

**WESTERN
COOPERATIVE
ELECTRIC**

WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Celebrate National Co-op Month

Western Cooperative Electric is joining 30,000 cooperatives nationwide in October to celebrate National Cooperative Month, which recognizes the many ways cooperatives are committed to strengthening the local communities they serve. “Co-ops Commit” is the theme for this year’s celebration, spotlighting the countless ways cooperatives meet the needs of their members and communities.

Western delivers electricity to over 6,400 member-owners in our 13-county service area of western Kansas.

“Delivering safe, reliable, affordable power is our top priority,” said Dennis Deines, member services. “We are also invested in our communities because we are locally owned

and operated. Revenue generated by Western goes back to Main Street, not Wall Street.”

Rural America is served by a network of about 1,000 electric cooperatives, most of which were formed in the 1930s and 40s to bring electricity to farms and rural communities that large, investor-owned power companies had no interest in serving because of the higher costs involved in serving low-population and low-density areas.

In addition to providing the vital power cooperative members depend on, Western is engaged in numerous local events including electrical safety demonstrations, sponsorships of high school activities, along with many community projects and events.

Electric Cooperatives by the Numbers

Western at a Glance

- ▶ Western Cooperative Electric is **ONE OF 834** distribution cooperatives nationwide
- ▶ Western provides electrical service in **13 KANSAS COUNTIES** compared to the 3,141 counties served by electric cooperatives nationwide.
- ▶ Western owns and maintains **3,982 MILES OF LINE** compared to the 2.6 million miles electric cooperatives own nationwide.
- ▶ Western **EMPLOYS 54** of the total 70,000 electric cooperative employees in the U.S.
- ▶ Western **PAID \$1,054,113.19** of the 1.4 billion property taxes paid nationally.

Compared with Electric Utilities

- ▶ Western Cooperative Electric serves an average of **3.07 MEMBERS PER MILE** of line and collects an annual revenue of approximately **\$9,426 PER MILE OF LINE**, compared to the national average of 7.4 consumers per mile of line with an annual revenue of approximately \$16,000 per mile of line.
- ▶ Investor-owned utilities average 34 customers per mile of line and collect \$75,500 per mile of line.
- ▶ Publicly owned utilities, or municipals, average 48 consumers and collect \$113,000 per mile of line.

Why Western Cooperative Electric vs. Electric Cooperative?

Named with our members in mind

Twenty six of the 28 Kansas electric distribution cooperatives have the words “electric cooperative” as part of their name. Western also has the words “electric” and “cooperative” in its name, but in reverse order. Since May 10, 1945, the name on the original corporation papers reads: The Western Cooperative Electric Association, Inc.

Our founders deemed it necessary to place the word “cooperative” in front of “electric” given that Western Cooperative Electric is member-owned and built on a unique business model based on the Seven Cooperative Principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; members’ economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community. These strong foundational principles distinguish a co-op from other forms of business ownership.

“As locally owned and operated businesses, electric

co·op·er·a·tive *noun* 1. Established to provide at-cost electric service; and governed by a board of directors elected from the membership, which sets policies and procedures that are implemented by the cooperative’s staff.

cooperatives have a real understanding of the people they serve. Cooperative management and employees share the same values and have the same pride of place because it is our community, too,” said Dennis Deines, member services. “We act like neighbors because we are neighbors. And that’s the cooperative difference.”

During October, as we observe National Cooperative Month, we hope to acquire a new appreciation for the dedication and tenacity our founders exhibited 72 years ago as we place special emphasis on the word “cooperative” in Western Cooperative Electric Assn., Inc.

seven COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

1 OPEN & VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP

Co-ops are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2 DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Co-ops are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-ops, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-ops at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3 MEMBERS’ ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4 AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

Co-ops are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-op autonomy.

5 EDUCATION, TRAINING & INFORMATION

Co-ops provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute to the development of their co-ops. They inform the public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6 COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Co-ops serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-op movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7 CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

While focusing on member needs, co-ops work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

Cold Weather Rule Effective Nov. 15

Western Cooperative Electric members who are unable to pay their electric bill from Nov. 15 through March 15 can avoid being disconnected by fulfilling the following good faith requirements:

- ▶ Notify the cooperative of their inability to pay their bill in full;
- ▶ Apply to federal, state, local or other financial assistance programs for which they may be eligible to receive aid in paying utility bills; and
- ▶ Reach a mutually-agreeable payment

arrangement with the cooperative.

