



WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC, INC.

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FROM THE MANAGER

Linemen Appreciation Day is April 8

It is important to recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of our linemen on Linemen Appreciation Day, observed on the second Monday in April. This day serves as a reminder of the tireless dedication, unwavering commitment, and significant sacrifices made by these brave individuals who form the backbone of our electrical infrastructure.

Linemen are the unsung heroes who work diligently, often under hazardous conditions, to ensure that electricity reaches our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses without interruption. They brave adverse weather conditions, high voltage power lines, and challenging terrains to maintain, repair and upgrade the intricate network of power lines that power our homes, farms and communities.

On Linemen Appreciation Day, it's crucial to reflect on the essential role these skilled professionals play in keeping our lives running smoothly. From restoring power after storms and natural disasters to routine maintenance



Lineman Kellye Irvin climbing during pole-top rescue training.

tasks, linemen work around the clock to ensure the reliability and safety of our electrical grid.

Beyond their technical expertise, linemen possess a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork. They form tight-knit bonds with their colleagues, relying on each other for support and

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home. Plant evergreen trees and shrubs to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating. **SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV**



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safety while facing the inherent dangers of their profession. Their collaborative efforts exemplify the spirit of unity and resilience that defines our cooperative.

At Western Cooperative Electric, we take immense pride in our 36 linemen's dedication to excellence, their commitment to serving our members, and their integrity and professionalism in maintaining over 4,000 miles of distribution power lines. Their hard work and unwavering commitment deserve our utmost appreciation and recognition not just on Linemen Appreciation Day, but every day of the year.

To honor our linemen on this special day, we encourage our members and the community to show their gratitude in various ways. Whether it's a simple thank-you note, a gesture of appreciation, or a social media shoutout, every expression of gratitude goes a long way in recognizing the hard work and sacrifices made by our linemen.

While the observance of Linemen Appreciation Day provides us with a valuable opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to the dedicated men and women who ensure the smooth functioning of our electrical infrastructure, these unsung heroes, whose resilience, bravery and unwavering commitment embody the very essence of service goes beyond one designated day. Let us continue to recognize and support our linemen in their vital mission, for they truly are the backbone of our cooperative and the lifeline of our communities.

Kellye Irvin Retires after 40-year Career

Recently, **KELLYE IRVIN** retired after a 40-year career as a lineman for Western Cooperative Electric.

With Lineman Appreciation Day just around the corner on April 8, it is only fitting that we honor Irvin's career. He spent his entire career as a lineman serving the members of his community.

"Kellye had a lot of experience, and we will miss having his knowledge of the system," said Ron Aschenbrenner, Western's line superintendent. "He has seen a lot of changes in our industry over the years and was always able to adapt. We would like to wish him a long, happy retirement."



Kellye Irvin (left), who recently retired after a 40-year career as a lineman, with Western General Manager Tom Ruth.

Through different mergers and acquisitions, Irvin worked as a lineman for several power companies. In 2007, Western acquired the Aquila territory, and Irvin spent his last 17 years working for Western's Olmitz outpost.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE IS **APRIL 10, 2024**

Western Cooperative Electric's Scholarship Program is committed to the leaders of tomorrow. The Western Cooperative Board of Trustees has approved four \$1,000 scholarships and the \$250 Darrell Brown Memorial Scholarship to be awarded for the 2023-2024 school year.

Eligible students must live in one of the 19 franchise communities Western Cooperative Electric serves or are a legal dependent of an active member receiving service from Western Co-op.*

Franchise communities in Western Cooperative Electric's Service Territory:

| | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Bison | Natoma | Susank |
| Bunker Hill | Olmitz | Sylvan Grove |
| Dorrance | Otis | Timken |
| Ellsworth | Palco | Waldo |
| Galatia | Paradia | Zurich |
| Liebenthal | Plainville | |
| Lorraine | Schenchen | |

SCAN TO APPLY



*STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS FROM WESTERN LAST YEAR FROM THE YOUTH CONTEST ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE 2024 SCHOLARSHIPS.

