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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

# NEWS

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

## FROM THE MANAGER

# September is Safety Month



Tom Ruth

Safety is a core value at Western Cooperative. Delivering affordable and reliable electricity requires employees to approach their daily responsibilities with an intense

focus on safety — for the sake of their fellow employees and the public.

All Western employees are responsible for ensuring every member of the co-op family returns safely home to their loved ones. The inherent dangers of working with high voltage electricity is why our linemen have made the “Commitment to Zero Contacts” pledge and why we are constantly trying to learn and improve our safety protocols.

On social media in September, Western will be sharing several of the safety measures we take to keep our employees and consumer-members safe. “Safety Month” will include videos and pictures on social media from our annual pole-top and

bucket rescue training, safety demonstrations for our consumer-members, and safety tips for those who operate equipment near power lines.

A thriving safety culture depends on everyone’s engagement and participation. Safety is a team effort that requires all of us to take responsibility and accountability for our safety and the people around us. These are the fundamentals that create and sustain a successful safety culture.

Safety is at the heart of everything we do at Western Cooperative. This includes keeping our employees safe on the job and educating the public about the possible dangers of electricity. Safety is critical to how we measure success. Although our dedication to safety is a year-round commitment, we hope that bringing awareness to some of the potential dangers of electricity will help prevent an accident before it happens.

To see how Western stays safe, follow us on Facebook, or stop by and see the Kansas electric cooperatives safety demonstration at the Kansas State Fair on Sept. 13-17 in the Ad Astra Pavilion.



## Tips for a Safe Harvest

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous — even deadly — when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, we see tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- ▶ Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- ▶ Use a spotter and deploy flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- ▶ If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it), and hop away to safety.
- ▶ Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

Sept. 19-25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week but practicing safety on the farm year-round yields positive results. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, follow the safety tips above.

## Plainville Youth Featured at Kansas Electric Cooperatives Meeting

**MAGGIE BRULL**, a high school senior at Thomas More Prep-Marian (TMP), was selected as the Kansas Electric Youth (KEY) spokesperson for the Kansas Electric Cooperatives (KEC).

Brull gave a speech to approximately 250 electric cooperative board members, managers and key staff during the KEC Summer Meeting in Overland Park on Aug. 2.

Brull was selected for this honor by participating in the KEY Leadership Conference. She was sponsored for the virtual program by Western Cooperative Electric.

"I thought it was a great leadership opportunity to represent the students who were selected for the KEY Leadership Conference," Brull said. "This conference has taught me that people come from a lot of different places in life, and co-ops serve everyone no matter what your place in life is. It is nice to know that you have this giant community of people who are there for you."

The week-long KEY conference focused on different aspects of leadership. It included sessions about the cooperative business model and the cooperative principles, a session on advocacy that included a review of the Co-ops Vote program and how students can make their voices heard, a reputation management workshop, and tips to prepare for the transition between high school and higher education.



**Maggie Brull, Plainville, was selected as the Kansas Electric Youth (KEY) spokesperson for the Kansas Electric Cooperatives.**

The speaker lineup featured a discussion with Sen. Jerry Moran, who visited with the students and answered their questions on topics ranging from foreign grain exports to death tax on inherited land, the pandemic, climate change, and support for military families. Other speaker highlights included an inspiring message from the reality television program Survivor's Holly Hoffman, and the presentation "Wolves Can't Fly" from the Kansas City Chiefs mascot Dan Meers.

"I want to thank Western and the other Kansas electric cooperatives for supporting the youth and helping us learn so much," Brull said. "I wish more companies would be able to offer this type of opportunity so that students can learn about their history and how they affect our communities."



**Lindsay Flax was recently hired as the new billing specialist at Western Cooperative.**

## Welcome to Western

**LINDSAY FLAX** has been hired as the new billing specialist for Western Cooperative. Flax brings with her a background in utility billing and banking. Flax and her husband Tyson have three boys, Casen, Austin and Evan. They like spending time outdoors, riding side by sides, and going to the lake in their spare time.

Welcome to the cooperative family!

# Scott and Kuhn Receive Spill Prevention and Clean-up Certification



Manager Tom Ruth (right) presents Safety Manager Jay Scott with his certification.



Materials Clerk Terry Kuhn (right) receives his certification for Spill Prevention and Clean-up from Western Manager Tom Ruth.

Safety Manager **JAY SCOTT** and Materials Clerk **TERRY KUHN** recently received their Spill Prevention and Clean-up certification from Kansas Electric Cooperatives (KEC), Inc.

This training is designed to educate personnel on proper oil spill response and cleanup procedures for electric cooperatives. Attendees were also educated on up-to-date regulations

set forth by the Environmental Protection Agency, proper personal protective equipment (PPE), and storage and disposal requirements of spill materials.

“Staying up-to-date on regulations and how to handle potentially harmful materials is essential to creating a safe workplace and protecting our environment,” said Scott.



## SMART USAGE

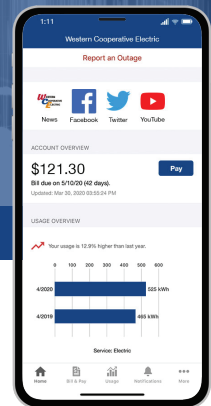
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# Cooperation Among Cooperatives



High winds led to large power outages in Lane-Scott's service territory. To get the power restored to their consumer-members quickly, Lane-Scott requested mutual aid from the surrounding co-ops including Western Cooperative Electric.

High winds in western Kansas led to large power outages on Aug. 7. North of Ness City, 60-70 mph wind gusts broke 56 poles in Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative's service territory. To get the power restored to their consumer-members quickly, Lane-Scott requested mutual aid from the surrounding co-ops.

In case of a natural disaster or other extreme circumstances, electric utilities can request additional help from the surrounding cooperatives. Western Cooperative and Victory Electric Cooperative, based out of Dodge City, sent crews to help out our neighbor in need.

Providing mutual aid is an essential part of the sixth Cooperative Principle: Cooperation Among Cooperatives. Cooperatives improve services,

bolster local economies and deal more effectively with social and community needs by working together through local, regional, national and international structures.

"We know what it is like to have a storm take out a large section of line," said Line Superintendent Ron Aschenbrenner, "We help out when we can because there may come a time when we are the ones asking for help."

Cooperatives around the nation operate according to the same set of core principles and values. These principles are a key reason that America's electric cooperatives operate differently from other electric utilities, putting the needs of their consumer-members first.



**FAR LEFT:** Western Cooperative crews helped restore power, embracing our core principle "cooperation among cooperatives."

**LEFT:** Lineman Apprentice Tap Penka works to repair line damaged in the storm.