



Connection

Communicating local energy news to Four County Electric members

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

inside
Four County
Connection



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Get the Scoop

About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip all windows to seal air leaks. When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: Dept. of Energy

Five Reasons We Love Serving Our Members

February may be the shortest month, but it's packed with special observances like Presidents' Day, Black History Month and Valentine's Day. But they all have something in common. They were created to draw attention to a particular issue or theme.



Valentine's Day isn't just for the love-birds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends, family, co-workers and other special people in our lives know we care about them—with or without a store-bought greeting card. So, in that vein, we've created our list of top five reasons why we love serving you, the members of Four County EMC.

1 We love serving our members because without you, the co-op wouldn't exist. Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, responsible and safe electricity. Simply put, Four County EMC exists to serve you. That's why we were formed in 1937—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.

2 You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back. A major part of our mission is to serve our community and look after the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through Operation Round-Up which supports local non-profit organizations providing assistance to members in need.

3 Members of our co-op also serve on the board of directors. They provide guidance for setting co-op priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the

larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. The broader co-op membership provides helpful input through their vote on director elections and by weighing in on co-op and community issues.

4 You help us get it right. Four County EMC members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature can occasionally throw us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to safely restore power. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees.

5 You and other Four County EMC members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community. Our employees live and work here too and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested and work to help it thrive. That's why the cooperative donates to local charities, schools, and scholarship funds and why we invest in economic development.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, want to see it continue to thrive.

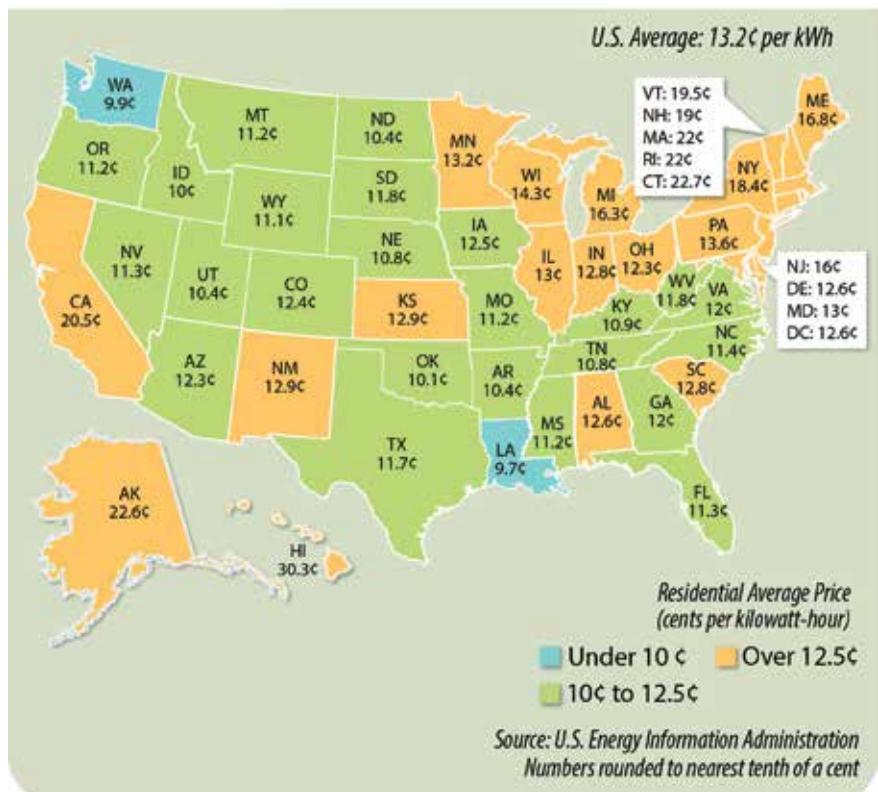


No Rate Increase for 2022

In addition to awarding more than \$2 million in Capital Credits to our members in December 2021, Four County EMC will not seek a rate increase this year. “Keeping costs under control, careful budgeting, and managing interest have allowed us to keep the same rate we've had since 2013, which is lower than the average rate for North Carolina,” says CEO Don Gatton. “Our goal has always been, and will continue to be, to provide superior service and to do so at the lowest possible cost.”

