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**WESTERN
COOPERATIVE
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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Co-op Receives Safety Recognition

Every employee has the right to go home safe and healthy every day. Western Cooperative Electric is committed to the safety of their employees. Safety is integral to our day to day activities, from tailgate discussion, reviewing work procedures, monthly safety meetings, to ensuring employees are working safely.

Western earned a No Lost Time Accident Award and was recognized at the Kansas Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting in January for working 176,387 employee hours with no lost time off.



Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.'s Loss Control, Safety and Compliance department presents Western with a Safety Achievement Certificate for 2017.

Crossland Achieves Director Gold Credential



Craig Crossland

CRAIG CROSSLAND, president of Western Cooperative Electric's board of trustees, received the Director Gold credential from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Crossland attended training classes conducted by NRECA in July 2017.

Today's electric utility environment imposes new demands on electric cooperative directors, particularly increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a working knowledge of the cooperative principles.

Western Cooperative Electric has a commitment to work through NRECA and our statewide association, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of their electric cooperative member-owners.

NRECA is the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide service to 42 million people in 47 states.

Western Cooperative Electric board member **SUE ROHLEDER** also attended classes to earn credits in attaining her Gold certification in the future.

Linemen Up to Their Knees in Boots

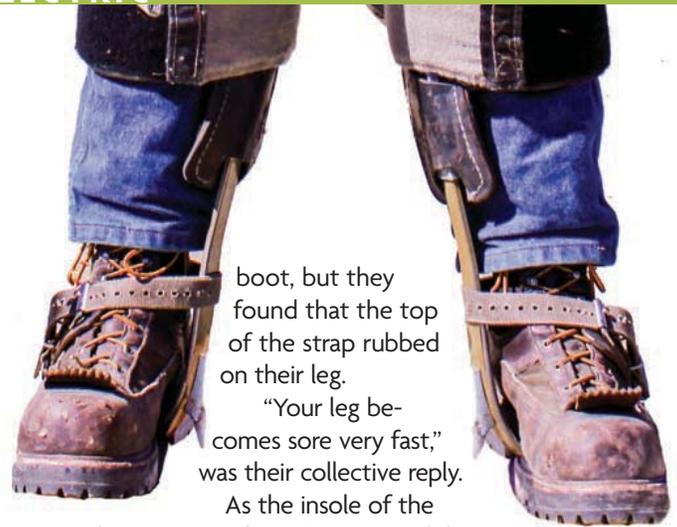
Often, the best things in life are the most obvious, the least complicated and right within arm's reach. Truth is, there are just so many accessories, add-ons and luxuries, a person sometimes forgets about the things that matter most. To a lineman, fashion is not necessary for their uniform—but safety is, and its quality and dependability matters most.

To complete a day's work, linecrews have access to a bucket truck, but that's not always the best option, especially when working in a tight space, on soft ground or in muddy and snowy conditions.

Imagine being 35 feet in the air, working from a wooden utility pole, relying on several safety devices to keep you from falling including pole climbers. Linemen's pole climbers consist of a "U" shaped frame made of steel, aluminum or titanium, that slip over the linemen's boots.

The sharp pointed gaffs or "spikes" on the pole climbers drive into the wood allowing the linemen to climb the pole. They are replaceable components attached near the bottom of the pole climber, with an average of a 16-degree angle and a length of 1 ¾ inch. The top and bottom of the climber is secured to the boot by leather, nylon, or Velcro straps. The "U" portion of the climber rests under the boot next to the heel with the gaff on the inside of the instep.

Most linemen prefer to wear tall boots, around 16 inches tall, so the top strap of the climbers surround the top of the boot instead of directly on their skin. Some linemen at Western have tried wearing a short-topped



boot, but they found that the top of the strap rubbed on their leg.

"Your leg becomes sore very fast," was their collective reply.

As the insole of the foot rests on the "U" portion of the pole climber, discomfort comes quickly without good support from the bottom of the boot, so a steel shank installed within the insole of the boot is necessary for support. Top-grade leather with heavy stitching gives the boot the flexibility needed for maneuverability on a pole.

A pair of linemen boots often exceed 8 pounds and cost more than \$250. Even though heavy and expensive, a quality-made lineman's boot is essential for safety and comfort.

Equipment has evolved and improved through the years. "When wages were considerably lower we had to make do with what we had," said a retired Western lineman. "We would cut the tops off a worn out pair, and have the shoe shop sew them onto a pair of low topped shoes."

