

Understanding Your Electric Bill

July and August are typically two of the warmest months of the year, and that means air conditioners across our community are working overtime to keep homes comfortable. During periods of extreme heat, many members may see an increase in their electric bill and wonder what factors contribute to the cost of electricity.

At BARC, we believe understanding your electric bill is an important part of being an informed member. Although the total amount due may seem like a single number, it actually reflects several different costs associated with delivering reliable electricity to your home or business. BARC breaks down these costs on your monthly bill, ensuring full transparency so members always know exactly what drives their charges.

The largest factor is often the amount of energy you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), and the more energy your household consumes, the higher your bill will be. During the summer, air conditioning is typically the largest driver of increased energy use. When temperatures climb into the 90s or higher, our cooling systems run longer and more frequently, consuming significantly



more electricity than they do during milder weather.

Another major factor is the cost of generating or purchasing electricity. Like many cooperatives, BARC purchases power from Old Dominion Electric Cooperative. The cost of producing electricity fluctuates based on fuel prices, including natural gas, coal and other energy resources used to generate power. Changes in wholesale power costs influence the price of electricity delivered to members.

Transmission costs also play a role. Before electricity reaches your home, it must travel across a network of high-voltage transmission lines that connect power plants to local distribution systems. Transmission equipment requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliability, especially as electricity demand continues to grow.

Closer to home, BARC maintains the local electric distribution system — utility poles, power lines, transformers, substations and other essential equipment that safely delivers power to members. Maintaining this equipment is covered through the monthly service charge. This is a flat monthly fee all members pay, regardless of how much electricity they use. This fixed fee ensures all members pay a fair share of the basic, operational costs required to keep the power grid reliable and ready to serve your home or business. Whether a member uses a little electricity or a lot, we must maintain infrastructure

and have crews, equipment and resources available to provide electricity around the clock.

Summer temperatures can also influence costs in less obvious ways. When the demand for electricity is high across a region, wholesale power prices can increase. Utilities and grid operators must ensure enough generation is available to meet peak demand, and those costs can be reflected throughout the electric system.

The good news is that simple steps to lower energy use can make a meaningful difference. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher when you're away (or signing up for our BARC Smart Thermostat program), replacing dirty HVAC filters, using ceiling fans, sealing air leaks and avoiding the use of major appliances during the hottest parts of the day can help reduce energy consumption, lower your bill and reduce strain on the local grid during peak demand.

BARC's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity while being transparent about the factors that impact energy costs. We understand every dollar matters, and we are committed to making smart investments that keep the lights on and support the communities we serve.

If you ever have questions about your electric bill or co-op programs designed to help you save, please reach out. We're here to help you make informed decisions that work for your household.

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BARC Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The Highland County Fair

75 Years of Memories in the Mountains

Highland County is gearing up to celebrate “75 Years of Memories in the Mountains” at the 75th Annual Highland County Fair, running Sept. 2–5, 2026. As Virginia’s longest-running small county fair, this milestone year promises four packed days of agricultural showcases, thrilling competitions, live music, Valley Amusement rides, drone shows, and family favorites such as mutton bustin’, bull riding, a demolition derby, and a truck and tractor pull. A free kickoff event on Aug. 29 will feature a horse show, a cruise-in and jousting, followed by the beloved parade on Sept. 2. Exhibits in arts, crafts, baking, horticulture, photography, and more will highlight the creativity and heritage of Highland County residents.

The fair is powered by the heart of the community, supported directly by the Highland County Chamber of Commerce, Blue Grass Ruritans, Mill Gap Ruritans, Stonewall Ruritans, Bolar Ruritans and the Monterey Lions Club. Nonprofit food vendors, games, historical displays, a commemorative quilt auction and free admission for anyone age 75 and older make this anniversary year especially meaningful. Most vendors and admission are cash-only, with ATMs available on-site. Organizers invite everyone to mark their calendars and join in celebrating one of the region’s most cherished traditions for its 75th year!

Visit HighlandCountyFairVA.com for more information



Photo by Sky Pics



Photo by David Cockerham Photography

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

August heat can put your air conditioner to the test, making it a great time to check your system’s air filter. A dirty, clogged filter restricts airflow, forcing your cooling system to work harder than necessary to keep your home comfortable. That extra strain can reduce efficiency, increase energy use and contribute to unnecessary wear and tear on equipment. Inspect your filter monthly during periods of heavy air conditioner use and replace it if it appears dirty. A clean filter supports efficient operation and can even enhance indoor air quality—helping you stay cool and comfortable during the hottest days of summer.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



One of the best ways to protect yourself from online scams is by using strong passwords. While many people focus on complexity—adding symbols, numbers and capital letters—password length is equally important. A longer password or passphrase is generally harder for cybercriminals to crack than a short, complex one. Consider creating a memorable phrase made up of several unrelated words, and avoid using personal information like birthdays or pet names. Use a unique password for each account and enable multi-factor authentication when possible. Taking these simple steps can help keep your personal information and online accounts secure.

Source: CISA



Fourth of July Storm Restoration

Over the Independence Day weekend, a severe thunderstorm front moved rapidly through the territory, causing widespread infrastructure damage and extensive power outages across the state. Emergency line crews were immediately deployed, leaving families and celebrations, working a continuous 24-hour restoration shift to stabilize the grid.

On July 4, the utility experienced 35 individual outages, affecting an estimated 2,000 meters at its peak. The following day saw an additional 16 individual outages, though the impact was significantly lower, affecting between 150 and 200 members. While broken poles were minimal, crews successfully repaired several downed spans of transmission lines to bring everyone back online.

“Storm outages can be challenging when it comes to help, especially during

holidays” says CEO Bill Buchanan “One of the things I’m most grateful for during storm response is seeing how our teams — both in the field and behind the scenes — come together when our members need us most. Time and again, people set aside their own plans, rearrange weekends and holidays, and leave their families so they can help restore power. In some cases, they’re facing the same challenges at home as the customers they’re working to restore.”

Buchanan adds, “What stands out to me is not just the hard work, but also the commitment, creativity and resilience our teams bring to every situation. When storms hit, they do whatever they safely can, for as long as they can, to restore service as quickly and efficiently as possible. I’m very thankful for the dedicated people who show up, support one another, and serve our members.”



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