



WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC, INC.

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Landon Heier
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Frank Joy
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GENERAL MANAGER

Tom Ruth
General Manager

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FROM THE MANAGER

Make Your Voice Heard at the 2024 Annual Meeting

As we approach our upcoming annual meeting on May 8, I wanted to take a moment to emphasize the significance of your attendance and participation in this event. Our cooperative is not just a utility provider; it is a community, and your involvement is crucial in shaping the direction of our shared future.

First and foremost, the annual meeting is a unique opportunity for us to come together as a community, to connect face-to-face, and to strengthen the bonds that make our cooperative special. In an era dominated by digital communication, personal interactions have immense value. The annual meeting provides a platform for open dialogue, allowing you to voice your concerns, share your ideas, and engage in constructive discussions with fellow members, trustees, and our leadership team.

Moreover, attending the annual meeting grants you a firsthand look at the achievements and challenges of the past year. We will present a comprehensive overview of our financial performance, infrastructure upgrades, and community outreach initiatives. This transparency is not only a testament to our commitment to accountability, but also an opportunity for you to gain insights into how your cooperative is working for your benefit.

In addition to understanding our past, the annual meeting is an occasion to shape our future. You have the chance to participate in the democratic process by voting on trustee positions before the meeting. Your input is invaluable in guiding us toward sustainable and responsible decisions that align with the needs and aspirations of our community.

Beyond the business aspects, the annual meeting is a celebration of our shared achievements and a showcase of our cooperative spirit. We will highlight our positive impact on our community through various initiatives, underscoring the power of collective effort and collaboration.

As we strive to build a brighter and more resilient future, your attendance at the annual meeting is a tangible way to contribute to the well-being of our community.

I hope that you can attend in person; however, if you are unable to travel, there will be live-streaming of the annual meeting available at www.westerncoop.com.

Sincerely,
TOM RUTH, GENERAL MANAGER
WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC



Tom Ruth



CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO A BALLOON RELEASE

Everyone has great intentions when planning a balloon release. However, as soon as balloons are let go, they can go from sentiment to hazard.

Although beautiful to look at, balloons can cause power outages.

LATEX AND MYLAR BALLOONS AND ATTACHED STRINGS AND RIBBONS CAN:

- ▶ Threaten birds and animals (via ingestion and entanglement).
- ▶ Harm marine life.
- ▶ Obstruct the flight path or cause damage to an airplane's engine.
- ▶ Cause ground and ocean trash.
- ▶ Create plastic pollution.

ACCORDING TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS:

- ▶ What goes up, must come down: Balloons will fall back to earth either semi-deflated or in tiny and hard-to-retrieve fragments.
- ▶ Only an estimated 5% of all released balloons return intact.
- ▶ Even if balloons are marketed as degradable, they may take several weeks to break down.

ALTERNATIVES TO BALLOONS:

- ▶ Blow bubbles.
- ▶ Light candles.
- ▶ Throw biodegradable confetti.
- ▶ Plant trees or flowers.
- ▶ Paint stones.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.COM

Nominations for Trustee Elections Due March 1

Members who meet the qualifications have the right to seek election to the board of trustees. While serving on a board is certainly not for everyone, it is healthy for any co-op to have an engaged membership with members interested in serving in a leadership role.

At Western Co-op, we are governed by a board of nine trustees elected by the membership to provide strategic guidance and ensure we continue to serve the members' interests.

TO RUN FOR A TRUSTEE POSITION, CANDIDATES:

- ▶ Must be a member of Western Cooperative Electric.
- ▶ Cannot be employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the cooperative.
- ▶ Cannot be a current employee or have been employed by the cooperative within the last five years.
- ▶ Must be a bona fide resident within Western's service territory.

During the December 2023 board meeting, the Western board appointed a nominating committee to serve as an impartial party to help vet and provide information to members interested in running for a trustee position.

TRUSTEE INCUMBENTS



Marvin Keller
District 1



Craig Crossland
District 2



Landon Heier
District 3

If you are interested in running for a board of trustee seat, you must contact a nominating committee member in your corresponding district before the March 1 deadline or stop by Western's office to pick up the member petition form.

