SPOON RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

NEWS

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President's Report

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President/CEO

The power surge

Factors driving the rising demand for electricity

Across the U.S., the demand for power is climbing at one of the fastest rates in decades. As the economy becomes more reliant on electricity and data centers continue to sprout up in many parts of the country, electric cooperatives are preparing to meet the challenges that skyrocketing demand brings.

The North American Reliability Corporation — the watchdog for the U.S. electric grid — recently released the 2025-2026 winter reliability assessment, which echoed other recent reports, including longer-term outlooks that expect sufficient energy resources during normal conditions but potential supply shortfalls and outages under more intense weather conditions.

Extreme weather coupled with additional factors that are driving increased demand creates challenges for electric utilities, including cooperatives, in their mission to provide reliable power around the clock.

Several key factors are driving increased demand — including economic growth, expanded manufacturing, data center development and increased electrification in transportation. Together, these trends are reshaping how much electricity we consume and how quickly utilities like Spoon River must adapt to meet future needs.

One of the biggest drivers of rising demand is increased electrification. More homes and businesses are transitioning to electricity for home heating, water heating and transportation. EVs are becoming more common on the road, and many states are offering incentives to help consumers make the switch. Additionally, electric heat pumps are replacing traditional furnaces in many homes due to their efficiency. These transitions mean more energy use and pressure placed on our electric grid.

Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough electricity to power 3,600 homes for one year) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

1. **Increased Electrification:** Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
2. **Data Centers:** Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
3. **Economic Growth:** Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
4. **Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring:** New, expanding and "onshored/reshored" manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

Data centers are another major contributor to rising demand. As AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing technologies grow, the need for data processing and storage has skyrocketed. Data centers require huge amounts of power to operate servers and cooling systems 24/7. Tech companies are building new facilities nationwide — many of which are in electric cooperative-served areas — and these regions are experiencing multi-year surges in electricity demand as a result.

Economic and manufacturing growth are also contributing to higher electricity use. As businesses expand and new industries take root, especially in rural and suburban areas, the demand for reliable, high-capacity power is increasing. The resurgence of domestic manufacturing has led to major facility construction. These facilities often require substantial energy

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Power surge continued from 18A

loads, and many operate continuously to keep production lines running. This growth brings jobs and investment, but it also puts new pressures on the electric grid.

Population growth and housing development are also contributing to rising demand in many regions, and everyday life is becoming more energy dependent, too. Smart appliances, connected devices, home offices and entertainment systems are adding to overall consumption, even as efficiency improves.

While increased demand presents new challenges for electric utilities, it also has the potential to create significant opportunities for co-ops and the communities they serve, such as job growth, steady revenue and improved infrastructure. Electric co-ops are responding by planning carefully for the future.

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of today's economy, and its role will only grow stronger. As electrification accelerates, long-term planning becomes more important than ever.

Spoon River is ready to meet rising demand in our local communities. Through innovation, investment and collaboration, we are preparing for a more reliable and resilient energy future.

