



NEWS

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Western's Rates Undergoing Study

The Western Cooperative Electric Association (Western) Board manages the cooperative's funds to ensure quality of service and make prudent financial decisions and investments. One tool to help us do this is a rate study by an independent consultant. A rate study helps identify the needs of the cooperative, promote continuity of financial health, ensure equitable rates among all classes of consumer-members, and determine if the current rate structure will allow for adequate recovery of costs in the future.

An annual study of the sub-transmission system is mandated by the Kansas Corporation Commission and a study of the distribution system is conducted as needed. Cost of service studies were completed for Western's eastern system (formerly Aquila) in 2014 and for Western's legacy system in 2013. This analysis is necessary to ensure reliable service, while maintaining a healthy balance sheet both now and into the future. It is

also necessary to evaluate the cost of technologies that will help Western provide better service to our membership, prevent long outages and improve the reliability of service.

Western's Board of Trustees has hired Power System Engineering to conduct a rate study. Results will be received this spring and shared with the membership this summer.

The rate study will analyze the cost of providing service, provide guidelines for assigning cost responsibility and indicate if any rate changes are necessary.

If the study recommends increasing electric rates, it will be a decision that is thoroughly analyzed and would not be implemented prior to 2020.

The decisions made at the board table affect us all. As a not-for-profit, member-owned utility, Western's board and employees pay the same electric



Tom Ruth

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

SUMMER TIP: Spring is nearly here! Now is the perfect time to test your A/C and ensure it's ready for summer. Remember to check the evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually for optimal efficiency.



Western's Rates

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rates and experience any outages right along with our consumer-members. The leaders of our cooperative are consumer-members just like you and understand the unique differences within the communities we serve, each with specific needs.

Stay tuned for more information regarding the rate study. As always, if you ever have questions or concerns, please contact me by phone at 785-743-5761 or by email at tomr@westerncoop.com.

Tom Ruth, General Manager



2019 RATE STUDY

We belong to the people we serve.

Western doesn't just serve communities; we are a part of the community. The people who work at Western also call this home.



You elected your fellow members to run your co-op.

Western's Board takes the responsibility that you entrusted to them very seriously. They carefully manage the co-op's funds and operations to ensure quality of service while maintaining a healthy balance sheet.



Studying our financial health just makes good sense.

An independent rate study is performed as needed to ensure equitable rates among rate classes and rate structures that allow for recovery of costs.



Stay tuned.

Results of the independent rate study by Power System Engineering are expected to be delivered to the membership this summer.

Find us on:  [facebook](#)

As always, if you have questions, give us a call: 785-743-5561 or visit [westerncoop.com](#)

Tips for Avoiding Common Mistakes Made with Electricity

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 tips on how to safely avoid common mistakes made with electricity:

- ▶ Just because a power line is down it does not mean it is dead. 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 your electric utility immediately.
- ▶ 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 restore power.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Water and electrical equipment don't mix. Replace any appliance damaged by water because it is unsafe to use, and never use electrical equipment in wet conditions—if it is raining or the ground is wet.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ All outlets near areas with water should have ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection. GFCIs



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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.

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Avoid overloading outlets. Plugging in too many appliances to an outlet can strain your electrical system.
- ▶ Always call 811 before any digging project. You may not know the precise location of utilities that are buried beneath the ground, so always have your utilities marked to know where it is safe to dig.

Western offers safety demonstrations discussing any of the topics listed above. For more information, contact Western's office at 800-456-6720 or e-mail western@westerncoop.com.

2019 Youth Winners Announced

On Sunday, Feb. 3, students participated in Western Cooperative Electric's annual youth contest for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., or Steamboat Springs, Colorado, plus a scholarship!

The winners were selected by a three-member judging panel based on an interview, a quiz about electric cooperatives and a one-page essay on the topic "Something I am Passionate About."

The top five youth in this year's contest, are **HAYDEN ROGERS**, Ellsworth High School, son of Clint and Dimity Rogers; **JORDYN COONROD**, Ellsworth High School, daughter of Eric and Steph Coonrod; **CORA ANDERSON**, Otis-Bison High School, daughter of Eric and Rebecca Anderson; **HAYLEY KELLER**, Palco High School, daughter of Myron and Rachel Keller; **ALYVIA ZEIGLER**, Natoma High School daughter of Tracy and Annette Zeigler.

Hayden Rogers and Jordyn Coonrod will join 1,700 youth from across the nation in Washington, D.C., June 13-20. During the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, students will visit their legislators and sites of historical significance.

Cora Anderson and Hayley Keller will join approximately 100 youth from four states at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, July 12-18. At camp, the youth will learn more about energy challenges and tour



Cora Anderson



Jordyn Coonrod



Hayley Keller



Hayden Rogers



Alyvia Zeigler

one of the largest electrical generating plants in the Rockies.

