



# BTES NEWS

**Bristol Tennessee Essential Services**

*Electric • Internet • Telephone • Cable*

Fall 2020 - For customers of Bristol Tennessee Essential Services

## BRISTOL TENNESSEE RECOGNIZED FOR FASTEST INTERNET

In a recent study by AdvisorSmith, author Adrian Mak researched the fastest and slowest Internet speeds available in the United States. Bristol Tennessee was recognized as having the fastest Internet speeds available to residents in the small city category.

"It is great to be recognized as number one," said BTES CEO Mike Browder. "BTES offers Internet speeds of 10 Gigabits per second to everyone in our franchised Internet service area. I don't know of another city, even larger cities, with a better Internet network than ours."

The study used data from the Federal Communications Commission on residential broadband Internet speeds

and divided cities into three categories based on population size. Bristol fell into the small city category (10,000-100,000 residents). In total, the study examined Internet speeds in 3,983 cities in the United States.

"In our community, we've always known that the Internet service that BTES offers is powerful," said City of Bristol Tennessee Mayor Mahlon Luttrell. "This recognition opens so many opportunities for our community and tells everyone that you can move to Bristol and work worldwide. I personally want to thank the employees of BTES and Dr. Browder for his leadership in bringing this to our community. I believe that BTES has the best and brightest in the industry."

Bristol tied with seven other cities for the fastest Internet with all having 100 percent penetration of Gigabit Internet to residences, meaning every resident has the option to subscribe to Gigabit Internet speeds.

Browder continued, "Our customers not only have access to 1 Gigabit Internet - they have access to Internet speeds of 10 Gigabits per second, if they want it. This is offered to our entire franchised Internet service area, not just Bristol. So, the fastest Internet in the United States is available to Bristol, Bluff City, Blountville...every home and business!"

AdvisorSmith specializes in providing research and tools to businesses. The full study and results can be found at [www.advisorsmith.com/data/cities-with-the-fastest-and-slowest-internet-speeds/#SF](http://www.advisorsmith.com/data/cities-with-the-fastest-and-slowest-internet-speeds/#SF)

### FASTEST INTERNET

small cities < 100k

- |     |             |    |
|-----|-------------|----|
| 1.  | Bristol     | TN |
| 2.  | Celina      | OH |
| 3.  | Dalton      | GA |
| 4.  | Laramie     | WY |
| 5.  | Ozark       | AL |
| 6.  | Evanston    | WY |
| 7.  | Hays        | KS |
| 8.  | Monmouth    | OR |
| 9.  | Dickinson   | ND |
| 10. | Cedar Falls | IA |

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## WHO DO WE GET BETTER FOR?

Uncle Harlston Conaway was actually my grandmother's uncle. As I remember it, he was in his nineties when I was a teenager. In the community where we lived (Forney, Alabama), there were always stories being told.

One had to do with selling several acres of pine trees to a contractor who supplied pulp wood to a container board paper mill for a "tidy sum." When Uncle Harlston was in his seventies, he planted several acres of pine tree seedlings. His friends and others called him crazy for doing all that work because he wouldn't live long enough to make a dime off of it. It would take thirty years for the seedlings to grow into saw timber.

He said, "I have eaten apples, pears, and peaches off trees someone else planted. I have sat under shade trees someone else planted. It is okay if someone else benefits from something I have done."

It sounded good to me. Not only was he doing something for someone else, he did a right thing and was the beneficiary of the "tidy sum." He sold the trees to the paper mill. Now, they were laughing with him instead of at him.

A Forester with the Alabama Forestry Department came to my high school and addressed our vocational class about planting pine trees. That speech, plus Uncle Harlston's "tidy sum," started a fire in me. I went looking for a clean place that had a couple of acres that I could use. There was an area on our farm that daddy had cleared to plant watermelons. That project didn't go too well. I told daddy about the speech I had heard at school. He was ready to forget the watermelon project and said yes. I submitted the plot and ordered the trees.

It was a long, hot, and difficult planting project about a half-mile from home. I had help from my two much younger brothers and their red radio flyer wagon. We finally completed the project and submitted it for a Cherokee County Forestry Project Competition. My trees had a 94.5% success rate.

I was designated the Top Cherokee County Forester Student. The prize was an all-expense paid trip to a week-long State Forestry Camp. The camp was great with a lot of learning and a lot of time on the lake. The things I learned are still useful today. Of all the trees I have planted, not one has grown into the power lines and not one has had to be trimmed except for natural beauty.

At BTES, we measure what we do by our three Key Success Factors: Safety, Reliability, and Financial. They are for the benefit of our customers, community, and employees. Sometimes we are asked to submit results for comparison to the best. This helps us have more feedback as how we are doing when compared to the best.

