



# NEWS

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



## Western Welcomes Summer Interns

**CHANTZ BRUNGARDT** has joined Western's operations department as a summer intern at the Plainville warehouse to train and gain experience in the challenging field of electric utility work.

Brungardt is enrolled for the fall semester at Pratt Community College for his first year in the Electric Power Technology program. He enjoys fishing and hunting in his leisure time.

**NICK PENNINGTON** joined Western's IT department as a summer intern through the Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth program. This program matches more than 30 high school and college students with local businesses throughout northwest and north central Kansas for paid internships.



Chantz Brungardt



Nick Pennington

Pennington enjoys singing, composing and playing the ocarina, or building Gundam scale models during leisure time.

During their summer internships, Brungardt and Pennington will gain hands-on experience and also learn more about co-op careers and electric cooperatives.

## Natural Gas Offers Affordable Generation

To provide optimal wholesale generation services to their members, Sunflower and Mid-Kansas board members (elected by their member cooperatives) consider factors such as costs to construct and maintain generation facilities, availability of fuel resources, cost and price stability of fuel, and other market conditions. In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the domestic supply of natural gas in the United States, primarily as a result of enhanced processes for recovering natural gas from shale formations. As supply has increased, the price of natural gas has decreased. Today, natural gas

prices are more than 70 percent cheaper than they were in 2008. The increased domestic supply has also helped reduce some of the price volatility that has typically been associated with natural gas in the past. These price factors have resulted in an increase in the utilization of natural gas-fired generators to meet the nation's electric demand.

Generators fueled by coal have produced the majority of electricity consumed in the United States in recent years. That trend is changing: Generators fueled by natural gas pro-

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## Keep Your Bills Low as Temperatures Rise

It's the dreaded dog days of summer. While the temperature outside is rising, that doesn't mean your utility bills have to. Heat may overwhelm your air conditioning unit during the hot summer months causing it to run frequently and increase your cooling costs. However, there are steps you can take to make your home more efficient when temperatures rise.

Home efficiency during summer months has a lot in common with the home efficiency checks you do during the winter months. Make sure you change your air filters monthly to keep your unit running efficiently. Just like checking for cold air leaking in through cracks in the winter, look for any areas that may need weather stripping and caulk where heat could enter your home.

You may be in the habit of setting your thermostat on a lower temperature while you are away during the day to save during the winter months, but now is the time to set that temperature higher. Set your thermostat to around 85 degrees during the day while you are gone. This temperature will keep any pets that may be in the home comfortable, but can help to lower your bills.

A programmable thermostat will help you control the temperature of your home, so it is cool when you return for the day. It is important to remember when adjusting your thermostat, whether it's manual or programmable, do not lower the temperature rapidly in an attempt to cool your home faster. Your air conditioner will cool just as fast at 78 as it might at 85 degrees.

Ceiling fans are also a great way to keep rooms cool while saving energy. Fans average between a quarter to one amp used, while air conditioners can range between 12-16 amps of electricity used. While running a fan may not exactly bring in



**With a programmable thermostat, you can save money on your cooling bill by resetting your thermostat when you are asleep or away from home.**

new cold air, it does circulate the cold air that is already in the home and may make it feel cooler than it really is." It was also noted that it's possible to turn on your fans and turn up your thermostat a degree or two and not notice a difference in energy use.

Other simple things to do to keep cool, include keeping your shades, blinds and drapes closed during the day. A darker room stays cooler longer than a room that has sunlight coming in. Also, consider running stoves, dryers and other heat-producing appliances during cooler hours of the day, such as the evening or early morning.

Energy efficiency, whether during winter or summer, is key for keeping your bills lower and your family comfortable.

## Posting on Power Poles Poses Safety Hazards



**Attaching signs to power poles creates serious safety hazards.**

We all have seen or hung posters of missing pets, upcoming garage sales and other announcements on utility poles. While it may seem harmless, these little pieces of paper can cause big problems for utility workers and are illegal in many areas.

Utility workers must climb those same utility poles to work around power lines that carry 7,200 or more volts of electricity. Foreign objects, such as staples or nails embedded in the pole, can lead to the utility worker snagging or getting a hole in their gloves. Those gloves are meant to insulate workers from high voltage and protect them from being electrocuted.

