

enchantment

The Voice of New Mexico's
Rural Electric Cooperatives

**OTERO COUNTY
ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE**

OCTOBER 2024

SOARING HIGH

Touchstone Energy
Cooperatives hot air balloon
marks 25 years of flight

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The Touchstone Energy
Cooperatives Balloon has
flown at more than 650
cooperative events around
the country. PHOTO
COURTESY OF CHERI WHITE





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Chief Executive Officer

Mario Romero

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Office Hours

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (M-F)

Board of Trustees

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Board Meeting

The board of trustees meets at 8:30 a.m. the third Friday of the month at the cooperative.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Time for a Fall Tuneup

Assess the health of your home to maximize savings



Thermostat

A programmable thermostat allows you to control settings to suit your climate, schedule and temperature preferences.

Consider installing a smart thermostat. After installation, input your schedule and temperature preferences. As you change the settings, the thermostat adjusts to minimize energy use. Bonus: You can control the thermostat remotely with a smartphone.

Don't adjust the thermostat drastically. Your home will not heat or cool more quickly.

Keep the temperature at or below 68 degrees during the day and cooler at night.

Save up to 10% on your monthly heating and cooling bill by turning back your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees for eight hours a day.



Windows and Doors

Energy loss and drafts often occur in the cracks between window components. Use weatherstripping where a window's movable parts meet the window frame.

The seam between the window frame and the wall is a common source of air leakage. Fill any crack less than ¼-inch wide with caulk. For larger cracks, use expanding foam, and paint over it.

Use window coverings to cut energy costs. Cellular shades, curtains and draperies can provide increased comfort year-round.

Use a door sweep—a flexible piece of rubber or plastic held to the door's lower edge by a piece of aluminum—on an exterior door to block drafts.



Insulation

Insulation reduces heat loss during winter and heat gain during summer. Before you add or replace insulation, check your current levels.

Start with your attic. Aim for at least 14 inches of insulation for warmer climates and at least 18 inches in colder climates. The

U.S. Department of Energy recommends an R-value—which refers to the insulation's ability to resist heat—of about R-60 for most regions.

According to DOE, air leaks are among the most significant sources of energy loss in a home. They also are the easiest to fix. Check for leaks throughout your home, including insulation.



Heating and Cooling

Frequently replacing your furnace filter is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to keep your HVAC system running efficiently. A clogged filter causes your system to work harder and can shorten its life span.

Depending on the home, filters should be changed every month or every other month when the HVAC system is in use.

Schedule an annual service on your HVAC system. A clean system is safer and more efficient. A preventive service call for a tuneup and cleaning usually is less expensive and less stressful than an emergency service call if your equipment fails.

Leaky furnace ducts mean higher utility bills. Improve their performance by sealing exposed ducts in the attic, crawl space, unfinished basement and garage.



Outdoors

Trim shrubs, and clear leaves and other debris. Keep branches away from the house and electrical wires to prevent property damage or power interference. Cut cracked and diseased limbs close to the trunk. For large jobs, hire a pro.

Rake yard debris away from the outdoor compressor unit of your heat pump. A heat pump needs good circulation to work efficiently, so make sure there is a 2-foot clearance around the outdoor compressor.

Ensure gutters are clear and downspouts are correctly connected so water drains away from your home. The dirt grade around your home should slope away from the house. ■



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Winter Moratorium, Heating Season Shut-Off Protection

Otero County Electric Cooperative members who qualify for low-income help may be protected from disconnection due to non-pay during the New Mexico heating season moratorium. Protection from winter shut-off begins Nov. 15, 2024 and ends March 15, 2025.

Members behind on their bill before Nov. 15, 2024, must contact the OCEC to set up a payment plan for balances owed. Electric service can only be shut off if arrangements are made before Nov. 15 for outstanding billing.

To avoid disconnection of services, don't hesitate to contact the Human Services Department at 800-283-4465 or 575-397-3400 or the appropriate tribal or pueblo entity for eligibility information for Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program. Your service will be connected to Nov. 15, 2024, through March 15, 2025, if you meet the qualifications of LIHEAP and have no past due amounts or remain current on any settlement or installment agreement for payments due as of Nov. 15, 2024.

Members of New Mexico tribes or pueblos who need help with translation or other matters may contact the Public Regulation Commission's consumer relations division at 888-427-5772, which will contact the appropriate tribal or pueblo official for assistance.

Protección de apagado de temporada de calefacción

Los miembros de Otero County Electric Cooperative que califiquen para ayuda de bajos ingresos pueden estar protegidos contra la desconexión debido a la falta de pago durante la moratoria de la temporada de calefacción de Nuevo México. La protección contra el cierre de invierno comienza el 15 de noviembre de 2024 y finaliza el 15 de marzo de 2025.

Los miembros atrasados en su factura antes del 15 de noviembre de 2024 deben comunicarse con el OCEC para establecer un plan de pago para los saldos adeudados. El servicio eléctrico solo se puede cortar si se hacen arreglos antes del 15 de noviembre para la facturación pendiente.

Para evitar la desconexión de los servicios, no dude en comunicarse con el Departamento de Servicios Humanos al 800-283-4465 o al 575-397-3400 o con la entidad tribal o del pueblo correspondiente para obtener información sobre la elegibilidad para el Programa de Asistencia de Energía para Calefacción de Bajos Ingresos (LIHEAP). Su servicio se conectará desde el 15 de noviembre de 2024 hasta el 15 de marzo de 2025, si cumple con los requisitos de LIHEAP y no tiene montos vencidos o permanece al día en cualquier liquidación o acuerdo de pago a plazos para pagos vencidos a partir del 15 de noviembre de 2024.

Miembros de las tribus o pueblos de Nuevo México que necesiten ayuda con la traducción u otros asuntos pueden comunicarse con la división de relaciones con el consumidor de la Comisión de Regulación Pública al 888-427-5772, que se comunicará con el funcionario de la tribu o pueblo correspondiente para obtener ayuda.

ADOBE STOCK ILLUSTRATION BY DHANU3182

