

# Along the Lines

A Publication of Rolla Municipal Utilities

## COMING SOON

Due to a recent software update, auto-payments and ACH payments will be processed seven days *prior* to the due date beginning February 1, 2025.



To report or track an outage, simply click on the “report an outage” button on our homepage at [rmuroll.org](http://rmuroll.org). You can also text or call 1-866-733-1701.



## UPCOMING PROJECTS

Please help keep crews safe by giving them plenty of distance and obeying road signs. RMU crews expect to be working in the following areas in the near future; however, crews could work in other areas of Rolla as situations dictate.

### ELECTRIC

- South Adrian Ave
- McCutchen Road
- Forum Drive

### WATER

- 7th Street, between Pine & Rolla Streets

## HOW DOES WEATHER AFFECT YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?

Winter is here, at least that’s what the calendar and the cooler temperatures suggest. It’s that time of the year when people are concerned about how the cold weather can affect their monthly expenses, especially their electric bill. Let’s explore how colder weather affects your electricity usage, and whether it results in higher bills.

### Does Cold Weather Affect Electricity Usage?

Yes, if electricity is your primary source for heating your home, usage does go up as the temperature goes down. It takes more energy to heat your home when the temperature falls. So, if your home uses electricity to produce heat, it’s nearly a guarantee that you will use more electricity during the colder winter months. How much more? That depends on how cold it gets. As the difference between the temperature outside and your thermostat setting increases, more energy is required to bridge that gap. If your home is low on insulation or you have drafty windows or doors with a lot of air leaks, your furnace will have to work even harder. That’s why we recommend everyone spend some time checking their home in the fall for ways to prepare their home for winter to save on winter energy bills. See page 2 for some tips to conserve energy.

# IF A DOWNED POWERLINE HAS FALLEN ON YOUR VEHICLE:

Here's what to do.



## DOWNED POWER LINE SAFETY

Our instinctual behaviors are designed to protect us; however, in certain situations, these reactions can result in disastrous outcomes. For instance, if your vehicle collides with a utility pole, it is generally safest to remain inside your car—unless there are extenuating circumstances—until the power lines have been properly de-energized. After an accident involving a downed power line, the best course of action is to stay inside your vehicle. Unless there is a fire, you should:

- Remain inside your vehicle
- Call 911 to report the downed or damaged power lines
- Keep calm
- Wait for utility personnel to arrive
- Exit your vehicle only when a utility worker advises that it is safe to do so

If you must leave the vehicle due to a fire, make a strong, clean jump out, and then shuffle or hop with your feet together to distance yourself as much as possible.

When exiting, avoid touching both the vehicle and the ground simultaneously, as this could create a path for electricity to ground through you—this is known as touch potential, where you touch something energized and the ground at the same time.

Shuffling helps prevent step potential, which occurs when each foot is placed at a different voltage. When electricity disperses into the ground, it resembles ripples in a pond, with each ripple signifying a different voltage level.

## TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR ELECTRICITY USE WHEN IT'S COLD

When the temperature goes down, reducing your electricity usage is an excellent way to keep your bills down and reduce your demand on the grid. Our favorite strategies for minimizing your energy use are as follows.

- Resist the urge to turn up the heater and turn the thermostat down a few degrees. Each degree you reduce may save you 2% on your heating costs. Grab a sweater and some warm socks instead. If you head out of town for a few days, you can drop it down to 55 degrees, but don't shut it off entirely to avoid returning home to frozen pipes.
- Use a portable space heater if you reduce your home thermostat setting but still want to warm up a small room. They're small and efficient — most space heaters use around 1,500 watts of electricity, whereas an electric furnace can use ten times more.
- Seal up the drafts. If you feel air coming in along windows or doors, replace the weather stripping or use caulk or other draft-reduction tools to keep the warm air in and cold air out.
- Draw the curtains and shut the blinds. Covering your windows can reduce heat loss through the windows.
- Replace your furnace filters regularly. This task isn't exclusive to cold weather situations, but as long as you're on a roll, you may make sure your filters are within date so your furnace can operate efficiently. Dirty filters make it work harder than it has to and use more electricity.
- Add insulation where needed. Generating heat is one of the most energy-intensive activities, so if you're letting heated air escape, it's not far from throwing money out the window. Check the attic and strengthen any weak points.