

WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS



WHEATLAND ELECTRIC

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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FROM THE MANAGER

You're Not Alone in the Dark

Electricity powers our lives. We depend on it for nearly everything we do. So we understand how frustrating it can be when you're left in the dark.

Power outages are never convenient. It takes a lot of hands to keep your power on, and even more hands to get it up and running when an outage occurs. Wheatland Electric Cooperative works hard to restore your electric service when outages occur, but there are necessary steps to take to ensure that power is restored to the majority of members as quickly, and safely, as possible.

After a major storm, Wheatland line crews must identify which towers, poles and lines have incurred damage. Very rarely, but occasionally in the case of a major storm such as a tornado or blizzard, transmission towers can be damaged. If that is the case, tens of thousands of members could be affected. Repairing damage to transmission lines is top priority when it comes to restoring power.

High voltage transmission lines deliver power to Wheatland Electric distribution substations. These substations serve thousands of members. If there is no damage done to transmission towers, the local distribution substations are checked first. If the issue is isolated and can be resolved at the substation level, great! That means thousands of people can get their power restored at once.

At times, the issue cannot be isolated to one of our distribution substations. If that is the case, Wheatland crews inspect distribution lines between the substations and the meters they serve. When the lines are repaired, electricity can be restored to the towns and homes to which those lines are delivered.

Tap lines carry power from the substations to the individual transformers located either underground or connected to poles outside of homes and other buildings. Wheatland line crews identify which damaged tap lines to work on first based on which lines will restore power to the greatest number of members.



Bruce Mueller

Many times, the issue is resolved once the tap lines are repaired. But have you ever lost power only to look next door and see the lights still blazing from your neighbor's window? When this happens, it generally means that the service line between your home and the nearby transformer has been damaged. If this happens, call Wheatland Electric right away so we can send a line crew to your home.

Power restoration can be a tricky and dangerous process, so if you lose electricity to your home or neighborhood please remember the following:

- ▶ Stay clear of downed power lines. Contact with these lines could be life threatening.
- ▶ Report the outage to Wheatland Electric as soon as possible. Make sure to inform us if loss of power to your home affects life support systems or could cause any additional threat to health and safety.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation whenever an outage occurs. For more information on outages, stay connected with Wheatland Electric on Facebook or check our website at WECL.net.

Until next time, take care.

“Playing Chicken” with Kansas En

As a member of Wheatland Electric Cooperative you are also a member-owner of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation and Mid-Kansas Electric Company. Sunflower and Mid-Kansas not only provide wholesale generation and transmission (G&T) services to Wheatland and their other members, but your G&T staff also stays abreast of federal and state regulations that impact the electric industry and ultimately those we serve at the end of the line.

For 16 years, your G&T staff members have advocated on behalf of their members as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) contemplated listing the lesser prairie chicken (LPC) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Last spring, the USFWS announced its decision to list the bird as threatened, a decision that is expected to cost Kansans millions of dollars as local governments and businesses comply with regulations associated with the listing.

Since the ESA does not require the USFWS to consider economic impacts when listing a species, costs now associated with compliance of the new regulations will impact economic growth within and beyond the five-state region where the bird is protected. The listing will certainly impact land use by farmers and ranchers—according to the USFWS, 90 percent of the species’ habitat occurs on private lands—and will

also impose costs on developers of home sites, new roadways, electric and communication infrastructure and other utilities.

When costs of production rise, it means that purchases—everything from a tank of gas to hamburger to a gallon of milk—will cost more money as a result of the listing of the LPC. For electric ratepayers, these increased costs will be reflected in monthly electric bills.

Since its enactment, the ESA has been among the most contentious environmental laws because its substantive provisions can affect the use of both government and private lands and resources. Furthermore, once a species is listed, it is a difficult decision to reverse, even if protection of a species is no longer needed.

Many believe the push to list the bird as threatened was overstated. While the drought contributed to the overall decline in numbers, expansion of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has increased LPC numbers in western Kansas. Landowners have also voluntarily taken measures to improve habitat with grassland establishment/restoration, brush management, and adoption of recommended grazing and burning techniques.

“This was a very disappointing decision. We had been working hard to urge an outcome that balanced the interests of the rural Kansas economy with goals to encourage the LPC population,” said Bruce Graham,

CEO of Kansas Electric Cooperatives, the statewide service organization for electric cooperatives to which Sunflower belongs.

“The decision pre-empted voluntary conservation efforts in favor of a plan

that will extract millions of dollars from a struggling rural economy.”

