



An Equal Opportunity Provider & Employer

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

[www.westerncoop.com](http://www.westerncoop.com)

[www.facebook.com/WesternCoopElectric](https://www.facebook.com/WesternCoopElectric)

# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

## Western Cooperative Electric, Inc.

### Board of Trustees

**Nick Zerr**  
President

**Terry Hobbs**  
Vice President

**Richard Schaus**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Craig Crossland**  
Trustee

**Landon Heier**  
Trustee

**Frank Joy**  
Trustee

**Marvin Keller**  
Trustee

**Susan Rohleder**  
Trustee

**Dale Weinhold**  
Trustee

### General Manager

**Tom Ruth**  
General Manager

### Contact Us

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

### Like us on Facebook

Be sure to LIKE us on Facebook! Just go to [www.facebook.com/WesternCoopElectric](http://www.facebook.com/WesternCoopElectric) to find



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

## FROM THE MANAGER

# We're Here to Serve You

"We're here to serve you." We've all heard this phrase countless times. These words may sound generic, but to us — your local electric cooperative — they mean everything.

Western Cooperative was created to serve our community. Back then, neighbors banded together and formed our co-op for the common good. In our case, it was the only way the community could bring electricity to the area where there was none. In doing so, Western Cooperative helped the community thrive. That mission-focused heritage is what has guided us throughout our history.

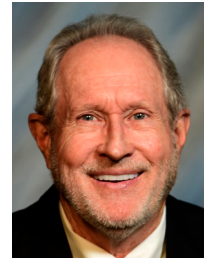
Today, we are continuing to power the community. While our focus has remained steady on providing reliable energy to our members, today's energy landscape and consumer expectations are far different than they were decades ago. That's why we're adapting to keep pace with changing technology,

evolving needs, and new expectations.

We want to help you save energy (and money) and provide information on a broad range of energy topics. For example, if you're looking for ways to save energy, check out [www.westerncoop.com/touchstone-energy-savings](http://www.westerncoop.com/touchstone-energy-savings) for energy-saving tips and ideas to increase your home's energy efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

If you're considering a rooftop solar installation, seek an unbiased view of the pros and cons. Investing in a solar system is a major decision, and it's important to fully understand the costs, responsibilities, and potential energy

**Continued on page 12D ►**



**Tom Ruth**

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Summer is a prime opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors. To reduce home energy use, avoid using your oven and use a grill instead. Not only will cooking outdoors eliminate the electricity used to power the stove, but it will also avoid raising the temperature inside your home, reducing the need for air conditioning or cooling. You can also avoid using the oven with tasty no-bake recipes. (Check out Page 20 in the magazine for no bake recipes this month.) **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



## FREE & EASY ways to save energy

(Spoiler Alert: Your clothes and dishes won't know the difference)

Major home appliances account for approximately 16% of an average home's energy consumption.

16%



- ▶ Run full loads of laundry instead of several smaller ones.
- ▶ Use cold water to wash your clothes.

- ▶ Keep your refrigerator at 35-38 F and your freezer at 0 F.
- ▶ Regularly defrost manual-defrost freezers and refrigerators.



- ▶ Skip the heated dry setting on your dishwasher.
- ▶ Fully load your dishwasher before washing.

- ▶ When buying new appliances, consider Energy Star® versions.
- ▶ Unplug appliances you're not using.



Time to replace that old appliance? Replacing older versions with energy-efficient models can save the average household more than

**\$500 per year.**

SOURCES: NATIONAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, U.S. ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

## Look Up and Look Out to Stay Safe

When the crops are ready to be harvested, farmers have only a window of time — between weather events, equipment breakdowns, and life events — to get the best quality crop out of the field. To make the most

of this time, farm workers try to get as much work done as possible. Safe Electricity offers safety tips for farm and ranch workers across the nation to help keep them safe during this time.

“The rush to harvest can lead to farmers working long days with little sleep,” cautions Nolan Numrich, Western Cooperative assistant general manager and member services manager. “Make sure before starting, to note the location of power lines.”

One of the biggest hazards for farmers is posed by power lines. To stay safe around overhead power lines, Safe Electricity urges farm operators and workers to:

- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- ▶ Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- ▶ Keep equipment at least 20 feet from lines — at all times, in all directions.
- ▶ Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- ▶ Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- ▶ Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- ▶ Call the local utility immediately if a power line is sagging or low.

“Always remember to periodically look up and be aware of your surroundings,” Numrich adds. “If you



Farming accidents are one of the most common reasons for electrical line contacts in Kansas.

can't safely pass under a power line, choose a different path.”

If contact is made with a power line, remember, it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Warn others to stay away and call the local utility provider immediately. The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, “bunny hop” away.

### Additional Safety Tips

- ▶ Do not use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside and around bins.
- ▶ Always hire qualified electricians for any electrical issues.
- ▶ Do not use equipment with frayed cables.
- ▶ Ensure outdoor outlets have a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- ▶ When operating a portable generator, ensure nothing is plugged into it when turning it on, and never operate a generator in a confined area. Generators can produce toxic and deadly gasses like carbon monoxide.
- ▶ Always use caution when operating heavy machinery.

For more farm and electrical safety information, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

# Considerations for Adding Solar

Renewable sources of power hold promise for the environment and energy bills. One such renewable system is solar power, which draws energy from the sun. If you are considering adding solar to your home, the Energy Education Council and its Safe Electricity program encourage you first to do a thorough assessment to help you make informed decisions based on goals, energy needs, and safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a small solar electric or photovoltaic (PV) system can be a reliable and pollution-free producer of electricity for your home or office and can also reduce your monthly utility bill. Savings levels depend on the array's size, system performance, and current electricity rates.

