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**WESTERN  
COOPERATIVE  
ELECTRIC**

**WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC  
NEWS**

## Western Cooperative Electric, Inc.

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### Tip of the Month

Is your room air conditioner working overtime? Reduce air leaks by installing rigid foam panels (instead of the commonly used accordion panels) in between the window frame and unit, and secure with duct tape.

## Get the Most Cooling for Your Dollar

Hot temperatures are hard on people, pocketbooks and our electrical systems. Increased demand for electricity during summer months strain a home's electrical system, increasing the likelihood of an electric shock or fire. This high demand for electricity also makes it more expensive in summer months.

By preparing your home, you can save money, stay comfortable and decrease demands on the electrical system.

Western Cooperative Electric provides the following tips to save money on cooling costs:

- ▶ Use curtains and blinds to keep the sun out on hot days.
- ▶ Use ceiling fans. They circulate air and take heat from the body's surface to create a cooling effect.
- ▶ Keep cool air in and hot air out. Avoid unnecessary trips out the door, and do not leave the door open.
- ▶ Invest in a programmable thermostat. It allows you to change your home's temperature based on your daily patterns. The thermostat can adjust the temperatures to go higher when you are away and cooler when you are back in the home.
- ▶ Prepare your air conditioner for the hard work it will do over the summer months. Turn off power to the air conditioner before you work

on it. Clean or replace filters. Clear leaves and other debris away from the condensing unit. Hose off any accumulated dirt.

- ▶ Shade your home by installing awnings over windows in direct sunlight.
- ▶ Make sure your home has the insulation it needs. EnergySavers.gov provides information about the best insulation to use in different geographic areas.
- ▶ Ventilate your home. It is one of the most efficient ways to keep a building cool. In breezy, dry climates, ventilation can eliminate the need for an air conditioner all together. Attic vents and fans can help reduce energy costs.
- ▶ Look for the Energy Star label when purchasing a new air conditioner. The Energy Star label indicates the unit meets energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- ▶ Consider evaporative or swamp coolers, if you live in an arid climate. They release moisture into the air for a cooling effect. These coolers work at a fraction of the cost of air conditioners. Also, absorption cooling is essentially an air conditioner that is not run by electricity. Instead, it uses heat from sources such as natural gas or the sun for operation.

## Added Danger in Accidents with Power Poles

A car accident can happen so quickly, yet the final seconds may seem to be in slow motion as the vehicle and its passengers jolt upon contact. Such an accident can inflict serious injury and damage, and when the car wreck involves power poles, there is an added danger. Western Cooperative Electric would like to share tips to help keep you safe in the case of a vehicle accident involving power poles and lines.

After any vehicle accident, it is natural for people to want to get out of the vehicle to assess damage to themselves, as well as the vehicle. However, when the accident involves power poles and lines, it can be extremely dangerous to get out of the vehicle.

Knowing what actions to take to stay safe can make the difference between life and death. According to recent statistics, approximately 20 percent of car accident deaths result from a vehicle making contact with a fixed object such as a power pole. The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that, on average, auto accidents with power poles result in 1,000 deaths each year.

If you are involved in an automobile wreck involving a power pole, Western would like to remind you of the following safety tips:

- ▶ **Stay in the vehicle.** Call 911 and ask the dispatcher to notify the utility.
- ▶ **Do not leave the vehicle** until electric utility professionals have de-energized the line and they advise you that it is safe to do so.
- ▶ **If the car is on fire** and you must exit the vehicle, jump from the vehicle with your feet together. Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Keeping your feet together, “bunny hop” to safety. Doing this

**When the accident involves power poles and lines, it can be extremely dangerous to get out of the vehicle.**



The danger of an accident can be increased greatly when it involves power poles and line. Remember, unless you are otherwise endangered, stay in the vehicle and call 911 and ask the dispatcher to notify the utility.

will ensure that you will not have different strengths of electric current running from one foot to another.

- ▶ **Be aware.** After an accident with a pole, wires can fall at any time.
- ▶ **Treat all downed wires as though they are energized.** Downed lines can sometimes show they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity, but this is not always the case.
- ▶ **Remember, most power lines are not insulated.** The coating on the lines is for weather proofing and will not offer protection from the electrical current.
- ▶ **The tires of the vehicle do not insulate it from electrical dangers.** Follow the above safety precautions even if the car has rolled and is upside down or on its side. The vehicle is the path to ground for the electrical current. So while you remain in the car, you are safe. If you step out of the car, you are in danger of becoming the path to ground.

If you witness an accident, be cautious to approach the vehicle when there are downed lines. Stay back and warn others to stay away. Make sure the occupants of the car stay inside the vehicle until the utility has arrived to de-energize the lines.

For more information about electrical safety or viewing a safety demonstration, contact Western Cooperative Electric at 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720 or visit our website at [www.westerncoop.com](http://www.westerncoop.com).

