



WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Contact Us

635 S. 13th Street
P.O. Box 278, WaKeeney, KS 67672
785-743-5561
FAX: 785-743-2717
www.westerncoop.com

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co-op news, energy tips, photos from co-op events and more!



FROM THE MANAGER

Rate Adjustment Proposal Approved



Tom Ruth

During the public meeting on Nov. 17, 2022, the Western Cooperative Electric Board of Trustees unanimously approved a three-year

rate adjustment plan. The approved rates are effective Jan. 1, 2023, followed by additional adjustments in 2024 and 2025.

Overall, the cost-of-service study revealed a 6% revenue increase was needed to maintain service levels and meet lender requirements. While we know these rate increases can create hardship, this was not our intent. As a member-owned cooperative, we have the fiduciary responsibility to you, our members, to balance cost with risk and provide consistent service levels.

Rate changes are never easy, and depending on your rate class and usage, these will affect members differently.

However, during this entire process, we maintained **FOUR MAIN GOALS:**

- 1** Collect the proper amount of revenue to operate effectively.
- 2** Realign rates to collect fixed costs through fixed charges.
- 3** Maintain a fair rate structure for all Western members.
- 4** Remain revenue neutral in 2024 and 2025.

I would like to thank the board of trustees, Western employees and members who showed up to our community meetings to provide feedback and comments.

These past couple of years have been economically challenging for our members. Massive swings in energy markets, particularly natural gas, paired with some of the highest inflation rates in 40 years, accelerated the need for a rate restructuring.

As we close the holiday season and turn the calendar to 2023, I would like to wish our members health, happiness and a Happy New Year! Although these have been a very challenging times, we will get through it together.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Tip of the Month

Did you know insulating your electric water heater could reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%? This could save you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs. Insulating your electric water heater is an easy, inexpensive project that can improve energy efficiency and save you money each month. The Department of Energy rates this project level as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**

Top 10 Social Media Posts of the Year

Happy New Year from Western Cooperative Electric! 2022 was a year to remember. We celebrated retirements, youth opportunities and our members, but we also faced many challenges.

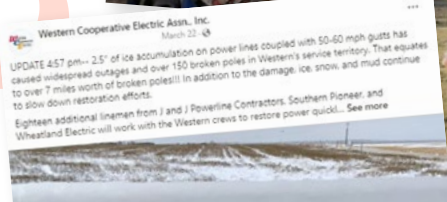
The ice storm that hit western Kansas in March broke more than 400 poles in Western's service territory and it took our linemen several long days filled with hard work to restore power to all our members.

The rest of the spring and summer was one of the driest and windiest years on record. Natural gas prices in the summer and fall pushed the price of wholesale power up, adding to the economic challenges Western and our members faced.

Through our challenges and successes, Western has kept the same mission to serve our members with safe, affordable and reliable power.

As we welcome 2023, we look forward to starting a new year filled with hope and joy.

Follow us on social media to learn more about outage notifications, electrical safety, youth opportunities and everyday happenings at your electric co-op.



Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. July 15 · 🌐
 🎉 We had some happy campers (and chaperones) stop by our Western office to eat lunch on their way to Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, CO!!! 🎉 Cameron and Greta will represent Western and join dozens of other students from the surrounding states for an amazing week-long experience. 🎉 #FutureLeaders

Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. Published by Nolan Numrich · July 15 · 🌐
 🎉 We had a great time doing the ping pong ball drop last night at the Trego County Fair!!! 🎉 #SummerFun



Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. Published by Nolan Numrich · March 27 · 🌐
 UPDATE 11:04 am--- All residential service has been restored. Only 57 meters remain without power. Many of the remaining meters sustained damage on the member side and will need electrician repairs before we can safely restore power.
 Snow, freezing rain, and high winds caused extensive damage to Western system. Over 300 broken poles and 3000 meters without power. Crews worked extremely hard over the past 5 days to take care of our members and restore service.
 Thank you to ... See more

Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. July 10 · 🌐
 🎉 Congrats Tag!!! Last week he successfully completed his 3rd Year Apprentice skills test! 🎉 #skills

Follow Western Cooperative Electric for large outage alerts and estimated restoration times, co-op updates, Youth Tour opportunities and other news!



Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. April 8 · 🌐
 🎉 It's a happy/sad day at Western as we wish one of our favorite Member Service Representatives, Bon Voyage!!! 🎉 Today is Colleen's last day at Western. Western employees and members will greatly miss her amazing personality and positive attitude. Best of luck on all your future adventures. ❤️

Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc. is with Rick Billinger for Senate May 12 · 🌐
 🎉 Yesterday we celebrated Western Cooperatives 77th Annual Meeting 🎉 Thank you to all those who attended in person. If you were unable to yesterday, visit westerncoop.com to watch the live stream. #MovingForward #CooperativeDifference



Flax Retires After 32 Years at Western

After 32 years of serving as a lineman for Western Cooperative Electric, **KENNY FLAX** is retiring. Flax's career began in 1990 as a lineman apprentice. He earned his journeyman credentials in 1994 and was promoted to crew foreman in 1997.

During his time at Western, there have been many changes in the electric distribution industry. "Besides the big improvements in trucks and tools, one of the biggest changes I have seen in my career as a lineman has been in electrical power metering," Flax said. "Over the last 12 years, metering has become much more complex, and I worked hard to keep up with all technological changes."

Regardless of the industry's evolution, Flax remained dedicated to serving Western's members over the years. "Kenny started his career at Western as an apprentice lineman and consistently demonstrated a willingness to learn new technology and the ability to solve complex problems," General Manager Tom Ruth said.

Line Superintendent Ron Aschenbrenner has appreciated Flax's expertise. "Kenny is one of a kind. I don't think there's been a lineman in the history of Western that has more knowledge of our system than him. We'll miss having him around to bounce ideas off," said Aschenbrenner, who has worked with Flax for the last 20 years. "Kenny has always been there for me and one of those people you are proud to have worked alongside. I wish him the best in his retirement."

"It's been a great place to work, and I appreciate having the opportunity to serve the community," Flax said. "As a lineman, there can be tough days, especially during storms, but that's part of it. It is our job to restore service."

"Kenny has provided our members with quality service for over 32 years," Ruth said. "Through all the challenges of storms, building line, serving members and learning new skills, he has demonstrated professionalism throughout his long career. Kenny is well respected for his knowledge and



Lineman Kenny Flax has served Western Cooperative Electric and its members for 32 years.

ability to mentor co-workers. We wish Kenny and his family the best health and a long, happy retirement."

While working as a lineman, Flax and his wife, Connie, raised three children in WaKeeney. During his retirement, Flax plans to spend more time camping and fishing with family and attending his grandchildren's sporting events.

Zeman Promoted to Crew Foreman

Western has promoted **BOBBY ZEMAN** to WaKeeney District line crew foreman. As a WaKeeney native, Zeman graduated from Trego Community High School in 2001 and attended NCK Tech in Hays. After working in agriculture and the oil industry, Zeman started as a lineman apprentice with Western in 2007.



Bobby Zeman

"I saw an opportunity to work and serve in my community, so I applied," said Zeman. "Western has been a great place to work, and I look forward to a new role as a crew foreman."

Zeman and his wife, Alicia, live near Voda, where they raise their three children, Taylor, Joseph, and Brinlee. Congratulations Bobby!

Apply for a \$1,000 Scholarship and a Trip of a Lifetime

Western Cooperative Electric invests in our youth with opportunities designed to reflect our society's realities and its preference for dynamic, personal interactions. It is important to build the skills necessary to become tomorrow's leaders through hands-on learning. These experiences are all-expenses-paid and will truly be the experiences of a lifetime for area youth. Two students will attend Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and two students will attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp.

Who is Eligible?

Any high school junior whose parents or guardians are members of Western Cooperative Electric is eligible to apply for the scholarships and all-expenses-paid trips.

How to Apply

Visit www.westerncoop.com/youth-tour for details on what is required to apply. Each student will need to fill out an application, provide a short essay and participate in a virtual interview.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE JAN. 10, 2023.

Accompanying Scholarships

The top four finalists will be awarded \$1,000 Western Co-op Youth Leadership Scholarships. The fifth-place finalist will serve as a trip alternate and receive the \$250 Darrell Brown Memorial Scholarship. Don't miss out on this rare opportunity for juniors to get a head start on applying for college scholarships.