"A renewable energy system can be a valuable long-term investment," says Safe Electricity Advisory Board Member Mike Ashenfelter. "Homeowners and small business operators should do some good hard looking before leaping into one to ensure they will get value for their investment."

To help homeowners and small business operators make more well-informed decisions, the Energy Education Council has developed a checklist of questions and resources to consider before starting a renewable energy system installation at [www.EnergyEdCouncil.org/checklist.pdf](http://www.EnergyEdCouncil.org/checklist.pdf).

If a homeowner decides to install a solar system, the local government entity needs to be notified. In most cases, a permit will be required. Homeowners should also make sure that their electric utility is aware of their solar PV system. Many utilities require a visible disconnect system on the house's exterior as a safety measure.

Because a correctly sized, sited, installed, and maintained PV system is essential for maximizing its energy performance and minimizing the chance of injury, a professional contractor should always install residential solar panels.

Periodic and routine maintenance is also an important consideration. The

Fire Protection Research Foundation (FPRF) suggests maintenance procedures to help prevent fire or damage, including:

- ▶ **VISUALLY INSPECT THE EQUIPMENT AND CONNECTIONS** for signs of damage or degradation.
- ▶ **INSPECT ELECTRICAL JUNCTION BOXES AND RACEWAYS** to see if conductors are damaged and need repair or replacement.
- ▶ **VISUALLY INSPECT STRING CONDUCTORS** to identify physical damage that is in need of repair.

For homeowners, solar systems are commonly mounted on the roof for easy access to the sun and to save space. Make sure your roof's structure is strong enough to hold the additional weight of a solar system.

Also, be aware that roof-mounted panels could cause some issues in the case of a fire. The FPRF explains that solar panels cannot always be easily shut down, so electric shock is a primary concern for emergency responders. On roofs where solar panels take up a large amount of space, it can inhibit the use of vertical ventilation, where a hole is cut through the roof of a building to release smoke and increase visibility of victims.

Solar panel equipment can also pose tripping, slipping, and snagging hazards and broken panel glass can cause cutting hazards to first responders and residents alike.

For more information on using energy safely, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).



A source of renewable energy for your home can be a valuable asset. Before installing renewable energy at your home, be sure to contact Western Cooperative Electric.

## We're Here to Serve You Continued from page 12A ▶

savings. Unlike a solar company that has one objective — to sell their products and services — look at the total energy picture and determine the best options for your home. We understand that homeowners must complete their due diligence and are here to help you through that process. For more information on the considerations of adding solar, read the story on Page 12C.

So, the next time you hear Western Cooperative say, “We’re here to serve you,” we hope you know we mean it. Service is deeply ingrained into who we are. We continue to evolve with the times, and in return, we’ve found additional ways to serve you and provide more options for you to power your life. If you haven’t already, consider signing up for SmartHub, Western’s free account management app. Through SmartHub, you’ll be able to track your usage, pay your bills, and set notifications. SmartHub puts the power in your hands, saving you time and money.

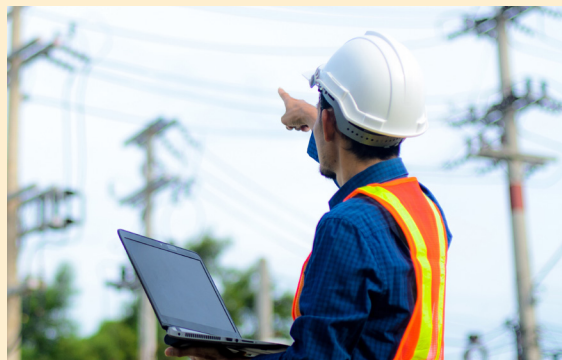
We’re here whenever you need us. Connect with us in person through the SmartHub app or our social media channels. However you choose to connect, please let us know how we can serve you better.



### 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-mounted 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.



## Sharing Success Community Grant Applications Due July 1

In partnership with CoBank, Western Cooperative Electric provides grant opportunities for local nonprofit organizations.

Applications for the 2023 cycle will be accepted until July 1, 2023. The Western Board of Trustees will review the applications and select the winners at the July board meeting. Grants will be presented in August and September.

Those interested in applying for grant funds can submit an electronic application at [www.westerncoop.com/sharing-success-community-grant](http://www.westerncoop.com/sharing-success-community-grant).

### Contribution Request Amount

Western will award one to four grants totaling \$20,000. The minimum request is \$2,000. The CoBank’s Sharing Success program is competitive on a first-come, first-served basis, with limited funds; therefore, Western Cooperative Electric is not guaranteeing the full amount of granting dollars.

### Eligibility

Contributions to any 501(c)(3) charity are generally eligible. Select organizations not designated a 501(c)(3) may also be eligible. These organizations include schools and government organizations such as counties or municipalities and their



Submit your Sharing Success Community Grant applications by July 1.

agencies or departments, as long as the donation serves a public purpose. Organizations that are political in nature, limit their activities based on religious affiliation or discriminate do not qualify.

Priority will be given to organizations in Western Cooperative Electric’s service territory,

There is little restriction on the type of projects that can apply. Western asks that your project be community-oriented and serves a public need.