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KCC approves settlement agreement in Atmos rate case

TOPEKA — Thursday morning, Feb. 26, the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) approved a unanimous settlement agreement allowing Atmos Energy to increase its rates by \$12 million to recover costs already incurred by the company to support safe and reliable natural gas service for

Kansas customers. The new rates took effect March 1. Residential customers with average monthly usage (67.3 Ccf) will see an increase of approximately \$5.69 per month or 6.81%. A portion of the increase is the result of a change in the fixed customer charge from \$19.75 per month

to \$23 per month. In an application filed with the Commission in July, Atmos requested an increase of \$19.1 million, which would have raised the monthly bill of customers with average usage by approximately \$9.12. The settlement agreement approved last week was reached

after negotiations between KCC staff, Atmos, the Citizens Utility Ratepayer Board, and WoodRiver Energy LLC, all of which were participants in the case. Based on review and consideration of evidence in the record, the Commission found that the agreed upon rates are

just and reasonable, and will provide Atmos with sufficient revenues to meet its financial obligations, yet will keep rates as low as possible while maintaining reliable service for its customers. Atmos provides natural gas service to 140,000 customers in 110 Kansas communities.



Prescribed burns are common in Osage County during March and April, as a way to control invasive species and provide better forage for cattle.



Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 8, when clocks should be set forward one hour to 3 a.m. Daylight Saving Time will end the first Sunday in November.

Remember to change batteries in smoke detectors each time clocks are reset.

Kansans urged to guard against scams

TOPEKA — In observance of National Consumer Protection Week, March 1-7, Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach is encouraging residents to "spot, avoid and report" scams as fraud tactics continue to evolve.

Consumer advocates across the country use the annual awareness week to educate the public about recognizing and preventing scams. The attorney general's office warns that criminals are increasingly using artificial intelligence, deepfakes and sophisticated phishing schemes to target victims. U.S. consumers reported billions of dollars in fraud losses last year.

Kobach said basic precautions can help residents protect themselves. Joseph Sciarrotta, chief deputy attorney general, noted that consumer protection remains a key function of the office.

In 2025, the Attorney General's Public Protection Division resolved 4,039 consumer complaints, filed 3,952 new complaints and secured more than \$3.24 mil-

lion in settlements for Kansans.

Scams to watch for:

Imposter Scams: Callers posing as government agents or bank fraud departments claiming your account is compromised.

Job Scams: Fake job solicitations promising high pay for little work designed to steal personal information or money.

Investment & Romance Scams: Long-term grooming scams, like "pig butchering" where scammers build trust online before luring victims into, often times, fake cryptocurrency investments.

Online Shopping & Subscription Traps: Deceptive websites offer "free trials" that become difficult to cancel and lead to unauthorized recurring monthly charges.

Suspected scams can be reported to the Kansas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at cprotect@ag.ks.gov or by calling (800) 432-3699. Complaints also may be filed online at www.ag.ks.gov.

Health advisory, safety tips for prescribed fire season in Flint Hills

TOPEKA — The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) reminds Kansans that March and April are when large areas of the state's rangelands are burned, especially within the Flint Hills.

Prescribed fire is a tool used by landowners and managers to help preserve the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, control invasive species, reduce woody encroachment from species such as Eastern Red Cedar, and provide better forage for cattle. Prescribed burning also reduces the risk of wildfires and is effective in managing rangeland resources. Smoke from the burns can influence the air quality of downwind areas. The use of smoke management techniques is vital to reducing air quality and health impacts.

KDHE activated the Kansas smoke modeling tool on March 1, prior to widespread burning in the Flint Hills. The computer models use fire data and current weather

conditions to predict the potential contribution of smoke and air quality impacts to downwind areas. There are approximately 2.1 million acres burned on average in the Flint Hills of Kansas and Oklahoma each year.

