The LAMPLIGHTER
Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC
August 2023
Serving members in Baldwin, Emanuel, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens, Warren, Washington and Wilkinson counties

Factors that impact electricity prices

I was recently asked by one of our newer employees about what impacts electricity prices. We talked about how the daily cost of living seems to have increased across the board. Just as inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the fuels required to produce electricity have also risen. This is a timely topic, so I wanted to help explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills) in this month's issue of our newsletter.

While there is no short answer, there are a few key elements that impact electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Washington EMC can manage, some of them you can impact and other factors are beyond our control. So, let me break it down.

Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

There are three primary parts to your monthly electric bill: service/base charge, energy consumption/kwh charge and power cost adjustment (PCA). To understand your total energy costs and what impacts your bill, let's unpack one piece at a time.

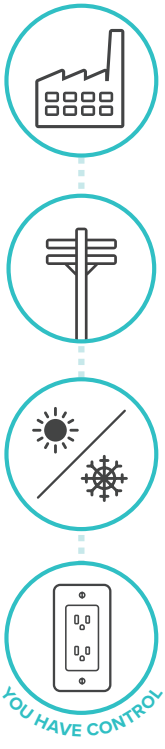
The first is a fixed monthly service/base charge, which covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes equipment, materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in Washington EMC's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. In order to ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment.

Like many other businesses, we've experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for a distribution transformer (which looks like a long metal can at the top of

Continued on page 18B

4 KEY FACTORS
THAT IMPACT ENERGY BILLS

You pay for the electricity you consume each month, but there are additional factors that impact your energy bills.



1. **Fuel Costs**
Before electricity can be delivered to your home, it must first be generated at a power plant or from a renewable source. The cost of fuels used to generate electricity fluctuates, which is why you see a power or fuel charge on your monthly bill. This monthly charge covers cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates.

2. **Service Costs**
Your bill includes a monthly service charge, which recovers part of the co-op's ongoing investments in poles, wire, meters, system maintenance and additional costs necessary to provide electric service.

3. **Weather**
When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling or heating equipment must run longer and at maximum capacity, which can greatly increase your energy use. Extreme temperatures can also affect electricity market prices. When the need for electricity increases due to extreme heat or cold, the price of power typically rises.

4. **Energy Consumption**
This is the amount of electricity you use each month to power your home's cooling/heating system, appliances, lighting, electronics and more. The amount of electricity you consume is measured in kilowatt-hours, or kwh. You have control over how much energy you use, which can ultimately help manage your monthly costs.

WashingtonEMC
A Member-owned Electric Cooperative

An electric membership corporation

258 N. Harris St. • P.O. Box 598
Sandersville, GA 31082
Email: *wemc@washingtonemc.com*
Website: *www.washingtonemc.com*
Wendy Sellers, President/CEO

OFFICE HOURS
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

PHONES
Local (478) 552-2577
Long distance (800) 552-2577

24-HOUR CALL CENTER
To report a power interruption please call:
Local (478) 552-2577
Long distance (800) 552-2577

BRANCH LOCATIONS

12860 Broad St.
Sparta, GA 31087
Closed on Thursday

100 W. College St.
Wrightsville, GA 31096
Closed on Wednesday

Convenient bill pay options include:
Drive-thru payment window
319 N. Smith St., Sandersville, GA 31082
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Pay your bill online
www.washingtonemc.com
Use the free Washington EMC mobile app
Look for WEMC in the
App Store or Android Market.
Pay by phone
(478) 552-2577 or (800) 552-2577

Electricity prices,

Continued from page 18A

a power pole) went from $790 in 2021 to $1,965 this year, and wait times to receive essential equipment can be up to 12 months. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. The service/base charge ensures that the costs are shared across the membership.

Another component of your monthly bill is the kwh charge, which covers how much energy you consume. You've likely noticed the amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures. When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling and heating equipment run longer, which increases your home energy use.

