



DREMC NEWS

DECEMBER 2023

DREMC announces substantial return on fiber loop investment

Welcome news comes at the end of the year as Duck River Electric finalizes a way to monetize the unused portion of its 330-mile fiber optic loop through the sale of the asset to a regional internet service provider (ISP).

Currently, the cooperative uses less than one-sixth of the fiber ring's capacity, which is more than enough to support DREMC's current and future needs.

The remaining available capacity of DREMC's fiber infrastructure has been purchased by the ISP, which means the membership will recoup a portion of the financial investment by not having to fund as much of the original construction cost through higher-than-necessary electric rates.

Additional savings to the membership come from DREMC not having to pay for future repair and maintenance expenses of the fiber optic loop because those expenses were included in the transaction. Damage to fiber infrastructure caused by ice storms, tornado outbreaks, and other

threats can easily cost millions per year.

The original vision in 2018 for constructing the fiber loop was to connect DREMC's system monitoring and communications devices at substations, the eight DREMC offices, and at the system operations center located in Shelbyville - all of which would ensure safety and service reliability. It also established a fiber "backbone," in the areas that DREMC serves to encourage ISPs to consider investing in rural broadband and further expand internet service to more rural Tennessee areas.

"As a cooperative, Duck River Electric is a not-for-profit service provider," said DREMC President and CEO Scott Spence. "Every purchase and investment is weighed heavily before decisions are made to determine if they are in the best interest of the members we serve and if they support our mission of providing safe, reliable service at the lowest possible cost."



Scott Spence
Duck River EMC
President & CEO

"For-profit internet providers are more capable of recouping the cost of such an investment because of their business models," Spence adds. "The sale of the excess fiber capacity is a substantial return on our initial investment and relieves DREMC members of any further funding of the project to maintain the excess fiber infrastructure."

At a time when electric rates have been rising across the nation, the DREMC team has been innovative and adaptable to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep rates as low as possible, which is not only part of DREMC's mission but one of the commitments we make to those we serve.

Pole attachment audit underway

Duck River Electric has contracted with Osmose Utility Services to perform system-wide utility pole attachment audits, a process that involves evaluating every pole on the DREMC system to provide crucial information to ensure safety, reliability and efficient operations for the cooperative.

Osmose currently performs regular pole inspections as an ongoing process to ensure the structural integrity of the electric system. DREMC uses the data collected to schedule proactive pole maintenance or replacement to extend the life cycle of the electric infrastructure and to further secure reliability, minimizing the need for more costly emergency repairs later.

By contrast, the newly launched pole attachment audits will assist with updating documentation of pole locations and attachments (or joint use) by telecommunications companies and other for-profit, non-member utilities. The audits will provide an accurate record of all lines and associated hardware owned by other utilities and attached to DREMC poles.

Utility companies, including DREMC, charge fees that are regulated by the Tennessee Valley Authority to other entities that attach their equipment to poles owned and maintained by that utility. Those using DREMC's

infrastructure are appropriately billed for this use, which makes accurate tracking of pole attachments essential.

DREMC receives almost \$2 million annually through pole attachment fees. This revenue helps offset operational expenses and keeps electric rates low for cooperative members.

Updated pole attachment records can be used to assist DREMC in the event of emergencies, such as storms or natural disasters. Knowing the types and locations of pole attachments becomes crucial for efficient and safe emergency response efforts by line crews and other team members during outage restoration.

Other benefits of updated pole attachment information include:

- improving the effectiveness of coordination and communication between the utilities to assist with streamlining service installations to new homes and businesses.
- ensuring that attachments meet safety standards and regulatory compliance.
- planning for adequate space allocation for electric line construction or upgrades.
- supporting DREMC's continued GIS integration.

What can DREMC members expect?

Osmose crews plan to complete pole attachment audits based on the schedule at right, which may vary based on various factors, including the weather.

To complete the systemwide pole attachment audit, close access to utility poles is necessary and may require Osmose personnel to be on private property. Osmose vehicles will display a "DREMC Contractor" magnet, and personnel will have identification badges.

The DREMC team appreciates your patience as we continue to pursue innovative ways to provide safe, reliable service at the lowest possible cost.

Sewanee | Nov. 2023 - Dec. 2023

Decherd | Dec. 2023 - Jan. 2024

Manchester | Jan. 2024 - Feb. 2024

Shelbyville | Mar. 2024 - Apr. 2024

Lynchburg | Apr. 2024

Chapel Hill | Apr. 2024

Lewisburg | May 2024

Columbia | May 2024 - June 2024



Receive EnergyRight rebates for qualifying home energy efficiency upgrades

Improving the energy efficiency of your home means a lower monthly bill and increased indoor comfort year-round. To help residential members achieve these benefits, Duck River Electric gives you easy access to rebates and financing on qualifying home energy efficiency upgrades through TVA's EnergyRight program.