Winter Storm Uri Lessons Help Protect Members from Effects of Current Extreme Weather Patterns

Mother Nature got our attention early in 2024 with winter Storm Finn and Storm Gerri. We experienced snow, wind, ice and cold temperatures, but fortunately not the “perfect storm” of conditions that led to natural gas shortages, high energy prices, and alternating electricity interruptions during 2021 Winter Storm Uri.

Although the recent storms caused transmission outages requiring difficult and commendable measures by our line crews, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) — the regional transmission operator for 14 states, including Kansas — had enough capacity to meet customer load, and there was enough natural gas available to keep energy market prices from spiking.

Still, we all wondered “What if this is Winter Storm Uri round two? Will electric bills spike again?”

The answer is, hopefully not. Each storm is different, and although we can’t predict what will happen, we can prepare based on the lessons learned during Winter Storm Uri and other storms, and we have.

The SPP, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation (our wholesale energy provider), and Western Co-op continue to analyze Winter Storm Uri and put measures in place to minimize impacts from extreme weather events. We have made operational changes (e.g., when to bring units online during cold weather), revisited rotating load shed blocks, and purchased fixed-price energy blocks.

FIXED-PRICE ENERGY PRODUCTS (HEDGING)

Each month, fuel costs are billed in the form of an energy cost adjustment (ECA) charge, and the cost is usually very affordable and stable. However, when market energy prices spiked during Winter Storm Uri due to a scarcity of natural gas, our members’ bills rose as well. Electric cooperatives do not make a profit on the cost of fuel, but the cost of fuel must be recovered for electric co-ops to remain financially stable.

To guard against future surging ECA costs, Sunflower purchases fixed-price blocks of energy for the months of the year most susceptible to extreme weather patterns. Similar to purchasing a homeowner’s insurance policy, these blocks hedge against spiking market energy prices. The more you’re willing to spend on an insurance premium, the more protection you get, so it’s important to find a balance between premium cost and risk. Purchasing hedging products reduces the risk of high market energy price spikes (insurance protection), but adds cost if market energy prices don’t spike (insurance premium). You know

the feeling ... dreading the home insurance payment, but fearing more the ramifications of going without insurance.

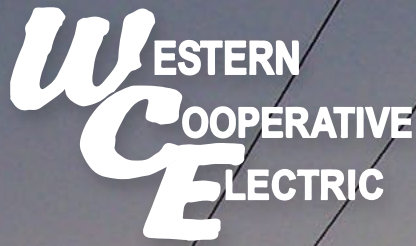
When developing hedging strategies, Sunflower evaluates how much of its total energy needs during a specific time period can be met by resources that have stable production costs. Sunflower’s coal-based Holcomb 1, as an example, can be relied on to produce energy at a stable cost due to the price stability of coal compared to the volatile price of natural gas. Sunflower’s renewable energy resources have fixed-price power purchase agreements, so the cost of the energy they provide is also stable.

The amount of energy above the energy-producing capability of these resources needed to serve Sunflower’s total load is energy exposed to market price volatility. The amount of this market exposure is affected by fluctuating electric demand during different parts of the year as well as the varying energy-producing capability from fixed-price and stable-priced resources. Sunflower analyzes the amount of market exposure and the risk associated with that exposure to determine if and how much to proactively invest in fixed-priced energy blocks.

These energy hedging products, along with Sunflower’s diverse generation fleet, help insulate our members from high energy market costs. For example, when natural gas prices rose to historic levels during Winter Storm Uri, Sunflower’s dispatchable capacity from the coal-based Holcomb unit and fixed-price power purchase agreements from renewable units kept ECA costs from rising higher than in other regions of the U.S. Sunflower’s fleet of natural gas, coal, wind and solar resources complement each other and continue to provide price and generation stability to the system.

The well-being of co-op member-consumers is paramount, and you can count on Western Cooperative to continue learning from past experiences and pursuing opportunities to strengthen our system and improve our service to you, our members.

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Wired for Success

79th Annual Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024

Lunch at Noon | Meeting to follow.

Join us for
Door Prizes | Cooperative Updates | Trustee Election Results

Can't Make it in Person?
LIVE STREAMING OPTION IS AVAILABLE!

LOCATION WESTERN HEADQUARTERS | 635 S. 13TH STREET | WAKEENEY, KANSAS 67672