Spoon River Electric Cooperative

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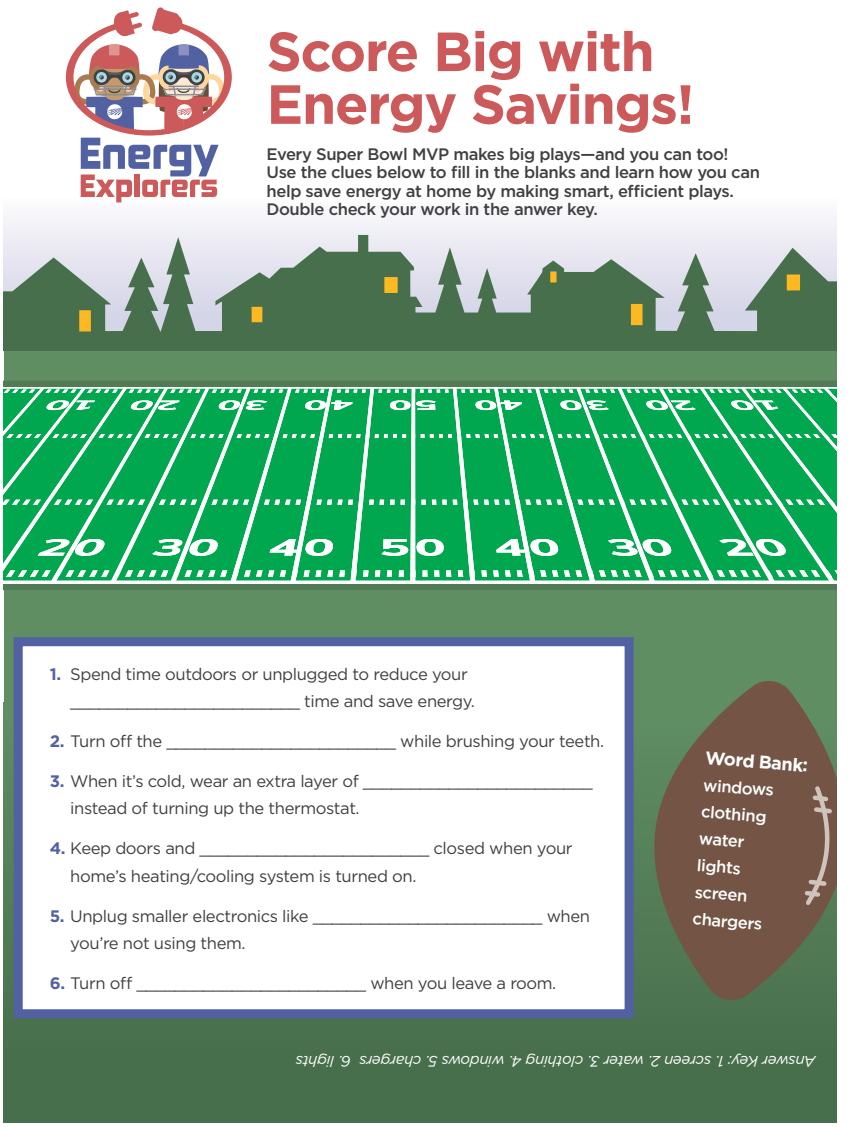
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
309-647-2700 • www.srecoop.org

Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,272

Number of members served: 5,022

Number of power poles in territory: 29,361



Portable power stations for power outages

How to stay safe and keep your devices running

If the power goes out due to an emergency, you don't want to be left in the dark. Portable power stations are compact, rechargeable battery systems that can keep essential devices, like phones, medical equipment, lights and even refrigerators running during an outage.

They're easy to use, safe to operate indoors, and many can be recharged through a wall outlet, your car or solar panels. Here's what you need to know to choose the right one.

Portable power station basics

Think of a portable power station as a high-capacity rechargeable battery designed for emergencies, travel or off-grid use. Unlike traditional generators, they produce zero emissions, operate silently, need very little maintenance and don't require gasoline.

Most models have three main components:

- Battery: Stores energy
- Inverter: Converts stored energy to usable household power
- Ports and outlets: USB, AC and DC connections for your devices

Features to look for:

- Pass-through charging: Allows you to power devices while the unit is charging.
- Battery management system: Provides built-in safety features to prevent overcharging, overheating and shorting out circuits.

To maintain your system, store it in a cool, dry place and keep it clean to ensure maximum lifespan and performance.

How to choose the right power station system

The system that's right for you depends on three things:

- What you want to power (lights, phone chargers, refrigerator, medical equipment, etc.)
- How long you need power (a few hours during an outage or days without electricity).
- Where you'll use it (at home, in an RV, camping or during travel).

When comparing battery systems, you'll see two key ratings:

- Capacity: How long it can power your devices. This indicates how much total energy is stored in the battery. The higher the watt-hour (Wh) rating, the longer it can run your devices.
- Output: Which devices it can power. This is the maximum amount of power the system can deliver simultaneously. The output must meet or exceed the wattage (W) required by the device you want to run.

Example: A battery with 500 Wh capacity and 1000 W output could run a 1000-watt device (like a small space heater or microwave) for about 30 minutes.