It will be the responsibility of the cooperative during the cold weather period to send one written notice to the member and attempt to phone the member at least two days prior to collection/disconnection.

The Cold Weather Rule is to ensure that human health and safety are not unreasonably endangered during the cold weather months. For more information, please visit www.westerncoop.com or call 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720.

Dangers of Posting on Power Poles

Most jobs don't require you to climb 40 feet in the air and work within a few feet of high-voltage power lines that carry 7,620 volts of electricity. However, for Western Cooperative Electric lineworkers, this is just another "day at the office."

To help keep our lineworkers safe, Western urges everyone to keep poles free from all objects such as tree stands, fencing wire, balloons, fliers and metal objects like staples or tacks.

Western's policy follows the National Electrical Safety Code which states, "signs, posters, notices, and other attachments shall not be placed on supporting structures without concurrence of the owner (in this case Western). Supporting structures should be kept free from other climbing hazards such as tacks, nails, vines and through bolts not properly trimmed."

Unauthorized pole attachments not only violates the National Electrical Safety Code, but it also creates hazards for the lineworkers who repair and maintain infrastructure that powers everything in your daily life, starting with the cup of coffee you brew in the morning to the lights you turn off before going to bed at night. By respecting Western's poles, you can help keep your community powered and Western's line workers safe.

Western's linemen use specialized climbing gear to perform construction, maintenance and repairs. Nails, tacks,



Attaching signs to power poles creates serious safety hazards.

and other metal objects used to attach objects to poles can interfere with the safe operation of the climbing gear. Foreign objects that are embedded in poles can also snag or damage the protective clothing that keeps linemen safe from electrical shock.

Mounting hunting tree stand, attaching fence wire to or placing fence posts alongside an electric pole is prohibited. Not only do these attachments put Western's linemen at risk, anyone illegally placing these items on poles could expose themselves to thousands of volts of electricity.

By not attaching items to poles you can help us maintain a safe environment for a lineworker's "day at the office."

Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

Kaleb Stefek Journeyman Lineman

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My wife and I have a nine-month-old daughter.



Kaleb Stefek

HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

8 years

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Ellsworth

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Hunting, fishing and being outdoors.

WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Becoming a journeyman

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Camping at Yellowstone

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE?

"The Cowboys" with John Wayne

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE TEAM?

K-State

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

A dog; they have it made.

WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My dad; he is hard working.

Tip of the Month

When you are asleep or out of the house, turn your thermostat back 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit for eight hours and save around 10 percent a year on your heating and cooling bills. A programmable thermostat can make it easy to set back your temperature—set it and forget it!

Take Time to Reap a Safe Harvest

It can be an exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, too many farm workers are killed or injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

“Things people see every day can fade from view and the busyness of harvest time, can cause farm workers to forget about the power lines overhead,” said Nate Budig, safety director for Western Cooperative Electric. “That failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.”

Review with all workers the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from all power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

“Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it’s only a few feet,” suggested Budig. “Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a truck and extending the unloading auger of the combine.”

Farm workers should take these steps to ensure a safer harvest season:

- ▶ **Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks** around power lines.
- ▶ **Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.** Do not let the spotter touch the machinery while it is being moved anywhere near power lines
- ▶ **As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines.** Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- ▶ **Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.**
- ▶ **Don’t use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside bins.** Know where and how to shut off the power in an emergency.
- ▶ **Use qualified electricians** for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical system.

Operators of farm equipment or vehicles must also



Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line: Stay on the equipment, warn others to stay away and call 911. Do not get off the equipment until the electric utility crew says it is safe to do so.

“If the power line is energized and you step outside, touching the vehicle and ground, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result,” states Budig. “Even if a power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there’s fire or imminent risk of fire.”

If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Some electrocutions have occurred after the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment.

Western offers safety demonstrations discussing these topics and more. These demonstrations are available to all ages, civic groups and schools. For more information, call the cooperative at 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720 or e-mail western@westerncoop.com

Kansas Corporation Commission Complaint Procedure

Western Cooperative Electric strives to provide our members with quality service and support, but if you have a complaint about your electric utility bill or service that you cannot resolve by contacting Western Cooperative Electric, Kansas law allows you to file a complaint with the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC). To file an informal complaint, please contact the KCC office of Public Affairs at 800-662-0027 or by e-mail at public.affairs@kcc.ks.gov. Most complaints can be resolved through the informal complaint procedure.