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2020 figures, in cents per kWh



Middle School Students: Apply Now for a Summer Sports Camp Scholarship

Summer basketball camps are back in action. Four County EMC is awarding two local students with scholarships to the Carolina Basketball School and the Wolfpack Women’s Basketball Camp. Both are scheduled for June 2022. Applications are open now through March 31 to eligible rising sixth and seventh graders.

For more information and to apply, visit ncelectriccooperatives.com/sportscamps.



Four County EMC EV Charging Station Opens in Bladen County

Four County EMC recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new EV charger at its Elizabethtown district office to celebrate the first public EV charging station in Bladen County.

CEO Don Gatton opened the ceremony, followed by remarks from Diane Huis, senior vice president of innovation and business development for North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives, and Dane Rideout,



CEO Don Gatton gets things started

Elizabethtown's town manager. Four County EMC Directors Kenneth Thornton Jr. and Ronald Allen cut the ribbon.

This EV station is one of three new Level 2 chargers recently installed by the cooperative utilizing the DEQ grants funded with money from the Volkswagen emissions settlement. The other new chargers are located at the Rose Hill district office and FCEMC's headquarters in Burgaw. The cooperative now has five charging stations available to the public.

There has been a 50% increase in EV registrations in North Carolina



in the last year, according to Huis. "We appreciate co-ops like Four County for their innovation and willingness to add these new technologies."

Gatton says, "With EVs becoming more prevalent, we and other co-ops are working to provide the charging stations necessary to meet this growing demand. These public charging stations may encourage our members to consider an EV and increases tourism opportunities for EV drivers considering traveling to our area."

After the ceremony, guests could check out or take a test drive in one of the EVs brought in for the event.



Keep Your Home Energy Efficient During Cold Weather

Four County EMC provides tools and tips for managing winter energy use

While winter's cold weather almost always means higher home energy use, the good news is Four County EMC has tools to help keep your home energy use, and budget, under control.

Here are some tips to help you save both energy and money when cold weather strikes:

- **Seal air leaks:** Use weather stripping or caulk to seal any cracks or gaps around windows, doors and thresholds. Also check your ceiling – make sure that fans and light fixtures are properly sealed to the ceiling to prevent the air in your home from escaping into the attic.
- **Inspect your insulation:** Ensure you have adequate insulation in your attic. This helps keep warm air in your house, rather than allowing it to escape into the attic.
- **Set your thermostat:** Lower the setting on your thermostat to 68 degrees, or as low as is comfortable, and maintain that temperature setting throughout the winter. Your heater has to work harder when temperatures are frigid, so lower temperature settings can lead to savings. Stay warm by wearing layers and adding extra blankets to beds.
- **Switch to LED lighting:** LEDs are more efficient than incandescent bulbs and Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs). Make the switch to LED bulbs in your home, and enjoy increased efficiency that will create savings now and all year round.
- **Save hot water:** It takes energy to heat water, and you can save by adjusting your water heater's setting to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, installing high-efficiency showerheads and washing clothes in cold water.
- **Have your HVAC unit serviced:** Ideally, you should

schedule a service in the spring and fall - right before the unit is needed most - to ensure that it functions at top capacity during times of high usage.

- **Get a home energy audit:** Kick off the year with a free home energy audit. Our energy experts can guide you on ways to make your home more energy and cost-efficient.

