



# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Safety: A Core Value at Western Cooperative Electric



Tom Ruth

At Western Cooperative Electric, safety isn't just a policy — it's a core value that underpins every aspect of our operations. As an organization, we are committed to ensuring that our dedication to safety extends to the communities we serve. This September, designated as Safety Month at Western, we are amplifying our focus on electrical safety to foster a culture of safety and mindfulness.

Safety begins with our employees,

who are the backbone of Western Cooperative Electric. We provide comprehensive training programs to ensure that every team member is equipped with the knowledge, equipment and skills necessary to perform their duties safely. Our commitment to safety is reflected in our rigorous adherence to industry standards and best practices, ensuring that our workforce operates in an environment where safety is paramount.

Our responsibility stretches beyond our employees to the members we serve. Electrical safety is a critical aspect of our service, and we take many precautions to minimize risks associated with our electrical infrastructure. We engage in

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## ATTENTION FIRST RESPONDERS!

Western Cooperative Electric invites you to enhance your safety skills with our electrical safety demonstration. Learn to identify electrical hazards, manage emergencies involving electricity, and practice safe response techniques.

Our goal is to equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to protect yourself and the community during electrical incidents. Don't miss this valuable opportunity to stay prepared and safe.

To schedule your free safety demo, please contact Western Cooperative Electric at 800-456-6720. Together, we can make our community safer.



# Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. Even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

## 360 AWARENESS

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground power lines,

defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Western Cooperative Electric.

## SMART HARVEST SAFETY TIPS

To ensure a safer harvest season, [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org) recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- ▶ Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- ▶ Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- ▶ Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into

power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.

- ▶ Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- ▶ Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- ▶ Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. If that happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. After exiting the vehicle, keep your feet together and "hop" away or shuffle your feet across the ground. Never lift a foot — this will keep you from having different strengths of electric current running from one foot to another. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop at least 50 feet to safety as you leave the area.

## 5 TIPS FOR A SAFE HARVEST

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

- 1** Maintain at least a 20-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
- 2** Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
- 3** Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
- 4** Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
- 5** Keep first-aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.

# Western Cooperative Empowers Student Leaders at Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

**TAYLOR AYERS**, Plainville High School, and **EVAN WALT**, Hill City High School, represented Western Cooperative Electric at the 47th Annual Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) July 12-18, 2024. Near scenic Steamboat Springs, Colorado, this event brings together 79 student leaders from Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Wyoming, sponsored by 44 participating electric and agriculture cooperatives.



Taylor Ayers (left) and Evan Walt pose at Elk River during CYLC this summer.

Western selected student representatives based on their leadership skills, academics, extracurricular activities and strong character. These student leaders underwent rigorous evaluation, which comprised an essay, exam and interview.

Throughout CYLC, students learned about the cooperative organizational structure by forming a candy cooperative. Students collaborated with their peers, elected a board of student directors, appointed a general manager, formed committees, and engaged in daily membership meetings.



Camp activities focused on leadership, conflict management and co-op career pathways.

In addition to these experiences, participants attended seminars covering leadership, conflict management, and co-op career pathways. The agenda also featured sessions on electric safety and avian protection by HawkQuest, as well as a tour of the Craig Power Station.

“For me, all of the leadership presentations have made me become a stronger leader,” Walt said.

CYLC wasn't just about professional development; it also embraced the spirit of camaraderie and adventure. Students ventured to Mount Werner, downtown Steamboat Springs, and went white water rafting on the Colorado River. Students also participated in various recreational activities, including a volleyball tournament, swimming, a talent show, and a dance.

“I was most affected by the values I obtained along the way from this trip,” Ayers said.

“At Western Cooperative, we are invested in empowering young leaders. That's why we're excited to continue supporting the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp,” said Assistant General Manager/Member Services Manager Nolan Numrich. “It's our way of giving students the chance to step up and make a real impact in our communities.”

Western sponsors two students' trips to camp each year. Applications for 2025 trips will open in late 2024. For more information on CYLC, contact Nolan Numrich at the Western Cooperative office. You can also stay up-to-date on Western's youth programs by following Western Cooperative on Facebook.

## Safety: A Core Value at Western Cooperative Electric *Continued from page 12A* ▶

regular maintenance and upgrades of our electrical systems to ensure they meet the National Electric Safety Code standards. Additionally, we conduct public awareness campaigns to educate our community about electrical safety practices.

One of the key components of our public safety initiative is the promotion of safe behavior around power lines. We emphasize the importance of staying away from downed power lines and reporting them immediately to our emergency services. Our educational programs also highlight the dangers of operating farm equipment near power lines and the importance of adhering to safety guidelines.

September is Safety Month and provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce these messages and engage with our community on a deeper level. Throughout the month, we will be posting on our website and social media pages promoting electrical safety awareness.

In addition to these public-focused initiatives, we will also be reinforcing our internal safety protocols. Annual safety drills and reviews will be conducted to ensure that our employees are well-prepared to handle any emergencies. We believe that a well-informed and safety-conscious workforce is crucial to maintaining the high safety standards we have set for ourselves.

At Western Cooperative Electric, safety is more than just a priority — it's our No. 1 core value that defines who we are and how we operate. As we observe Safety Month this September, I invite everyone in our community to join us in our commitment to electrical safety. Together, we can

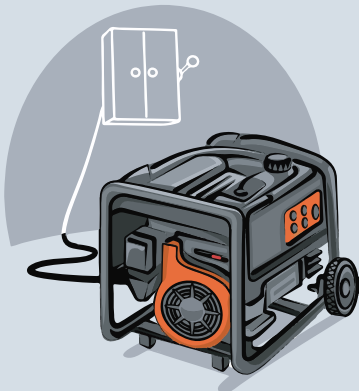


**One of the key components of our public safety initiative is the promotion of safe behavior around power lines. We emphasize the importance of staying away from downed power lines and reporting them immediately to our emergency services.**

create a safer environment for all and ensure that safety remains at the heart of everything we do.

By fostering a culture of safety, we not only protect our employees and the public but also fulfill our obligation to the fifth Cooperative Principle — Education, Training and Information. Let us all take this opportunity to recommit to safety and work together toward a safer future.

## What is a **TRANSFER SWITCH?**



### **TRANSFER, THROW OR DOUBLE-THROW SWITCH:**

*An essential mechanism that safely shuts off power to the electrical grid before backup power is used. It is sometimes referred to as a double-throw switch, as it controls two separate circuits.*

This switch's job is to safely transfer power from its primary source to a backup power source, enabling users to maintain power during an outage. It works by connecting a generator to your home's main circuits to provide backup power.

Properly installed transfer switches are essential because they prevent dangerous backfeed into the power grid, which endangers utility workers and others. Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet, as this can cause backfeed.

SOURCE: [WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.COM](http://WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.COM)