A very special thanks goes to our customers, community, and employees and to all of our readers. Have a very happy fall and...

Good luck!

*Mike Browder*

## BTES News

Owned and published by Bristol Tennessee Essential Services, serving more than 33,000 electric customers and over 18,000 fiber customers.

**Dr. R. Michael Browder**  
Chief Executive Officer

Address changes, news items and suggestions should be sent to:  
PO Box 549, Bristol, TN 37621

Editor: Leslie Blevins

### Our Mission

To provide service to our customers, employees and community that exceeds their expectations

### Our Vision

To be the best electric, Internet, telephone and cable television provider for the benefit of our customers.

“

BTES provides the best Internet that I've ever had! The setup process was easy and the staff were very friendly! The installation was neat and clean and the installer was polite, friendly, and fast!

**Robin B.**  
BTES Customer

## PREPAY: PAY AS YOU GO!

BTES is now offering PrePay to our customers! This option has a lot of advantages including payment flexibility. Also, a deposit or credit check is not required and there are no reconnection fees!

So, how is PrePay different than standard billing? Lola McVey, Director of Accounting and Finance, explains.

"With Standard Billing, we read your meter to see how much power was used in the prior billing cycle, which is around a month. Then, we bill your account for your energy usage. Any Internet, telephone, or cable services are billed a month in advance. Customers then pay the account balance using any number of different payment options. Long story short: Standard Billing customers receive a bill with a due date for their services every month, and THEN pay their balance."

### PrePay works differently.

McVey continues, "Let's say I'm a PrePay customer. Much like putting gas in my car to drive until I run out or refill, I put money into my account creating a PrePay credit balance that pays for my usage and services until I 'run out' or 'refill.' Every day BTES reads my meter and calculates my usage. This usage includes how much power I used the prior day plus a pro-rated charge for one day of any other services and charges."

Instead of getting a bill every month like Standard Billing customers; every day PrePay customers receive a balance and usage alert by text or email to let them know how much was deducted for the previous day, and also lets them know the current balance of their PrePay account.

"Just like when the gas light in my car

turns on to warn me that my gas is low, I will receive an additional text or email alert to let me know when my PrePay balance is low," McVey explains.

Customers choose the PrePay balance threshold at which they receive the alert.

So, what happens when the credit runs out?

McVey continues, "Sticking with the car analogy, when my gas runs out, the car stops driving. When I run out of credit on my account, I receive a pending auto-disconnect alert between 8:30 and 9:00am. If I pay enough to reestablish a PrePay credit balance, my services will stay on. However, if I do not pay, my services will be automatically turned off at 10am, no matter the day of the year."

If the services are turned off, the services will be automatically reconnected once the customer pays enough to have a PrePay credit balance of \$50.

### PrePay is an excellent way to help manage your budget and energy usage.

If you are interested in PrePay, give us a call at 423-968-1526 to discuss your account with a Customer Service Representative or visit [www.btes.net/prepay](http://www.btes.net/prepay) for more information.

# PrePay

in four easy steps!

SIGN UP



Call 423-968-1526 to get started.

ADD FUNDS



Put at least a \$50 credit on your account.

CHECK BALANCE



Receive text message and/or email alerts.

REFILL ACCOUNT



Numerous payment options available!

[www.btes.net/prepay](http://www.btes.net/prepay)

## BTES CUSTOMERS TO RECEIVE TEMPORARY RATE REDUCTION

The Bristol Tennessee Essential Services (BTES) Board of Directors voted on September 16 to reduce its customers' rates for the next 12 months.

"On August 27, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Board approved a Wholesale Pandemic Relief Credit of 2.5 percent of certain components of the wholesale rate for twelve months for all of the customers TVA serves," explained BTES CEO Mike Browder. "The BTES Board voted to pass this credit through to our customers which results in a decrease of an average of 1.6 percent of retail rates."

The rate reduction will be applied beginning in October 2020 and will remain in effect for the duration of the TVA credit.

"The continued impact of this pandemic on our communities is unprecedented and creates continued economic uncertainty," said Jeff Lyash, TVA president and CEO. "Because of the TVA team's strong operational and financial performance under challenging circumstances this past year, we have an opportunity and responsibility to use TVA's resources and expertise to provide continued support for customers, businesses and communities."

In addition to the temporary rate reduction, BTES and TVA have each allocated \$15,000 in matching funds to donations that help residential customers in need pay their electric bills. Since April 2020, BTES' customers have donated almost \$14,000 to the BTES Help Your Neighbor Program. This has the potential to reach \$45,000 in direct benefit to our community. The Salvation Army certifies the eligibility of the recipients and the United Way of Bristol administers the funds.

"We are hoping this provides our customers with some additional help during the COVID-19 pandemic," continued Browder. "BTES is committed to doing what we can to help our customers, our employees, and the community we serve."