Regardless, energy consumption is an area that you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by actively reducing energy use. Your thermostat is a great place to start, so be sure to keep it close to 78 degrees during summer months. Also, ensure other electrical appliances like hot water heaters and refrigerators are in good, working condition.

The last component of your bill is the PCA, which is the power cost adjustment charge. The PCA covers fuel fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates. The PCA recently increased because of higher fuel prices, which means the power that Washington EMC purchases from our wholesale provider is more expensive. The PCA covers fuel cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates. The PCA is also lowered when fuel costs drop back down.

I hope this information sheds light on some of the factors that impact electricity prices. While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuels, please know that Washington EMC is doing everything possible to keep internal costs down.

We're here to help you, too! Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home.

Providing your own power during an outage

How to sort the many choices in home generators

By Paul Wesslund

Some generators have gotten so popular to use in case of a power outage that manufacturers now offer a wide range of choices. Options run from pull-start gasoline models to permanent outdoor installations. This variety makes it even easier to get what you want, but harder to choose.

A good first step is to think about what you want a home generator to do. Do you want to keep your phone charged, make sure food doesn't spoil, have heat and air conditioning during an extended outage? Answering these questions will require you to know the wattage of the appliances you want to run so you know the capacity of the generator you need.

But do you really need a generator? The average U.S. home is without power about seven hours a year. Is that enough to justify the expense and attention?

Another part of your planning should be contacting your electric co-op to get their expert advice on the best and safest fit for your home.

Here's what to know about the four basic choices in home generators:

Portable generators are small enough that you might even take them on camping trips. Costs vary—from more than $2,000 to as low as $400. Most should be able to run a refrigerator or window air conditioner. Special attention to safety is required. They should never be used indoors, not even in a garage. The carbon monoxide they produce can be deadly in minutes.

Portable generators should be operated more than 20 feet from a house and be connected only with outdoor extension cords matching the wattage being used. Look for models with a carbon monoxide detector and automatic shut-off.

Appliances should be plugged into the generator, but the generator should never be plugged into an outlet or your home's electrical system.

You should also spend the money to have an electrician install a transfer switch. That acts as a mini-circuit breaker to protect your appliances and can be an easier way to connect the house to the generator.


CANVA

Most standby generators are permanently mounted outside a home, then connected to the home's electrical system. Standby generators run on propane or natural gas, and they must be installed by a professional electrician.


CANVA

Most portable generators are powerful enough to run a refrigerator or window air-conditioner unit. Special attention to safety is required, and they should never be used indoors, not even in a garage.

Inverter generators are higher-tech versions of standard portable generators. The power they produce changes to match what the appliances are using, so although they are a little more expensive, they use fuel more efficiently and make less noise. The same safety guidelines apply to inverter and standard portable generators.

Standby generators can cost $7,000, plus installation, but they have the benefit of turning on automatically during a power outage and running your whole house. They're typically a permanently mounted outdoor unit that's connected to your home electrical system and runs on propane or natural gas. It must be installed by a professional electrician.

Power stations, also known as batteries, charge themselves up while the power is on. They're not as powerful as some of the other options, and can be more expensive, but they're quiet, easy to operate and some are designed to look good hanging on the wall. They can cost between $400 and $6,000. One common use of power stations is to pair them with rooftop solar panels so that electricity from the sun can be available even at night.

With the increased intensity of storms and our reliance on electronic devices, power outages can be a bigger concern these days. However, today's technology gives you many choices for how to react. You may want to make sure you're never without power, or you may be willing to just light a candle and wait for the lights to come back on.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know ceiling fans can make a room feel 4 degrees cooler? To save energy through ceiling fan use, remember to raise your thermostat a few degrees while fans are turned on. Ceiling fans can help improve comfort year-round. In the summer, operate ceiling fans in a counterclockwise direction. Reverse the direction to clockwise during winter months and set fans on a low speed so warm air can circulate from the ceiling to the lower levels of the room.

Remember: Ceiling fans cool people, not spaces. Be sure to turn them off when you leave the room.

Source: www.energy.gov