



WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

FROM THE MANAGER

Your Money Stays at Home



Darrin Lynch

Ever wonder who owns your electric company? If you receive electricity from Western Cooperative Electric, the answer's easy... look in the mirror.

You and a list of community members and neighbors who receive electricity from Western are the owners. Of course, being an owner doesn't mean you can drive to a substation and take home a transformer or borrow a spool of wire. Those assets are owned collectively by everyone who has an electrical meter being served by Western. A portion of the electric bill you pay each month, in fact, goes into building distribution infrastructure—poles, conductors, and substations—that supplies you with electrical power.

Western Cooperative Electric follows a unique consumer-focused business model led by a set of seven principles. The Third Cooperative

Principle, “Members’ Economic Participation,” recognizes that all of the membership chips in a bit to cover Western’s monthly bills and, to the extent operating margins exceed operating expenses, those who chipped in share the excess operating margins via an allocation of “patronage capital” or “capital credits.”

Western conducts business locally. Investments made in electrical infrastructure don't profit someone in an area far away, benefits stay right here in our communities and neighborhoods.

Paying your monthly bill does more than build lines, buy equipment, and purchase wholesale electricity. You also pay the salaries of our hard-working employees, who live right here in the community. They, in turn, buy goods at local businesses, spreading income around and boosting our local economy.

Here's another membership perk: you receive money back. Western is a not-for-profit, so any margins remaining after bills have been paid, are

allocated back to you, the member, according to the amount of energy purchased for that accounting year. These patronage capital allocations are refunded at the discretion of Western's Board only when there are margins and the cooperative is financially sound.

Again, as a not-for-profit, Western provides its member-owners with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity in accordance with sound business practices. Electricity is provided as close to cost as possible, with a little extra cushion to provide your electric utility with equity to weather future storms and upgrades to keep the system standing ready to serve you and your families for decades to come.

In short, you receive a vital resource, electricity, from a business owned and operated by you, your friends, and neighbors. Working together, Western provides you, the member-owners, with the highest level of service and reliability while keeping your electric bills affordable.

And that's another example of the cooperative difference!

Western's Payment Options

Western's members can make payments through our website or by phone using a credit card or electronic funds transfer. To pay by phone, call our automated service at 800-330-1025 or call our main office to speak with a Western employee. Through our website, you can also view your account or enter your meter reading. Check this feature and other services at www.westerncoop.com



Meet the Challenge of Power Outages with the Safe Use of Generators

One way to meet the challenge of a power outage is with a generator. Generators can help you get by until Western Cooperative Electric gets your power restored. If you are in the market for a new generator, Western provides the following selection tips to help you make sure the generator you are buying is right for your needs:

▶ **Size the portable generator according to your needs during an outage.**

It is necessary to know the wattage required to run the appliances you will attach to the generator. You also need to know the surge power, which is the power it takes to turn an appliance on. With proper planning and sizing, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity to start and operate safely, without damaging the appliances connected.

▶ **After making the correct purchase, operating your generator safely is crucial.**

Western Cooperative Electric's electrician department offers these tips to keep in mind when operating your generator:

▶ **Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator.**

Be sure you understand them before operating the generator.

▶ **To prevent back feed, standby generators should have a transfer safety switch installed by Western's electrician department.**

Generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system. Use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator to operate them.

▶ **Never operate a generator in a confined area, such as a garage.**



When buying a generator, be sure to keep these tips in mind!

Generators can produce numerous gases, including toxic and deadly carbon monoxide. They require proper ventilation.

▶ **Generators pose electrical risks especially when operated in wet conditions.**

Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Always ensure that your hands are dry before touching the generator.

▶ **When you refuel the generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire, should the tank overflow.**

▶ **There should be nothing plugged into the generator when you turn it on.**

This prevents a surge from damaging your generator and appliances.

▶ **Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.**

For assistance in sizing and installation, contact Western's electrician department at 785-743-5561 or in Kansas toll-free 800-456-6720.

Holiday Cooking Safety Tips

The kitchen is the heart of the home. Sadly, it's also where two out of every five home fires start. Many home fires occur during what's supposed to be the happiest time of the year—the holidays. Thanksgiving, Christmas and Christmas Eve hold a tradition of cooking, and safety should always be considered in the kitchen.

As we embark on the holiday season, Western urges you to use these simple safety tips to identify and correct potential kitchen hazards:

- ▶ Never leave cooking equipment unattended, and always remember to turn off burners if you have to leave the room.
- ▶ Keep the cooking area around the stove and oven clear of combustibles, such as towels, napkins and potholders.
- ▶ Supervise the little ones closely in the kitchen. Make sure children stay at least three feet away from all cooking appliances.
- ▶ Prevent potential fires by making sure your stovetop and oven are clean and free of grease, dust and spilled food.
- ▶ Remember to clean the exhaust hood and duct over your stove on a regular basis.
- ▶ Always wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can catch fire.
- ▶ To protect from spills and burns, use the back burners and turn the pot handles in, away from reaching hands.
- ▶ Locate all appliances away from the sink.
- ▶ Keep appliance cords away from hot surfaces like the range or toaster.
- ▶ Unplug the toaster and other countertop appliances when not in use.