## NEW PAYMENT OPTION!

Exciting news - we have a new payment option:

### CheckOut!

CheckOut is a fast and convenient way to pay your BTES bill with cash at participating retailers. CheckOut lets you pay your bill at locations across the United States with extended hours such as Dollar General and CVS Pharmacy, and the payment applies to your account immediately!

1

WWW

Visit  
[btes.net/checkout](https://btes.net/checkout)

2



Enter your account number and  
get your barcode!

3



Find locations

4



Scan barcode at cashier

## BRISTOL, TENNESSEE RECEIVES \$500,000 SITE DEVELOPMENT GRANT

BTES was awarded \$500,000 from Tennessee Governor Bill Lee as part of the Site Development Grant Program that helps communities prepare industrial sites for businesses. The Site Development Grant program, part of the Rural Economic Opportunity Act, works in tandem with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's (TNECD) Select Tennessee Certified Sites program. BTES was one of eight recipients.

"These funds will continue to help Tennessee communities attract jobs and enhance the quality of life for their residents," Governor Lee said. "I congratulate the recipients and thank them for their efforts in building and growing businesses here in Tennessee."

The grant awarded to the Bristol Business Park will be used for the clearing, grading, and seeding of two separate sites totaling approximately 22 acres to accommodate a 35,000-square foot building and up to a 200,000-square foot building.

"Having large pad-ready sites are a critical component in attracting new business to our community," explained BTES CEO Mike Browder.

BTES Business Development Manager April Eads continued, "Having pad-ready sites gives us the opportunity to participate in requests for information from site selection consultants that we wouldn't have been able to otherwise. These sites are more attractive to potential businesses since it helps to mitigate risk and allows for a faster speed to market. This, in addition to BTES' reliable electric service and 10 Gigabits of Internet service availability, helps attract fulfillment centers, data



*An aerial view of the Bristol Business Park located on Highway 394.*

centers, advanced manufacturing, service industries, or corporate offices to this newly developed site."

Through the combined efforts of BTES, the City of Bristol Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the TNECD, and the TVA, a complete infrastructure system has already been installed at the Park including roadway, water, sewer, storm drainage, electrical and fiber optic.

"We are excited to join our economic development partners, both here locally and at the state level, in preparing additional sites within the Bristol Business Park for a wide array of business and industrial uses," said Bristol, Tennessee City Manager Bill Sorah. "Working together, we can transform these grant dollars into new opportunities for our community."

Grants were awarded based on benefit to the community, economic impact, leveraged resources, and ability to implement a successful project.



**BTES**  
Digital Tennessee Essential Services  
power • internet • managed • cloud

# INTERNET SPEEDS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Order now at [www.btes.net](http://www.btes.net)



Autumn  
shows us how  
beautiful  
it can be to  
let things  
go.

-unknown.

## The Lighter Side

Why was the jack-o'-lantern afraid?

It had no guts.



# Favorite Recipes

## Easy Pumpkin Muffins

1 box Spiced Cake Mix  
1 can (15 oz) pumpkin  
1 cup water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well. Grease a muffin pan and transfer mixture into pan. Bake for 20-25 minutes. Makes 12 muffins. These will be very moist!

## Pumpkin Fluff Dip

1 can (15 oz) pumpkin  
1 pkg. (3.4 oz) vanilla flavor instant pudding  
1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice  
1 tub (8 oz) whipped topping, thawed

Mix pumpkin, dry pudding mix and spice in large bowl with whisk until blended. Stir in whipped topping. Refrigerate 1 hour. Serve with cinnamon graham crackers or gingersnap cookies.

# HELP US PROTECT THE POWER LINES FROM TREES

Safe and reliable power is important to all of us. Protecting power lines from trees and other vegetation is a big part of keeping the lights on.

"Trees are our largest cause of electric outages each year," explained Steve Craddock, Supervisor of Transmission and Distribution. "Trees have been planted too close to the power lines, and trees and vegetation have been left to grow that should have been trimmed or removed by the land owner before it reached a height to interfere with BTES providing the safe and reliable service our customers expect."

It costs BTES - and therefore our customers - over \$1 million each year to trim and remove trees that are impacting the power lines. This means that our customers have to pay over \$1 million each year within their electric rates for crews to manage vegetation.

Craddock continued, "We need our customers help to maintain safe spaces between trees and power lines."

You can help! First, if there are trees or other vegetation on your property that is growing too close to the power lines, take the necessary steps to safely remove the impending vegetation before it reaches the power lines. Second, if you are planting trees, take the power lines and other BTES equipment into consideration.

