



An Equal Opportunity Provider & Employer

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Western's Values Have Stood the Test of Time



Tom Ruth

Over the past few years, you've heard me expound on why and how Western Cooperative is different — because we're a cooperative. Our business

model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Western Cooperative, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Equal Access for All

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Western Cooperative was built by and belongs to the communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender, language, political perspective, or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in Western Cooperative's director elections every year and we will continue to be transparent to our member about co-op governance through communications via

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Western's Values Have Stood the Test of Time

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Kansas Country Living, bill inserts, westerncoop.com, and social media.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of our community.

Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we are able to invest in our communities through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs, and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Western Cooperative was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. My pledge to you — the members we proudly serve — is to continue to follow the Cooperative Principles, and remain focused on serving our members with integrity. By following our guiding principles, Western Cooperative will carry the same values on for another 75 years.



STAY COMFORTABLE

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.

Mother Nature's Wrath Can Mean Service Disruptions

Although we work hard to maintain our equipment, monitor power delivery 24/7, and do all we can to keep the lights on, circumstances beyond our control can interfere with power delivery. Winter weather is one example. Winter storms can impact the distribution of electricity due to ice, heavy winds, sleet, and other extreme conditions.

Regardless of the reason, know that when the lights go out — even during extreme weather — we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power. Along with causing outages, wintery conditions can cause hiccups with power delivery that include blinking lights or ebbs and flows in the amount of power that comes into your home. Although blinking lights can be a symptom of other problems such as loose wiring connections or overloaded circuits, they can also be caused by extreme weather conditions.

Wintery Conditions Include:

ICE/FREEZING RAIN: Ice accumulation on power lines makes them heavy. Half an inch of ice can add as much as 500 pounds to a power line. This added weight can impact power distribution and even bring down a power line. Ice that forms on power lines also increases the line's surface area, which means gusts of wind have more to catch. The weight of ice on tree limbs can cause them to fall on power lines as well.

WIND: Wind can cause tree branches to brush power lines, which can result in blinking or flickering lights. This is why it's important for us to keep trees cleared around power lines and poles. In addition, heavy winds

(or extreme wind plus ice) can cause lines to move and sway. If they gain enough momentum, they can gallop or jump, causing disruptions in service as the extreme motion can trigger lines to break or make contact with each other.

MELTING ICE: Melting ice can be extremely heavy, putting extra strain on power lines and causing the lines to touch or rest on one another. Because of this, melting ice can cause outages even though the temperature is rising. Depending on conditions, melting ice can cause as many or more problems than the ice itself.

WIND OR ICE PLUS TREE BRANCHES: In any weather condition (even in calm conditions), tree-related issues cause the most power outages in many service areas. Branches, limbs or even tree trunks can fall into power lines and cause problems. Add wind, freezing rain, or ice to the mix for an increased potential for problems.

ICY ROADS: Vehicles sliding on ice or colliding with one another can strike a power pole or pad-mounted transformer, causing an outage or other problems.

BLIZZARDS: Heavy snowfall, icy roads, or reduced visibility can make it more difficult for our crews to get out and fix problems, although we do all we can to address service issues as soon as possible.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. Items to gather include bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, hand sanitizer, first-aid kit/medicine, flashlight, radio, backup phone chargers, extra batteries and toiletries.

What Happens Behind the Scenes During a Power Outage?

Here in the U.S., we are fortunate to have an advanced power grid in place. Power transmission and distribution is reliable in our country, and we are proud to deliver the electricity you depend on each day. Excluding outage times attributed to major weather or other catastrophic events, electricity consumers in our country typically experience only about two hours of total power interruptions per year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. When outages due to major events are taken into consideration, the EIA reports the total outage time at six hours a year.

What happens on our end when your power goes out? We swing into action in a safe and efficient manner to ensure your power is restored. How long that takes depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages, and how long it takes for our work crews to safely access the storm-damaged areas. We are careful to follow standard restoration procedures

to ensure safety and to get the job done right by:

- ▶ Assessing damage to utility equipment.
- ▶ Addressing immediate safety risks, including downed power lines.
- ▶ Ensuring that essential public health and safety facilities are operational.
- ▶ Prioritizing repairs that will restore power to the greatest number of people first.
- ▶ Evaluating power plants for damage and restoring them to working order.
- ▶ Repairing transmission lines that carry power to large areas.
- ▶ Assessing and repairing (in this order) substations, distribution lines, and service lines to properties.

Thank you for your patience during power outages. Know that in the event of an outage, we are working hard to restore power as safely and efficiently as possible, day and night.

For more information about preparing for outages or storms, or about electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.

Staying Safe During an Outage

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including:



Extent of the storm's destruction



Severity of utility equipment damage



Number and extent of outages



Accessibility to damaged equipment.

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED.

- ▶ Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- ▶ If you come across a downed line, immediately call 911 to report it.
- ▶ Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- ▶ If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.

PREPARE FOR A STORM BY GATHERING THESE ITEMS:

- ▶ Bottles of water
- ▶ Non-perishable food
- ▶ Portable phone charger
- ▶ Prescriptions
- ▶ Battery-powered radio and batteries
- ▶ Blankets and warm clothing
- ▶ First-aid kit
- ▶ Hand sanitizer



Happy Valentine's Day

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static. Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



PowerOn

76TH ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, May 12

Find details about the annual meeting online
westerncoop.com/annual-meeting



TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

MEETING AGENDA

CO-OP UPDATES