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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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800-456-6720

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**WESTERN
COOPERATIVE
ELECTRIC**

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NEWS

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Tip of the Month

Avoid setting your thermostat at a colder setting than normal when you turn on your air conditioner. It will not cool your home any faster and could result in excessive cooling and unnecessary expense

Let Nature Help You Conserve Energy

The cheapest, cleanest, and greenest energy is the energy not used. There are many ways to be more energy efficient—from equipment upgrades to things that don't cost a cent.

Let nature do some of the work. Consider leaving your windows open and cutting the air conditioner at night, when temperatures are much more moderate. Then keep the windows shut during daylight to help keep that cooler air inside. You can also install window coverings, which can block out sunlight and heat during the day. Also, increase insulation and seal cracks that may let out cold air.

Fans can make higher temperatures in the home feel more comfortable. When using a ceiling fan along with air conditioning, Energy.gov says that you can raise the thermostat approximately 4 degrees Fahrenheit without reducing comfort level.

Make sure that your cooling equipment is in top-notch condition. If possible, move the air conditioner out of direct sunlight. Regularly clean or replace dirty air conditioner filters. Energy.gov reports that doing so can lower the unit's energy use by 5 to 15 percent.

Use a programmable thermostat and set it to a warmer than normal temperature while away and to a lower temperature when you expect to return home.

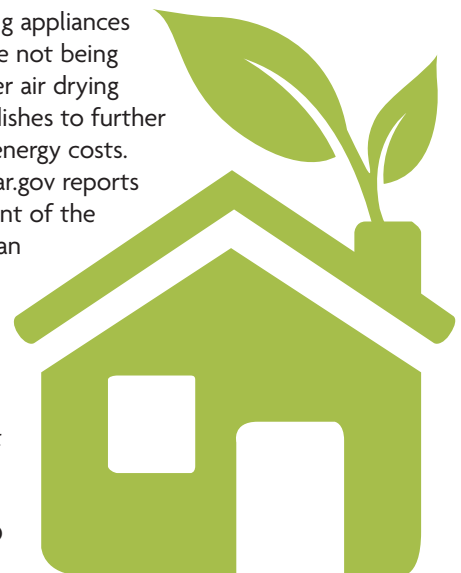
On the warmest days, avoid us-

ing the oven. Grill outside or use the stove or a microwave. According to Energy.gov, a microwave can use up to 80 percent less energy when reheating than a standard oven.

According to Energy.gov, water heating costs make up an average of 18 percent of energy costs. Cut back on these costs by taking shorter showers and using low-flow showerheads. Run clothes and dish washers only when they have full loads. Additionally, lower the set temperature on the water heater to no higher than 120 degrees.

Take into account the best times to run your appliances. Avoid using them during typical peak hours, from 4 to 6 p.m. Also be sure to switch off and unplug appliances when they are not being used. Consider air drying clothes and dishes to further cut back on energy costs.

Energystar.gov reports that 90 percent of the electricity in an incandescent bulb is given off as heat rather than as light. Turn off lights that are not being used and switch to LED bulbs.



Bill Pay Website Now LIVE!

We are excited to announce the launch of Western's new online bill payment website, Ebiz! To make a payment online, register on <https://ebiz.westerncoop.com> today! Ebiz is available at no extra cost to you, the member. No more convenience fees for using credit/debit cards (a savings of \$3.95 per transaction)!

Highlights of the new site:

- ▶ Provides safe, secure online transactions
- ▶ Saves credit/debit card information, if desired
- ▶ Specifies date to have payment applied
- ▶ Accepts eCheck, bank drafts and recurring card payments
- ▶ Tracks energy usage and displays current bill in one place for all of your accounts!

We will soon offer an affiliated mobile app that will be available to make payments and check usage.

The following will be available with the upcoming mobile app:

- ▶ Email and text notifications
- ▶ Outage reporting
- ▶ Prepaid billing support (balance payments and notifications)
- ▶ Graphical energy usage information with weather data

Look for more details in following issues of *Kansas Country Living*. If you have any questions, please call 1-800-456-6720.

