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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

September is Safety Month

Safety is not just a priority, but a fundamental core value for Western Cooperative Electric. As a member-owned organization, we are committed to ensuring the well-being of our employees, members, and communities we serve. One powerful testament to this commitment is the observance of September as safety month, a time when Western recognizes team members contributions and emphasizes the necessity to be less accepting of risk in all aspects of our operations.

For electric cooperatives, safety is not an afterthought; it's an integral part of our operations. The high-risk nature of their work involves dealing with electricity, which, if mishandled, can have severe and even fatal consequences. From lineworkers who maintain power lines to office staff and consumer-members, everyone involved must understand the importance of

adhering to stringent safety protocols near electricity. Our dedication to safety goes beyond the workplace — it extends to the communities where cooperatives operate.

September being designated as Western's safety month underscores the significance of safety in Western Cooperative's mission. We focus on safety in all aspects of our daily operations but during this month, Western engages in a variety of activities aimed at raising awareness about safety. These initiatives range from safety training sessions and workshops to



Tom Ruth

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Derek Keith

Welcome to Western

On Aug. 1, Western Cooperative hired **DEREK KEITH** as a lineman apprentice in WaKeeney. Keith, a 2022 Hill City High School graduate, attended Northwest Lineman College in Denton, Texas, following high school, where he went through the electrical lineworker program.

Keith grew up helping his dad and grandfather on their Graham County family farm and is excited about the opportunity to work for his local electric cooperative.

"Western has a reputation as a place where you want to work," he said. "I am happy that I get to stay close to my family and start my career at the co-op."

5 Power Line Safety Myths: Separating Fact From Fiction



Journeyman Lineman Dalton Hensley practices life-saving techniques during Western's annual pole-top rescue training.



Contact Bob McCoy (left) at Western's main office to request a free public safety demonstration.



Line Foreman Chad Schoenthaler lowers an "injured employee" during pole-top rescue training.

Power lines are an essential part of our daily lives, providing electricity that powers our homes, workplaces, and communities. However, misconceptions about power line safety can lead to potential risks for Western's members. Here are some of the most prevalent myths surrounding power lines and the truth behind them.

“Power Lines Are Harmless From a Distance”

A common misconception is that as long as you are not in direct contact with power lines, you are safe. In reality, power lines can carry high voltages, and their electrical fields can extend several feet from the lines. It's crucial to maintain a safe distance, especially when flying kites, using ladders, or operating machinery near power lines. Even without physical contact, electricity can arc or jump, posing a danger to anyone too close.

“Rubber Shoes/Gloves Provide Protection Against Electric Shock”

Some believe that wearing rubber-soled shoes or gloves can prevent electric shock. However, rubber is not a reliable insulator against high voltages. If you come into contact with a live power line, the electricity can still travel through the rubber and into your body. The best approach is to stay away from power lines altogether and rely on proper safety practices.

“Birds on Power Lines Mean the Lines Are Safe”

While it's true that birds can safely perch on power lines, it doesn't mean the lines

are safe for humans. Birds don't provide a path for electricity to flow to the ground like a human body would. Attempting to imitate birds by touching power lines can have tragic consequences.

“Power Lines Are Insulated, So They're Safe to Touch”

Most power lines are not insulated like the cords on household appliances. Power lines typically carry high voltages, and coming into direct contact with them can result in severe injury or even death. Maintaining a safe distance from power lines, whether overhead or on the ground, is crucial.

“Underground Power Lines Are Completely Safe”

While underground power lines reduce the risk of direct contact, they are not entirely risk-free. Excavation near underground lines without proper precautions can lead to accidental damage, causing power outages and posing a potential danger. It's essential to follow proper digging procedures when working near underground utilities.

To ensure the safety of yourself and those around you, it's vital to separate fact from fiction when it comes to power lines. Always follow recommended safety guidelines, stay informed through credible sources, and prioritize caution when near electrical infrastructure. By dispelling these myths, we can promote a culture of informed decision-making and responsible behavior around power line safety. For more information, visit www.westerncoop.com or follow us on Facebook.