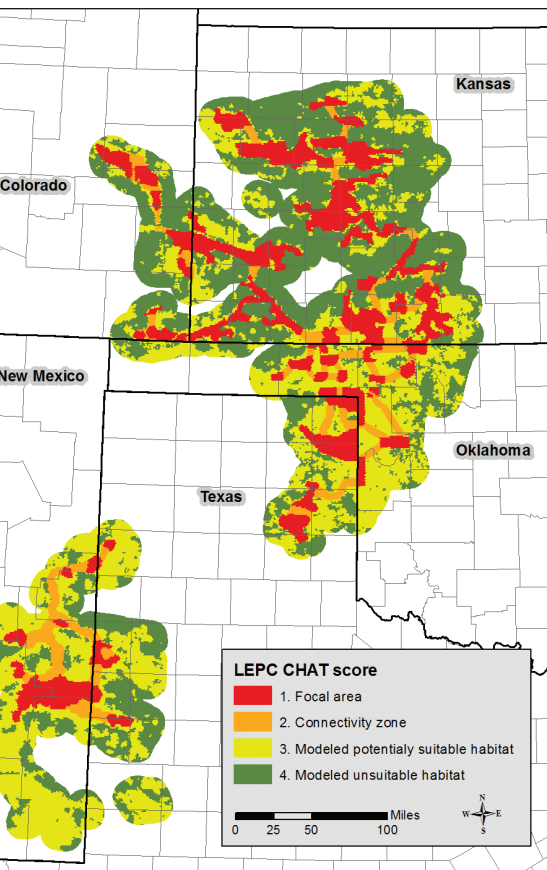
Electric cooperative members, in particular, will feel the impact of the listing since electric cooperatives often serve in rural areas where there are fewer customers to share the cost of utility operations. Wheatland Electric and the other distribution cooperatives that own Sunflower and Mid-Kansas will be especially hard hit since, according to the USFWS, of the five states in the native range of the LPC, more than half of the LPC population is located in western Kansas. In fact, more than seven million acres are included in the Kansas LPC range.

Hoping to forestall the listing of the LPC, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)—made up of fish and wildlife officials in the five states where the LPC is most often found—developed a Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP). The mission of the RCP is to protect the species and give regulatory sureness to landowners and industry. Even though the plan was endorsed by the USFWS, the agency still listed the LPC as a threatened species.

As a result of the listing, mitigation is expected to be costly. WAFWA’s RCP essentially serves as a potential mitigation strategy, but the admission price is costly. It is likely that Sunflower and Mid-Kansas will enroll in WAFWA’s RCP plan, which will act as a shield from fines in the event that a prairie chicken(s) or habitat is disturbed or harmed as defined in the ESA. However, protection from all penalties and fines is not clearly defined or guaranteed, so the total cost of living in rural America with the now threatened LPC is yet to be determined. What is certain is that WAFWA’s plan will increase costs to complete transmission and distribu-



Energy Prices



tion line projects, thereby increasing the cost of electricity.

Soon after the listing, Gov. Brownback announced that Kansas, along with North Dakota, has joined an Oklahoma lawsuit to contest the listing of the LPC.

“When government regulations make it more difficult to reside and make a living in rural America, electric cooperatives take notice,” said Bruce Mueller, General Manager of Wheatland Electric Cooperative. “Be assured that Wheatland staff, along with staff representing Sunflower and Mid-Kansas, will continue to follow the progress of this decision and will actively engage in appropriate measures to ensure that our members continue to receive reliable electricity at a competitive price.”

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Wheatland Teaches Electric Farm Safety

There are certain hazards associated with life on the farm. Progressive Agriculture Safety Days seeks to educate participants on these potential dangers and is designed to reach eight to 13-year-olds in rural areas where a significant percentage of the population lives on a farm.

Recently, Wheatland Electric linemen in Syracuse, Caldwell and Tribune helped educate local youth on the dangers of electricity as part of the program.



Syracuse linemen Joe Thomeczek (left) and Wayne Parks, along with Safety Director Luke West, demonstrate the dangers of electricity on the farm to students from Lakin.

Participants are divided into small groups that rotate through a series of stations dedicated to different topics. Aside from electrical safety, the kids learn about everything from farm equipment to gun safety to first aid.

Smaller numbers offer more

one-on-one interaction with instructors, and demonstrations and activities help reinforce safety rules.

All of this is made possible through community support by way of donations and volunteers.



Students from Caldwell learn about proper safety practices from linemen (from left) Clint Gulick, Derek Callaway, Robert Osterberg and Clay Shelton.