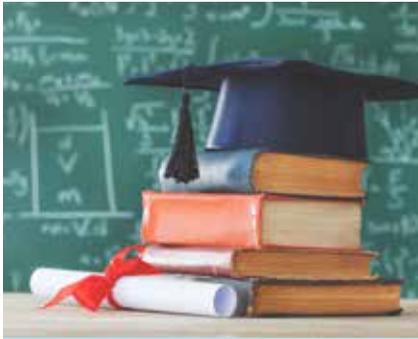
Four County EMC also offers services to help members manage energy use during colder-than-normal temperatures, such as:

- **Mobile App:** Track your energy use from your smartphone to keep heating and energy-related costs in check.
- **High-Use Alerts:** Sign up for text or email alerts that let you know when your energy use reaches a certain level.
- **Prepay and Levelized:** Four County offers prepaid and levelized billing services to help spread out your energy payments instead of having to pay the high costs that cold weather brings at one time.
- **Energy Efficiency Rebates/Loans:** If you need a new heat pump or other home appliance, Four County offers rebates/loans to help offset their cost. You'll also save money year-round through the increased energy efficiency these products provide.

Visit fourcty.org or call us at 888-368-7289 to learn more about these resources that can help you manage your energy use during the cold winter months and throughout the year.



CO-OP CONNECTIONS BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



High School Students: Apply Now for Community College Scholarships

Each year, Four County EMC awards \$10,000 in scholarships to students through the scholarship foundations of four community colleges in our service area. For the full application process and eligibility requirements, interested students should contact one of the community colleges listed below:

Bladen County

Bladen Community College
910-879-5567
sbenson@bladencc.edu
Scholarship deadline: April 15

Duplin County

James Sprunt Community College
910-275-6152
adgraham@jamesprunt.edu
Scholarship deadline: April 30

Pender County

Cape Fear Community College
910-362-7331
kpinder@cfcc.edu
Scholarship deadline: May 1

Sampson County

Sampson Community College
910-592-8081
lturlington@sampsoncc.edu
Scholarship deadline: April 15



Allen Brothers Outdoors

For the ultimate hunting destination in North Carolina, you don't have to go far. Ronald and Joe Allen took several hundred acres of land in Bladenboro and created a bird hunting paradise in their back yard. Over the years, this paradise has grown into Allen Brothers Outdoors, a preserve offering tower shoots, guides Mallard duck hunts, upland guided quail hunts, lodging facilities, and their famous gun and ammunition shop called The Candy Store.



Ronald Allen (right), his brother Joe (center) and grandson Robbie

Ronald Allen says the preserve has exceeded the family's expectations, with hunters coming from all over the country, including Phil Robertson from Duck Dynasty, for a unique hunting experience and a dose of good ole southern hospitality.

Allen Brothers Outdoors participates in Four County's Co-op Connections Program, where cooperative members can save money while supporting local businesses. When using their Co-op Connections card or mobile app, members can save 5% at The Candy Store and 50% off the third night of lodging!



What is Beneficial Electrification?

If you're like most Americans, you're interested in saving money on energy costs and in doing your part to help the environment. But wouldn't it be great if you could do both? Well, you can! It's through a concept called "beneficial electrification." This utility industry term means the innovations in energy technologies are creating new ways to use electricity instead of on-site fossil fuels, such as propane, natural gas and fuel oil, in a way that reduces overall emissions and energy costs.

By virtue of being plugged into the grid, the environmental performance of electric devices improves over time. As Four County EMC and other utilities shift to more options that include renewable energy sources to make existing generation technologies cleaner, electricity will require less fossil fuel per kilowatt-hour of energy produced.

So, here's how this concept impacts you. It means that electric appliances such as your water heater, clothes dryer, oven and even your lawn care equipment have the potential to become greener. When Four County EMC takes advantage of advances in technology and the market at the generation point (how the electricity is produced), it means those efficiencies are inherently passed along to you, the consumer-member.

Electricity is getting cleaner.

Because large appliances have a typical lifespan of about 10 years, it means that you are able to benefit from the flexibility of the grid in addition to the increased efficiency of the particular appliance. In other words, the high-efficiency electric oven you have today could be powered by renewable sources in the near future. This would not be the case with gas appliances where you are essentially locked into the technology of that gas appliance for the 10-year lifespan.

As Four County EMC taps into more renewable options in the



future, your electric appliance has the potential to become greener and more energy efficient. The only way you would benefit from this trend is through an electric appliance.

Small steps to help the environment.

