




An Equal Opportunity Provider & Employer

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

# NEWS

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General Manager

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Safe, Reliable and Affordable

Western Cooperative is dedicated to delivering safe, reliable and affordable power. While there must be a balance between reliability and affordability, safety is an ever-present concern for our employees and the public.

### Safe

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.

September is "Safety Month" at Western. During the month, our social media pages will share several safety measures Western takes to keep our employees and members safe. Follow us to view pictures and videos of our annual pole-top and bucket rescue training, safety demonstrations, and safety tips for our members.

### Reliable

Western developed a construction work plan for the next four years. This work plan uses engineering studies to prioritize projects. Whether it is a large project like a substation rebuild or a smaller one like rebuilding a section of a line, the operations team must plan in order to have the materials and time to complete projects on a schedule. By constantly improving our system, Western is dedicated to providing reliable service.



Tom Ruth

### Affordable

As I alluded to earlier, there must be a balance between reliability and affordability while managing risk.

*Continued on page 12B ►*



## LABOR Day Office Closing

In observance of Labor Day,  
our office will be closed on  
**MONDAY, SEPT. 5.**

# Improving Reliability

## Codell and Sylvan Grove Substations Get an Upgrade

The reliable flow of electricity is one of Western Cooperative's top priorities. Many members may take reliability for granted because the modern electrical grid is an ever-evolving, interconnected system designed to minimize interruptions.

When you turn on the light switch, you expect the lights to come on, and while our members may not always be concerned with how power gets to their homes or farms, Western continually evaluates when and where system improvements are most necessary.

Western has been rebuilding the Codell and Sylvan Grove substations for the last few months to replace two of the older structures in Western's system. When completed, the new substations will meet today's National Electric Safety Code standards and improve reliability for members who get power from those substations.

"The Codell and Sylvan Grove substations are being built with improved reliability in mind," Line Superintendent Ron Aschenbrenner said. "Updated protective devices and controls will improve fault protection and lead to fewer power outages."

The ability to switch between substations is another way the new design will help with reliability. "If a fault occurs on a section of line where a windstorm breaks several poles, we can switch the feed to energize the members who are not directly affected by the damaged power lines," Aschenbrenner said.

The data collected from the controls at the substations



Upgrades at the Codell and Sylvan Grove substations will improve reliability for members in those areas.

will also assist in analyzing performance. Data analytics and SCADA controls will play a more significant role in the future as Western works to gain efficiency through technology.

The electrical grid in Kansas will continue to face unpredictable weather such as the extreme wind and ice storms Western experienced earlier this year. As your electric provider, Western does our best to prepare for the worst conditions before they take place.

Our members founded Western Cooperative 77 years ago to bring affordable and reliable power to rural Kansas, and the mission remains the same today. So, the next time you flip the light switch, please take a moment to appreciate the planning, investment, and hard work that created the modern electric grid.

## Safe, Reliable and Affordable Continued from page 12A ►

Managing costs and expenses is something Western has done very well over the years to keep rates as low as possible.

The board has already taken steps to relieve rate pressures by reducing capital spending in the construction work plan and extending the capital credit retirement cycle, which will reduce the impact of the rate increase required. We are entering the final phase of our cost-of-service study, analyzing the rate design.

We know the cost to serve our members has increased dramatically over the past few years. The cost of providing service is collected through the monthly "customer charge." The customer

charge is a flat monthly cost per meter that recovers a portion of Western's fixed cost in each rate class. Before we sell one kilowatt, Western must pay for poles, wires, transformers, meters, system maintenance, and many other fixed costs to meet your energy needs.

Western remains dedicated to serving our members with safe, reliable, and affordable power. Within the next two months, we plan to communicate the study results and set up public meetings to discuss rate changes. If you have questions or concerns, please email [western@westerncoop.com](mailto:western@westerncoop.com).



## Western Awards Sacred Heart Grade School \$5,000 Sharing Success Grant

Western Cooperative Electric's Sharing Success Fund has awarded a \$5,000 grant to the **SACRED HEART GRADE SCHOOL** in Plainville to upgrade the kitchen facilities.

In addition to preparing meals for the students, the kitchen at

Sacred Heart is used for family gatherings, fundraisers, and other community events.

"We have been raising funds to make improvements to the kitchen," Jenny Molina, said. "The Sacred Heart School building has been at the heart of the community since it was built, and with these improvements, it will continue to be a great place for our students to learn and our community to gather."

