Prairie Land: 800-577-3323 or afoley@ple.coop.



Each year, campers go rafting during Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Next year's camp is scheduled for July 10-16, 2020.

# Why is My Power Out?

When power goes out, we are working hard to restore it.

We hate it when the power goes out just as much as you do. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible.

Many times, the reasons for outages are beyond our control. Here are the main reasons the power goes out:

**Storms** – Conditions brought on by storms such as high winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service. Lightning itself does not impact outages as much as people think, but it can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can cause a problem if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer. Strong high winds and ice that accumulates on lines can also impact distribution.

**Trees and Vegetation** – Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines and vegetation (such as vines) can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. Ice and wind can make matters worse. This is why we continuously work to keep rights of way near power lines and equipment clear.

**Animals** – It is estimated that 11% of all outages are caused by our furry friend the squirrel. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Other critters like turkeys, snakes and seagulls can interfere with service too.

**Accidents** – Cars, trucks and farm equipment that collide with a utility pole can cause an outage.

**Public Damage** – Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism or



KLIM SERGEEV ON UNSPLASH

theft can all cause interruptions in the energy chain.

**Overload** – This happens where demand spikes, such as when too many air conditioners run on a hot summer day, causing blackouts or brownouts.

**Equipment issues** – We maintain and inspect all of our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions and we address those problems as soon as they happen.

Please contact Prairie Land Electric at 785-877-3323 or toll-free at 785-577-3323, with questions about outages or to learn more about the steps we take to provide reliable service.

## KILOWATT TIPS

### Up the Chimney

There's nothing quite like the warmth and ambiance of a fireplace in the winter. But although they are attractive to look at and enjoyable to sit near, some fireplaces can actually waste energy.



Kilowatt

Fireplaces can be inefficient because they draw heated air up the chimney, pull outside air into the home and cause your main heating system to work harder and longer.

If you want to use a fireplace for heat, get glass fireplace doors to act as a barrier against warm air being pulled up the chimney. The glass allows the heat from the fire to radiate into the room. Because glass doors reduce the amount of conditioned air that is drawn up the chimney, they also reduce the infiltration of outside air into the home.

### New Year's Resolution for Electrical Safety

Even if you do not traditionally make resolutions, Prairie Land has one resolution you should consider — protecting yourself and your home from electrical hazards.

The following tips from Prairie Land will help you keep your home safe from electrical accidents:

- ▶ Check for loose-fitting plugs, which can be a shock or fire hazard.
- ▶ Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed.
- ▶ Make sure unused outlets are covered.
- ▶ If your appliances or electronics have given you shocks, blown a fuse or tripped breakers, replace them.
- ▶ Use surge protectors to protect expensive equipment.

**KILOWATT** was adopted by Prairie Land after the December 2006 ice storm. She now brings you energy and safety tips each month.

## JAN. 4 Cut Your Energy Costs Day

By sealing uncontrolled air leaks in your home, you can save **10%-20%** on heating and cooling bills.



# ENERGY SAVINGS WORD SEARCH

Did you know there are many ways you can help save energy in your home?

Read the energy efficiency tips below and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle.



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

- Turn off **lights** any time you leave a room.
- Keep the **refrigerator** door closed to save energy.
- Wash **clothing** in cold water to reduce the load on your **water heater**.
- Unplug items that consume **electricity** even when they're not in use, like cell phone **chargers** and coffee makers. These are known as "phantom load" **electronics**.
- Take **showers** instead of baths – showers require less **water** use.