

**WESTERN
COOPERATIVE
ELECTRIC**

WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Make Your New Year a More Efficient One

It is that time of year again—time to take down the holiday decorations, reflect on the past year and set goals for the New Year. Start this New Year on the right foot by resolving to make energy efficient choices with these tips.

When it comes to resolutions, it is important to set a clear and achievable goal for yourself to reach by the end of the year. Whether you aim to reduce your energy use by 5 percent, save \$150 over last year or compete with your neighbor for more efficient energy use—choose a goal that works for you.

Then it is time to identify where your home is losing energy. Contact a local home energy auditor or conducting an energy audit yourself by making use of an online energy audit tool. Although the latter method is not as thorough as if done by a professional, it can still help you pinpoint some of the easiest fixes and upgrades.

Once you have concrete objectives, it is time to start making energy efficient choices. Whether you choose a quick fix or a long-term investment, here are a few good starting points:

▶ One of the most inexpensive ways to be more energy efficient is to make use of a power strip or smart strip. Televisions, computers and even cell phone chargers continue

to use electricity even when they are off. Unnecessary energy use can be prevented with the flip of a switch if devices are plugged into a power strip.

- ▶ From a lightbulb to a refrigerator, upgrading outdated and inefficient appliances can help you save as well. Recent figures show more than 30 percent of an average home's energy usage comes from lighting and appliances. Make the switch to energy efficient LED light bulbs, or better yet, EnergyStar-rated appliances to put a serious dent in your energy use.
- ▶ Weather-proofing your home can reduce your annual energy use by up to 10 percent. This can include minor jobs, like installing weather stripping on doors and caulking around windows, or bigger jobs, like sealing air leaks and adding extra insulation in your attic.
- ▶ Finally, check your furnace filter regularly and replace it if it is dirty. Why make your furnace work harder than it has to? A clogged filter can slow the flow of air and reduce the efficiency and life of your furnace.

For more information visit www.westerncoop.com and click Member Services to find and utilize the energy calculator tab.



Western Cooperative Electric Awards Olmitz Fire Department Sharing Success Grant

Western Cooperative Electric is pleased to announce the Olmitz Fire Department as one of three recipients of this year's Western and CoBank "Sharing Success" Grant.

Since becoming Olmitz Fire Chief, Jim New and his department of 16 volunteers have received several sets of used turn-out gear for his new fire fighters and several air packs from the Kansas Forest Service. These donations encouraged the current roster to organize a fundraiser to fund a brush truck, which they rigged up. The Forest Service gave the crew another pump truck. The Olmitz Fire Department now has three trucks in its fleet to meet the demands of the small, but growing community.

As with any small community, funds were limited to equip this third pumper. Even though local fundraisers were held, the amount raised was still less than needed. The Olmitz Fire Department contacted Western and, soon after, Western's Board of Trustees approved a donation of \$1,400 with a match from CoBank for a total donation of \$2,800.

"This donation allowed the Olmitz Fire Department to not only equip the third truck, and be prepared, but also have equipment available for assistance to departments needing mutual aid," said Fire Chief New.



This fully-equipped brush truck was added to fleet at Olmitz Fire Department to serve the community.



Olmitz Fire Department received a \$2,800 Sharing Success Grant, to help equip their new brush truck.

"Thanks to our Board of Trustees and CoBank, the 'Sharing Success' Grant has enabled Western to give back to the communities we serve," said Darrin Lynch, Western Cooperative Electric general manager.

CoBank is a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it services, including Western. Western's donation was in conjunction with Golden Belt Community Foundation of Great Bend.

This year, CoBank established a \$3 million fund to match charitable contributions made by its cooperative members across the nation. The matching grant program, named "Sharing Success," is designed to celebrate the vital role that cooperatives play in individual communities across the country. Contributions made during a calendar year will be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis, from a minimum of \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$5,000. CoBank states that partnering with their customers to support worthy causes they care about is a great way for them to make a positive difference and fulfill its mission of service to rural America.

Thanks to our Board of Trustees and CoBank, the "Sharing Success" grant has enabled Western to give back to the communities we serve. DARRIN LYNCH, GENERAL MANAGER

Thinking Ahead Can Help Trim Future Issues

Trees add beauty to our region, no matter what time of year. But, trees may also interrupt your electric power if they are too close to the lines. At Western, we're committed to providing you with reliable power. There are some things we can't stop—like high winds and ice storms—but we do what we can to prevent other outage culprits.

Weather-related events cause the majority of power outages for all electric cooperatives—a whopping 19 percent according to a survey by our national service organization, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. However, vegetation such as trees, shrubs and brush growing too close to power lines and distribution equipment leads to 15 percent of power interruptions.

To “cut back” on potential tree-related problems, Western operates a tree trimming/right-of-way maintenance program. Western's line crews, along with tree trimming contractors, look for foliage growing

under the power lines, overhanging branches, leaning or other types of “danger” trees that could pull down a power line if they fell and trees that could grow into lines. Before trimming or removing the tree(s), Western's crews or the contractor will contact the owner and discuss different options.

Let us know if you notice trees or branches that might pose a risk to Western's power lines by calling 800-456-6720. In some cases, the tree(s) could be the member's responsibility, but it's still important to notify Western.

