

ELECTRICITY BRINGS EVERYDAY VALUE



Richland Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

By Trevor Clark

Even though I work in the energy industry, like most people, I still don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and the coffemaker to work each morning. Because electricity is so abundant, we don't think much about it. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the past few months, we have likely been using more energy. And yet, we still expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we really think about electricity is when the power goes out or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our modern lifestyle every day, it's a great value, especially when compared to other common services and expenses. For example, think back to the cost of a gallon of gasoline 20 years ago. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat, unlike most other consumer goods.

Like many of you, I have a cell phone to stay connected, and I subscribe to cable channels so I can enjoy more viewing options. Many of us consider these necessities for modern day life. We can see what we're getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services. In contrast, when we use electricity, we don't necessarily "see" all that we're getting for our money.

But considering what electricity does for us, it's a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets. For comparison, consider that the average rent

increase was nearly 4% (from 2014–2019) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of medical care was increased 3% during this time, and education was not too far behind at 2.6%. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4%.

The bottom line: Electricity brings everyday value. Considering that electricity is something that we all use around the clock, I'm very proud of our track record. At the

We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options...

same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions, and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options where possible.

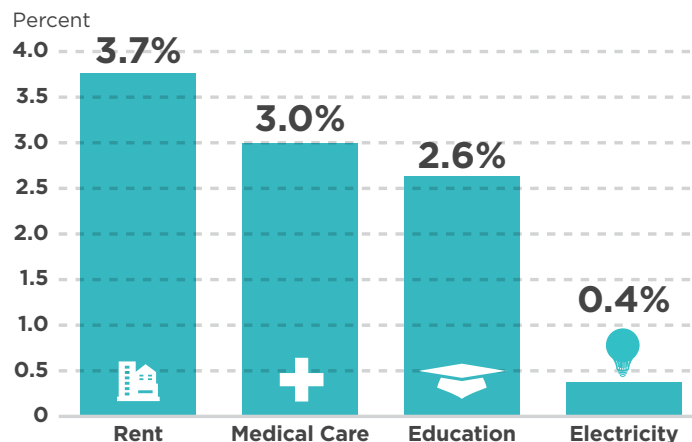
Richland Electric Cooperative provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. And as your trusted energy advisor, we want to help you save you energy and money.

We recognize that the past few months have been challenging for many of our members and we're here to help. If you have questions about your account or are looking for ways to save energy at home, please give us a call. Richland Electric Cooperative is your electric co-op and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of our community. That's everyday value.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

When you look at price increases of common expenses over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2014-2019



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index



LET'S TALK

Be aware of utility phone scams



The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored, and shared. Consumers are interested in more green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations in particular. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating, or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

Avoid Phone Scams

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame, to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at 608-647-3173. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

Avoid Solar Scams

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade, or extended warranty to their solar array. The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace

faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) or the company that installed the solar array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

Use Trusted Sources

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck.

Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

REC can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, REC has a different "bottom line" that is not directly tied to the sale of a product or service. We take a more holistic, objective view of how to achieve energy and cost savings for our members, and that may or may not include rooftop solar.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor—your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable, and safe energy to our members.

Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills—we're here to help.



LOVE THE OUTDOORS?

BE SAFE OUT THERE



$\frac{2}{3}$

of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor **recreational activities**.



Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating**. Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder**.



Do not use generators in enclosed areas. The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.



Look up for power lines while fishing or sailing.

FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.



Going for a hike? If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**



X

Tent camping? Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.



For more information, visit:

**Safe
Electricity.org**

STAY SAFE ON THE WATER

Safe Electricity shares tips to help keep you and your loved ones safe when you're enjoying time on the water this summer.

- Do not raise a mast or antenna when your boat is near a power line. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way so that a boat can pass underneath. Maintain a safe distance of at least 10 feet between your boat and nearby power lines. Keep in mind that water levels are constantly changing, altering the distance between the water and the line.
- If your boat comes in contact with a power line, do not enter the water. The water could be energized. Instead, stay in the boat and avoid touching anything metal until help arrives or until your boat is no longer in contact with the line.
- Do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If you are in the water and feel a tingle of electric current, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not head to boat or dock ladders to get out.
- If you see someone who you suspect is getting shocked, throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection at the meter base, and/or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible; then call for help.



THE FARMER'S CAP


Farmers' caps, almost all of them baseball type, usually advertise something. Beyond advertising various companies, a farmer's cap offers a bit about the farmer's personality. How a farmer wears his cap can make a statement:

- Straight and even, pulled down to the ears: A practical fellow who doesn't want to lose his cap in a gust of wind.
- Tipped toward one ear: A bit of show-off, cocky.
- Pushed back with the bill high on the forehead: Friendly, easy to talk with. (Or it may be a cloudy day and the fellow merely wants to see better.)
- Pulled down low so the eyes peer out from under: Doesn't want to be bothered. "I mind my business, you mind yours."
- Farmer yanks off his cap and slaps it against his knee: He heard something funny. Or he's trying to remove the dust from it.
- Farmer pulls off his cap and throws it on the ground: The guy is mad. Don't say anything more to him.
- A farmer never wears his cap backwards: How dumb can you be. Your neck doesn't need shade, your eyes do.
- Farmer and his wife are in an expensive restaurant and he doesn't want anything to happen to his cap. He carefully removes it and places it on the chair beside him. People with expensive caps will leave them in the cloakroom. But not the farmer who has a free cap with a picture of a John Deere tractor on the front. "Heard people steal caps like this," the farmer says.




Go to www.jerryapps.com to learn more about Jerry's work.

Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO

1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581
608-647-3173
www.rec.coop
Find us on Facebook 



**Richland Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Board of Directors

Calvin Sebranek, President • Daniel Hillberry, Vice President • Judy Murphy, Secretary • Tim Tiller, Treasurer
Don Huffman, Jim Goplin, Steven Fuller, Jeff Monson, Kevin Kepler