"We are entering the 16th year that we have been able to provide this important tool for the prescribed fire community," said Douglas Watson, meteorologist and KDHE Bureau of Air. "We continue to encourage ranchers and land managers to utilize smoke modeling resources, such as the smoke modeling tool to mitigate potential air quality impacts."

Prescribed burns release large amounts of particulate matter and other pollutants that can form ground-level ozone. Particulate matter and ozone can cause health problems, even in healthy individuals. Common health problems include burning eyes, runny nose, coughing, and illnesses such as bronchitis. People with respiratory

conditions, cardiovascular diseases, and children and the elderly are more vulnerable to experience symptoms.

Steps to protect your health on days when smoke is present in your community include:

Healthy people should limit or avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.

Vulnerable people need to remain indoors.

Keep indoor air clean by closing doors and windows, and running air conditioners with air filters.

Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.

Contact your doctor if you have symptoms, such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue.

For more information about the prescribed burning in the Flint Hills, the Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan, April burn restrictions, and the smoke modeling tool, visit The Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management website, KSFire.org.

Osage County Commission

Smith runs Feb. 24 Osage County meeting

LYNDON — With only one commissioner physically present, the Osage County Commission moved through a full agenda Feb. 24, approving personnel actions, signing off on health department grant paperwork, and advancing a state-funded bridge project.

Commissioner Brandon Smith was the only commissioner in the meeting room. Osage County Clerk Michelle Morris was present throughout, and County Counselor Joshua Ney joined roughly 45 minutes into the meeting. Commissioner Les Holman participated by phone, while Commissioner Heather Kuder was absent.

For viewers watching remotely, the commission's YouTube livestream had a significant hiccup early: The audio portion of the feed

did not function for roughly the first 10 minutes, limiting public access to the opening discussion. Sound was restored later, and the remainder of the meeting proceeded normally on the broadcast.

Among actions, the commission approved a clerk's office payroll action form reflecting a deputy clerk position change, then approved several sheriff's office personnel forms, including a promotion, a transfer, and a resignation.

The board also approved a signature page for annual health department grant applications totaling \$49,570 for the grant period July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

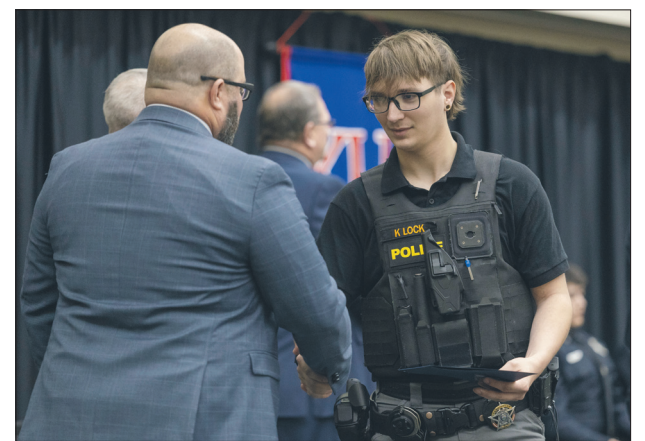
The grants included immunizations (\$3,751), public health emergency preparedness (\$16,856), and a state formula grant (\$28,963).

Public Works Director Ryan Fine presented a contract tied to the state's off-system bridge program for the Fisher Bridge project, planned for 2027. Later, after Ney arrived, the board approved signing the bridge contract and related certifications.

Commissioners also approved batches of tax roll correction forms, including real estate corrections for 2022-2025, personal property corrections for 2023-2025, trucks for 2025, and payments under protest for 2025, with Morris authorized to use a commissioner stamp due to the volume of documents.

In scheduling action, the board agreed to move its March 17 meeting to 6 p.m. The meeting concluded after roughly an hour and fifteen minutes.

Lock graduates from KLETC



Jeff Tuttle/Contributor

Kevin Lock was among 20 recruits from the 353rd Basic Training Class at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center (KLETC) who graduated recently, after completing 14 weeks of intensive training. Lock will now return to the Carbondale Police Department to begin serving the community.



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