

# SAVE the date

## SEPTEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

September 24, 2024

Member Appreciation Open House 4-7:00 p.m.  
Virtual Annual Meeting online all day!

## BEWARE OF SCAMS

### Cyber Security Tips

- Protect Info: Don't share personal details unless sure.
- Strong Passwords: Use unique, strong passwords.
- Email Caution: Be wary of suspicious emails or links. Always verify the sender before clicking.

### Bill Pay Impersonators

- Verify Calls: Hang up and call BCEC directly.
- Payment Methods: Use official BCEC payment options.
- Urgent Threats: Confirm any immediate disconnection threats with us.

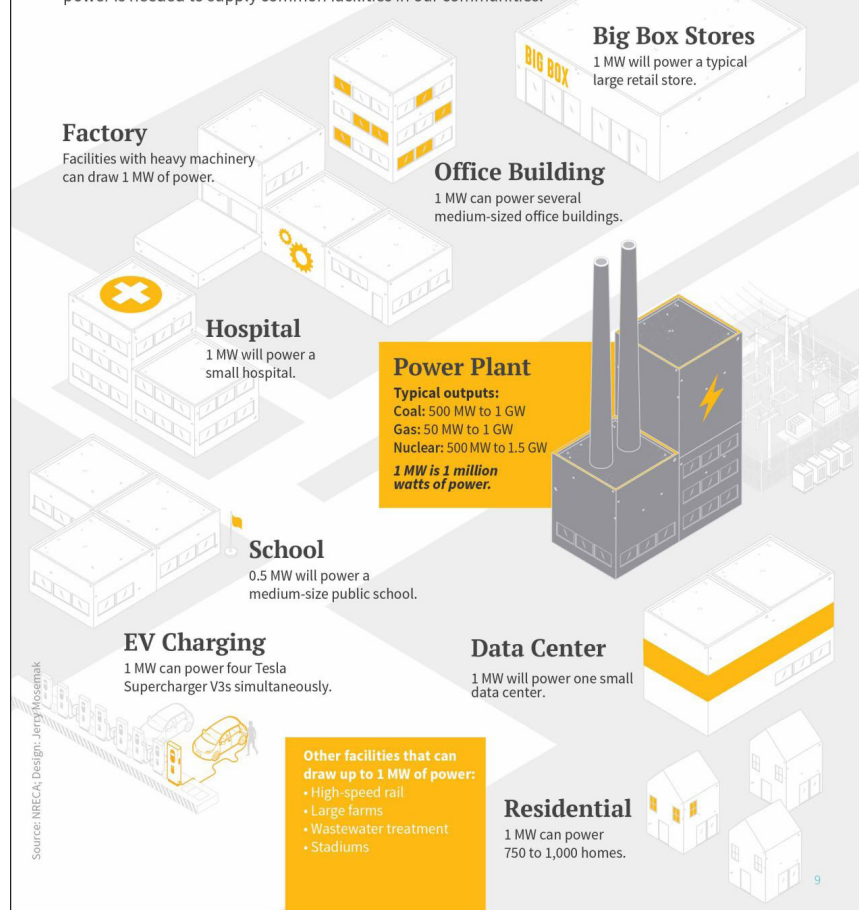
### Solar Salesmen

- BCEC doesn't partner with door-to-door solar salesmen or any solar installers.
- Check credentials of salespeople and ensure they work for a reputable company.
- Be cautious of high-pressure sales tactics.

## What Is 1 MW?

First in a series

Exploding demand for electricity, lingering supply chain challenges and short-sighted public policy aimed at rapidly eliminating fossil fuels from power generation have forced large portions of the United States to confront unprecedented power shortages and soaring costs. This series of infographics will look at the most critical elements at play in this time of transition for our industry and our society. This month, we examine the familiar measurement of 1 megawatt and how much power is needed to supply common facilities in our communities.



## BCEC's 2023 Capital Credit Allocation

This year, the BCEC Board approved retiring a total of **\$1,781,672!**



80% of that total was applied to outstanding capital credit retirements for 1993, 1994, and a portion of 1995, while 20% was applied to 2023.

2023 Capital Credit Allocation notices were mailed to members in April, while Retirement checks for eligible members during the stated years were mailed in May.



