

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**WESTERN  
COOPERATIVE  
ELECTRIC**

# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

## Western Cooperative Electric, Inc.

**Darrin Lynch** General Manager

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## 2017 Annual Meeting Highlights

Since Western's May 10th annual meeting was canceled because of storms, this year's annual meeting was held June 7, 2017, at Western's WaKeeney facility. Approximately 150 members, guests and employees attended. Bigge's Country Kitchen of Stockton served lunch prior to the meeting.

After calling the meeting to order and introductions, the results of the mail in ballots for trustees were announced as follows: District 1 (Graham, Osborne, Rooks, and Sheridan counties), **TERRY HOBBS**; District 2 (Ellis, Lincoln, Russell, and Trego counties), **RICHARD SCHAUS**; and District 3 (Barton, Ellsworth, Gove, Ness and Rush counties), **DALE WEINHOLD**.

Darrin Lynch, Western's general manager, reviewed financial facts and highlights of activities at Western in the past year. Stuart Lowry, president and CEO of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, was guest speaker and updated attendees on current events



Trustee Melvin Keller addresses the membership.



Emma Klein thanks the membership for the opportunity to attend last year's leadership camp.

in the electric industry.

**EMMA KLEIN**, Ellsworth, one of Western's winners of the 2016 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Colorado, gave a presentation about her camp experiences.

Drawings for prizes were held at the conclusion of the meeting. We would like to thank our vendors for their prize donations. Each household also received a registration gift, and ice cream was enjoyed by all.



Dennis Deines (left), members services, visits with members before the business meeting is called to order.



Darrin Lynch, general manager, interacts with members as they enjoy a meal catered by Bigge's Country Kitchen.

## Western Welcomes Summer Interns



Brayden Bittel

**BRAYDEN BITTEL, DALTON HENSLEY** and **CHASE WERNER** have joined Western for the summer to train and experience the challenging field of electric utility work.



Dalton Hensley

Werner is employed at the Plainville warehouse. After graduating from Plainville High School, Werner completed one year in the Electric Power Technology program at Pratt Community College and plans to return this fall to complete his associate's degree.



Chase Werner

Hensley and Bittel are employed at the WaKeeney warehouse. Both graduated from Ellis

High School and are enrolled for the fall semester at Pratt Community College for their first year in the Electric Power Technology program.

When asked about their hobbies, all three responded with "hunting, fishing and being outdoors." Also a special comment from one of the interns; "Loving everyday!"

These men are not only gaining experience, but are learning how important safety and focus are within the day-to-day work of an electric cooperative lineman.

## Office Closed on July 4



In observance of Independence Day, our office will be closed on Tuesday, July 4.

## Look Up and Live: Large Equipment Safety

Working with large equipment can be hazardous. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), of the 4,379 work fatalities in 2015, 8 percent of these were electrocutions. Western encourages large equipment operators to look up and live, and follow all safety procedures around overhead power lines.

While most large equipment requires a 10-foot clearance from overhead power lines, cranes and derricks require an even greater distance for safe operation where overhead power lines are present. In such situations, OSHA requires that individuals, their tools and their equipment must maintain a minimum 20-foot distance away from power lines. The total distance increases as the voltage of the power line increases.

Whenever working with large equipment, it is important to follow all OSHA regulations. Conduct a site survey to identify the location of overhead power lines, and take measures to prevent incidents with lines. Make sure that you know the maximum height of your machinery's extensions.

Never work with large equipment without first having the proper training. Even experienced large equipment operators must always take

protective measures against electrical hazards. Also before using large machinery, make sure that the equipment is mechanically sound. Always use the equipment as intended.

Remember to lower extensions while moving large equipment. When possible, use a spotter. To help reduce the likelihood of an accident, never store machinery directly under a power line.

If your equipment makes contact with an overhead power line, the safest option is almost always to stay in the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for utility crews to arrive on the scene and de-energize the lines. Never assume a line is de-energized. The only time you should leave the cab is in the rare case that the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without coming into contact with the equipment and the ground at the same time. Then, keeping your feet together, bunny hop away.

Western offers free safety demonstrations, with small scale equipment addressing these incidents and how to safely deal with a contact of high voltage lines. For more information call 800-456-6720.

### SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

**Make sure that any lighting equipment in your pool is up to code and regularly examined by a professional. To change or repair a light, ensure the electricity to the pool is first turned off at the circuit breaker.**

*If you are in the water and feel electric current, which can cause a tingling sensation, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not use a metal ladder to exit the pool.*

*Remember, water and electricity are a dangerous mix, even outside the pool. Never touch any electrical appliances or outlets when you are wet or standing in water.*

Learn more at

# Illuminating Storm Safety

Despite the beautiful colors it casts into the sky, lightning brings with it dangerous risks to personal safety. A lightning strike can cause serious or even fatal injuries. To avoid these risks, always keep an eye on weather forecasts and make backup plans in case of an unexpected storm.

Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the area in which it is raining. Preparation is important to safety. Listen to, watch, or download an app on a handheld device that provides weather forecasts so you know if there is a chance of severe weather. If there is a chance, reschedule the activity or make sure you can get to a safe location if a thunderstorm develops.

