



HILL COUNTY ELECTRIC NEWS & VIEWS

February 2026



1.877.394.7804
hcelectric.com 

CEO Message Upcoming Electric Rate Adjustment Effective April 1



Craig Gates
General Manager/CEO

Increase in the Cost of Power

As previously communicated in 2024 and 2025, our wholesale power providers (WAPA and Basin Electric) have informed us that the cost of power is expected to continue increasing in the years ahead. These rising wholesale power costs place ongoing financial pressure on

Hill County Electric Cooperative (HCE) and directly impact the cost of providing reliable electricity to our members.

Why a Rate Change Is Necessary

Power supply is one of the expenses that HCE faces which cannot be disputed. As wholesale power costs increase, HCE must pass those increases to its members in order to remain financially sound and prepared for the future.

- The upcoming rate adjustment allows HCE to: Spread rate increases gradually to help avoid a single, significant rate hike.
- Sustain essential system reliability upgrades
- Continue our pole testing and replacement program to ensure safety and reliability.
- Upgrading from an obsolete AMI metering system to a new platform that will enhance service reliability, data quality, and future capabilities for our members.

HCE's goal is to take small, predictable steps now rather than much larger steps later. This approach helps keep member rates as stable and affordable as possible over the long term.

Rate Class	Current Rate	4/1/26 Rate
Rural Service (Rate Class 11)	0.11165	0.1195
Annual Service (Rate Class 15)	0.12474	0.1335
Irrigation (Rate Class 31)	0.10655	0.1140
Small Commercial (Rate Class 41)	0.11619	0.1243
Large Commercial (Rate Class 45)	0.09448	0.1011

What Stays the Same

There will be no changes to monthly base charges as part of this rate adjustment.

When the Change Takes Effect

The new kilowatt-hour (kWh) rates for each class of service will take effect on April 1, 2026.

Assistance Is Available

If you need help managing energy costs, assistance programs to qualifying members are available through HRDC and HCE's Energy Assistance Program. More information can be found at: www.hcelectric.com/my-account/energy-assistance

Our Commitment to Members

This decision was not made lightly by HCE's Board of Trustees. We remain committed to keeping cooperative costs as low as possible while continuing to explore ways to mitigate rising power supply expenses. Our priority is to maintain a reliable electric system while serving the long-term interests of our members.

What to Expect as HCE Upgrades Its Meters

Hill County Electric is in the beginning stages of upgrading its metering system. The new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) requires the installation of new equipment to send members' electrical usage to the main office. Installation of this equipment will begin in mid-January with most of the installations occurring Monday through Friday during business hours. Members don't need to be home, one of our Team Members will knock on your door before the new meter is installed. You will experience a short power interruption during the installation.

The co-op's old meter reading system, which was originally installed beginning in 2009, has become obsolete and the manufacturer is no longer supporting the old technology. After a considerable period of studying and comparing prospective metering systems, Hill County Electric selected what is known as an Advanced Metering Infrastructure, commonly referred to as AMI. The new meters communicate with antennas that send energy usage information to the co-op. The new meters record electronic meter readings, the date and time of energy usage, the overall peak demand of the electric account, the voltage, and the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power for any reason. What's more, the meter will record the date, time of light blinks and the length of the power outage. The meter display is visible for members to be able to check their consumption. Members may also view their account information via SmartHub®. All other information and data stored in the meter is secure and the meter is sealed. Hill County Electric will also be able to tell if someone "tampers" with a meter because the meter will report any attempts of tampering.



Hill County Electric Cooperative owns and maintains all parts of its distribution system to the meter. After the meter, Hill County Electric members own the meter base and are responsible for the maintenance of this equipment. This includes making the correct repairs to the meter base if it is damaged and/or unsafe. This ensures a safe working environment for Hill County Electric line crews performing the necessary work to upgrade the meter.

Scenes From the Field

HCE crews making power line upgrades to serve a new helium plant north of Rudyard.



SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES ARE APPROACHING!

APPLY BY MARCH 1ST!

HCE Tell Us Your Story Scholarship - \$1,000

For students who want to share their story and goals for the future. Tell us how this scholarship will help you reach your dreams.

Lineman Workforce Development Scholarship - \$1,000

For students in one of the five counties served by Hill County Electric who plan to attend an accredited lineman school and build a career right here in Montana.

Trade School Scholarship - \$500

For members or dependents pursuing their first accredited trade school program, including fields like automotive, construction, welding, electrical, or other skilled trades

Teacher Appreciation Program - \$1,500 (renewable)

For current or incoming teachers working in a Class B or smaller school district within HCE's service area.

Teacher Appreciation Program

Recruiting and retaining good, quality educators in rural schools is a significant problem in Montana. We are proud to offer a unique opportunity to rural communities to help with this issue.

Each year, we will present an area teacher with a \$1,500 award through this program (renewable one-time) to a current or incoming educator who teaches at a Class B or smaller school district in HCE's service area. Funds may be matched by one of HCE's partner companies.