Summer Hours Reminder

From June 1 to Aug. 31, Western linemen will work their summer hours: 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (CDT), Monday through Friday. Linemen are only allowed to make trips to connect and disconnect meters during linemen's working hours.

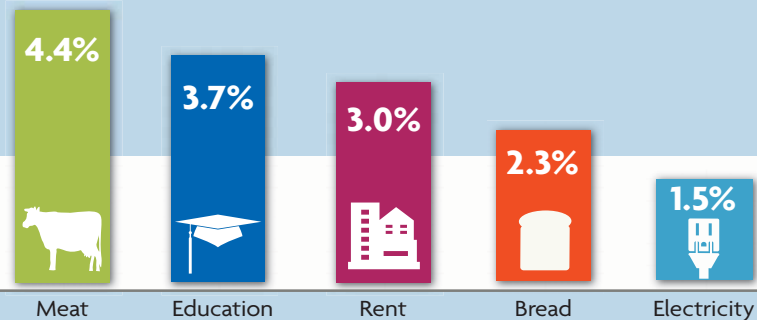
Members are encouraged to call to reconnect a disconnected meter as early in a day as possible. Please keep in mind that driving distances need to be considered. To ensure that we can reach you for outage notifications and reminders, be sure your contact information is up to date, especially phone numbers. The co-op office is open year round from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Electricity Remains a Good Value

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than many of your typical expenses. Compare the average price increase of these expenses each year over the last five years, and the value of electricity shines.



Average Annual Price Increase 2010-2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

We are Prepared for Summer Storms

Summer is here, school is out and families are gearing up for a few months of fun and relaxation. While summer brings much fun in the sun, it can also bring the occasional severe storm. In the event of a power outage, you can trust Western Cooperative Electric is ready to respond.

The major cause of most power outages comes from damage to power lines due to falling trees and branches. We work year round—through right-of-way clearing—to ensure power lines in our service territory stand little risk of being damaged by trees, branches or other types of vegetation.

Despite our best efforts, during major storms damage can occur to transmission stations, substations and power lines. When this happens, our first priority is to safely restore power to as many members as possible in the shortest amount of time.

We start by mobilizing our line crews and other critical staff. Every phone line available is utilized to take your outage report calls. The big problems are handled first—like damage to

transmission lines, which serve thousands of people. These problems must be corrected before we can focus on other areas where more localized damage may have occurred.

Western Cooperative's line crews inspect substations to determine if the problem starts there or if there could be an issue down the line. If the root of the problem is at the substation, power can be restored to thousands of members.

Next, line crews check the service lines that deliver power into neighborhoods and communities. Line crews repair the damaged lines, restoring power to hundreds of people. If you continue to experience an outage, there may be damage to a tap line outside your home or business. Make sure you notify Western Cooperative so crews can inspect these lines.

We will do our best to avoid power outages, but sometimes Mother Nature has other plans. Be sure to check Western Cooperative's website for the latest updates during a power outage.

2016 Annual Meeting Highlights

This year's annual meeting was held May 11, 2016, at Western's WaKeeney facility with webcast viewing available at Western's facilities in Ellsworth, Olmitz and Plainville. Approximately 200 members, guests and employees attended.

Bigge's Country Kitchen of Stockton served lunch prior to the meeting. As always, the meal was delicious!

Don Schultz, Grainfield, spoke to the audience about his experience of first receiving electricity from Western and becoming a member of Western's Board of Trustees. After serving on Western's Board for 37 years, Don chose not to run for re-election. His years of service are appreciated and we wish him well.

Pursuant to last year's bylaw approval by the membership, ballots for election of trustees were cast by mail. Results were announced at the Annual Meeting. Elected for three-year terms, were District 1 (Graham, Osborne, Rooks and Sheridan counties), **SUSAN ROHLEDER**; District 2 (Ellis, Lincoln, Russell and Trego counties), **FRANK JOY**; and District 3 (Barton, Ellsworth, Gove, Ness and Rush counties), **CHARLES** Luetters. We welcome Rohleder as the newest member of Western's Board. Rohleder is the

first female to serve on Western's Board.