To linemen and their families, the ultimate goal is to return home from work safely. A good pair of boots and pole climbers are essential to a lineman's job and completing work safely. A lineman never forgets the things that matter most: safety, security and his life.

Seasonal Safety: Planting for the Future

When trees grow into or near power lines, they pose a threat to safety and to the reliability of your electrical service. Below are some tips to help you avoid such dangers, through appropriate pruning and by planting trees in locations where they will not grow into overhead power lines.

- ▶ **Be sure that no one climbs a tree near power lines.** Water, sap and chemicals in trees make them able to conduct electricity, so if a branch touches a wire, the tree could be energized. Even branches not touching power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added.
- ▶ **Prune trees to help prevent damages caused by fallen tree limbs.** If trees are located near overhead power lines, there is a greater potential of tree limbs falling on the electrical wires that provide you and your neighbors with power, resulting in downed lines and power outages. Trimming trees near power lines is a dangerous job and best left to professionals.

To help maintain safety and electrical service reliability, Western Cooperative Electric may either prune trees that are too close to power lines or will contact a tree trimming service to do so. Although simply

trimming a tree is usually enough, some trees that are at risk of damaging power lines during severe weather—like dead or dying trees or those with a shallow root system—may need to be removed completely.

- ▶ **If you live in an area where there is a risk of wildfire, create a defensible space around the perimeter of your home to slow or stop the spread of a fire.** Within 30 feet from your home and structure, trim trees to a minimum of 10 feet from other trees and remove branches that hang over the roof.
- ▶ **Pick the right types of trees to plant in the right locations where they will not grow to be a problem with overhead power lines.** Make sure you know the expected mature height and width of the tree. Plant tall growing trees with a mature height of greater than 40 feet at least 50 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. A mature height of less than 15 feet is recommended if planting near lines. Keep in mind, trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles, or too close to electrical equipment.
- ▶ **Remember to call 811 to have buried utilities marked so that you can safely dig around them.**

Tall Equipment a Tall Order for Safety

Accidents with electrical equipment are both dangerous and costly, so it's important to maintain a safe distance from electrical equipment. Moreover, additional precautions need to be taken when using large equipment near electrical lines and equipment. Not doing so puts the operator at risk as well as the safety of those nearby.

Before beginning work, conduct a site survey and note the locations of overhead power lines, and take measures to prevent electrical accidents. Never attempt to move or raise a power line yourself. If any potential clearance issues are identified, contact Western Cooperative Electric.

When operating equipment, maintain situational awareness, and keep yourself and the equipment safely away from overhead lines. Know the clearance rules for the machinery you are operating. Equipment like dump trucks, backhoes and loaders require a minimum 10-foot clearance from overhead lines. Cranes and derricks need to maintain an even greater distance for safe operation.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires the clearance for cranes and derricks be a minimum of 20 feet from overhead power lines. The equipment's maximum working radius, 360 degrees

around the equipment, must also be considered. A dedicated spotter is very helpful when working near overhead lines to help the operator keep the required clearance.

Even if contact is not made with electrical lines, but a collision occurs with other related equipment such as electrical poles or guy wires, it should still be reported to Western. Though the equipment may appear to have survived the collision, unexpected degradation of electrical equipment can lead to public safety hazards such as fallen power lines. Just because a power line has fallen does not mean that it is not carrying electricity. There is still the potential for the line and the nearby area to be energized.

If the equipment you are operating does contact any overhead lines, it is best to stay in the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for Western's crew to cut the power before exiting the machinery. If you see an operator's equipment contact a power line, resist the instinct to rush to that person to provide help. It is best to stay back and warn others to stay away.

Western offers safety demonstrations to identify and discuss these hazards. For more information call us at 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720.

Daylight Saving Time Reminders

On March 11, remember to **spring your clocks forward** one hour. This is also a great time to check fire, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and change out batteries. Make sure smoke detectors work properly by using the alarm test option. Use a vacuum to make sure there are no cobwebs, spiders or other little insects taking up residence that would hinder the effects of the smoke alarm.

Detectors play a larger role in survival than one might think. Experts determined that inoperable smoke alarms caused two-thirds of fire-related deaths due to damage, defects and missing batteries. It is recommended writing the date on the new battery in the detector so there will be no question as to when it was last replaced.

Daylight saving time is also a great time to review with family members home safety including escape routes and checking all electrical outlets. Practice home safety and test procedures on getting out safely in an emergency situation. Look through the house for any hazards, such as overloaded or improperly placed extension cords. It is recommended to make sure areas around the furnace, water heater and stove are clear of debris that can cause fire.



