



# POWERLINES

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Official Newsletter of Tri-State Electric Membership Corporation

## Be Aware of Potential Energy Scams

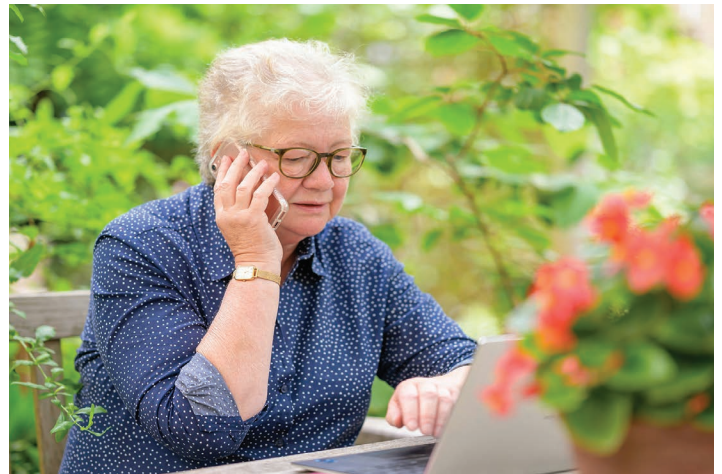
**E**lectric cooperatives across the country are urging members to stay alert as utility-related scams continue to evolve. Fraudsters are becoming more aggressive and more convincing by using impersonation, false urgency and digital deception to extract payments or personal information from unsuspecting individuals.

Reports of scam calls, fake energy rebate offers and phony disconnection threats have increased in recent months. These schemes often begin with a phone call, text or visit from someone claiming to represent the local electric provider. The tactics vary, but the goal is always the same: to pressure the member into acting quickly before they have time to verify the request.

Some scammers demand immediate payment, threatening that your service will be shut off within minutes. Others offer too-good-to-be-true incentives like rebates, energy audits or free equipment installations—if the member provides banking information or pays an upfront fee. In many cases, scammers can even manipulate caller ID to appear as though the call is coming from a trusted utility number.

Tri-State EMC wants members to know they will never call and demand immediate payment. They will never ask for banking or account information over the phone, nor will they pressure a member to act without the opportunity to verify the situation. If someone claiming to be from our cooperative insists on urgency or payment through nontraditional means, that's a red flag.

These scams can arrive in the form of emails, text messages or QR Codes designed to look like real payment portals. Typically, the links redirect to fraudulent websites that steal sensitive data. The scammers may also encourage members to pay through untraceable methods like prepaid debit cards, mobile apps or cryptocurrency—methods legitimate utilities never use.



CENTER FOR AGEING BETTER, UNSPLASH

*If you suspect you've been targeted by a scammer, don't hesitate to hang up. Call your cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website.*

One concerning trend involves scammers visiting homes unannounced, posing as utility workers conducting inspections or installations. Unless someone offers proper identification or has confirmed an appointment, these visits should always be treated with caution.

Education and awareness remain two of the most powerful tools in this fight. Members are encouraged to talk with family, friends and neighbors about the warning signs of scams. Sharing information helps others stay safe and contributes to a stronger, more connected community.

If something doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to hang up, close the message or refuse entry. Call your cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website. Member service professionals are available to assist.

Electric cooperatives were built on trust, service and community. By working together and looking out for one another, members and cooperatives alike can help expose fraud for what it is, and ensure that scammers are left in the dark.


*Jennah Denney writes about 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.*

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

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RAJU SHRESTHA, PIXABAY



Prioritize the invisible upgrades that make your home more comfortable and efficient, such as adding blown-in insulation to your attic.

# Efficiency Tips for Older Homes

By Miranda Boutelle

If you're interested in improving the efficiency of an older home, start by prioritizing the invisible upgrades that make a home more comfortable and efficient.

Many older homes are not properly insulated. Insulation has several benefits beyond sealing your home and keeping outdoor air from seeping in. It reduces outdoor noise, makes your home quieter and improves your overall comfort.

Always properly air seal before you insulate. Older homes with pocket doors, coved ceilings, dumbwaiters, doors to attic spaces and laundry chutes allow indoor air to escape through the cavities, gaps and cracks around these classic features. Sealing off open cavities around those features often requires fastening plywood, rigid foam or drywall into place, and then caulking around the edges.

Keep an eye out for framing features that cause drafts. Balloon framing is a type of construction where wall studs run all the way from the foundation to the roof, allowing air to flow freely through those spaces. Second floors with knee wall attics on both sides are notorious for air leakage. Open cavities allow air to flow horizontally between the attic spaces, making the home uncomfortable and inefficient. Seal off the open cavities in the floor framing and insulate attic spaces.

Dense-packed cellulose or closed-cell foam insulation can be sprayed into exterior walls. Skilled contractors can remove pieces of siding and drill holes to fill the wall cavities from the outside of the home. For brick or stone homes, holes can be drilled from the inside and then patched and painted. Insulating walls from the inside of the home requires more time and effort in preparation and cleanup, but having well-insulated walls is worth it.

Knob and tube wiring—commonly used from the early 1880s to the 1930s with no grounding wire—should be replaced prior to insulating walls and attics for safety purposes. Contact between

Considering the cost of replacing windows, it may be better to invest in air sealing and insulation first. Then, consider storm windows to keep the charm of the original windows, such as leaded glass and stained-glass windows in good condition.

insulation and knob and tube wiring can create a fire hazard.

People often think new windows are the best way to improve a home's efficiency. Considering the cost of replacing windows, it may be better to invest in air sealing and insulation first. If your home has leaded-glass or stained-glass windows, consider installing storm windows to help keep the windows in good condition.

Once you've addressed the envelope of your home, consider appliance improvements. Replace an old electric water heater with a heat pump water heater. This upgrade can save a family of four an estimated \$550 a year and more than \$5,600 over the lifetime of the water heater, according to Energy Star.

Invest in high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment. A mini-split heat pump, also known as a ductless heat pump, is a more efficient option than electric baseboard heating and provides the benefit of air conditioning.

Older homes don't have to be inefficient. Show your home some love and invest in energy-efficient upgrades.

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*Miranda Boutelle is COO at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon and writes about energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.*