Sacred Heart has received some additional grants for the project, but due to the cost of materials and supply chain issues, the project's total cost is now estimated at \$80,000.

"We have been blessed to receive funding to address the most immediate needs of the project," Sacred Heart Principal Scott Brown said. "The vent hood over the stove area has become hazardous to the kitchen staff and will



Western's Member Services Manager Nolan Numrich (right) presents Principal Scott Brown and Jenny Molina, volunteer, with a \$5,000 grant to make kitchen improvements at Plainville's Sacred Heart Grade School.

be the first thing replaced. Unfortunately, just like everything else, costs continue to rise, and we will need to raise more funds to complete the project.

"Concern for the Community is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles, and the Sharing Success grant program is a great way to give back to our communities," Western Member Services Manager Nolan Numrich said.

Western's Sharing Success grants are made possible, in part, through CoBank, which matches funds. In 2022, Western's board of trustees approved \$20,000 to be made available through a competitive grant process. Since 2013, the Sharing Success program has donated nearly \$100,000 to local non-profit organizations. Applications for the 2023 grant cycle will be accepted starting in January. For more information, visit [westerncoop.com/sharing-success](http://westerncoop.com/sharing-success).

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Our faucets and appliances use a lot of hot water, which accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. You can lower your water heating costs by using less hot water in your home. To save energy (and money!) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are Energy Star®-certified.

SOURCE: [WWW.ENERGY.GOV](http://WWW.ENERGY.GOV)



## What to do before using a PORTABLE GENERATOR



### Prepare

Install battery operated carbon monoxide (CO) alarms throughout your home; ensure they are working properly.

### Position

Place a portable generator at least 20 feet from windows and doors; do not use one in a garage or carport.



### Read

Carefully review and then follow all manufacturer's instructions.

### Protect

If it is wet outside, keep it dry by placing it on a tarp. Position it under a portable canopy (not a carport).



### Refuel Safely

Turn off your portable generator and let it cool down before refueling.

### Inspect and Maintain

Inspect a portable generator before each use and make sure it is properly maintained.



Using a portable generator can be useful during an outage; however, use one correctly to prevent CO poisoning and to stay safe.

## Why ha\$ my electric bill increa\$ed? I haven't touched my thermo\$tat!

If this is your recent reaction when opening your electric bill, you are not alone. At Western Co-op we, too, are paying higher electric bills this summer.

We know having others FEEL your pain doesn't take AWAY your pain. And while we can't take away the pain of your higher bill or ours, we can explain the reason behind them.

### It's been a scorcher.

You've no doubt recognized this summer has been much hotter than last summer. Last summer, WaKeeney experienced 8 days above 100 in June and July. Those same months this year produced 24 days above 100 degrees.

During scorching hot temperatures, we rely more on our cooling units to stay comfortable, and that consumes more electricity. Specifically, when outside temperatures become higher than 100 degrees or there is more than a 20-degree difference between the inside and outside temps, air conditioners consume considerably more energy.

### Record high demand causes increased prices.

Electric bills, yours and ours, are broken into cost sectors, one of which is the variable cost for fuel and purchased power. The costs for fuels, such as natural gas, which are needed to operate power plants fluctuate from day to day. The cost of electricity purchased from the Southwest Power Pool wholesale energy market also fluctuates hour by hour due to several factors. Each month, electric utilities recover the fluctuating costs of fuel and purchased power—with a pass-through cost, or credit, on consumers' electric bills in the form of an Energy Cost Adjustment (ECA). Electric cooperatives do not mark up or make a profit on the costs of fuel and energy purchased from the market. The ECA is a mechanism to recover these fluctuating costs to remain financially whole.

Fuels such as natural gas are a commodity, and like all commodities, fuel prices are

influenced by supply and demand. Several domestic and global factors have contributed to natural gas price increases in recent months. The war in Ukraine, increased exports of liquefied natural gas to Europe, and increased demand for natural gas used to run power plants are all factors that have contributed to the price of natural gas nearly doubling since March.

Western Co-op receives wholesale energy from Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, which is a member of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). The SPP oversees, manages, and balances the dispatch of energy based on reliability and economics across a 14-state region. On July 19, SPP experienced a record high demand for energy at 53,243 MW, which required running more expensive generators to serve the load.

### We're here for you.

We can't stop Mother Nature from doing what she does, and we can't change the principle of supply and demand. We can assure you we are always looking for ways to help our members, who are also our neighbors. Please give Western Co-op a call or visit our website for energy efficiency saving tips.