## BIG COUNTRY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE Membergram



### Medical Priority

If you or anyone living in your household uses life-sustaining medical equipment that requires electricity, please call a BCEC office and let us know so that we can classify your household as a medical priority account.

In the event of an extended widespread power outage, power restoration at medical priority service addresses will be our first priority. Please provide details of the medical condition and the type of life-sustaining equipment in use, along with the amount of backup power you have available. You will also need to provide a medical certification from a physician stating that the equipment in use is life-sustaining.

*Medical priority status is not a guarantee that you will be provided with immediate power after an outage, as no one can make that guarantee. You should always be prepared to move to an alternate location in the event of an extended power outage.*

[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

July 2024

## Independence Day Offices Closed

Big Country EC offices will be closed Thursday, July 4, and Friday, July 5, in observance of the Independence Day Holiday.

Phones will be answered, crews will be on standby, and outages reported via SmartHub will be addressed.

We wish all of you a safe holiday weekend!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Electricity used to operate major appliances accounts for a significant portion of your home energy use. Here's an easy way to lighten the load on your clothes dryer. Before you dry a load of damp clothing, toss in a clean, dry towel. The towel will absorb excess water, shortening the drying time. If your dryer does not include an autosense feature, reduce the timer to about half of what you normally would. Remove the towel about 15 minutes after the cycle begins. Shorter drying times will extend the life of your dryer and save energy.

Source: [homesandgardens.com](http://homesandgardens.com)

Congratulations to Lauren Callway and Hannah Caswell who are recipients of a Texas Rural Electric Women's Association (TREWA) Scholarship of \$1,500!





### Committed to Community

For complete information about our Operation Round Up program or to opt out of participation, visit [bigcountry.coop/operation-round-up](http://bigcountry.coop/operation-round-up).

## Operation Round Up Helps the Big Country

*In June, the following organizations were approved for Operation Round Up grants:*

Garza County Trailblazers	\$1,000
The Lifehouse of Emmanuel Fellowship	\$1,000
Post-Garza County EMS	\$3,850
Rotan Cheer	\$500
Scurry County Ministerial Alliance	\$2,000
Haskell Lions Club	\$1,000

#### Who can apply to Operation Round Up?

Local organizations or programs that provide vital community services, such as food banks, shelters, medical and health needs, rescue organizations, educational projects, childcare programs, and other community needs.

Families and individuals with demonstrated financial need due to life-altering circumstances.

Applications must be received at the co-op by 5:30 p.m. on August 20, to be eligible for consideration in September. Please visit our website for more information and applications.

## GENERATOR SAFETY

Do NOT connect a backup power source (generator) to your home's electrical circuits without a BREC approved transfer switch that has been installed by a licensed electrician!

#SAFETYFIRST

**BIG COUNTRY**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



**Agricultural Tax Exemptions** - In order to claim an exemption from Texas sales and use taxes on electricity and other items used in agricultural and timber operations, you are required to provide us with a registration number on Texas Agriculture Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification Form 01-924. All water wells should be exempt if used for irrigation or watering livestock. The Texas Comptroller's Office issues the registration number and those wanting to claim the exemption must fill out an application. Registration numbers must be renewed every four years. Applicants can request a paper application to mail in by calling 1-800-252-5555 or download a copy from the comptroller's website, [www.getreadytexas.org](http://www.getreadytexas.org). The generic exemption certificate, Form 01-339, cannot be used to claim the agricultural exemption. Accounts that do not have the new required form on file will be subject to taxation.

**Commercial Tax Exemption Records** - A completed and signed exemption form is required for each commercial tax exempt account. Accounts that do not have current exemptions on file will be changed to taxable accounts. Any refunds for taxes must be claimed from the State of Texas. Thank you for your help.

## PCA Stays At Zero

Big Country Electric Cooperative, like many electric providers, uses a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) to reflect the fluctuating costs passed on from our generation and transmission cooperative, Golden Spread EC. Golden Spread EC generates a portion of our electricity and also purchases additional electricity on the wholesale market to meet demand. This means the amount you pay can vary each month depending on several factors.

Think of the PCA as a surcharge or credit applied to your base electric rate. The base rate covers the cooperative's operational costs like maintaining infrastructure. The PCA reflects the difference between the budgeted cost of buying electricity and the actual market price.