Program Requirements

- Teach in a B or smaller school district
- Teacher does not have to be a member or member-dependent

Visit www.hcelectric.com/tap to apply



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ANNIVERSARY
LISA!
30 YEARS



HAPPY WORK
ANNIVERSARY
CONRAD!
10 YEARS



Swap and Shop

Welcome to our Swap and Shop! Feel free to post and find classifieds from other members!

Visit www.hcelectric.com/swap-and-shop to view all listings or to submit/remove your own.

**Denotes photo available on website*

735 7" Brandt Auger

Like new. \$5,000. (406) 945-2027.

Wanted: Hunting lease for elk and deer

Personal use, not a outfitter. Prefer annual lease but will consider options for shorter duration. (406) 932-5296.

New Aluminum Stall Horse Door + Hardware Kit System

Five horse door hardware kits with everything you need. \$2000 OBO. (406) 932-4391.

BOSCH 3-1/4" Planer Kit*

Barely used \$75. (406) 750-7894.

ISO Used 4-wheeler

With rack to mount sprayer, honda 250 or equivalent. (406) 899-9279.

Greenhouse Windows

Make offer. (406) 439-5456.

Two Horse Buggy Parts

Free. (406) 439-5456.

Morris Cultivator CP760

Great shape, 60' wide with harrows. \$7,500. (406) 262-4466.

Misc Tools

Van Norman Boring Bar & Accessories. Souix Valve Grinder & Hard Soft Facer. (406) 262-3058.

2022 Chevy G3500 Passenger Bus

Comes with a chair lift, seats 14, or 12 with 2 wheel chairs. \$20,000. (406) 932-5455.

1973 28' Red Dale 5th Wheel

Sleeps 4, full bath, kitchen etc. Great for hunters or bunk house. \$2,450. (406) 262-4466.

Birch Hutch

Lots of storage, bottom has 4 drawers and 4 cupboards, upper portion has glass front. Length 6 ft.- Height 7 ft. \$250.00. (406) 376-3135.

Hydraulic Rock Picker

\$1,750. (406) 670-9706.

Whole & Half Pork

Processing dates of July, August, and September 2026. Raised in Havre, MT processed at the Pay-N-Save in Saco. (406) 230-2281.

Free Dogs

1 English bulldog and 2 tea cup yorkies. (854) 737-3737.

Hundreds of free books and records

Big Sandy Cultural Center. 79200 U.S. Highway 87, Big Sandy. (406) 378-2514.

FlexCoil 2320 45' Airdrill

12" single shoot. Lots of new parts. (406) 390-3185.

Professional Chicken Cages

Accommodates 550 Hens. \$800 each. (406) 945-2027.

1 year old Border Collie

Started on sheep, too much energy. No fear. Will be great on cows. Has had 2 weeks professional training. Great with children and other dogs. \$950. (406) 374-2406.

2015 Polaris 1000XP

3,945 miles, 468 hrs. Handle bar & hand warmer, hard case lockable front rack, winch, 3/4 tread left, rear receiver, medium size trunk. \$7200. (406) 390-4077.

1993 Safari Motorhome For Sale

3430 Cummins, 8.3 turbo-charged, intercooled. Allison World transmission with 6 speed and 2 overdrive gears. 98,600 miles. \$15,000. (406) 547-2184.

1993 Ford Explorer

Needs transmission, runs good, \$400. (406) 547-2184.

1996 Suburban

Needs motor, \$400. (406) 547-2184.

Targhee Registered Rams

Over 75+ years of genetics. Great longevity and will do their best for you and your flock! (406) 799-2379.

Small Square Wheat Straw Bales

30lb average - \$3 each. Located in Havre. Call (406) 230-2281.

Cajun electric smoker

With timer, thermostat, burns pellets. \$75, call (406) 547-2184.

Mini Washing Machine

Mini washing machine, capacity 1KA, B-Quick Bubbleator, portable, great for RV's or apartments. \$35.00. (406) 547-2184.

Water Tank

Estimated 350-500 Gallons. (717) 994-5076.

6 Lots with two buildings in Harlowton

Corner Lots on Central Ave, Harlowton, For Sale By Owner. (24,150 sq ft) with two buildings. Lots of space in a great location. \$350,000. (406) 350-1408.

Diamond Laser 3000 Glass Bandsaw

Asking \$220. Call 406-547-2437.

Round bale wool sacker gas motor

\$275 OBO. (406) 326-2287.

ISO Model T Car Body for Model T Frame

(406) 945-2027.

Craftsman 28" Snowblower

Electric start, 2 stage snowblower with tire chains. Only used twice. Asking \$500. (406)395-4581.

1976 GMC 4wheel drive

4 speed manual 350 V8, Very nice condition, new GM engine and all new interior, no rust P.S P.B. nice paint. runs great, long box. (406) 374-2458.

Swap & Shop is a classified advertising section of the Hill County Electric and Triangle Communications websites and newsletters. It is maintained as a service to members wanting to buy, sell and announce non-commercial items. To have an ad included, simply enter all the pertinent information on the online form. An administrator will review the information and if approved, the ad will be published. It will stay online for 1 year unless you notify us to remove or change it. Ads will also appear in our newsletters (space permitting). Due to print deadlines and space available, some ads may appear in the next month's issue. We reserve the right to abbreviate ads.

Happy swapping and shopping!