

**WESTERN  
COOPERATIVE  
ELECTRIC**

# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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## A Shotgun in a Lineman's World

While gathering tools from the service truck for an electrical outage at a residence in Western Cooperative Electric service territory, the foreman makes a request to his fellow lineman, "Get the shotgun ready for me, too."

Strapping on climbing hooks and buckling together his tool belt, the foreman attaches a nylon rope—called a handline—to his belt, puts on hardhat, safety glasses and rubber gloves, and approaches the pole.

After a 20 foot climb, and securing a good working position on the pole, the foreman has the shotgun sent up the pole by the handline. He then disconnects the transformer with the shotgun and continues the process of changing out a pole mount transformer.

Understanding some of the jargon used in the electric utility industry can be both informative and entertaining. It is interesting to view a new employee's facial expression when he hears the term "shotgun" being used on the job for the first time. Even though the connotation of this slang term can be misleading, a shotgun is a very important and useful tool in the electric utility work place.

A "shotgun" or "shotgun stick" or sometimes called a "grip all stick" is of a tubular design with a diameter of 1.125 inches with lengths ranging from 4-feet to 11-feet. The tube is

made of fiberglass, an excellent insulator, with a closed cell polyurethane unicellular core and sealed ends. Extensions are available for different length requirements.

The parts of the shotgun consist of a hook on one end connected from the top of the tube to the bottom with a fiberglass rod connected to a control handle. The handle moves on a cast slide, released or locked with a trigger. When used, the hook of the shotgun is engaged within the eye of a clamp making a connection. This clamp is threaded which secures or releases the connection on a conductor.

Colors of a shotgun are available in either safety yellow or orange. Models range from telescopic, fixed lengths

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A "shotgun" is a very useful tool for Western's linemen.



## Lower Your Energy Costs this New Year

A new year is a chance for a new beginning. If you want a new beginning that involves saving money, Western Cooperative Electric has the following tips;

► **HEATING AND COOLING**—Since heating and cooling is such a big cost, it is a good place to begin savings. During winter, dress warm and keep the temperature in the home moderate. In the summer, wear light clothing and use fans to keep cool instead of running the air conditioning. Members can save money any season by closing off rooms that you do not need to heat or cool.

► **WATER HEATING**—We need warm water throughout the day to shower, cook, and clean. We do not need warm water every moment of the day. However, many water heaters work hard to keep water warm constantly. You can give your water heater a break by setting its temperature to 120 degrees

► **APPLIANCES**—Do laundry in cold water, when possible. Air dry dishes and line dry clothes as often as possible.

► **ELECTRONICS AND OTHER DEVICES**—Let Energy Star help you cut costs. Energy Star products use less energy than other products. Even if you are not replacing electronics, you can save money by unplugging products that are not in use.

► **LIGHTING**—Lighting is one of the easiest ways to increase your home's efficiency. Switch to compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs or light emitting diode (LED) light bulbs. Both types use significantly less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs. CFLs and LEDs also last longer than incandescent lighting, so you will not have to replace light bulbs as often.

## A Shotgun in a Lineman's World

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with external or internal rods, folding, or sectional.

As with all insulated linemen's tools, cleanliness is of utmost importance. Inspections are made daily, as a shotgun is exposed to high voltage (7,620 volts) in almost every situation. When not in use, the shotgun is stored in a separate waterproof protective bag to help prevent scratches, abrasions and accrual of foreign material on the surface.

Equipment inspections are also

made and documented by Western's linemen usually with a monthly safety meeting presentation. A yearly conductivity test is completed on each shotgun Western's linemen use. Even though fiberglass is a good insulator, the linemen also wear rubber gloves when using a shotgun.

So, the next time you hear linemen talking about "killing out a section of line" you might understand why they use a piece of equipment called a "shotgun."

## 10 Quick Tips to Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.

-  Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.
-  Reduce wasted heat by installing a programmable thermostat.
-  Turn off lights when not in use.
-  Lower your water heater temperature. The Department of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.
-  Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.
-  Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.
-  Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.
-  Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.
-  Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.
-  Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.

# 10 Tips for Avoiding Common Electricity Mistakes

Electricity is an integral, yet easily overlooked, part of our everyday lives. Western Cooperative Electric encourages everyone to brush up on guidelines for using electricity safely and offers these 10 tips on how to safely avoid common mistakes made with electricity:

**1** Just because a power line is down does not mean it is not energized. Whether caused by a storm or a car accident, a fallen power line is very dangerous. Stay far away, instruct others to stay away and call 911 or your electric utility immediately.

**2** Never plug a generator into a wall outlet. After a power outage, many use generators as a quick solution to get the lights back on, but plugging a generator into an outlet creates dangerous back feed. Back feed sends electricity back through the power lines and can injure or kill the lineman trying to turn the power back on.

**3** Don't step into a flooded basement if there is a chance that flood waters may be in contact with outlets or electrical cords. The waters of a flooded basement may be energized with electricity.

**4** Water and electrical equipment don't mix. Replace any appliance damaged by water and never use electrical equipment in wet conditions—when it is raining or the ground is wet.

**5** All outlets near areas with water should have GFCI protection. Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) monitor the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is an irregularity of electrical flow, the power is cut off, preventing an electric shock.

