

# POLK COUNTY RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

‘The Livewire’

“Committed to enhancing the lives of our customers by providing safe, reliable and economical energy through excellence in customer service and innovation”



December 2023

## Watt Matters

By Barb Fowler - General Manager

It's never an easy conversation to have. After all, who wants to hear yet another bill will be increasing? But the truth is Polk County RPPD will be increasing our electric rates by 1% in 2024.

We have worked hard to keep the rate adjustment as low as possible by cutting expenses where it is reasonable and feasible, but inflation and increased material costs are very strong opponents. For example, the cost of a 15 kVa pole mount transformer (you likely have one on a

pole by your house) has increased 250% in the last three years. What cost \$454 in 2020 now runs \$1,400. A meter socket (the box that your meter sits in by your irrigation well) cost \$290 in 2020 and \$395 in 2023, an increase of 36%. A chemical we use to treat stumps after tree trimming saw an increase of 34% in the last three years, and even copy paper increased by 49%. You get the picture.

What we won't do is offer you less reliability or lowered customer service. Rest assured, keeping your

lights on 24-7-365 is our top priority, and we will continue to work hard to make that happen while keeping costs as low as possible. We do have tools in our toolbox to help increase your energy efficiency, so please do not hesitate to call us for more information.

The new rates will be effective starting with your January 10th usage, which you will see on your February 20th billing.

## Red Cross Blood Drive

By Wade Rahn

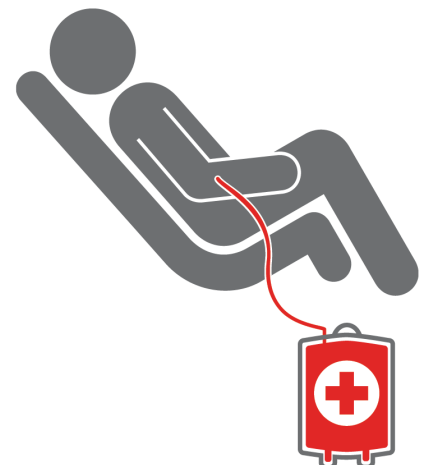
Starting in 2019, PCRPPD has sponsored an American Red Cross Blood drive that have been held in the fall in Stromsburg. The idea of PCRPPD hosting the blood drive came from a suggestion by Cindi Perdue, who was a regular blood donor and felt that it aligned perfectly with our strategic plan. Over the previous years, the PCRPPD drives have collected a total of 204 units. This year the drive was held at the Viking Center on November 9<sup>th</sup> with an additional 34 units collected.

According to the American Red Cross, which provides about 40% of our nation's blood and blood cell components, someone in the U.S.

needs blood every two seconds. Blood is essential to help patients survive surgeries, cancer treatment, chronic illnesses, and traumatic injuries. Whether a patient receives whole blood, red cells, platelets, or plasma, this lifesaving care starts with one person making a generous donation.

The need for blood is constant, but only about 3% of age-eligible people donate blood yearly.

If you would like to learn more about donating blood or would like to sign up for future blood drives to donate visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) for more information.





# Merry Christmas

FROM

*Polk County Rural Public Power District*

ANDY ROBERTS

BARB FOWLER

BILL KROPATSCH

CHARLIE CLARK

DAWN DUDGEON

DJ CROWELL

JODIE ALVIS

JUDY RIEKEN

JEFF SCOW

JEFF WALLER

JUSTIN SUNDAY

LAURA JENSEN

MARK WYMAN

MEGAN KLEIN

MICKEY BERGGREN

MICHEL PETERSON

ROBERT LINDBURG

RANDY REESE

RYAN CARLSON

RYAN TWOGOOD

RILEY CARLSTROM

TODD KING

TYLER LAMOREE

VERNON KUHNEL

WADE RAHN

YANCY KROL

# Guard against scams and identity theft

By Wade Rahn

It is the world we live in today – the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer or respond to someone seeking information. No industry, person or business is off limits to scammers, who even try to con their way into the utility industry.

The Better Business Scam Tracker reports that victims usually lose \$274 in all types of scams and \$500 in a utility scam.

When it comes to power bills, scammers make threatening phone calls to consumers to demand immediate payment, or else! (Or else their service will be shut off, they threaten.) This deceiving claim is often made during the height of summer or winter, when people want to stay comfortable during the extreme heat or cold.

However, PCRPPD sends initial disconnection notices in writing.

## Utility scams: How they get you

Scammers request that immediate payment be wired, loaded on a reloadable gift card or debit card or sent using cryptocurrency. Only scammers request this type of payment and threaten immediate service disconnection. Do not provide any information (including your utility account number) or agree to immediate payment; instead, hang up and check with us by using the phone number listed on your power bill. Fake numbers and links can appear in emails and texts. Consumers should trust their gut reaction; if it seems like a fraud, it probably is.

## Protect personal info

When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a social security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information. Additionally, do not give out sensitive information to anyone who calls you. Verify the phone number and call the utility directly to discuss any matter that would involve providing personal information. In

general, some companies do have password-protected, secure methods to obtain personal information via an app or portal, but always verify this before using.

## At your door

Door-to-door scams may involve impersonators of utility workers saying the meter is broken or offering to perform other repairs or an energy audit — all at the consumer's cost. Do not let someone in the house without a pre-approved appointment.

## Scams in general

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) warns that phishing emails and texts attempt to convince individuals to make payments or provide personal information. Thieves use stolen information to open accounts and pass charges on to the victim.

## Caller ID can fib

Over the phone, calls appearing to be local are not always an accurate assessment of who is calling. AARP has a fraud watch network that provides alerts of new frauds; do an internet search for the fraud watch network to learn more.

## Scams are everywhere

Non-utility-related scams may include the announcement of an inheritance or pop-ups on a computer warning that

technical support is needed. There are even puppy purchase cons when cute and often sought-after breeds are offered in all their puppy cuteness, but scammers take your money and run. There are student loan forgiveness scams and one-time password bot scams.

Hackers even prey on the many smartphone users who have cracked screens. It is called the “chip in the middle attack,” and scammers get ahold of a screen replacement and install it on your phone with a spyware chip. Always verify a screen-fix-it phone number or take your phone to a store/servicer you trust. If the company cannot be verified by a search engine, do not trust it.

No matter the scam, the goal of the scammer is to gather personal information. Stay safe: Do not share Social Security numbers, account details, credit card numbers, bank information, death certificates or birth dates. Thieves can use this information to steal their victim's identity.

If you become a victim of a scam, report it to the local police and your bank. Consumers can protect themselves by blocking unknown callers and keeping software updated on phones and computers.

**BEWARE  
OF SCAM  
CALLS**



Do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment; instead hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your power bill.



# STRINGING UP THE LIGHTS?



Check them first. If they are old and damaged, it is time to replace them.

## POLK COUNTY RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

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