Safe shelters are in fully enclosed buildings or in a fully enclosed metal-topped vehicle. Open vehicles, such as convertibles, motorcycles and golf carts, are not safe. Open structures—such as porches, gazebos, pavilions and baseball dugouts—are not safe either. Stay in a safe shelter for at least 30



**Before a thunderstorm, take electrical safety precautions, including turning off or unplugging corded appliances.**

minutes after you last hear thunder.

Before a thunderstorm, turn off or unplug corded appliances and stay away from television sets. Also, turn off your air conditioner to help protect the compressor from a potential power surge and costly repairs from the storm.

During a thunderstorm, do not lie on concrete floors and avoid leaning on concrete walls. Lightning can travel through any metal wires or bars in concrete walls or flooring.

If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being shocked or electrocuted by the victim.

## Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth



**Nick Pennington**

Western Cooperative Electric is a participating business with the Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth program. This program matches more than 30 high school and

college students with local businesses throughout northwest and north central Kansas for paid internships.

**NICHOLAS “NICK” PENNINGTON** has been hired in the IT department of Western through August of this summer. Pennington is taking classes at Fort Hays State University in addi-

tion to working part time at Western. He graduated from Jacksonville High School in Jacksonville, Illinois, and will be returning to Southern Illinois University this fall to complete his degree in computer science. Pennington's hobbies include singing, composing, playing the ocarina (a small wind instrument), and building Gundam scale models.

When asked about the Nex-Generation program, Pennington said, “I’d like to thank the Nex-Tech Nex-Generation program for connecting me to Western. Without them, I would never have known there was such a great opportunity right next door!”

Western welcomes Nick to the electric cooperative family.

## Get to Know Your Western Cooperative Electric Staff

### Ashley Garrett Accountant

#### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My husband, Cory, and I have one daughter, Rose, who recently completed nursing school. And I can't forget to mention our spoiled dachshund, Jax, and charcoal lab, Cooper.



**Ashley Garrett**

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

12 years

#### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

WaKeeney

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

I enjoy traveling, going to flea markets and shopping, of course.

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

Graduating from Kansas State University.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

I work for vacations. My favorite was a trip to Puerto Rico for our anniversary.

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

*The Notebook*. It's a great love story.

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

I participated in a food fight at Long John Silvers.

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

The K-State Wildcats and KC Royals.

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

A dog, so I could communicate better with mine.

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

My mother. I miss her eccentric personality and wisdom.

## While Some Like It Hot, Outdoor Air Conditioner Units Do Not

As the temperature rises, so does our use of air conditioning to keep our homes cool and comfortable. Statistics have shown that three-quarters of U.S. homes have air conditioners. The approximate annual cost to run these air conditioners is \$29 billion.

Below are tips to help you keep cool, save money, and make summer efficiency a “no sweat” item.

- ▶ Often homeowners place AC condensing units on the south side of the home where they are in direct sunlight most of the day, or they try to hide the AC or heat pump units. Extreme heat can be the enemy of any mechanical equipment, causing the equipment to work harder, which can shorten its life expectancy. In addition, covering these units makes it more difficult for them to dissipate the additional heat from the structure. It is more efficient to give your condensing units the space to breathe and a cooler place to reside.
- ▶ Set up a regular maintenance schedule for changing furnace and air handling equipment filters. This helps keep the return air flowing properly through the heating and cooling coils. Regular maintenance in the late spring and fall also benefits the longevity of con-

**Extreme heat can be the enemy of any mechanical equipment, causing the equipment to work harder, which can shorten its life expectancy.**

densing units and heat pumps. Proper cleaning of condenser coils will provide appropriate heat transfer, keeping your home cooler and helping the equipment run longer.

- ▶ Seal cracks around the house with weather stripping and caulk to keep cold air in and hot air out. The Department of Energy estimates between 10 and 20 percent in energy costs can be saved by reducing drafts along baseboards and plugging holes around windows, doors, faucets, pipes, and electric outlets.
- ▶ Use outdoor air to your advantage. Open your windows at night to let cool air in, and then close them in the morning to trap it. Avoid unnecessary trips outdoors in the heat of the day.
- ▶ Use curtains and blinds to keep the sun out on hot days.
- ▶ Consider shading your home by installing awnings over windows in direct sunlight.
- ▶ Operate ceiling fans in a counter-clockwise direction, which forces air down and creates a cooling effect.
- ▶ Natural ventilation can take some of the strain off electrical systems. In breezy, dry climates ventilation can eliminate the need for an air conditioner altogether. For the many who need air conditioning to cool their homes, attic vents and fans can help reduce energy costs.
- ▶ Set your thermostat as high as comfortable to cut back on energy costs. Do not waste electricity cooling an empty home. Invest in a programmable thermostat to set your temperature a few degrees higher while you are away. The smaller the difference between your thermostat and the outdoor air temperature, the more you will save on your utility bill.
- ▶ Consider investing in an Energy Star-rated air conditioning unit. Appliances with an Energy Star rating meet and often exceed energy efficiency standards and can end up saving you money over the lifetime of the appliance. For those living in arid climates, consider evaporative or swamp coolers, which release moisture into the air for a cooling effect. These coolers work at a fraction of the cost of air conditioners.



During warmer weather, the recommended indoor temperature is 78 degrees Fahrenheit.