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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

NEWS

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STRAIGHT TALK FROM THE TOP

The Power That Brings Us Home

In August, the transition from summer freedom to back-to-school routines is noticeable in homes across Kansas. For many of us, it brings back memories of playing outside until the streetlights came on — that familiar signal it was time to head home for supper and wind down the day.

Today, the signal is often a text or call on a cellphone: “Time to come home.” Both the streetlight and the cellphone depend on the same reliable source: electricity from Western Cooperative Electric. This practical connection shows how power supports both traditional rural life and modern family needs.

Electricity keeps things running during busy summer days — powering equipment on farms, air conditioning and refrigerators in homes, and devices for children. It enables parents to stay in touch with their kids and helps families coordinate during long workdays.

Reliable power means fewer disruptions, and our line crews play a key role in making this possible. They perform system maintenance to reduce outage risks ahead of summer storms and respond quickly when issues arise. Their work ensures the power stays on so families can count on lights, chargers and air conditioning when it is most needed.

As times change, the way we use electricity also evolves. Streetlights

once marked the end of a summer evening. Today, phones, tablets, farm technology, and countless other tools help us manage daily life. But the purpose remains the same: electricity connects us to the people, work and routines that matter most.



Nolan Numrich

At Western Cooperative Electric, we understand that reliable power is more than a convenience. It is part of how families communicate, how businesses operate, how students learn, and how communities stay connected. That responsibility guides the work we do every day.

As students head back to school and families settle into new routines, we are reminded that electricity has always been there in the background — lighting the way home, keeping families connected, and helping each generation move forward.

Whether it is a streetlight glowing at the end of the block or a phone lighting up with a message from home, Western Cooperative Electric is proud to provide the power behind the moments that connect us.

**HERE TO SERVE,
NOLAN NUMRICH
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER**

Cooperatives Team Up to Strengthen Workplace Safety for Independent Salt Company



Rolling Hills linemen (from left) Wyatt Bohnen, Ryan Lively and Logan Adams watch as Doug Errebo demonstrates. Learning the hidden dangers of mylar balloons through an electric safety demonstration can make a big difference in preventing power outages and electrical hazards.

Safety is a shared responsibility, and sometimes the best results come when organizations work together to achieve a common goal.

That was the case on May 1 when Western Cooperative Electric and Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative partnered to provide an electrical safety demonstration and training in Ellsworth for the employees of Independent Salt Company in Kanopolis.

Independent Salt Company is a key industrial account served collaboratively by both cooperatives. After conversations with company representatives revealed an interest in refreshing workplace electrical safety practices, Western Cooperative Electric reached out to Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative to combine resources and expertise for a hands-on training opportunity focused on electrical awareness, hazard recognition, and safe work practices around energized equipment.

The event brought together safety professionals, operations staff, and cooperative personnel with a common purpose: reinforcing the importance of workplace safety and providing practical knowledge employees could use every day.

For both cooperatives, the training represented more than an educational opportunity. It was a chance to put one of the cooperative principles — Cooperation Among Cooperatives — into action.

“Safety education is an important part of the service we provide,” said Jay Scott, WCE safety manager. “We appreciated the opportunity to work alongside Rolling Hills Electric and Independent Salt Company to help reinforce safe practices for their team. We truly value this shared partnership and the positive impact it created.”

Throughout the demonstration, Independent Salt Company employees were encouraged to ask questions, discuss real-world situations, and gain a better understanding of the risks associated with working around electrical equipment. The interactive format helped participants connect safety concepts to the work they perform each day.

The impact of the training extended well beyond the event itself.

Following the demonstration, Independent Salt Company reviewed information presented during the training and implemented internal changes aimed at strengthening workplace safety practices.



Jay Scott, safety manager, (left) and Tyler Lang, lineman, (second from left) both from Western Cooperative Electric, joined Rolling Hills Safety Coordinator Scott Splichal (right) and the Rolling Hills line crew for a hands-on demo — wrapping up with a great team photo and even better collaboration.

“The demonstrations and discussions provided practical examples that reinforced why safety must remain a priority every day. It gave our team an opportunity to evaluate our own practices and identify areas where we could make improvements.”

**DANIEL REDETZKE, MINE ENGINEER/TECH SERVICES
MANAGER AT INDEPENDENT SALT MINE**

For both cooperatives, seeing the company take action based on what was learned was one of the most rewarding outcomes of the partnership.

“One of the most valuable aspects of the training was seeing electrical safety from a different perspective,” said Daniel Redetzke, mine engineer/tech services manager at Independent Salt Mine. “The demonstrations and discussions provided practical examples that reinforced why safety must remain a priority every day. It gave our team an opportunity to evaluate our own practices and identify areas where we could make improvements.”

Reed Bayles, operations manager at Independent Salt Mine agreed, noted that the hands-on approach made the demonstration especially impactful.

“The demo wasn’t just a presentation — it was an opportunity for our employees to engage in meaningful conversations about workplace safety,” Bayles said. “The variety of examples and real-world scenarios shared by Western and Rolling Hills helped our team think differently about potential hazards and ways to reduce risk. We appreciated the investment both cooperatives made in helping us strengthen our safety culture.”

