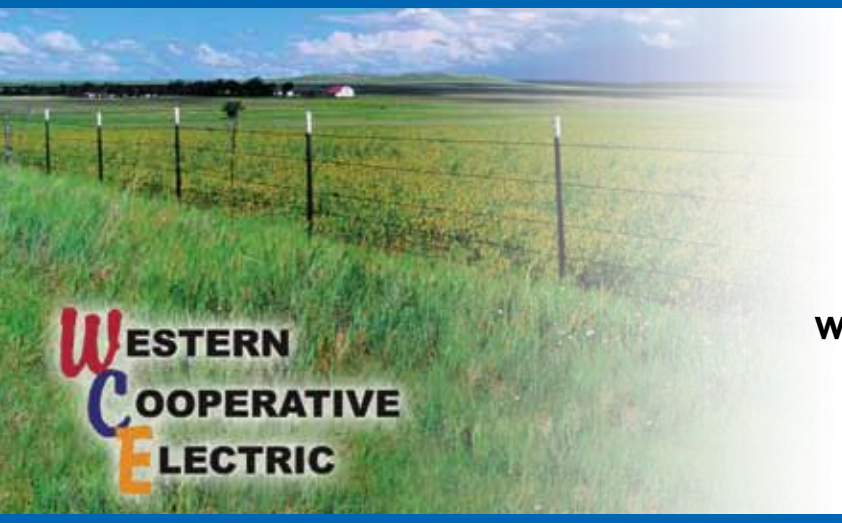

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC
NEWS

FEMA Restoration on Target for January 2011 Completion

If you were in western Kansas on December 29, 2006, a picture of destruction to electrical systems remains etched in our minds from rain and ice.

Damages were substantial enough to grant federal assistance, so with engineering studies completed, materials ordered and contractors hired, Western's three year rebuilding process began. Western had two projects to be completed:

- Rebuild 430 miles of electrical distribution line
- Straighten 7,000 existing poles

"The rebuilding process is currently 75-80 percent complete and is projected to be 100 percent within the January 2011 deadline," said Darryl Steckline, Line Superintendent.

To complete this large undertaking, Western hired two contractors Texoma Powerline, Inc., of Sayre, OK, and Custom Powerline Construction.

"With a concerted effort, these contractors continue to meet our completion date," Steckline said. "The rebuilding crews are currently working in the Gove County area and then will begin rebuilding the larger conductor circuits throughout the distribution system."

To finance the project, the federal government provides 75 percent; state government, 10 percent; and Western will pay 15 percent. Total cost of the project is estimated to be $25 million.

"We are very appreciative for the financial assistance," said Dave Schneider, General Manager. "Without this assistance, Western would not be able to complete a project of this size and cost."

Line crews from Texoma Powerline, Inc., and Custom Powerline Construction were hired to aid in the rebuilding process.

Western's crews and contractors will straighten 7,000 existing poles.

Without this assistance, Western would not be able to complete a project of this size and cost.

Western's goal is to have 430 miles of line rebuilt before January 2011.

Keeping Power Flowing

Western's linemen maintain an intricate system of power lines around the clock

We often take electricity for granted. It makes our homes comfortable day-in and day-out, and it's available with little more than the flip of a switch.

What goes on behind the scenes once that switch is thrown is far more complex. The power grid, which can be described as the largest, most complex machine ever built, involves an intricate network of power lines crisscrossing neighborhoods and open country, over mountains and through cities, which has evolved over the last century to supply consumers with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

The tricky thing about electricity is that it must be used, or moved to where it can be used, the second it's produced; it generally can't be stored like water or gas. What's more, electricity moves at the speed of light along the path of least resistance. This basic principle calls for a carefully monitored, intricate system to move it 24 hours a day.

Literally millions of miles of power lines span the United States in a complex series of "highways." These lines can be broken into two main categories: transmission, the high-voltage "interstates" supported by steel towers and other similar structures that move electricity over vast distances; and distribution, the "local roads" that run through small towns and neighborhoods and into homes and businesses. Electric cooperatives own and maintain roughly 65,000 miles, or 6 percent, of the nation's transmission lines and 2.5 million miles, or 42 percent, of its distribution lines, according to the Arlington, Virginia-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. This cooperative maintained system could cover the distance to the moon and back five times over.

Western Cooperative Electric alone has its own distribution system to maintain: Western's linemen stay busy keeping over 3,900 miles of line up and running, 24/7.

When there's a problem somewhere on Western's system, a power outage typically results. Pinpointing the cause of an outage among those thousands of miles of line may seem like trying to find a needle in a haystack, but Western's crews can generally isolate the outage and then find the problem.

To understand how Western's crews restore power during an outage, think of electricity distribution like a river in reverse. It originates at a single ocean of power—a generation plant—and diverges from there into a series of transmission lines, substations, distribution lines until it reaches homes and businesses at a trickle of its original strength. So when we start assessing storm damage, Western works to fix the biggest problems first (those starting near the "ocean"), prioritizing repairs according to how we can get the most homes back in service the fastest.

It's a big job, but Western's linemen are up to the challenge. If there is an outage in your area, you can help crews pinpoint damage by calling us at 785-743-5561. Even if your neighbors have already called, every bit of information Western has, helps get the river flowing smoothly again.