Western Cooperative Electric Students attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

KAYDENCE GREBOWIEC, Plainville High School, and **MARISSA REEVER**, Otis-Bison High School, attended the 46th Annual Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) from July 14-20, 2023. The leadership camp was held near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and hosted 43 student leaders from Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Wyoming, sponsored by 25 participating cooperatives.

Western selected Grebowiec and Reever through their annual youth contest, where high school juniors must write an essay, take an exam, and be interviewed by a panel of judges. The highest-scoring contestants receive scholarships and have the first choice whether to attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp or the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

During the camp, Grebowiec and Reever learned how an electric cooperative is organized and operated by developing a model-cooperative with their fellow students, empowering the campers to elect a board of directors, appoint a general manager,



Kaydence Grebowiec got a chance to get up close with a bald eagle during the HawkQuest raptor and avian protection presentation.



Marissa Reever (left) and Kaydence Grebowiec were representatives of Western Cooperative Electric at the 2023 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Students learn about the co-op business model, leadership and conflict management.

establish committees, and attend daily membership meetings. Camp participants also attended educational seminars on leadership, online reputation management, conflict management, and co-op careers, in addition to presentations on high voltage electricity, raptors and avian protection with HawkQuest, and tours of the Craig Power Station and the Yampa Valley Electric community solar array.

Along with its professional development programs, CYLC included a visit to Mount Werner and downtown Steamboat Springs, whitewater rafting on the Colorado River, and other fun activities such as a volleyball tournament, swimming, talent show and a dance.

At the conclusion of the leadership camp, Grebowiec reflected on her time in Colorado. "Being out of my comfort zone this week has been the most valuable experience to me," she said. "I talked to so many new people, and it

was a lot of fun to put myself out there and make new friends."

Likewise, Reever was amazed by her experience at camp, "I had no idea how many people I would meet and become friends with," she said. "I also thought touring the power plant was very impactful. It really puts into perspective how co-ops work and the environment they work in."

"Western Cooperative Electric is proud to continue our sponsorship of our co-op's student leaders at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp," Nolan Numrich, Western's assistant general manager, said. "It is an honor to help provide students opportunities to grow in their leadership potential and develop the knowledge to further engage in our cooperative community."

Western Cooperative sponsors trips for four students each year. For more information on how to attend/send students to camp, contact Nolan Numrich at nolann@westerncoop.com or follow Western's Facebook page.

September is Safety Month

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educational campaigns targeting both employees and the public.

Furthermore, safety month allows Western to showcase our commitment to safety to the members we serve and the public. We hope to build trust and transparency by openly sharing our safety protocols, achievements and initiatives. This transparent approach should reassure members about the co-op's dedication to their well-being and encourage accountability within the organization.

Electric cooperatives understand that safety isn't a one-size-fits-all concept. Each cooperative's safety practices are tailored to their specific circumstances, service areas, and challenges. It is also based on industry proven practices, which go beyond Occupational Safety and Health Administration minimum requirements. For instance, a cooperative operating in a rural area might face different safety concerns than one in an urban environment. An example would be overhead power lines across rural farm ground while the size and height of farm equipment is ever increasing. By addressing these unique challenges, cooperatives show adaptability and attentiveness to their local communities.

In conclusion, safety is more than a buzzword for electric cooperatives — it's a core foundational principle that shapes their operations and culture. The observance of safety month in September serves as a reminder of the unwavering commitment to fostering a culture of safety. Through proactive education, training and engagement, electric cooperatives like Western work tirelessly to ensure the protection and well-being of their workforce, members and the broader communities they serve. Safety isn't just a requirement; it's an integral part of our identity. Our goal is to work in a safe manner to prevent injury and we want the same for our members and the public.

Celebrate SAFETY MONTH



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