

What is a brownout?

A blackout is a complete shutdown of power. A **brownout** means that energy is reduced by **10 to 25%**.



THE INS AND OUTS OF BROWNOUTS

The lights flicker and dim. The television suddenly reboots. Your computer screen goes dark. As soon as you start to wonder when or if you clicked save, the lights become brighter and everything seems to return to the way it was — except, perhaps, that document you were working on.

When these events occur simultaneously, it could mean you experienced a brownout, which gets its name from the way incandescent lightbulbs dim and the light appears brown. But what exactly is a brownout and how is it different from a blackout?

Where a blackout is a complete shutdown of power, a brownout means that energy is reduced by 10% to 25%. Brownouts typically occur when outdoor temperatures are extreme, causing a significant spike in energy demand. This heightened demand can cause electricity production to be near or at capacity. The opposite action, a temporary reduction in the voltage of electricity (aka a brownout), can help avoid a total shutdown of the electrical system.

Sometimes brownouts are planned by

us to regulate power delivery and prevent complete outages. These may last for several minutes or up to an hour or two. Reduced power that travels from one area to the next is called a rolling brownout. Once demand decreases and the power grid is less stressed, full power is restored. (Blair and Yvonne Ersek, acct.#xxx5800)

Brownouts can also be caused by a transmission issue, damage somewhere in the power delivery infrastructure or an issue in your home.

When energy demand is at its highest, Morgan County REA recommends:

- Unplugging computers and high-end electronics to protect them from potential damage caused by power sags and surges. As a rule, these types of devices cannot regulate the amount of power they receive.
- Installing point-of-use surge protectors. This type of affordable surge protector plugs directly into an outlet and works by cutting the power when excessive voltage is detected. While most appliances are typically unscathed by dips

and eventual surges in voltage levels caused by a brownout, damage can happen, and these devices add a layer of protection.

- Considering a whole-home surge protector, which helps protect all your home's electrical devices. While more of an investment than the plug-in variety, it works by diverting power from appliances and electronics through a home's grounding wires. It can also help protect appliances from spikes related to lightning strikes and other electrical issues. This type of whole-home protection should be installed by a qualified electrician directly into your home's electrical panel.
- Unplugging unessential appliances. Taking this simple step can help reduce the amount of power your home uses. If done in multiple homes, it may help shorten the length of the brownout.
- Being prepared for an outage. Unfortunately, brownouts are not always successful in reducing the load. Keep your home stocked with flashlights, batteries, water, nonperishable food and other emergency items in the event of an extended power outage.
- Having a fully charged portable power bank on hand. If the power goes out or a brownout lasts more than a few hours, you can use your mobile device to let us know about the issues you are experiencing. It is also good to have a fully charged cellphone on hand in case of an emergency.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



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SUDS AND SAVINGS

Ten Ways to Save Energy in the Laundry Room

BY ABBY BERRY

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion of energy consumption from major appliances and, let's face it, laundry is no one's favorite chore. But you can still make the most of your laundry energy use. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends the following tips for saving on suds:

1. **Wash with cold water.** Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half. By using a cold-water detergent, you can still achieve that brilliant clean you'd normally get from washing in warm water.
2. **Wash full loads when possible.** Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up if you can.
3. **Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle in the washer.** This setting will remove more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.
4. **Dry heavier cottons separately.** Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.
5. **Make use of the "cool down" cycle.** If your dryer has this cycle option, you can save energy because the clothes will finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer.
6. **Use lower heat settings to dry clothing.** Regardless of drying time, you'll still use less energy.
7. **Use dryer balls.** Dryer balls, usually wool or rubber, will help keep clothes separated for faster drying, and they can help reduce static, so you can eliminate dryer sheets.



Switch from warm water to cold water to cut energy use in half. Photo: Scott Van Osdol

8. **Switch loads while the dryer is warm.** This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.
9. **Clean the lint filter after each drying cycle.** If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.
10. **Purchase Energy Star-rated washers and dryers.** When it's time to purchase a new washer or dryer, look for the Energy Star label. New washers and dryers that receive the Energy Star rating use about 20% less energy than conventional models.

To learn about additional ways to save energy at home, visit the Department of Energy's home efficiency page, [Energy.gov/home-energy-saver](https://www.energy.gov/home-energy-saver).

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



PULL-OUT LIST

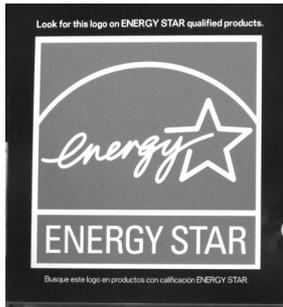
Do you have a tractor or heavy equipment that might help us pull out an MCREA vehicle that has gotten stuck?

MCREA is looking to update our list of those in our service territory who are willing to volunteer to help when REA equipment becomes stuck in mud, snow or sand. This allows our crews to get back to work safely keeping our consumer-members' power on.

MCREA provides compensation when you help with a pullout, and we greatly appreciate any consumer-members who are willing to contact us to sign up.

To be added to our list, visit mcrea.org, click on 'Power Outages', and hit the orange 'Pullout List Signup' link. Or call 970-867-5688 and ask for dispatch. We'll reach out to you when future need arises.

MORGAN COUNTY REA IS HERE TO HELP WITH REBATES



Morgan County REA along with Tri-State Generation and Transmission offer a wide variety of energy efficiency rebates. Rebates are a great way to get some extra cash back when making a significant purchase. Our member services department is always ready and available to answer any questions you have about rebates. We have information on our website (www.mcrea.org) to give you an idea of the types of items we give rebates on.

When purchasing a new appliance, make sure there is an Energy Star-rated stamp on the energy guide in order to be eligible for a rebate. When building a new home, there are lots of rebates available for you. Some new and exciting rebates that are now offered are for outdoor power equipment and electric vehicle chargers. As always, don't hesitate to contact us with rebate questions. We are available at 970-867-5688, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Win \$25 Off Your Electric Bill

Each month, Morgan County REA gives two lucky consumer-members a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just for reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congratulations, Howard Hettinger (account # xxx5100) and Peter and Barbara Begler (acct #xxx6700), you saw your names and account numbers in the April edition of *Colorado Country Life* and will receive a \$25 credit on your bill.

There are two more MCREA consumer-member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call member services at 970-867-5688 by June 30 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

MORGAN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION'S DIRECTOR ACHIEVES CREDENTIAL

MCREA board director Terry Tormohlen recently received the Director Gold Credential certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. MCREA has a commitment to work through NRECA to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of its electric cooperative consumer-members. The Director Gold Credential recognizes directors who already earned their Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates and who wish to continue to learn throughout their service on the board.

"The Director Gold certificate is geared toward directors who are committed to continuing their education beyond CCD and BLC and who desire a tangible credential that reinforces their stature as part of an experienced and educated group of directors," said Cary Wickstrom, MCREA board president. "Director Gold also demonstrates to co-op members those directors' ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability."

For a director to earn the Director Gold certificate, they must have already earned the CCD and BLC and earn three additional credits from the BLC series of courses. Unlike the CCD and BLC,



MCREA board president Cary Wickstrom (left) presents the Director Gold certificate to Terry Tormohlen.

Director Gold includes a continuing education requirement that calls for directors to earn three credits of approved course work and/or attend conferences every two years to maintain their Director Gold status.

NRECA represents the nation's more than 900 private, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide electric services to more than 42 million people in 47 states, with over 7,200 directors. MCREA serves 4,495 members.