



An Equal Opportunity Provider & Employer

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

# NEWS

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General Manager

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Here to Serve: Western Listens to the Concerns of Our Members

Earlier this year, Western conducted member satisfaction and renewable energy surveys. These surveys aimed to find ways to serve our members better, find out what is most important to you, and allow you to voice your concerns.

The high satisfaction score was notable as we analyzed the survey results. Western Co-op scored 88 on the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). This score was two points higher than the last survey held in 2018 and much higher than the national average for electric utilities (72).

Western Co-op exists to serve you, our members. We have faced several significant challenges together over the past several years, and we will continue

to face many more in the coming years. Still, as a member-owned electric cooperative, we must remain focused on actions within our control at a local level. Rising satisfaction scores, even with the recent challenges, are a direct result of the hard work of our team to bring our members safe, affordable and reliable power.

Several comments asked for ways to manage usage to lower electric bills. One of the best tools we offer our members is SmartHub. You can view your usage down to hourly increments by logging on to your SmartHub account from your



Tom Ruth

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**LABOR Day**  
*Office Closing*

In observance of Labor Day, our office will be closed on **MONDAY, SEPT. 5.**



Farming season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and do the following to keep everyone safe.

**1** Be alert and cautious, and give farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.

**2** Do not pass in a “No Passing Zone,” or where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.

**3** Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.

**4** Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator’s blind spot.

**5** Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe for them to do so.

SOURCE: TEXAS TABLE TOP (TEXAS FARM BUREAU)

## Keep Your Cool

### 5 tips to stay safe in extreme heat

The dog days of summer typically bring the warmest, sultriest temperatures of the year. Even if you’re a summertime enthusiast, it’s important to stay cool during extreme heat.

According to the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC), more than 700 people die from extreme heat every year in the U.S.

Factors like obesity, age and alcohol intake can impact how a person reacts to extreme heat. High humidity also contributes to heat-related illness because we don’t sweat as quickly — meaning our bodies can’t release heat as fast — when humidity levels are high.

Take extra steps to cool off, keep hydrated and stay informed. Here are five tips recommended by the CDC to help you stay cool during extremely warm weather:

- ▶ If you must be outdoors, wear loose, light-colored clothing and apply sunscreen often.
- ▶ Drink more water than usual. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink more.
- ▶ Stay in an air-conditioned home or building as much as possible. Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when the sun is hottest. If your

home is not air conditioned, call the local health department to locate public facilities or shelters.

- ▶ Take cold showers or baths to cool down.
- ▶ Avoid using the oven or stove to cook. These appliances add heat to your home. Try using the microwave, slow cooker or grill instead. (During the summer, *Kansas Country Living* often features slow cooker and grilling recipes. Check the Let’s Dish page for the recipes!)

Remember to look after those who may need extra help. People 65 years of age or older are at greater risk of heat-related illness, so check on your senior neighbors and friends. Children under the age of 2 and pets are also more susceptible to heat stroke. Never leave a child or pet in a vehicle, even if only for a minute.

If you work outdoors, use a buddy system to monitor your coworkers (and have someone do the same for you!).

Heat-induced illness can happen to anyone, even to those who are perfectly healthy. If you’re outdoors during extremely warm weather, monitor how you’re feeling, stay hydrated and keep an eye on those around you.

## Lang Earns Journeyman’s Certification

**TYLER LANG** has successfully completed the Merchant Job Training and Safety Program to become a journeyman lineman.

A WaKeeney native, Lang graduated from North Central Kansas Technical College with a degree in residential electricity and began working for Western Cooperative Electric in 2018. Congratulations, Tyler!



# Here to Serve: Western Listens to the Concerns of Our Members

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phone or computer. By comparing hourly, daily or monthly usage, consumers can manage their usage and know exactly when they are using electricity so they can take steps to gain efficiency and lower bills.

We share many of the same concerns you voiced during the survey. We know keeping bills low is an increasing worry for many of our members, especially as inflation and supply issues contribute to an uncertain economic climate. Unfortunately, due to the dramatic natural gas spike in February 2021, Winter Storm Uri's cost recovery will continue to burden many of our members until July 2023. However, this past winter and summer, our generation and transmission provider, Sunflower Electric, has taken additional steps to hedge against spikes in market costs, and we will continue to weigh the cost/benefit of hedging in the future.

Although external factors outside Western's control caused the Winter Storm Uri charges, the board of trustees voted to spread cost recovery out over 24 months to provide our members with some relief.

Western is not immune to the cost pressures of the current economic climate. Natural gas, material costs and fuel prices continue to increase.