Get your home energy rebate in 3 easy steps:

1 Find a contractor.

Search the Quality Contractor Network (QCN) to find a TVA-vetted, licensed and insured contractor to perform your upgrade. All TVA EnergyRight rebate-eligible upgrades must be completed by a QCN member.

2 Complete the upgrade.

Once the upgrade is complete, your contractor will submit the rebate request to EnergyRight for processing.

3 Claim your rebate.

Watch for an email from TVA EnergyRight with a redemption code to claim your rebate.



UP TO \$1,500

HVAC system

Replacing an old HVAC system can save up to 20% on your heating and cooling costs.



\$300

Duct system

Reducing duct leakage in your home can save you up to 30% on your energy bill.



\$500

Water heating

Installing an ENERGY STAR® heat pump water heater can save you around \$300 annually on your energy bill.



\$300

Air sealing

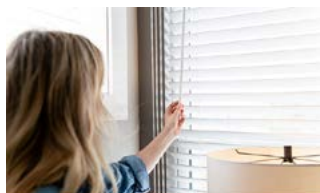
Air sealing gaps and holes in your attic, crawlspace and more can save you around 10% on your energy bill.



UP TO \$300

Insulation

Properly insulating your attic, floors and walls can save you up to 20% on your heating and cooling costs.



\$15 PER WINDOW

Windows

Upgrading to ENERGY STAR® windows and doors can save you up to 15% on your energy bill.

Source: EnergyRight.com

Ready for a rebate?

From HVAC systems to air sealing and insulation, TVA EnergyRight offers a wide range of rebates designed to help you save money and energy. See what's available at EnergyRight.com/Rebates.

Click [here](#) for more information on how to begin the process of getting a home energy rebate.





Helping families connect over the holidays

A message from Josh Lynch, Chief Operating Officer of United Communications

As a [local internet service provider](#), the team at United Communications is committed to helping our customers create memorable moments with family and meaningful connections with loved ones during the holidays, including those who live far away.

Whether you are video chatting with family and friends, sharing photos and videos, or playing online games together, fast and reliable internet service connects you.

A recent experience reminded me of the importance of connecting with loved ones when you're miles apart. While away for two weeks on business travel, I was also away from my three young children. Although many miles were between us, I was just a click away from home and my family thanks to the ability to connect with them using United Communications' home internet service.

Every day during my travels, I called home to hear their voices and see their familiar, excited faces, and we were able to share details about our day, which included me talking about the great food I ate (my favorite part of travel), and them telling all about their day at school. The kids even got to show me the crazy outfits they had chosen for homecoming week festivities.

For me, this experience was a reminder of how grateful I am for the ability to connect with loved ones from anywhere and at any time.

As we begin to plan for and host family gatherings during the holidays, the days ahead can be bit stressful, but they don't have to be.

At United Communications, we want to help [make the days ahead an effortless experience](#). A solid internet connection can assist with achieving this goal.

A few days ago, I ran across [an interesting study](#) revealing that 35% of Americans believe that Wi-Fi is more important than gifts for their holiday celebrations. The study also stated that 1 in 5 people planned to upgrade their Wi-Fi plan to accommodate additional users this holiday season. More aunts, uncles, and cousins visiting your home mean more devices connecting to your Wi-Fi service.

United's [fiber internet](#) offers the ability to connect an unlimited number of devices and stream multiple HD videos simultaneously. Play video games, use the Santa tracker on your phone, purchase that last-minute gift, watch a YouTube video to get that classic recipe, and stream holiday movies or football games without the worry of buffering.

United customers can also enjoy the UControl Wi-Fi management app that puts full network control in the palm of your hand. The app makes it easy to manage multiple guest access and prioritize devices using the Wi-Fi service so that everyone can enjoy connecting while in your home.

The United Communications team is dedicated to creating an exceptional customer experience to keep you connected - to those both near and far.

Visit United's [website](#) for more information about the services available in your area to make the holidays *and every day* a good experience!

GET DREMC NEWS SENT TO YOUR INBOX!

Opt in to receive the next issue by sending your preferred email address to DREMCNews@dremc.com.



Project HELP is the spirit of giving

It's the season of giving, and supporting Project HELP is important to ensure our neighbors facing financial difficulties are able to keep their power on - not just during the holidays - but throughout the year.

Emergency electric bill assistance through Project HELP is available to assist qualifying DREMC members, as long as funding is available.

"I've volunteered with the Good Samaritan organization for 27 years," said Cathy Miller, director of the Bedford County Good Samaritan Association, one of the agencies partnering with DREMC's Project HELP program. "Those who support Project HELP keep the program alive through their generous donations, and the funds that are donated by residents of Bedford County stay in this community to assist those who need help with paying their electric bills."