Along with the trips, each winner will receive a \$250 scholarship, sent directly to the college of their choice upon enrollment. Alyvia Zeigler will receive the \$250 Darrell Brown Memorial scholarship and will be this year's first alternate for a trip. Second alternates are R.J. Luea, Makua Lani Christian Academy, son of Ron and Joy Luea, and Hunter Mitchell, Otis Bison High School, son of Robert and Laurie Mitchell.

Congratulations the winners and thanks to all the contestants for participating.

2019 Spring Resolution

Preparing for warmer weather with the first day of spring on March 20 could also include preparing to simplify your bill paying process with Western Cooperative Electric. Payment options include bank draft with checking/savings or recurring card (debit/credit).

Additional options include enrolling for e-business (ebiz) or going green by opting for paperless billing. With paperless billing, you may opt to receive text or email notifications to get your information.

Ebiz allows you to see your monthly bill, view daily electric usage, along with historical data, store a payment method and make payments. Using ebiz allows you to enroll yourself in automatic

payments. If you need assistance contact us at 800-456-6720. There are no forms to complete, so signing up is fast, friendly and convenient. Automatic payment guarantees on-time payments, while maintaining an excellent payment history.

Selecting any one of these payment options makes you eligible for a monthly drawing for a \$25 voucher to a local business of your choice. Already signed up for these payment options? Your name will also be included in the drawings. Western's February winner is Lorrie Bland, Plainville.

Get a fresh spring start by enrolling in an easy payment option. Enter today for a chance to win.



Register for eBiz

1. Go to www.westerncoop.com
2. On Western's homepage, click the link to eBiz
3. Enter the information requested

Western Welcomes Jennifer Garner



Jennifer Garner

Western Cooperative Electric welcomes **JENNIFER GARNER** as safety manager. Garner brings safety and leadership experience to the position, attaining extensive training certifications,

including First Aid/CPR, defensive driving, pole top rescue, motor carrier regulations, high voltage circuits, switching, metering, root cause analysis, HAZCOM, and safety compliance training. Her previous experience includes being a Safety and Compliance Officer for Lea County Electric Cooperative in Lovington, New Mexico, managing a safety culture for 80 employees. Garner also chaired a safety task force in which she gained valuable experience from the state level as well.

"We're extremely pleased to have Jennifer join the Western family," said Tom Ruth, general manager. "Jennifer is passionate about safety and will be a strong advocate for building a sustainable safety culture in our cooperative, while demonstrating the ability to build relationships in the electric cooperative environment by working side-by-side with everyone to obtain the best possible outcome—all go home uninjured."

"I strive to ensure a cohesive learning environment for both employees and members about the dangers and safe practices of the electrical industry," Garner said. "My goal is that our members have the most reliable electric service provided in the safest way possible."

Western Cooperative Electric welcomes Garner to the family and appreciates her efforts to better serve you, the consumer-members.

Western Welcomes New Lineman Apprentices

Western Cooperative Electric would like to introduce four new employees hired since March 2018: **DALTON HENSLEY, TYLER LANG, LEVI SCHNEIDER** and **JOSH TESSENDORF**.

"We welcome these apprentices to our operations department at Western," said Tom Ruth, general manager. "They will play a vital role in Western's mission to provide safe, reliable, economical electricity to you the member-owner of Western Cooperative Electric."

DALTON HENSLEY is employed at the WaKeeney warehouse. Dalton attended the Pratt Vocational School under the Lineman Training Program. When not hunting or fishing, Dalton is involved with community volunteer work and enjoys assisting with coaching high school wrestling.

TYLER LANG is employed at the WaKeeney warehouse. Tyler attended North Central Kansas Vocational Technical College studying electricity and then acquiring contractor experience for residential and commercial wiring. Being outdoors, hunting and fulfilling the duties of being dad are after-hours activities.

LEVI SCHNEIDER is employed at the Ellsworth warehouse. Previous experience includes a summer internship with Western, while attending Pratt Community Area Vocational School. In his spare time, Schneider enjoys being outdoors, helping neighbors and family and volun-



Dalton Hensley



Tyler Lang



Levi Schneider



Josh Tessendorf

teering for the local fire department.

JOSH TESSENDORF is employed at the Olmitz warehouse having previous experience with a municipal electrical department. Josh's secondary education included playing football while attending a junior college, then attending Pratt Vocational School. His hobbies include hunting and driving ATVs.

These four gentlemen are employed as apprentice linemen, gaining experience in different facets of distribution line work. Each is enrolled in a certified training program involving basic electricity, safety, electrical mathematics, equipment and operations with an electric system.

We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as rights of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs



Maintaining rights of way improves service reliability for you – our members!