If you need to power multiple devices at once — like your refrigerator and lights — make sure their combined wattage stays below the unit's output limit and that the total running time fits within the capacity.

Be mindful that some appliances, especially those with motors such as fridges or power tools, have a higher starting wattage than their running wattage. For safety, add a 20% buffer to your calculations and look for surge output capability.

Power station categories

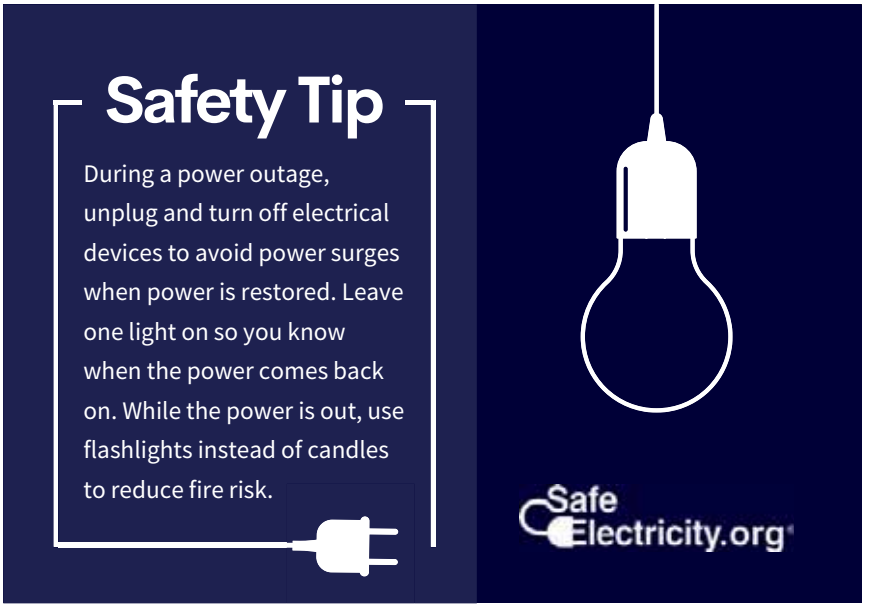
Power stations range from lightweight units to hefty systems that may require wheels or two people to move. Here's a quick breakdown:

- Small capacity: 100-500 Wh
  - Powers phones, laptops, Wi-Fi routers, small lights
  - Weighs less than 10 pounds
- Medium capacity: 500-1500 Wh
  - Powers mini fridges, small appliances, fans
  - Weighs 30-50 pounds
- High capacity: 1500-3000+ Wh
  - Powers a full-size fridge, microwave, multiple devices
  - Weighs up to 135 pounds

Stay powered when it matters

Portable power stations are a safe and flexible way to keep essential devices running during an outage or emergency, and many are compact enough to take with you anywhere. When choosing a system, think about how much power you need, how long you need it to last and whether portability or extra features are important to you.

If you want to power your entire home, look into whole-home battery systems or gas generators. Your utility may offer incentives or rebates, so it's worth asking before you buy.