# Cooperative Youth Experience Our Nation's Capital

**TERRAN HOMBURG**, Natoma, and **TAYLOR KELLER**, Palco, were selected by Western Cooperative Electric to attend the 56th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., from June 9-16. These local youth joined more than 1,700 high school students nationwide to visit with their state's senators and members of Congress, tour historic monuments and memorials, and hear from several speakers, such as Olympic Gold Medalist Mike Schlappi.

This year's delegation of 36 Kansas youth and four Hawaii youth began their trip on June 9 with a banquet in Topeka featuring youth tour alumni—Mike O'Neal, former Speaker of the Kansas House of Representatives; Brant Laue, Chief Counsel for Gov. Sam Brownback; Rep. Steven Johnson and Rep. Kyle Hoffman—and a night tour of the Kansas State capitol. Before flying to Washington, D.C., on Friday, the delegation had breakfast at Kaw Valley

Electric Cooperative where linemen presented an electrical safety demonstration and gave bucket truck rides.

While in Washington, D.C., the students met with Congressman Tim Huelskamp and Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins. They also visited with Senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran after their tour of Capitol Hill.

"Electric Cooperatives are more than just poles and wires. They're about people and communities," Moran said. "Recognizing that youth are the future of those communities is what the rural electric cooperative program is all about."

This trip opens the eyes of many students to future possibilities in leadership roles, while building lifelong friendships. "Learning about cooperatives has inspired me to see group cooperation in a different manner," Taylor Keller said.

The delegates also toured the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Smithsonian museums, Mount Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, attended a professional baseball game at Nationals Park, and had a laugh at the production of *Shear Madness* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

"Witnessing all of the monuments and documents that are an integral part of our nation was awe-inspiring and impactful," said



Co-counselors Darrin Lynch, Western's general manager, and wife Tricia overlook the Potomac River during the intermission of *Shear Madness* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Homburg. Amazing to see all of those history lessons come to life."

A unique and surprise turn of events also occurred on this year's trip. Delegates had the opportunity to see the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet while visiting the Capitol, and watch from a distance as presidential candidate, Donald Trump, boarded his plane at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The group also witnessed a vote in the Senate Gallery with several well-known senators who have also been a part of the current presidential campaign.

Western Cooperative Electric sponsors Youth Tour each year as

part of a strong commitment to community and to inspire the future generations to become leaders. The 2016 trip also included General Manager Darrin Lynch and wife, Tricia, as co-counselors.

For more information, contact Western at 800-456-6720 or 785-743-5561 or visit [www.westerncoop.com](http://www.westerncoop.com).



Above: Terran Homburg and Taylor Keller pose for a photo in front of the Capitol.

Right: The Kansas/Hawaii Youth Tour delegates visit the Jefferson Memorial.



Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

**Seth Bittel**

Journeyman Lineman



Seth Bittel

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.**

My wife, Stefanie, and I have been married for 11 years and have two kids: Rhett, 2 and Marley, 7.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?**

2 1/2 years

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?**

Ellis

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?**

Hanging out with my family and friends.

**WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?**

Raising our two children.

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?**

Beale Street Music Festival in Memphis, Tenn.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OR BOOK AND WHY?**

*Lonesome Dove* is my favorite book. It is a great adventure story. *The Big Lebowski* is my favorite movie. The Dude is a great character.

**WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?**

My favorite job I have ever had was working on a golf course.

**WHAT SPORT OR TEAM IS YOUR FAVORITE?**

KC Royals and the Jayhawks.

**IF YOU COULD BE ANY ANIMAL, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?**

A dolphin—I've never heard anyone say they dislike them.

**WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?**

My Mom and Dad. They raised me and still support me today.

**Avoid Hazards with Power Lines**

Electrical power is an indispensable part of modern agricultural operations. In fact, electricity is such a commonplace part of a farm operation that it can easily become a part of the scenery. One often overlooked safety consideration is the power line clearance required for grain bins.

Equipment and vehicles, such as augers and grain trucks, around grain bins are particularly at risk of coming into contact with overhead power lines. It is important that bins be built a safe distance from power lines to help ensure the safety of all farm workers.

The National Electrical Safety Code sets minimum clearances around grain bins. It requires that high-voltage power lines (over 600 volts) be at least 18 feet above the highest point on a grain bin. Additionally, the code sets the minimum distance that power lines must be from grain bins, depending on the bin's height. For instance, a bin that is 15 feet tall must be at least 55 feet from power lines on its loading side, and a bin that is 50 feet tall must be at least 143 feet from power lines on its loading side.

The State of Kansas may have additional requirements. If you're planning to build a new grain bin, contact your local utility before any construction begins. We can help you determine minimum safety requirements.

Remember these additional tips anytime you are operating farm equipment around power lines:



Building a structure too close to overhead power lines can create an electric shock danger during and after construction.

- ▶ Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines, at all times, in all directions;
- ▶ Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance;
- ▶ Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads;
- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines;
- ▶ Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance; and
- ▶ If a power line is sagging or low, contact Western Cooperative Electric.

If equipment does come into contact with a power line, remember, stay on the equipment until the utility has arrived to de-energize the lines. Warn others to stay away, and call the local utility provider immediately. The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" away to safety.

For more information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

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