2024 NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS INCLUDE:

DISTRICT 1 | SHERIDAN, GRAHAM, ROOKS AND OSBORNE COUNTIES

- ▶ **MICHELLE WINDHOLZ**, Morland
- ▶ **PAT WENDLING**, Plainville
- ▶ **EVAN LESSER**, Palco

DISTRICT 2 | TREGO, ELLIS, RUSSELL AND LINCOLN COUNTIES

- ▶ **TOM KREUTZER**, WaKeeney
- ▶ **NATHAN STAAB**, Hays
- ▶ **JOHN KUPPETZ JR.**, Ellis

DISTRICT 3 | GOVE, NESS, RUSH, BARTON AND ELLSWORTH COUNTIES

- ▶ **DOUG MANHART**, Grainfield
- ▶ **TERRY OSTMEYER**, Grinnell
- ▶ **DOUG STEFEK**, Ellsworth

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. They can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet comfy on cold winter days. Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION



Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) Application Period Ends March 29

Western Cooperative Electric receives requests for assistance with member electricity bills throughout the year. The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per-year benefit. The 2024 LIEAP application period will close on **MARCH 29, 2024, AT 5 P.M.**

TO QUALIFY, APPLICANTS MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ An adult living at the address must be personally responsible for paying the heating costs incurred at the current residence, payable either to the landlord or the fuel vendor.
- ▶ Applicants must demonstrate a recent history of payments toward purchase of the primary heating energy. The combined gross income (before deductions) of all persons living at the address may not exceed 150% of the federal poverty level according to the guidelines listed in the table to the right.

BENEFIT LEVELS VARY ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- ▶ Household income
- ▶ Number of persons living at the address

- ▶ Type of dwelling
 - ▶ Type of heating fuel
- For more information and/or to apply online, visit www.dcf.ks.gov, select the **SERVICES** tab at the top, then scroll down and click on **ENERGY ASSISTANCE (LIEAP)**. Applications must be received at the DCF office **PRIOR TO 5 P.M., MARCH 29, 2024**. Late arrivals will not be considered for assistance. The state will contact Western Cooperative Electric to verify payments are being made on the account and the account is active in the applicant's name. LIEAP payments will come directly to Western Cooperative Electric and be applied directly to the account. For more information or assistance in completing the application, please contact the LIEAP office by calling 800-432-0043.

2024 INCOME GUIDELINES	
PERSONS LIVING AT ADDRESS	MAX. GROSS MONTHLY INCOME
1	\$1,823
2	\$2,465
3	\$3,108
4	\$3,750
5	\$4,393
6	\$5,035
7	\$5,678
8	\$6,320
9	\$6,963
10	\$7,605
11	\$8,248
12	\$8,890
13	\$9,533
14	\$10,175
+1 \$643 for each additional person	



HORSES GALLOP AND SO CAN POWER LINES

How can galloping lines impact power transmission and distribution?

Galloping power lines are typically caused when ice and high winds occur at the same time. Freezing rain creates icicles and odd-shaped ice formations on power lines and conductors. The ice buildup changes how wind and air impact the now misshapen, ice-covered line. This change in airflow can cause the power line to begin bouncing.

They can bounce and buck enough to hit another line, damage themselves enough to cause a power outage or even fall to the ground.

A power company can't prevent galloping lines since the wild motion is caused by Mother Nature. However, some power lines have special mechanisms, such as twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal, attached to the line to minimize the motion. While they can help, sometimes they are no match for severe ice and whipping wind.

Aside from ice storms, year-round storms can cause damaging winds, which can knock down power lines and blow trees and limbs onto power lines. Keep the following safety tips in mind:

- ▶ When you see power lines on the ground, stay away, warn others to stay away and contact the electric utility or call 911. Lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live.

- ▶ Any utility wire, including telephone or cable lines that are sagging or down, could be in contact with an energized power line, also making it dangerous. Do not try to guess the types of lines — stay away from all lines.
- ▶ Be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide electrical hazards. Downed power lines can energize objects around them, such as chain-link fences and metal culverts.
- ▶ Keep in mind that a deenergized line could become energized during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators.
- ▶ Never drive over a downed line. It could start a chain reaction and cause additional poles or other equipment to collapse.
- ▶ If you are in a car that has contacted or is near a downed power line, stay in your vehicle. Wait until the utility crew has arrived and deenergized the line. Warn others not to approach the car.
- ▶ Only exit a car or cab near or on downed lines if there is a fire. If this happens, cross your arms over your chest and make a solid jump out and away from the car with both feet together. Then hop away at least 50 feet or more while continuing to keep both feet together. For more electrical safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

BEST BETS FOR

Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid and lower your energy bills by conserving during peak energy times.

UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE

Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.



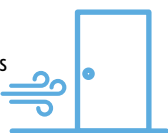
LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before going to bed.



MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.



How Severe Winter Weather Impacts Reliability

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. We're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times — in the morning and early evenings — and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

At Western Cooperative Electric, we work closely with our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and G&T.

In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow or ice storm or equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid.

Western Cooperative Electric and our G&T take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- ▶ Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers.
- ▶ **PRO TIP:** Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances

like slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.

- ▶ Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temperature and the outdoor temperature.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.
 - ▶ Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Make sure your furnace filter isn't clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed. Experts recommend replacing your furnace filter at least every three months or every two months if you have pets or allergies.
 - ▶ When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.
 - ▶ Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.
 - ▶ **PRO TIP:** Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.
- As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected.