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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 278, WaKeeney, KS 67672
800-456-6720

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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

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

FROM THE MANAGER

Sustaining a Reliable Electric System

We've all heard the phrase, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." This popular adage is often used in conversation or a story when someone is about to do something foolish or risky. If they heed this advice, it means they did not commit to "one basket," but instead hedged their bets with multiple options.

This strategy is how I describe Western Cooperative's common sense approach to the current energy transition. We know that national consumer interest in renewable energy continues to grow. Being wind-rich, we've seen this trend in Kansas for many years as wind farms have been built and expanded.

Innovations and advances in renewable energy technologies have decreased costs, making renewables more feasible, accessible, and scalable. Over the last few years, Sunflower Electric, Western's wholesale power provider, has adjusted

our fuel mix by utilizing more renewables. Today, approximately 18% of our fuel mix is comprised of renewable energy, the majority of which is wind.

Solar has also proven valuable in offsetting capacity costs during peak hours when the sun is shining.

Nationally, there is increasing reliance on renewable energy sources while fossil fuel plants are taken off-line, often ahead of schedule to the detriment of reliability. Additionally, there is more pressure on the electric grid due to the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events and rising electricity demand.



Tom Ruth

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

This planting season, include energy efficiency in your landscaping plans. Adding shade trees around your home can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 6 degrees. To block heat from the sun, plant deciduous trees around the south side of your home. Deciduous trees provide excellent shade during the summer and lose their leaves in the fall and winter months, allowing sunlight to warm your home. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



Lineworker Appreciation Day April 10

Electric lineworkers provide an essential service: They install and maintain overhead and underground power lines that keep electricity flowing. These specialized workers are on call 24/7 in case severe storms or other circumstances cause the power to go out.

Lineworkers work with high-voltage electricity, often at great heights, in all kinds of weather conditions. Maintaining the power grid is physically demanding. To become proficient, most lineworkers go through a technical training program and first learn on the job as apprentices under the careful eye of seasoned lineworkers who have earned journeyman status.

Electric power line installers and repairers held approximately 126,600 jobs in 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Nearly half of these employees worked for electric power generation, transmission and distribution utilities.

Safety Comes First

Lineworkers spend numerous hours in safety training each year and must understand and apply crucial safety regulations.



Olmitz Journeyman Lineman Chance Demel.



From left: Ellsworth Line Crew members Dustin Wacker, Tyler Renard and Line Foreman Mark Klein at work.

Protective clothing is required to shield lineworkers since they work around high voltages. Collectively, gear components can weigh up to 45 pounds.

According to the U.S. BLS, Electric Power Line Installers and Repairers Typically:

- ▶ Install, maintain or repair the power lines that move electricity.
- ▶ Identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers and switches.

- ▶ Inspect and test power lines and auxiliary equipment.
- ▶ String (install) power lines between poles, towers and buildings.
- ▶ Climb poles and transmission towers and use truck-mounted buckets to access equipment.
- ▶ Operate power equipment when installing and repairing poles, towers and lines.
- ▶ Know and implement safety standards and procedures.

When a problem is reported, lineworkers must identify the cause and fix it. This usually involves diagnostic testing using specialized equipment and repair work. To work on poles, they usually use bucket trucks to raise themselves to the top of the structure, although all lineworkers must be adept at climbing poles and towers when necessary. Workers use specialized safety equipment to keep them from falling when climbing utility poles and towers.

Storms and other natural disasters can cause extensive damage to power lines. When power is lost, line repairers must work safely and efficiently to restore service. We salute our lineworkers who work around the clock to keep the power on. Their safety, as well as yours, is our top priority.



Olmitz Fourth Year Apprentice Lineman Tap Penka.



WaKeeney Fourth Year Apprentice Lineman Nick Geist.

Join Us at the Annual Meeting on May 10

Western Cooperative Electric will host our 78th annual meeting for you, the members we proudly serve. Please join us at our main office, 635 S. 13th St. in WaKeeney, for a free lunch at noon, followed by the business meeting at 1 p.m. Door prizes will be available for those in attendance, along with a lineman tool display and electric safety demonstration, and the announcement of the trustee election results. We also are streaming the meeting live on YouTube. For those unable to attend in person, the link to the live stream will be available on our website and social media pages.