The collaboration also highlighted the value of cooperative partnerships.

“We appreciate the opportunity to work alongside Western Cooperative Electric to provide this safety training for Independent Salt Company,” said Scott Splichal, Rolling Hills safety coordinator. “When cooperatives collaborate and share resources, it creates meaningful opportunities to improve workplace safety and serve our members and partners more effectively.”

While electric cooperatives are best known for delivering reliable power, they also serve as trusted resources for the communities and businesses within their service territories. The successful partnership between Western Cooperative Electric, Rolling Hills Electric, and Independent Salt Company demonstrates how cooperation, education, and a commitment to safety can create lasting benefits for everyone involved.

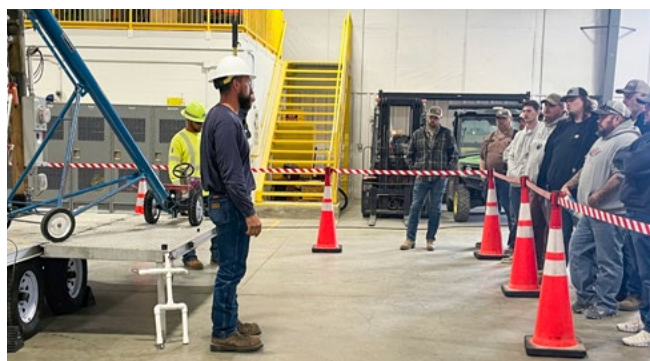
By combining expertise, sharing resources, and putting safety first, the organizations turned a simple conversation into stronger safety practices and a safer workplace.



Rolling Hills linemen showcase the effects of electrical contact on a steel-belted tire during a safety demonstration.



Rolling Hills linemen (from left) Wyatt Bohnen and Evan Keating watch as Doug Errebo demonstrates the importance of using GFCI receptacles.



Western’s Tyler Lang discusses the importance of proper personal protective equipment (PPE).

Western Students Explore Leadership and History on Youth Tour

Two local students sponsored by Western Cooperative Electric recently joined more than 2,000 students from across the nation for the 2026 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

AIDEN ASCHENBRENNER, Ellis High School, is the son of Gary and Tara Aschenbrenner, and **REYGAN COONROD**, Ellsworth High School, is the daughter of Eric and Stephanie Coonrod, represented Western Cooperative Electric during the weeklong leadership experience held June 13-19. The students were selected through Western's annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program, which provides young leaders an opportunity to learn more about government, leadership and the cooperative difference.

The journey began in Topeka, where delegates from Kansas, Hawaii and Maine gathered before traveling to the nation's capital. During the trip, students visited many of America's most iconic landmarks, including the U.S. Capitol, Arlington National Cemetery, Smithsonian museums, memorials and monuments. They also met with members of Kansas' congressional delegation and learned firsthand about the legislative process.

For Aschenbrenner, one of the most memorable moments came during National Youth Day. "What had the most impact on me during this trip was our keynote speaker, Paralympic gold medalist Mike Schlappi," he said. "He gave a great speech that had a lot of meaning and was something I truly enjoyed. Seeing all the history inspired me to be as good as I can be and to be a great American."

Aschenbrenner said the friendships he formed throughout the week and the opportunity to meet a Holocaust survivor are memories he will never forget.

Coonrod was especially moved by the visit to Arlington National Cemetery. "It was incredibly impactful seeing the

Changing of the Guard," she said. "The honor they bring to unknown soldiers and the dedication no matter the circumstances felt immensely powerful."

She also appreciated the leadership conference opportunities and discussions with students from across the country.

"Speaking with inspiring leaders from other states will enhance my leadership no matter the role that may be," Coonrod said.

In addition to the educational experiences, delegates enjoyed unique opportunities to connect with fellow students, including a dinner cruise on the Potomac River and interactive activities throughout the week.

Western Cooperative Electric is proud to support youth leadership development through programs like Youth Tour and congratulates Aiden and Reygan for representing the cooperative and their communities so well on the national stage. Check out our website and Facebook page for more information on this story!



Aiden Aschenbrenner (front) and Reygan Coonrod represented Western Cooperative Electric during the weeklong leadership Electric Cooperative Youth Tour held in Washington, D.C.



SAFETY *By The* NUMBERS

Protecting Our Employees, Members and Communities



 12,056 Meters served across western Kansas	 4,038 Miles of power line maintained	 52 Employees committed to serving our members	 37 Maintenance and service vehicles operating throughout our territory	 12 Company-wide safety meetings held annually	 100% Employees receive monthly safety information & reports	 24/7 Emergency response for outages and electrical hazards	 1 GOAL Everyone goes home safely every day
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MORE THAN A STATISTIC

While these numbers help tell the story, safety isn't measured only in miles, meetings or equipment. It is measured in the decisions employees make every day.

Whether conducting a routine service call, replacing a pole, restoring power after a storm, or answering member questions...Western employees are trained to always put safety first!



That commitment extends beyond our workforce. Through public education, youth programs, community events, and partnerships with local organizations...Western works to help members stay safe around electricity year-round.

**Driven By Safety,
Defined by Integrity**