As we analyze the ongoing cost-of-service study to determine how much of a rate increase is required, Western remains focused on providing our members safe, affordable, and reliable electricity. As a not-for-profit, Western does not focus on generating a profit margin for shareholders. Instead, our focus is on adequately recovering the cost to serve our members and meet the obligations to our lenders.

Given some of these challenges and concerns, many members have looked for different ways to lower their bills. Depending on the price point, 30-50% of Western members said they would be interested in rooftop solar or community solar. While nationally many people are turning to electric vehicles (EVs) to ease gas pressures, nearly 83% of survey respondents said they have no interest in owning an EV due to limited range and conflicting lifestyles.

Neither of these results is surprising. As the cost of solar panels continues to drop, more and more people will evaluate solar as a long-term investment. The lack of charging infrastructure and the inability to perform in agricultural sectors will slow EV adoption rates for rural Kansans. Although we are analyzing solar and EVs as part of the cost-of-service study, we know solar and EVs are long-term investments. We encourage our members to do their due diligence before making those decisions and to contact our staff if you have any questions.

As the summer ends and the new school year begins, August will be a busy time for many of us. So, I wanted to stop and take the time to thank those who participated in our survey. We know life can get hectic, but providing feedback and letting your voice be heard at the local level helps form our goals and initiatives to serve our members better. Thank you for being a member, and we look forward to finding new ways to better serve you in the future.



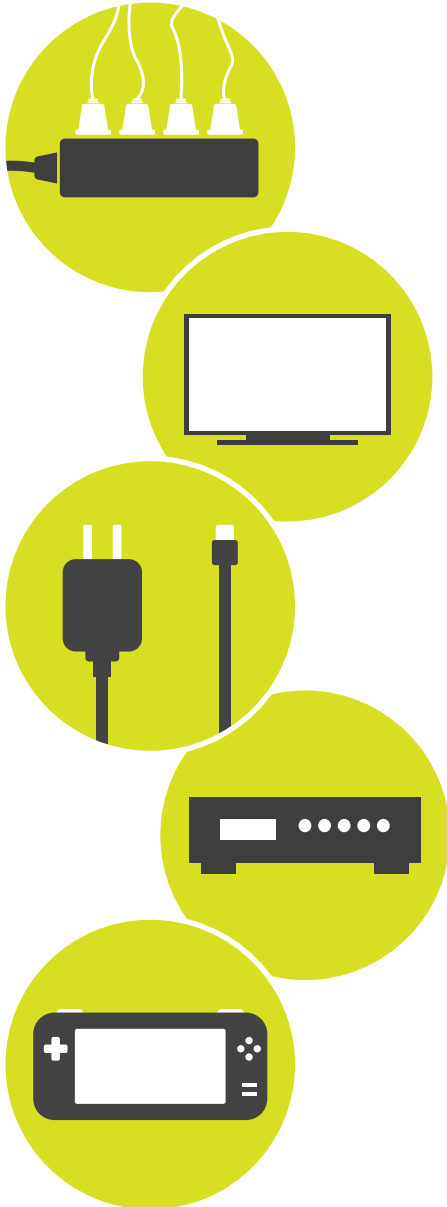
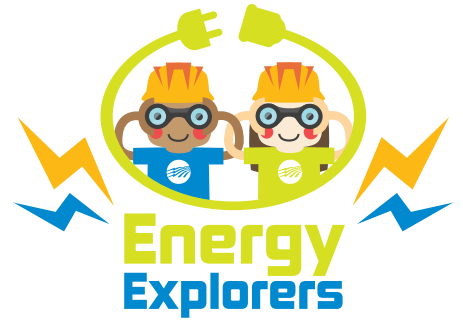
## Play it Safe Near Grain Bins

When moving equipment, be aware of power lines and maintain at least a 20-foot clearance to ensure safety. Follow all guidelines set by the National Electrical Safety Code.

# ELECTRONICS WORD SCRAMBLE

You can be more energy efficient by turning off unused electronics. Many electronics consume energy even when they're not being used. Unplug them to save energy.

Unscramble the letters below to reveal electronics you can turn off when not in use. Use the pictures for clues and check your work in the answer key.



1. NEPOH EHGRAC

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2. MGAE NOESCLO

---

3. LCAEB XBO

---

4. EWROP PRTIS

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5. ONSILEETIV

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## WORD BANK

- |             |               |              |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Power strip | Television    | Game console |
| Cable box   | Phone charger |              |

ANSWER KEY: 1) PHONE CHARGER 2) GAME CONSOLE 3) CABLE BOX 4) POWER STRIP 5) TELEVISION