



## WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS

### Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Bruce Mueller—General Manager

#### Board of Trustees

**William Barnes**

President

**Wes Campbell**

Vice President

**Dan Bonine**

Treasurer

**Stacey Addison-Howland**

Trustee

**Mark Arnold**

Trustee

**Charles Ayers**

Trustee

**Vic Case**

Trustee

**Katie Eisenhour**

Trustee

**Bob Hiss**

Trustee

**Roe Johnson**

Trustee

**John Kleysteuber**

Trustee

#### District Offices

**Garden City**

2005 W Fulton  
P.O. Box 973  
Garden City, KS  
67846  
620-275-0261

**Leoti**

N Hwy 25  
P.O. Box 966  
Leoti, KS 67861  
620-375-2632

**Scott City-Main**

101 Main Street  
P.O. Box 230  
Scott City, KS 67871  
620-872-5885

**Syracuse**

206 1/2 N Main  
P.O. Box 1010  
Syracuse, KS 67878  
620-384-5171

**Harper**

906 Central  
P.O. Box 247  
Harper, KS 67058  
620-896-7090

**Tribune**

310 Broadway  
P.O. Box 490  
Tribune, KS 67879  
620-376-4231

### FROM THE MANAGER

## Cooperatives Helping Cooperatives



**Bruce Mueller**

Every day, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. is hard at work to make sure all of our members have the electric power they need at a competitive price. Behind the scenes, we are working with a network of cooperatives to make that happen.

Wheatland is a member-owner of Sunflower Electric Power Corp. and Mid-Kansas Electric Corp., which generates the power for Wheatland as well as Victory, Pioneer, Lane-Scott, Western and Prairie Land electric cooperatives. We helped to create this generation and transmission co-op so that we have more control over power supply and pricing.

Operation of an electric co-op also takes capital, so when we need to borrow money, we turn to either the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) or CoBank. Both of these organizations are also cooperatives. CFC is owned by electric co-ops throughout the country, and CoBank is owned by electric and agricultural co-ops nationwide.

As you know, every month we generate an electric bill that we send to you either electronically or through regular mail. We use National Informa-

tion Solutions Cooperative (NISC), yet another cooperative, to ensure we can apply the latest technology, and send timely and accurate bills to you.

Our business cannot operate without several different types of insurance, such as general liability, auto and workmen's compensation. So once again, along with other electric cooperatives across the country, we are members of an insurance cooperative, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. This allows us to maintain reliable coverage at an affordable price.

Wheatland Electric is a member of Touchstone Energy, a nationwide alliance of 750 local, member-owned electric cooperatives. Our participation allows us access to a wealth of informational materials. It also allows us to benchmark our performance in comparison with other co-ops so that we can learn from others as we constantly strive to serve you better.

Wheatland is also part of the Cooperative Response Center, which allows us to answer your calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

So, while you are a member of one electric co-op (Wheatland), you are actually connected to many other co-ops. And being connected to this cooperative network ensures your needs are met in the most efficient and cooperative way possible.

**Until next time, take care.**

# RURAL Connections

Wheatland  
Broadband is  
making high  
speed internet  
and phone  
service a reality  
for Triangle H,  
rural locations,  
farms, and other  
agricultural  
entities in  
western Kansas.

Wheatland Electric was founded to accomplish one goal: to connect rural Kansas. Wheatland Broadband represents the modern reflection of that goal. For years, rural communities have been left out of the digital revolution because they had only intermittent internet access, often through a patchwork of satellite, dial-up or wireless service. For many companies, it was just too expensive to bring equipment and service over long distances to so few people.

For more than a decade, Wheatland Electric and other cooperatives around the nation have been working to address the lack of broadband in our communities. Just as electricity was the key to unlocking a better way of life nearly 100 years ago, broadband offers that same promise today by connecting people socially, economically and educationally to a global community.

In 2002, Wheatland Electric created its broadband subsidiary, Wheatland Broadband, to offer internet services to the true “last mile” in rural western Kansas. At a time when large telecommunications companies had seemingly left rural residents and communities behind, Wheatland Broadband made high-speed internet service a reality for its members.

One rural company taking advantage of these broadband services, **TRIANGLE H**, sees firsthand the benefits of working with Wheatland Broadband.

Triangle H is a family-owned farm, cow/calf and feedlot operation in southwestern Kansas. Established in 1974, Triangle H was formed as an operational partnership with Fielding Hands (retired) and his three sons: Sam, Greg and Cedric. Greg's son, Tyler, returned to the farm in 2008.

Triangle H farms their own ground in addition to farming for other landlords, which in total, encompasses approximately 10,000 acres. They have two locations, having purchased additional ground south of Deerfield in the winter of 2008. The farming operation normally includes a split between corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, and wheat. Alfalfa is grown as a cash crop as well as a supplement

for the cattle operation. Sam heads up the cattle operations at both Plymell and Deerfield locations. These operations consist of cow/calf, stocker, and finishing programs.

Assisting the Hands family in carrying out the objectives of the company are 15 full-time employees. Seasonal help is also employed as the need arises. In addition, Triangle H relies on a number of different specialists to stay on top of emerging technologies and to help them find efficiencies.