Whether you attend in person or virtually, we thank you in advance

for getting involved because your participation means so much to us. During the business meeting, we'll share brief updates on 2022 cooperative performance, finances and upcoming projects.

The annual meeting is an excellent opportunity for the board of trustees, employees, and members to socialize and discuss the past year's cooperative performance.

You Have a Say

Spending time with our members and hearing your take on our community's energy future is important. Gaining guidance and perspective from our

members helps the board set priorities for the co-op and guide future decisions.

Our board of directors is comprised of nine members who live and work right here in our local service area, so they are in the best position to know where community investments are most needed.

As a co-op, we're also motivated by service to our community rather than profits. Our mission is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power, but we're also dedicated to the service to our communities. We hope you'll exercise the benefits of your co-op membership and join us for the annual meeting on May 10. We look forward to seeing you! **#POWER&PEOPLE**



78th Annual Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Lunch at Noon | Meeting at 1 p.m.

Join us for
Door Prizes | Cooperative Updates | Trustee Election Results

LOCATION WESTERN HEADQUARTERS | 635 S. 13TH STREET | WAKEENEY, KANSAS 67672

*Can't Make it
in Person?*

LIVE
STREAMING
OPTION IS
AVAILABLE!



WHAT'S THE ORANGE SIGN FOR?

IT'S NOT A SUGGESTION. IT'S THE LAW.

Life is fast paced, but speeding or multitasking in a work zone is not worth losing your life or taking someone else's.

To help save lives and reduce injuries, follow orange sign directives every time you approach a work zone.

2020 Work Zone Statistics*

CRASHES AND INJURIES

102,000 Estimated total crashes

44,000 Estimated injuries

FATALITIES

857 Total fatalities

244 Fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles

PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES IN WORK ZONES

105 Pedestrians (non-workers)

51 Pedestrian workers

Do your part to help everyone return home safely. **THE ORANGE SIGN IS MEANT FOR EVERYONE.**

*MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE

SOURCES: NATIONAL WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK (NWZAW.ORG), NATIONAL WORK ZONE SAFETY INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE, AMERICAN TRAFFIC SAFETY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Sustaining a Reliable Electric System

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Competing Pressures

So how do we reconcile these challenges of grid pressure and a changing fuel mix? Solar and wind energy are limited resources because the sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. Our primary responsibility is to provide electricity 24/7 to you and our communities. To do this, we need reliable sources of power that will meet all the peaks and valleys of on-demand energy in our connected world.

So where are we netting out? That's where our familiar adage comes into play. Remember, solar and wind are intermittent power sources. This fact, coupled with the growing demand for renewables, creates its own challenges. One of those challenges is that renewables have to be backed up by redundant energy sources that are fully dispatchable when the renewable sources are not available. While the utilization of renewables is increasing, we still need to incorporate other forms of energy into the mix to ensure reliable service.

That's why we spread our eggs into multiple baskets. There is great value in maintaining a diverse mix of fuel sources — fossil fuels and renewables

work together to ensure reliability and resiliency and meet the growing demand for electricity.

Reliability also means repairing and replacing utility equipment to prevent wear-and-tear, ensuring our equipment can withstand severe weather. One of Western's top priorities is to supply our members with reliable, affordable energy. That's why fuel diversity — or placing our eggs in multiple baskets — is essential to reliability.

The Bottom Line

Lowering the overall carbon footprint in this country means we're going to electrify more and more of our economy. Solar and wind power are an important part of a broader energy portfolio, but they are not available 24/7. In today's ever-connected world, people need power around the clock.

As our nation increasingly depends on electricity to power the economy, Western Cooperative and Sunflower Electric are working together to anticipate, plan and respond to market trends and policy shifts. That's how we can power your home and our economy while continuing to serve as your local cooperative.

NOTICE: Contracted Crews are Mapping Western's System

Western Cooperative Electric has contracted Global Mapping Solutions (GMS) to GPS and take inventory of all pole structures and pad mount transformers on Western's system.

During this project, GMS is permitted to access Western's rights of way while on foot or operating

vehicles marked with Western logos. Due to the mapping project's size and scope, GMS expects the project to take 12-15 months to complete.

Questions or concerns? Please call the Western office at 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720.