Some partnering agencies in the DREMC service area report that the need for assistance outweighs the funds available in the Project HELP fund, especially during the winter months.

Miller says that agencies like Good Samaritan won't turn anyone away as long as funds are available to help those who qualify for assistance.



Hundreds of families and individuals have received emergency assistance through Project HELP to help them stay current on their electric bills and avoid service disconnection.

Please join us in donating to the program. Donations can be made by signing up to donate through your monthly electric bill, at dremc.com or by donating spare change when visiting any DREMC office.

Your donation, regardless of the amount, is appreciated!

If you or someone you know needs assistance paying their DREMC electric bill, Project HELP is available. Contact your [local community partner agency](#) for more information and to qualify for assistance.

DREMC kicks off annual creative writing competition

High school juniors are invited to enter Duck River Electric's 2023-2024 Creative Writing Competition for a chance to win an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., and scholarships!

Students interested in the writing competition should submit a short story titled "Electric Cooperatives Connect," which explains how electric co-ops connect Tennessee communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more. Students must submit their entries typed and double-spaced; submissions must not exceed 900 words.

What's the prize? An unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2024 with nearly 2,000 other students from across the country and a chance to win scholarships! Thou-

sands of dollars in college scholarships will be awarded to top statewide winners. In addition, two universities are offering scholarships to contest winners who meet the criteria set by the universities.

To be eligible, students must be enrolled as high school juniors, and their homes must receive electricity from DREMC. Eligible home school students are also encouraged to participate. **Story submissions must be received by DREMC no later than February 16, 2024.**

For additional information, contact Connie Potts at cpotts@dremc.com or 931-680-5881. Visit the [DREMC website](#) to access the online resource booklet and competition guidelines.

Good luck, and happy writing!



Students learn about electric safety

Duck River Electric appreciates those schools in our service area that have invited our team to bring electric safety programs to the classroom.

Each year, hundreds of students learn about the basics of electricity and how to use it safely through the programs offered by DREMC.

"Being able to share safety advice and demonstrations with students of all ages is an effective way to help children understand how to stay safe when around electricity inside and outside the home," said Brad Vincent, DREMC's safety coordinator.

Visit our [website](#) for more information about DREMC's school programs.



New Union Elementary



Decherd Elementary



Hickerson Elementary

Our offices will be closed for the following holidays:

Monday, Dec. 25
Tuesday, Dec. 26
Monday, Jan. 1

Although our offices will be closed to allow our team to spend time with their families during the holidays, the Duck River Electric team is available to assist members in the event of an outage.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



5 faqs

FREQUENTLY
ASKED
QUESTIONS
ABOUT
SAVING
ENERGY
DURING
WINTER
MONTHS

Look for more frequently asked questions in future editions of **DREMC News.**

1

What are the most effective ways to winterize a home?

One of the most effective improvements you can make to create a more comfortable home and lower the energy bill is by sealing air leaks around doors and windows and increasing the level of insulation in the attic and walls. Cracks, gaps and holes in a typical home can allow cold air to enter your home. Add weather stripping around windows and doors to prevent warm air from escaping your home, and caulk the gaps where the window trim meets the wall and the window frame. Caulk or expandable spray foam can help seal holes and gaps where wiring and plumbing enter the home.

2

Is it best to close doors or registers in unused rooms?

If you have a central forced-air heating system, leave doors open to all heated areas. Closing doors and register dampers forces the unit to work harder, using more energy and possibly shortening the life of the heating equipment.

3

How can I block drafts from my wood-burning fireplace?

Because a fireplace can draw warm air out of the house, causing the central heating system to use more energy to maintain the temperature in the home, it's important to close the damper when the fire is extinguished. Adding tempered glass doors to a wood-burning fireplace

can create an extra barrier to limit the cool air from entering the warm living space.

4

How can I increase efficiency of the electric water heater?

You can raise the water temperature inside your home's water pipes by 2 to 4 degrees by insulating them, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Insulating the water pipes allows you to turn down the thermostat on your water heater, if you choose to, saving energy and money. Start by insulating the pipes coming out of the water heater. Insulate hot and cold water lines, which can prevent condensation and freezing pipes. Insulating the water heater itself can also create energy savings. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully before wrapping or insulating the water heater.

5

What else can I do to ensure energy efficiency for my home?

Duck River Electric offers two FREE options to assist members with energy efficiency evaluations of their homes. Each evaluation is customized based on your home and provides information that can help you decide which energy efficiency projects will create the best results. Here's how we can help:

(1) Take the online [DIY Home Energy Assessment](#) or pick up a paper version of the assessment at any DREMC office.

(2) Schedule the Home Energy Evaluation conducted by DREMC's residential energy advisor at pgarrett@dremc.com or 931-680-5886.