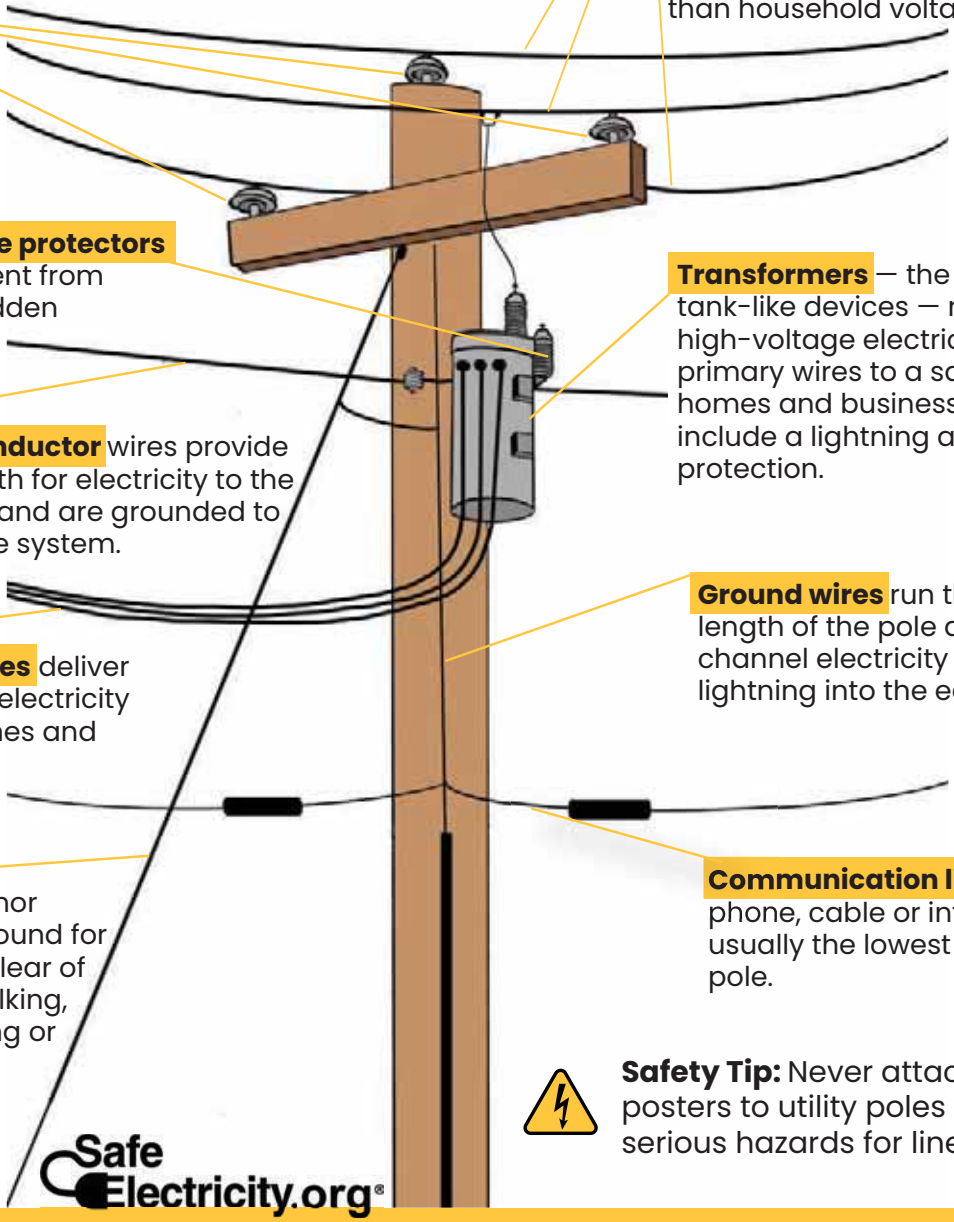
The parts of a **POWER POLE**

Ever wonder what's on a power pole and how it delivers electricity to your home? Learning about each part can help you and your family stay informed — and safe.

Here are some common parts found on power poles. Equipment can vary depending on location and service needs.

Insulators keep energized wires from touching the pole or other wires, preventing dangerous contact.

Primary wires are the main series of wires that carry high-voltage electricity (often 7,200 volts) from substations through the distribution system — about 60 times higher than household voltage.



Lightning surge protectors shield equipment from lightning or sudden voltage spikes.

Transformers — the round, metal tank-like devices — reduce high-voltage electricity from primary wires to a safer level for homes and businesses. Many include a lightning arrestor for protection.

Neutral conductor wires provide a return path for electricity to the substation and are grounded to balance the system.

Ground wires run the entire length of the pole and safely channel electricity and lightning into the earth.

Secondary wires deliver lower-voltage electricity directly to homes and businesses.

Communication lines — for phone, cable or internet — are usually the lowest wires on the pole.

Guy wires anchor poles to the ground for stability. Stay clear of them when walking, playing, mowing or driving nearby.

Safety Tip: Never attach signs or posters to utility poles — it creates serious hazards for lineworkers.

SafeElectricity.org®