

# SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2023



## MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 521  
La Junta, CO 81050-0521



## STREET ADDRESS

27850 Harris Road  
La Junta, CO 81050



**ph** 719-384-2551  
**tf** 800-332-8634  
**fax** 719-384-7320  
**web** www.secpa.com



facebook.com/secpaonline

**Our primary mission** is to provide high-quality, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost to our members, improve their quality of life through new technologies and services, be a visible and active member of the community and serve our members with respect, courtesy and responsiveness.

SOUTHEAST COLORADO  
POWER ASSOCIATION IS  
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY  
PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER



Touchstone Energy®



# FACTORS THAT IMPACT ELECTRICITY PRICES

BY KEVIN BRANDON CEO  
KEVINB@SECPA.COM GENERAL MANAGER



KEVIN BRANDON

I was recently asked about what impacts electricity prices. We talked about how inflation has impacted the price of everything we use in our daily lives, just as it has impacted the cost of fuels and supplies needed to produce electricity.

This is a timely topic, so I want to help explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills) in this month's issue of *Colorado Country Life*.

While there is no short answer, there are a few key elements that impact electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) can manage; some of them you can impact; and other factors are beyond our control. So, let me break it down.

There are two parts to a monthly residential electric bill: an access charge, and a kWh, or kilowatt-hour charge. Larger commercial accounts and some irrigation accounts add a third component to the electric bill called a demand charge. To understand your total energy costs and what impacts your bill, let's unpack one piece at a time.

The first is the fixed monthly access 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 SECPA's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. I should note that the access charge is the same for everyone in a particular rate class, and the costs are shared equally across the membership. 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 most of our basic equipment and supplies, including large

increases in our fuel costs. For example, the cost for a typical distribution transformer (which looks like a metal can at the top of a power pole) has increased 20-30% over the last couple of years and wait times to receive this essential equipment are greatly extended to 16-20 weeks on many items. Large items like substation transformers currently have lead times of one to two years. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members.

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 systems 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, raising the thermostat a few degrees in the summer can make a difference on your power bill.

The last component of your bill if you are on a demand rate, is the kW demand charge. The demand charge is a charge for the amount of energy that you are using at a particular time of the month, not the total of what you have used throughout the month. The demand charge is calculated on the highest peak usage in a 15-minute period during the month and is measured in kW (1,000 watts). To explain demand a little better, let's say you are using a 1,500-watt electric heater and nothing else. 1,500 watts equals 1.5kW, so you are setting a demand of 1.5kW. Now let's say you are using four of those 1,500-watt electric heaters at the same time; you would add the watts together and now you

are setting a demand of 6kW (6,000 watts). This is a simplified way to explain demand, but a more likely type of load on a demand account would be electric motors, lighting, cooling, and heating in commercial and industrial type loads, and irrigation motors and sprinklers on irrigation accounts. For reference, a typical 100-horsepower electric motor will set about a 75kW demand. Depending on the type of operation, you can sometimes control your demand charges and lower your bill by staggering item usage, or not running everything at the same time if you have that flexibility in your operation. Replacing older, less efficient equipment with new high-efficiency models can also make a big difference in your usage and demand charges. SECPA may even offer rebates to help with those high efficiency replacements. Visit [www.secpa.com/rebates](http://www.secpa.com/rebates) for more information.

I hope this information sheds light on some of the factors that impact your electric bill. While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuels, please know SECPA does everything possible to keep internal costs down. In fact, even with all the increases in costs, we are proud of the fact that we have been able to hold rates steady since 2015. That being said, our single largest expense is the cost of purchased power from our supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission. Just like every other business, Tri-State has experienced large increases in its operating costs, and it is projecting a small rate increase in 2024. SECPA does anticipate that the rate increase from Tri-State will necessitate a small increase in our rates as well. But as I mentioned above, we will continue to do everything we can to control costs and keep any future rate increases as low as possible.

Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home. We are here to help you. Please call 800-332-8634 or email [info@secpa.com](mailto:info@secpa.com).

## Branding Day: Local author pens children's book about cattle raising.

BY ANNE BOSWELL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Perhaps you have heard that children are more disconnected from their food than in generations past. And you don't have to look far from a quick internet search to see the headlines, "What's a harvest? Children lack farming knowledge, survey says," from Farming UK. "Teaching kids where food comes from," an article in The Washington Post from as far back as 2012 started tackling the issue.

Now, a southeast Colorado mom has put her pen to paper to write a children's book to address it in a fun way for kids. Havilah Hall lives on a ranch with her husband Gary and six children on the border of Otero and Las Animas Counties. She explains she's always had a heartbeat for writing and this project was close to home. As a result, the book, *Branding Day, A Cowboy Character Series* was born.

"We have had so many people come to our ranch and watch how we gather horseback and do our work horseback and brand — the whole cycle of producing beef. They're just amazed." (WIN\* William Leiker, 1204780900)

It's not just in the movies, it's real. Hall says that's what most people tell her after visiting them on their ranch. It's not just the kids who didn't know that working cattle was something that really happens. According to MeatEater.com, an article in the Journal of Environmental Psychology revealed that 40% of kids think meats such as bacon, chicken nuggets, and even hot dogs come from plants.

Hall's life on the ranch with her husband and children provided the perspective for the book. Helping with the 400 cows plus her in-law's herd provided ample material. Hall laughs and says she would write in between homeschool lessons and chores. Hall's husband Gary helped with proofreading the work and would let her know if he felt something needed to be added. The ranch hands who work with them, Clayton and Vanessa Casey illustrated the work making the project 100% homegrown.

The book is told through the eyes of her youngest son, Haze. Thumbing through the pages of the book you can feel his excitement for the day: The thoughtful description of



▲ Photo provided by Iron Springs Ranch


the smell of breakfast; gathering the horses; and the actual chore of branding, Haze seems like an old ranch hand. Even though he's just 6 years old, Haze already understands he plays a big role in branding day and the family business at Iron Springs Ranch. He explains proudly that he has his own brand for his cows. He added that his brand is special because it shows that he's the fifth generation of cowboys in his family.

The feeling resonates with others too. Feedback on the book, Hall says, has been great.



"A lot of ranch kids identify with the book because that's their life and the kids from non-ranching families like it because they don't know anything like it and it's new."

Hall says this makes her happy

 Photo provided by Iron Springs Ranch

because she feels so strongly about ag education, and since many schools are not teaching as much of the subject as they used to.

Homeschooling the kids made writing a challenge but says she took advantage of the time the kids were studying to write. She laughs when she admits that she would sometimes jump up in the middle of the night to jot down a thought.

Putting all the fun, creative stuff aside, Hall says it was important for her to let people know they care deeply for their cattle. She knows that some people think branding a calf is cruel, but that's not how it is.


"It's a process of health for the cattle and a process of health for American beef. That calf is on the ground for less than a minute, sometimes less than 30 seconds. Vaccinations are good for their health."

A second book is already in the works.

The book can be found locally at the Lighthouse bookstore in La Junta and online wherever books are sold.

SECPA offices will be closed  
September 4.

★ H A P P Y ★  
*Labor Day*




**CONNECTING RURAL COLORADO**  
From county fairs to back to school




Depend on  
Southeast Colorado's  
Local Internet Service  
Provider



800.657.7149



**YOU COULD BE A WINNER THIS MONTH**

If you find your name in this issue as follows (WIN\* your name, your account number), please contact Southeast Colorado Power Association at 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634 to receive a credit on your next power bill.

# Thousands of SECPA Members Lost Power Following Destructive June Storm

The evening of June 23 brought violent weather to southeast Colorado in the form of an EF3 tornado with wind speeds estimated at 155mph in southern Prowers County. This tornado completely destroyed one farmstead, including a house, outbuildings, and several vehicles in the yard. Luckily, the family was notified of the approaching storm, took shelter in their basement, and made it through the storm without injuries. Several cows did not survive the storm.

Many of Southeast Colorado Power Association's substations in Prowers and Baca counties are fed by a "looped" transmission system with one side of the loop being a 115kV transmission line owned by Tri-State Generation and Transmission that runs from Lamar to Vilas. The other side of the loop is fed by SECPA's 69kV transmission line that runs from Lamar towards Holly, then south to Walsh and then back west to Vilas. This is a redundant design that provides power to the area, even if one side of the loop is lost.

The reason so many SECPA members lost power that night is that the tornado was traveling from the west to the east — it hit Tri-State's transmission line first and destroyed six structures. The tornado then continued east, eventually destroying one structure on SECPA's

69kV line. When the tornado took out both sides of that transmission loop, seven substations lost power causing outages for roughly 4,000 SECPA meters.

SECPA crews worked through the night to replace the destroyed 69kV H-Structure and they were able to restore the 69kV side of the transmission loop at around 4 a.m. the next morning. The repair of other damages continued throughout the next day with all members restored by the evening of June 24.

We extend a big thank you to all the members who were so patient and supportive during this outage. We appreciate our awesome line crews who restored power quickly after such a destructive storm.



**▲** Crews work through the night rebuilding a storm-damaged structure.



**▲** Outage restoration in Baca County area after recent storm.