**6** Extension cords should never be used permanently. Extension cords are created for temporary use only. When using them for a permanent solution, they can

overheat and cause fires.

**7** Never remove a plug's grounding pin. The third prong on a plug is a safety feature. If the plug doesn't fit, the outlet needs replaced.

**8** Take care of electrical cords. Never tack or nail an electrical cord to any surface or run cords across traffic paths or under rugs where they can be trampled, and check cords occasionally for damage. Replace when necessary.

**9** Avoid overloading outlets. Plugging in too many appliances to an outlet can strain your electrical system.

**10** Always call 811 before any digging project. You don't know the precise location of utilities that are buried beneath the ground. Always have your utilities marked so you know where it is safe to dig.

Western encourages you to be a part of a safer, smarter world using these safety tips.

## GFCIs Keep You Safe While Doing Outdoor Chores

When the weather is nice, it is a great time to get those outdoor chores done. Unfortunately, the outdoors can hold many dangers. One of those is mixing damp conditions and electricity. If you plan to use electrical equipment while you work outside, it is important that your equipment is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).

A GFCI monitors the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is an irregularity, even a very small one, the flow of electricity is shut off, preventing an electric shock. GFCIs are recommended where water and electricity may meet – such as bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, basements, garages, and outdoor receptacles.

GFCIs come in several varieties. One type is a circuit breaker with a built-in GFCI that a qualified electrician can install in a home's panel box to add protection to the circuits it supplies. Others come in the form

of a receptacle that fits into a standard outlet box. For outdoor chores, it is important to consider using a portable GFCI. A portable GFCI is a specialized extension cord with GFCI abilities that can be plugged into an outlet and used to power your electrical equipment, such as hedge trimmers, edgers, drills, and saws.

Although a GFCI can protect you from dangerous conditions when water and electricity meet, there is no reason to push your luck. If it is raining or still damp outside from rain or snow, postpone your outdoor chores that involve electricity. If there is standing water in your workplace, wipe it up before you begin working.

If you have receptacle or portable GFCIs, you should test them after installation, after power failures and monthly. They will have test and reset buttons for this purpose.



## Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

### Melissa Sherfick

Manager of Billing and Collections



Melissa Sherfick

#### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I've been married to Jerry Sherfick for 13 years. I have three children, Sierra, Branden and Nicholas. We have two crazy dogs, Zoey, an English Bulldog, and Shelby, a Shih Tzu.

#### HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

13 years

#### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

I am originally from Oakley, Kansas, and my family still resides there.

#### WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I make flower arrangements for weddings.

#### WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I am most proud of going back to college and getting a degree in leadership and management.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

My favorite vacation has been in Hawaii.

#### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK OR MOVIE?

My favorite movie is *Titanic*.

#### WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE TEAM?

Kansas State University

#### IF YOU COULD BE ANY ANIMAL, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

I would be a dolphin. Dolphins swim all day, are smooth, elegant and people love them.

#### WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I love to ride horses.

#### WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My mom and dad. My mom has the patience of a saint, and my dad inspires me spiritually and always has the answer.

## Choose & Use Extension Cords Safely

Many people have tried to use an electronic device only to find out the cord is too short to reach the outlet. This is where extension cords come into play. They are useful for their practical, cost effective solutions to these problems, but remember to choose and use extension cords safely.

Extension cords are designed for temporary use. They should not be used as a long-term solution. A qualified electrician can install the necessary wiring and receptacle outlets for a permanent solution.

It is important to choose an extension cord that is properly rated for the environment (indoor or outdoor) and the device(s) you will have plugged into it. Check the packaging on the cord for its rating, size and wattage, and check the appliance or its user manual for its power usage.

Western Cooperative Electric offers safety tips for the use of extension cords both indoors and out:

- ▶ Occasionally check the condition of extension cords. Look for fraying or cracking along the entire length of the cord and for damage to the plug or sockets. Cords used outdoors should be checked more frequently because of the constant wear and tear. Replace any damaged cords.
- ▶ Be sure to provide some slack to prevent tension on the cord. Tension on any part of the cord can cause damage.
- ▶ Never remove the grounding pin (or third prong) from an extension cord to make it fit into a two-

### Tips Using Extension Cords Indoors:

- ▶ If any part of the extension cord becomes hot while in use, unplug it immediately and discard it.
- ▶ Keep extension cords away from children, pets, and high-traffic areas.
- ▶ Do not place extension cords under carpets, rugs, furniture, or cover with any other objects.

### Tips Using Extension Cords Outdoors:

- ▶ Do not use cords in wet conditions. Water conducts electricity, and working in wet conditions increases the chance of shock or electrocution.
- ▶ When not in use, store extension cords indoors, in a dry area and steady temperature climate.

prong outlet. This is a safety feature designed to protect. Instead of removing the third prong, hire a qualified electrician to install a new outlet.

- ▶ Do not overload extension cords with too many electronics or power tools. It may cause the cord to overheat and start a fire. If you are going to use the extension cord with two or more appliances, you must add together the wattage rating for all appliances used on the cord to make sure the cord will not become overloaded.
- ▶ Extension cords always conduct electricity when plugged into an outlet, even if it is not being used. Therefore, always unplug the cord when you are finished with it.

