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FLINT HILLS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

NEWS

FLINT HILLS REC

MEMBER SERVICES

- Viasat Internet Services
- Online Payment Options
- Outside Security Lighting
- Power Surge Protection
- Rebate Programs

For more information, call us at 620-767-5144 or visit our website at www.flinthillsrec.com.

FROM THE MANAGER

Reliability Requires Investment


Chuck Goeckel

As your local power provider, Flint Hills REC's mission has always been simple: support the communities we serve by providing **SAFE, RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE** power. But behind every switch, every warm home, and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid — through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades, and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually, equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions occur and create a stronger backbone for our community.

The demands on the electric grid are also evolving. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue. Electric vehicles, HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial facilities add load to the local distribution system. As these technologies take hold, the grid must be able to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members

Continued on page 12C ▶

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating — these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter. SOURCE: NRECA

Portable Power Stations for Power Outages

How to stay safe and keep your devices running

If the power goes out due to an emergency, you don't want to be left in the dark. Portable power stations are compact, rechargeable battery systems that can keep essential devices, like phones, medical equipment, lights and even refrigerators, running during an outage.

They're easy to use, safe to operate indoors, and many can be recharged through a wall outlet, your car or solar panels. Here's what you need to know to choose the right one.

Portable power stations are a safe and flexible way to keep essential devices running during an outage or emergency, and many are compact enough to take with you anywhere.

PORTABLE POWER STATION BASICS

Think of a portable power station as a high-capacity rechargeable battery designed for emergencies, travel or off-grid use. Unlike traditional generators, they produce zero emissions, operate silently, need very little maintenance and don't require gasoline.

MOST MODELS HAVE THREE MAIN COMPONENTS:

- **BATTERY:** stores the energy
- **INVERTER:** converts stored energy to usable household power
- **PORTS AND OUTLETS:** USB, AC, and DC connections for your devices

FEATURES TO LOOK FOR:

- Pass-through charging: allows you to power devices while the unit is charging
- Battery management system: provides built-in safety features to prevent overcharging, overheating and shorting out circuits

To maintain your system, store it in a cool, dry place and keep it clean to ensure maximum lifespan and performance.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT POWER STATION SYSTEM

THE SYSTEM THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU DEPENDS ON THREE THINGS:

- What you want to power (lights, phone chargers, refrigerator, medical equipment, etc.).
- How long you need power (a few hours during an outage or days without electricity).
- Where you'll use it (at home, in an RV, camping or during travel).

WHEN COMPARING BATTERY SYSTEMS, YOU'LL SEE TWO KEY RATINGS:

- **CAPACITY:** How long it can power your devices. This indicates the total energy stored in the battery. The higher the watt-hour (Wh) rating, the longer it can run your devices.
- **OUTPUT:** Which devices it can power. This is the maximum amount of power the system can deliver simultaneously. The output must meet or exceed the wattage (W) required by the device you want to run.

EXAMPLE: A battery with a 500-watt-hour (Wh) capacity and 1000-watt (W) output could run a 1000 W device (like a small space heater or microwave) for about 30 minutes.

If you need to power multiple devices at once — like your refrigerator and lights — make sure their combined wattage stays below the unit's output limit and that the total running time fits within the capacity.

Be mindful that some appliances, especially those with motors such as fridges or power tools, have a higher starting wattage than their running wattage. For safety, add a 20% buffer to your calculations and look for surge output capability.

POWER STATION CATEGORIES

Power stations range from lightweight units to hefty systems that may require wheels or two people to move. Here's a quick breakdown:

- **SMALL CAPACITY:** 100-500 Wh
  - Powers phones, laptops, Wi-Fi routers, small lights
  - Weighs less than 10 pounds.
- **MEDIUM CAPACITY:** 500-1500 Wh
  - Powers mini fridge, small appliances, fans
  - Weighs 30-50 pounds
- **HIGH CAPACITY:** 1500-3000-plus Wh
  - Powers a full-size fridge, microwave, multiple devices
  - Weighs up to 135 pounds

STAY POWERED WHEN IT MATTERS

Portable power stations are a safe and flexible way to keep essential devices running during an outage or emergency, and many are compact enough to take with you anywhere. When choosing a system, think about how much power you need, how long you need it to last, and whether portability or extra features are important to you.

If you want to power your entire home, research whole-home battery systems or gas generators. Your utility may offer incentives or rebates, so it's worth asking before you buy.

Reliability Requires Investment

Continued from page 12A ▶

expect. Strategic upgrades, such as replacing old construction with today's new construction standards, are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as automated switching devices, smart meters, drones and advanced monitoring systems allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively and efficiently. These technologies can isolate problems, reroute power to minimize outages, and provide real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently.