DANGER

LOOK UP and LOOK OUT: Failure to notice overhead power lines could be a **deadly oversight**. Make sure to stay 20 feet away from lines—above, below and to the side.



Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard...especially to power lines.

LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- ▶ Maple
- ▶ Oak
- ▶ Spruce
- ▶ Pine
- ▶ Birch
- ▶ Sweetgum
- ▶ Linden

MEDIUM TREES

Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

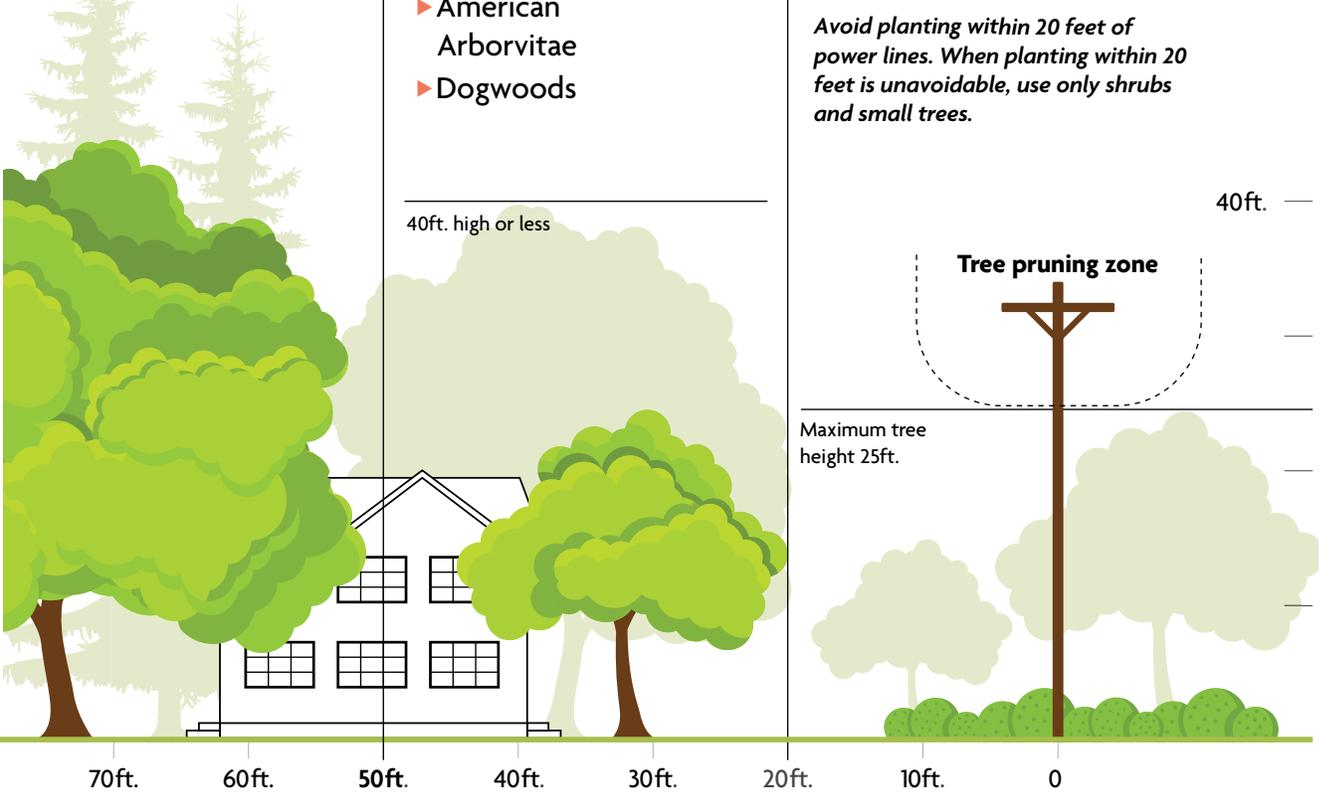
- ▶ Washington Hawthorn
- ▶ Goldenraintree
- ▶ Eastern Redbud
- ▶ American Arborvitae
- ▶ Dogwoods

SMALL TREES

Height/spread of no more than 25 feet, such as:

- ▶ Star Magnolia
- ▶ Crabapple
- ▶ Lilac

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.



Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.
 For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact your local electric cooperative or visit www.ArborDay.org.

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association