Darrin Lynch, Western's General Manager, reviewed financial facts and highlights of happenings at Western in the past year. Stuart Lowry, President & CEO of Sun-flower Electric Power Corporation, was guest speaker and gave an update of current events in the electric industry.

L.T. COBURN, Quinter, one of Western's winners of the 2015 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. , gave a presentation about his trip. He shared pictures and information. Thank you, L.T., for your contribution to our meeting! Wheatland High School's electric car team, coached by Mark Heier, displayed their car and visited with members and guests. Western Cooperative Electric helps sponsor their car, as well as others in the service area. It is always a pleasure to have your team in attendance!

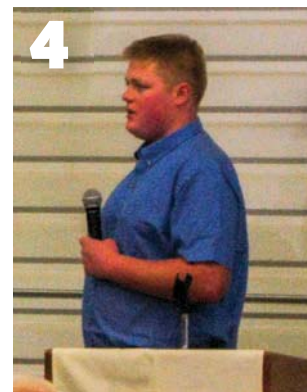
At the conclusion of the meeting, drawings for prizes were held. We would like to thank our vendors for their prize donations. Each household also received a registration gift consisting of a trouble light with a brightly colored cord. Ice cream was then enjoyed by all!

1. At the Annual Meeting, approximately 200 Western employees, guests and members enjoyed a meal catered by Bigge's Country Kitchen, Stockton.

2. Western employees serve members and guests.

3. The Wheatland High School Electric Car Team, sponsored by Western and coached by Mark Heier, displays their electric vehicle at the Annual Meeting.

4. L.T. Coburn, Western's 2015 Youth Tour delegate, thanks the membership for an experience of a lifetime.



Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

Vivian Russ

Customer Service Representative



Vivian Russ

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My husband, Ed, and I have eight children, 11 grandchildren, two dogs, a cat, and a partridge in a pear tree.

HOW LONG

HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

7 ½ years

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Oberlin

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Read and hang out with family.

WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

The fact that Ed and I have just celebrated 33 years of married bliss.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Going camping with hubs to the Dakotas.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OR BOOK AND WHY?

Anything by Debbie Macomber and Karen Kingsbury.

WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I am learning to play the bass guitar.

WHAT SPORT OR TEAM IS YOUR FAVORITE?

Royals

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

An indoor dog—someone's little lap dog.

WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My mother-in-law. She always has a kind word to say and a smile on her face.

Driving Blindfolded on the Highway

The dangers of texting and driving

Would you drive on a highway blindfolded? Of course not. However, if you text while driving 55 miles per hour on a highway, you are essentially doing just that.

Five seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55 mph, that's like driving the length of a football field while blindfolded. Talking on a cell phone also carries significant risks. According to the National Safety Council, drivers can miss seeing up to half of what's around them—including traffic lights, stop signs, and pedestrians—when talking on a cell phone.

In our digital world, people feel pressure to remain in constant contact, even when behind the wheel. As mobile technology use increases, distracted driving—talking, texting, sending emails—is a growing threat to community safety. We have all seen distracted drivers, and most likely, we ourselves have used a phone while driving. Drivers don't realize the dangers posed when they take their eyes off the road and their hands off the wheel and focus on activities other than driving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, each day in the U.S., more than nine people are killed and more than 1,153 people are injured in

crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver. The National Highway Administration notes that 3,154 people were killed and an estimated 424,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver in 2013.

Texting and cell phone use behind the wheel takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel and your focus off driving, putting the driver and others in danger, including passengers, pedestrians, other drivers and bystanders.

At Western Cooperative Electric, safety is a core value. At this time of year in particular, when more people are on the roads and kids are out of school, our goal is to raise awareness and spur conversation about the dangers of distracted driving. Talking on a cell phone quadruples your risk of an accident, about the same as if you were driving drunk. Risk doubles again if you are texting while driving. We are committed to eliminating this unnecessary risk and believe that no conversation or text is worth the potential danger.

Help promote a culture of safety. We encourage our members at Western Cooperative to join us and help keep our families, friends and neighbors safer by putting our phones down and focusing on the road when we drive. Together, we can put the brakes on distracted driving.

Drivers can miss seeing up to half of what's around them when talking on a cell phone.