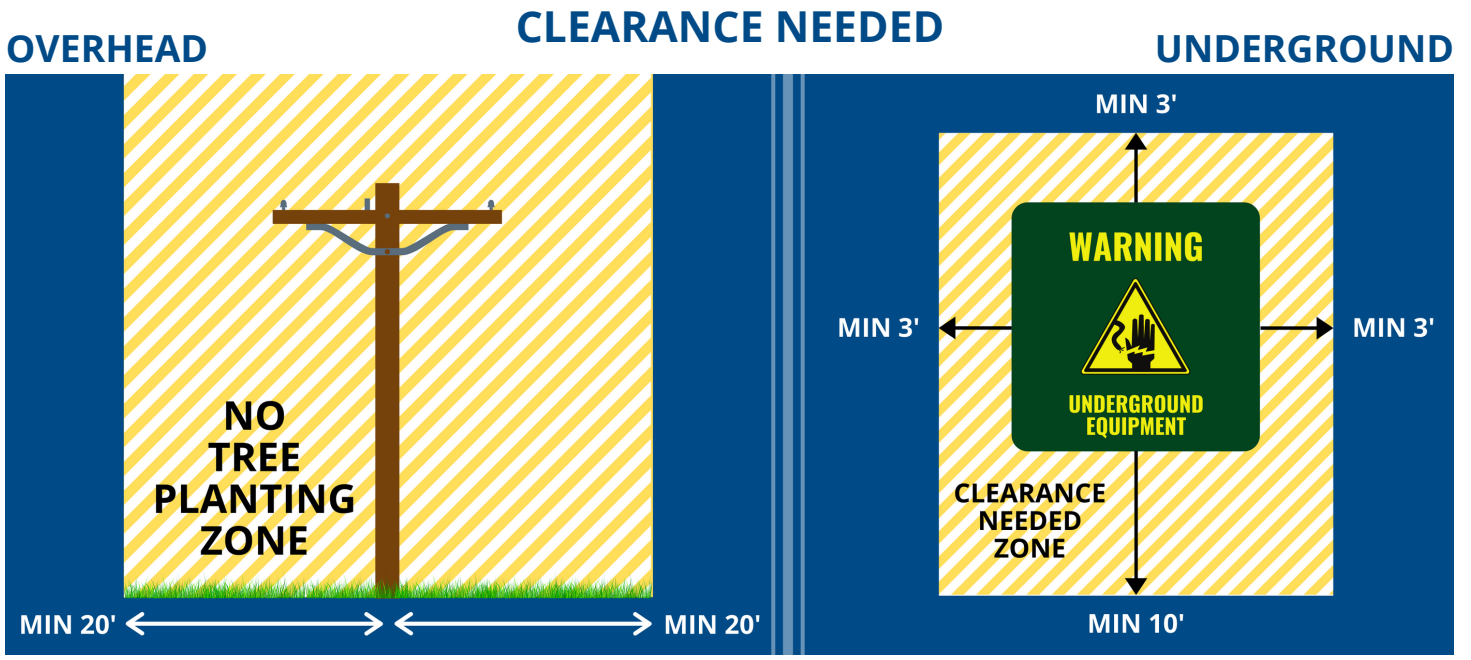
Here are three things to consider when planting trees:

- Consider what type of tree to plant based on its future size at maturity and give your tree room to grow to its full height and width safely.
- Consider where to plant and do not plant your tree near the power lines.
- Call 811 before you dig to locate any underground utilities.

BTES conducts line clearance work year-round on a planned cycle. Trees are trimmed by experienced professionals who use guidelines set by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

"Instead of trimming trees every cycle, BTES would prefer to remove trees that are obstructing or endangering a power line," Craddock explained. "BTES has a Trade-a-Tree Program in place that offers our customers a Dogwood tree [which is a low growing tree] in exchange for the removal of a tree."

BTES' Tree Trimming and Maintenance Program has won the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Line USA Award for 20 years in recognition of quality tree care and maintenance in our community. With your help, we can continue to keep rates lower by reducing the costs associated with tree trimming and removal of vegetation. Thank you for working with us to help keep the areas around power lines safe.





**Bristol Tennessee Essential Services**

*Electric • Internet • Telephone • Cable*

U.S. Postage Paid  
Presort Standard  
Permit 72  
Bristol, TN



**Malcolm Baldrige**  
National Quality Award

2017 Award Recipient

### YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT

Please list the articles you found most interesting in this issue of BTES News, then clip out this form and mail it to the address below. (Fall 2020)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments, story ideas or questions:

Please return to:  
BTES News, PO Box 549, Bristol, TN 37621

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and address (optional)

## PrePay

### PAY AS YOU GO!

With PrePay, as you use your services, your PrePay credit balance is reduced. You'll receive daily usage and balance alerts, and you can make payments through a variety of options!

With PrePay:

- NO deposit requirement
- NO credit check
- NO reconnect fees