“Cram the Van” Food Drive in Final Stages

The big red van went on a whirlwind tour of Wheatland's service territory in September and October making 10 stops in nine communities! Our final Cram the Van event was held on Halloween in Scott City, complete with kids in costume, prize drawings, a food slide and a barbecue dinner for anyone making a donation.

Next month, we'll recap the Cram the Van campaign and let you know how we did. Thanks for helping us Cram the Van!



Cold Weather Rule Notice for Residential Members

Though Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., is a self-regulated electric utility, we agree to participate in the special disconnect procedures for residential customers during the time period November 1 through March 31. The guidelines set out below have been established to protect not only you, the electric member, but your member-owned cooperative.

No residential electric service disconnections will be made when the nearest National Weather Service office forecasts that the temperature will drop below 35 degrees or will be in the mid-30's or colder within the following 48-hour time period. In order to avoid disconnection when the temperature is 35 degrees or above, or to reconnect service regardless of the temperature, the residential customer must comply with these provisions:

- ▶ Inform Wheatland Electric of the inability to pay the bill in full;
- ▶ Provide sufficient information to allow Wheatland Electric to create a payment agreement;
- ▶ Make an initial payment of the arrearage plus the bill for the most recent month's billing period for which service was provided, divided by 12, plus the full amount of any disconnect or reconnect fees, plus any applicable deposit, and enter into a payment plan for the rest of the arrearage. (The customer may enter into a pay agreement less than 12 months.)
- ▶ Apply for federal, state, local, or other assistance funds for which the customer is eligible; and
- ▶ In the event the customer fails to meet his/her payment plan, the customer must cure the default to remain in the payment plan. Contact Wheatland Electric's billing department for details at 620-872-5885 as soon as possible.

Wheatland Electric shall:

- ▶ Inform the residential customer of agencies having funds available to assist with payment of utility bills;
- ▶ Make telephone or personal contact with customer 24 hours prior to termination of service, or leave a written message on the door if these notification attempts are unsuccessful;
- ▶ Inform the customer of the third-party notification plan and any payment arrangements the customer may qualify for.

For additional assistance involving the Cold Weather Rule, you may contact:

- ▶ Wheatland Electric's billing department at 620-872-5885 during normal business hours 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday (except holidays).

Aviso de las reglas del tiempo de frío, para clientes residenciales

Aunque Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., sea una utilidad eléctrica autorregulada, estamos de acuerdo en participar en los procedimientos especiales de desconexión para los clientes residenciales durante el período 1 de noviembre al 31 de marzo. Las reglas dispuestas abajo han sido establecidas para proteger no sólo usted el cliente eléctrico, pero su cooperative poseída de miembro.

No desconectará a los clientes residenciales cuando el Servicio Meteorológico Nacional, pronostique que las temperaturas caerán debajo de 35 grados o estarán en la media de los 30's o más frío, dentro de un período de 48 horas. En orden, para evitar la desconexión cuando la temperatura es 35 grados o arriba, o volver a conectar el servicio, sin importar la temperatura, el cliente deberá cumplir estas provisiones:

- ▶ Informe a Wheatland Electric, la inhabilidad de pagar la cuenta en su totalidad;
- ▶ Proveer suficiente información, para lograr que Wheatland Electric, otorgue un plan de pagos;
- ▶ Hacer un pago inicial del atraso, más la cuenta reciente al período por el servicio proporcionado, dividido entre 12, más los cargos completos por desconexión o cargos por reconectar; (Plan de pago disponible para pagar en menos de 12 meses);
- ▶ Solicite Federal, del Estado, Local u otros fondos de ayuda, para los cuales el cliente sea elegible;
- ▶ Tal como, si resultó el incumplimiento al plan de pagos, el cliente debe curar la falta para permanecer en el plan de pago. Póngase en contacto con la oficina de Wheatland Electric para detalles en 620-872-5885 el más posible.

Wheatland Electric, deberá cumplir con lo siguiente:

- ▶ Informar al cliente residencial, de aquellas que tengan fondos disponibles, para ayudar con los pagos de las cuentas de utilidades;
- ▶ Contactar al cliente, ya sea por teléfono o en persona, 24 horas antes de terminar el servicio, o dejar un mensaje escrito en la puerta si estos intentos de aviso fueron inútiles;
- ▶ Informe al cliente sobre el plan de notificación de una tercera parte y cualquier arreglo de pago al que pueda calificar.

Para una adicional ayuda, relacionada con las reglas del tiempo de frío, usted puede comunicarse a:

- ▶ Al departamento de cuentas, al teléfono 620-872-5885, durante el horario de oficina de 8 a.m. a 5 p.m. de Lunes a Viernes. (Excepto los días festivos).