Hunting stands, basketball hoops and satellite dishes are other items that have been found attached to utility poles. These items are extremely

dangerous for utility workers and anyone who uses these items. Keep as much distance between yourself and overhead power lines when enjoying any outdoor activity.

The nails, staples and other materials used to attach items to a wooden utility pole can cause the pole to deteriorate more quickly, reducing its structural integrity and increasing the risk for the pole to fall when struck by a vehicle.

Downed poles mean power outages, which also creates danger for pedestrians and motorists. If you see a downed power pole or lines, stay away and call 911.

Keep everyone safe by not hanging anything on utility poles. Find other alternatives to post in your community, such as yard stakes or online community groups.

# Hazards Around Irrigation Equipment

While irrigation equipment helps farmers combat dry spells and summer heat, it also introduces electrical hazards, including contact with overhead power lines, short circuits and lightning strikes. Western Cooperative Electric wants farm owners and workers to be aware of potential hazards and take steps to stay safe.

Take time to survey your surroundings. Look up and around, and make note of any power lines that could be close enough to come into contact with equipment. Maintain proper clearances.

The combination of water and electricity is also hazardous. The sprays of water from irrigation systems should not be near overhead power lines. Because the impurities in water serve as conductors of electricity, a stream of water reaching non-insulated wires will become the path for the deadly voltage and can energize the entire irrigation system.

Read all operator manuals and follow the manufacturer's suggestions for inspection and maintenance, and always turn off the power first before working on the system. Also make sure all equipment is grounded. Call an electrician to check the pump and wiring and to complete any needed repairs.

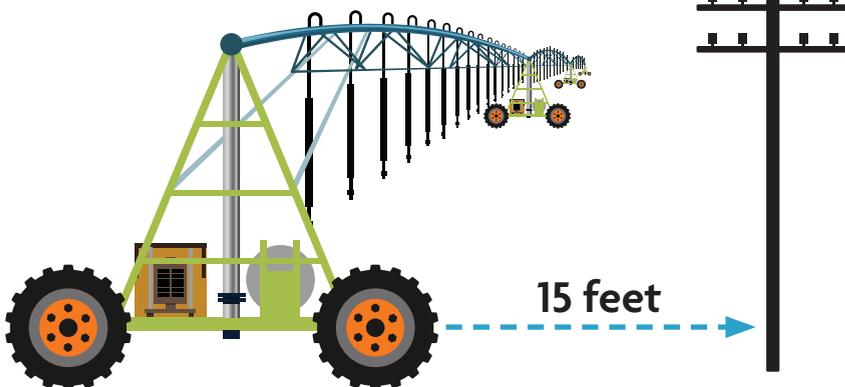
Storms can pose dangers for irrigation systems and those who operate them.

Keep an eye on weather forecasts, and stay away from the piping during lightning activity.

Keep the additional precautions below in mind to help ensure the safety of those working around irrigation equipment:

- ▶ If fuses continually blow or circuit breakers repeatedly trip, have a professional check the wiring. This could indicate a potential electrical hazard.
- ▶ Avoid moving irrigation equipment on windy days when pipes could blow into nearby power lines. Keep pipes horizontal to the ground to minimize the risk of contact with power lines.
- ▶ Store unused irrigation pipes far away from lines or electrical equipment.
- ▶ Position irrigation pipes at least 15 feet away from power lines.
- ▶ Position the water jet streams so there is no chance of spraying onto power lines. If this happens, the entire system could become energized, creating a danger for anyone nearby.
- ▶ If an irrigation pipe comes in contact with a power line, never try to remove it yourself. Stay away from the pipe. Call Western at 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720 for more safety tips or a free safety demonstration.

Keep **IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT** and *water streams* 15 feet away from overhead power lines.

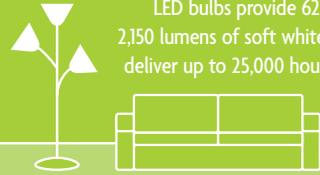


## Save Energy with LEDs

LED lights last up to 30 times longer than incandescents. Below are LED lighting suggestions for your home.