For consumers and homeowners looking for more environmentally-friendly options, choosing electric appliances, tools and cars over those powered by fossil fuels is an easy solution. Whether through electric lawn mowers, blowers and weed whackers (plug-in or rechargeable) or through electric water heaters and other appliances, beneficial electrification is a means to reducing greenhouse gases and helping our environment. It can also translate into a better quality of life. For example, when you can trade the loud rumble of

a gas-powered mower or blower for the quiet efficiency of electric versions, you eliminate the exhaust emissions and the unpleasant noise.

How we're doing our part to help the environment.

As the overall energy sector continues to evolve, Four County EMC is striving to take advantage of the advances in technology and the opportunities of the market as they become available. This means the cooperative can leverage the flexibility of the grid to offer a wider range of renewable power selections as we continue to bring safe, reliable and affordable power to our community.

We also promote energy efficiency through programs like our Comfort Loan Program and Energy Star rebates. In addition, through our mobile app, we offer our members the convenience and ability to manage and monitor their energy use.

We care about our community because we live here too. I hope you'll reach out to Four County EMC, your trusted energy partner, to discuss available renewable energy options and to learn about more ways to reduce your energy use. Because when you participate in the energy efficiency programs and incentives we offer, you're doing your part to save energy and better our environment. While each member's reduction might be small, together, they can lead to significant savings of money and emissions. And that means a brighter future for all of us.



Super Bowl Energy Savings



Here are **3** easy ways to save if you're hosting a Super Bowl party.



Before guests arrive, lower the thermostat.

(extra people = additional warmth indoors)



Cook with smaller countertop appliances to save energy.



Taking the party outdoors? Use solar lights (free energy!) to enhance the ambiance.



Have fun watching Super Bowl LVI.

(and the commercials!)



Winning
from the editor
Recipe



Ingredients:

- 1 pound lean ground chicken
- 1 egg
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 carrot
- 1 stalk celery
- 2-3 green onions
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese
- ½ cup hot sauce, divided
- 1 tablespoon butter

Preheat the oven to 350F. Line a cookie sheet with foil and coat with nonstick spray.

Cut the celery, carrot and green onions into large chunks and throw into a food processor. Pulse to chop into small bits.

In a large bowl, combine the vegetable mixture, chicken, egg, breadcrumbs, garlic powder, salt, blue cheese, and 1/2 of the hot sauce. Gently fold together to combine, but don't overmix. Form the mixture into small

Buffalo Chicken Meatballs



meatballs — you should get about 28 small meatballs.

Place the meatballs on the cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes.

While the meatballs are baking, put the rest of the hot sauce and the butter into a microwave safe dish and microwave about 30 seconds until butter melts. Stir well to combine.

Remove the meatballs from the oven and allow to cool for a few minutes.

Place the meatballs onto a serving dish and drizzle with butter/hot sauce mixture.

Watch 'Cooking with Cam' on our Facebook page to see how this dish is made.

Four County Connection
Janet Smith, Editor

Published monthly by Four County Electric Membership Corporation, P.O. Box 667, Burgaw, NC 28425, as a service to our members.

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Energy Star Rebates



Replacing an appliance? Our ENERGY STAR rebates can help offset the cost. With documentation and proof of purchase, Four County EMC members are eligible for a \$50 rebate for each qualified ENERGY STAR appliance! Eligible appliances are:

Refrigerators • Dishwashers • Washing Machines • Dryers • Freezers

For assistance with our ENERGY STAR rebate program, please contact us at 888-368-7289 or email makaylakillens@fourcty.org.

Look for the ENERGY STAR® label when making your purchase. You'll save money year-round through the increased energy efficiency these products offer.

Four County Electric

Our Mission

To provide highly reliable electric service, innovative energy solutions and outstanding service to our Members and Communities.

Our Values

- Respect
- Integrity
- Trust
- Teamwork
- Commitment
- Excellence

Our Vision

To be an advocate for our Members by:

- Exceeding members' expectations
- Utilizing well trained, motivated employees
- Achieving excellence
- Operating efficiently
- Maintaining hometown values

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

We believe in the Power of Human Connections

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