Before planting trees, think about how tall they may grow and how wide their branches may spread. As a rule, 25-feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of Western's poles to give conductors plenty of space. Choose tree varieties with care. To find out more, visit www.arborday.org.

Thanks for your help as we work together to keep electricity reliable.

Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

Kurtis Brock

Journeyman Lineman Digger Operator

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My wife, Brenda and I have two children Brittany, 20, and Leyton, 16, as well as two dogs: Dolly and Zoey.



Kurtis Brock

HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

20 years

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

St. John

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Boating and skiing

WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Two healthy children

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Estes Park, Colo.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OR BOOK AND WHY?

Star Wars—I'm a SciFi nut!

WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I may be a little stubborn at times.

WHAT SPORT OR TEAM IS YOUR FAVORITE?

KU Jayhawks and Kansas City Chiefs

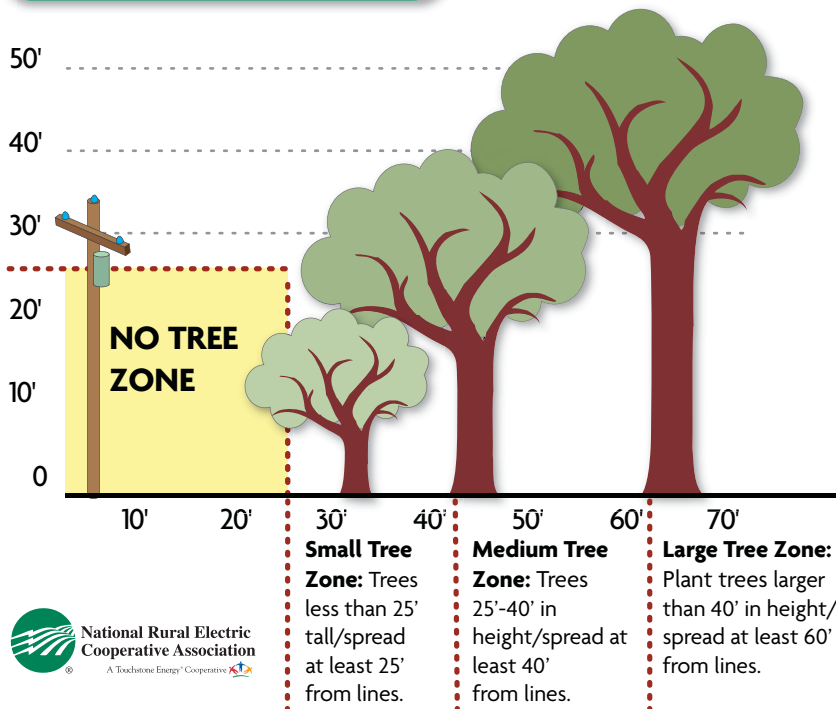
IF YOU COULD BE AN ANIMAL, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

A bird, because I like to fly.

WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My Dad. He taught me to always work hard and earn everything you have.

Tree Planting Guide



AFCIs & GFCIs

Understanding the Differences

While arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) and ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) both provide protection, they are each designed for different purposes. AFCIs are designed to protect against electrical fire, and GFCIs are designed to protect against electrical shock and electrocution.

AFCIs help protect wiring from unwanted arcing, which could lead to an electrical fire. Dangerous arcs are created when an electrical current ignites with surrounding materials at very high temperatures. If an AFCI is installed, it monitors current flow and can distinguish between normal working arcs and unwanted, dangerous arcs. When the AFCI detects dangerous arcing in the electrical system, it shuts off the electricity before the wiring overheats and starts a fire.

Damaged wires from nails driven into the walls, wiring that has deteriorated from aging, cracked insulation on wires due to stress, damage to wires at stress points (such as cords caught under furniture), loose/improper connections, faulty electrical equipment and overheated electrical wires are all risk factors

for electrical arcing.

There are different types of AFCIs available: branch/feeder, combination, and outlet circuit. There are differences among these types—including

A GFCI constantly monitors the flow of electricity through a circuit and will shut the circuit down if it senses a ground fault.

ing installation location and arc detection level. Since 2008, combination AFCIs have been required for new residential constructions.

GFCIs prevent electric shocks from ground faults, which occur when electricity travels outside its intended path to a grounded surface. If your body provides a path to the ground for this current, you could be burned, severely shocked, or electrocuted.

A GFCI constantly monitors the flow of electricity through a circuit and will shut the circuit down if it senses a ground fault. By doing so, this device reduces electrocutions, electrical burns and shock injuries. If an electrical current makes contact with a person, the GFCI is designed to shut down the power 1/40 of a second to prevent shock.

After first being introduced in the 1970s, GFCIs have become a standard requirement in new construction of all outdoor electrical outlets and in all areas of homes near water sources. GFCIs come in the following forms: receptacles, portable devices and circuit breakers.

After installation, both devices should be tested regularly, especially after a power failure. Contact a qualified electrician for installation, and support for maintenance and testing.



AFCIs are designed into conventional circuit breakers, but have a test button and look similar to ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) circuit breakers.