### Living Room Lamps

Table or floor three-way lamps using LED bulbs provide 620, 1,600 or 2,150 lumens of soft white light and deliver up to 25,000 hours of light.



### Kitchen

Dimmable recessed LED conversion lights add a warm glow of up to 1,200 lumens and add far less heat to your kitchen. Each bulb could last 10 years.



### Bedrooms & Hallways

Long-life LEDs are ideal for ceiling fixtures. A 9-watt LED produces the same 800 lumens of light as a 60-watt incandescent and uses about 80 percent less energy.



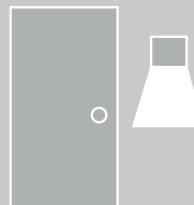
### Bathrooms

Omnidirectional LED globe bulbs are designed to provide a warm glow ideal for bathrooms. A 6-watt bulb produces 450 lumens and lasts up to 15,000 hours.



### Outdoors

A 6-watt, 500 lumen LED bulb can replace a 40-watt incandescent bulb. Designed to last up to 30,000 hours, it could be a one-time switch.



# Natural Gas Offers Affordable Generation Continued from page 16A ▶

duced 34 percent of electricity generation in the United States in April 2015, surpassing coal and providing the largest share of power generation for that month. Although the natural gas share is expected to decline through 2020 as it competes with renewables, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) expects it to hold the “largest share in the electricity mix by 2024 and maintain that position through 2040.”

Aside from cost, there are advantages of using natural gas to power units that generate electricity. Natural gas can be used to fire a wide range of generator types, from flexible, fast-start combustion turbines and reciprocating engines to larger steam-cycle units that are designed to operate in a more stable, baseload manner. This design flexibility helps to enable the use of intermittent, non-dispatchable renewable resources to serve part of the region’s electricity demand while maintaining system reliability. Natural gas also produces fewer air emissions than coal. According to EIA, the United States’ store of natural gas is projected to last 93 years at its current consumption rate.

Disadvantages of using natural gas to fuel electric power generators include a history of fluctuating prices that can be sparked by severe weather events. Also, some segments of the piping system do not have enough capacity to meet demand for natural gas to operate generators in some areas.

Sunflower and Mid-Kansas have a variety of natural gas units that help meet capacity requirements in the Southwest Power Pool, the regional organization that manages the electric grid and wholesale power market for a 14-state area. As members of

**The diverse generation resource portfolio of Sunflower and Mid-Kansas was assembled with the goal of meeting our members’ power supply needs at an affordable price while providing protection against various risks that can cause electric power costs to increase.**

the SPP, Sunflower and Mid-Kansas use their natural gas units to respond quickly to the fluctuating needs of the SPP’s Integrated Marketplace, which coordinates next-day generation across the SPP region to maximize cost-effectiveness and reliability.

The strategic goals of the Sunflower and Mid-Kansas Boards of Directors put their members and those they serve, including you, first.

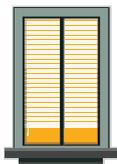
“The diverse generation resource portfolio of Sunflower and Mid-Kansas was assembled with the goal of meeting our members’ power supply needs at an affordable price while providing protection against various risks that can cause electric power costs to increase,” said Corey Linville, Sunflower’s vice president of power supply and delivery. “These three principles will continue to be used when determining how to best meet the needs of our members and those they serve, and resources fueled by natural gas will continue to be a significant part of the mix.”

## Summer Energy-Saving Tips

Costs associated with cooling your home can make up a large portion of your summer electric bills. Stay cool and save money with these energy efficiency tips.

### NO-COST TIPS

- ▶ Close blinds and drapes during the day to keep heat out.
- ▶ Set your thermostat to 78 degrees when you are home. Set it to a higher temperature when you’re away.
- ▶ Turn off lights and ceiling fans when you leave a room.



### LOW-COST TIPS

- ▶ Plant trees and shrubs to shade the exterior of your home.
- ▶ Replace disposable air filters (or clean permanent filters) once a month to maximize efficiency.
- ▶ Use solar lighting to brighten your outdoor space. Solar lights are easy to install, low maintenance and provide free electricity.