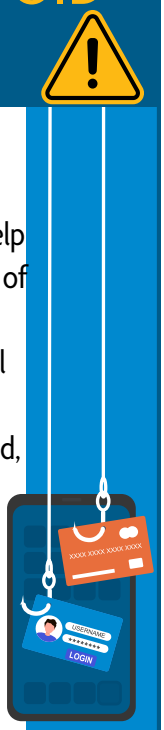
Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience — it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life — from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.

TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Enrolling in autodraft payments with your utility provider can help prevent certain types of utility bill scams. Rest easy knowing your bill is paid automatically through a pre-arranged, secure channel. Autodraft payments also eliminate the risk of exposing checks and personal banking info through the mail. SOURCE: AARP

Save the Date

MARCH 31

Make plans to attend the Flint Hills RECA Annual Meeting

Registration and meal at 5:30 P.M.

Meeting at 6:30 P.M.

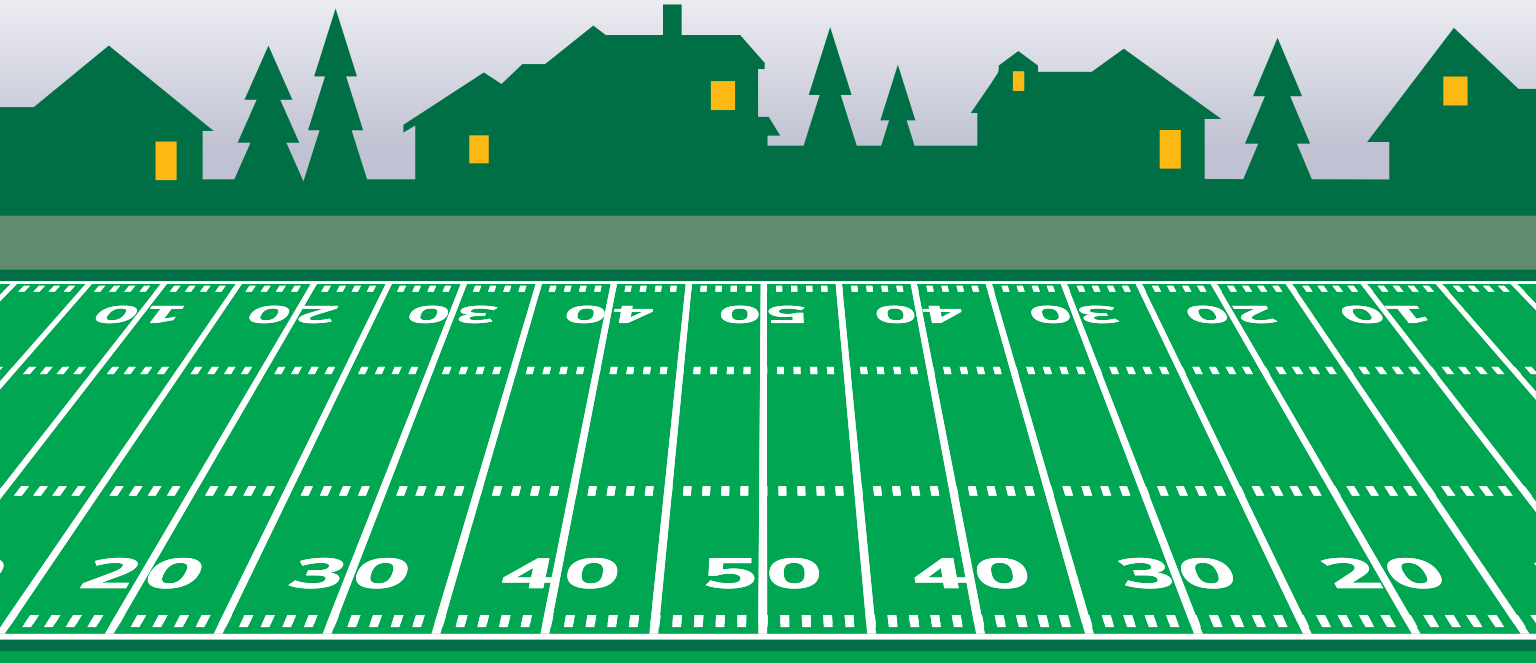
Herington Community Building

Election and annual meeting information will be mailed separately in March.

Energy Explorers

Score Big with Energy Savings!

Every Super Bowl MVP makes big plays — and you can too!
Use the clues below to fill in the blanks and learn how you can help save energy at home by making smart, efficient plays. Double check your work in the answer key.



1. Spend time outdoors or unplugged to reduce your _____ time and save energy.
2. Turn off the _____ while brushing your teeth.
3. When it's cold, wear an extra layer of _____ instead of turning up the thermostat.
4. Keep doors and _____ closed when your home's heating/cooling system is turned on.
5. Unplug smaller electronics like _____ when you're not using them.
6. Turn off _____ when you leave a room.

Word Bank:
windows
clothing
water
lights
screen
chargers

Answer key: 1. screen 2. water 3. clothing 4. windows 5. chargers 6. lights