## WHY DOES THE PCA FLUCTUATE?

The biggest factor is the price of fuels like natural gas, coal, or the resources used for generation (like wind).

**Why are fuel costs low when gas prices at the pump are high?**  
Natural gas prices used for electricity generation are different from the oil prices that affect gas station prices.

Electricity prices rise with high demand, especially during peak summer months.

Extreme weather, plant outages, and transmission costs can also strain the electricity supply chain, raising wholesale prices reflected in the PCA.

Recently, the PCA has been at zero, which is a positive trend for our cooperative and members. This stability in power costs is encouraging, and it suggests that we might be able to provide credit to our members soon.

While we cannot promise or guarantee that the PCA will not fluctuate differently in the future, the current trend opens up the possibility of a credit for our members.

At Big Country Electric Cooperative, we value open communication and transparency. Understanding your Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is essential, and we're happy to answer any questions or provide further clarification. We're committed to keeping you informed about your energy costs.

## Energy Update: New EPA Rules and the Electric Grid

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently released four significant regulations aimed at the electric industry. These include a rule to cut emissions from power plants, which has raised serious concerns about the reliability of the electric grid. As a non-partisan electric cooperative, our goal is to keep our members informed about these developments and their potential impacts.

### Key Concerns Raised by the NRECA

Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), has expressed strong objections to the new EPA rules. He describes the path outlined by the EPA as "unlawful, unrealistic, and unachievable," and warns that it could undermine electric reliability, posing serious risks to an already stressed grid.

### Main Points of the New Regulations

The Power Plant Emissions rule requires existing coal plants and new natural gas plants to deploy carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technology. However, this technology is not yet proven or commercially available, raising feasibility concerns.

The other three new rules tighten standards for mercury and air toxics and wastewater and impose requirements on legacy coal ash sites.

### Potential Impacts on the Electric Grid

The power plant rule could lead to the early retirement of coal-fired plants that are currently providing consistent power, as well as restrict the construction of new natural gas plants. This is particularly concerning given the increasing demand for electricity driven by the rise in electric vehicles, data centers, and other technological advancements.

**Early Retirement of Coal Plants:** Coal units planning to operate past 2039 must cut carbon dioxide emissions by 90% by 2032, or they must co-fire with natural gas at a 40% rate starting in 2030. Units closing by 2032 are exempt from these requirements.

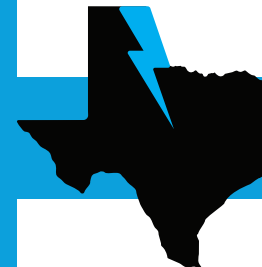
**Restrictions on New Natural Gas Plants:** New gas plants operating above a 40% capacity factor must capture or avoid 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. Without additional emissions controls, operation is limited to a 20% capacity factor.

### Challenges for Electric Cooperatives

These stringent regulations could hinder electric utilities' ability to replace coal generation economically and reliably. New gas-fired facilities would either need to install costly CCS technology or operate under significant limitations.

The new EPA rules represent a significant shift in the regulation of emissions from power plants. While aimed at reducing environmental impact, they raise substantial concerns about the reliability and economic feasibility of the electric grid. As your electric cooperative, we remain committed to providing you with reliable information and advocating for policies that ensure a stable and affordable energy future.

Molly Christian, a staff writer for the NRECA, contributed to this report.



[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

### Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 7:30-12:00, 1:00-5:30

Friday: 7:30-11:30

### Contact Us

Toll Free: 1-888-662-2232

Roby: (325) 776-2244

Stamford: (325) 773-3684

Snyder: (325) 573-3161

### Report Outages

Please **call** your local BCEC office to report power outages.



## We're Mobile!



Access your BCEC account anytime with SmartHub! Download the app for your mobile device today by visiting [www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop) or searching for SmartHub in the app store.

### Ask about our partnerships with:



**Rural Development Assistance Available Through BCEC**  
BCEC is an Equal Opportunity Lender.

Big Country Electric Cooperative, Inc. has a limited amount of funds available for low-interest loans to qualified applicants to stimulate rural development. Applicant does not have to be a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. Please contact Sarah McLen at [smclen@bigcountry.coop](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop) for details.



Call 811 at least 2 working days before you dig.  
Visit [www.texas811.org](http://www.texas811.org) for more information.