One of those specialists, Wheatland Broadband, ensures that Triangle H is connected with the latest technology. Not only does Triangle H rely on Wheatland Broadband's internet service, but most recently Triangle H started utilizing Wheatland's myVoice phone service. myVoice uses Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technology, or in more common terms phone service over the internet. myVoice makes easy some things that are difficult or impossible with traditional phone networks. For example, myVoice allows incoming calls to be automatically routed to any phone at any location.

"The idea is wonderful, customers can call one number, select who they want to talk to and the call will ring into their office and then to their cell phone. We have been able to eliminate the receptionist role. Leslie, our office manager, has been able to be more efficient and productive. myVoice allows for quicker, more direct communication," said Marisa Kleysteuber, with Triangle H. "It's a huge benefit for us because we have various locations."

## For years, rural communities have been left out of the digital revolution because they had only intermittent internet access.

As with any technology, issues can arise but Wheatland Broadband employs local service technicians who are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. An on-call service technician is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for connection-related issues.

"If we're getting ready to process cattle and the internet is down then we have to hand write everything and then manually enter at a later date—it's not ideal," Kleysteuber said. "We've been so fortunate. If we call first thing with a problem, Doug (Heberlee, network administrator at Wheatland Broadband) is always so helpful and usually has the problem fixed within minutes."

Wheatland Broadband, along with Wheatland Electric, has a commitment to rural Kansas and each community they serve that goes beyond DSL and cable broadband. By utilizing fixed wireless technology, Wheatland Broadband is making high-speed internet and phone service a reality for Triangle H, rural locations, farms, and other agricultural entities in western Kansas. Wheatland Broadband currently offers service in 16 counties. For more information about their coverage area visit [www.wbsnet.org](http://www.wbsnet.org).



Cattle line up for feed at the bunks at the Plymell feedlot, one of the two Triangle H feedlot locations.



Triangle H, located in southern Finney County, is a family partnership and has operated in the area for over 100 years.

## Get to Know Your Co-op Staff

### Francis Lobmeyer

Water Technician  
11 years at Scott City



Francis Lobmeyer

23. We have two grandsons: Axton, 6, and Waylon, 3. We have three horses, several barn cats, and a Great Dane named Savanna.

#### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Leoti

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

Spending time with the family, ride motorcycles, and help with Magic's Hope Therapeutic Program.

#### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TEAM?

KC Chiefs

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Going on a motorcycle trip through the Black Hills in South Dakota.

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

My family and the young adults they have become

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

My parents. They would spend quality time with us children. They encouraged us to do our best at whatever we chose to do.

#### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My wife, Jada, and I have been married for 21 years. I have two step-daughters: Christine, 32, and Shelby, 24. I have one son, Thomas,

## Save Using Co-op Connections Card

**PAPA MURPHY'S** in Great Bend celebrates Valentine's Day with the return of its popular HeartBaker Pizza! The heart-shaped pizza, synonymous with this time of year, adds a special touch to any Valentine's Day dinner at home and is the perfect way to celebrate love with the entire family.

The HeartBaker pizza starts with Papa Murphy's fresh, scratch-made dough in the shape of a heart topped with traditional red sauce, generous portions of mozzarella and premium pepperoni for a distinctly red, heart-shaped pizza.

**Stop in today for your HeartBaker Pizza or use your Co-op Connections Card and receive \$3 off a Family Size Pizza!**

For more great savings, use your Co-op Connections Card at these other local businesses:

- Dairy Queen, Scott City

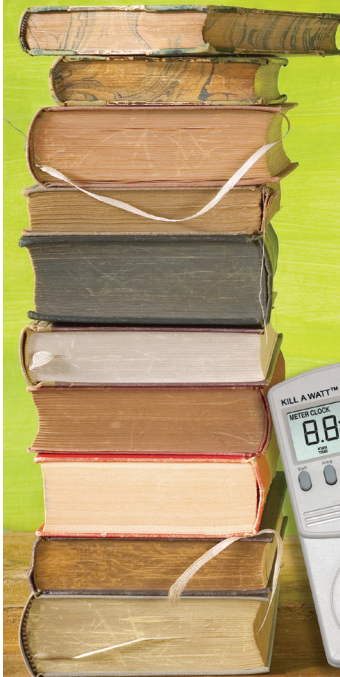


Visit Papa Murphy's in Great Bend for a HeartBaker Pizza or use your Co-op Connections Card and receive \$3 off a Family Size Pizza!

- Renewal by Anderson, Great Bend
  - Suzy B's Flowers & More, Scott City
- For a complete list of deals visit <http://www.connections.coop/weci>. Still need a Co-op Connections Card? Contact your local Wheatland Electric office to learn how to save with the Co-op Connections Card.

## Check Out a New Way to Curb Your Energy Usage

*Borrow a Kill-A-Watt at Your Local Library Today!*



The Kill-A-Watt™ EZ is an electricity monitoring device designed to easily measure how much electricity is being used by your plug-in appliances at home or work.

Find out how much money you would save on your electricity bills by turning them off and being smarter in your home energy management.

The Kill-A-Watt EZ is now available for checkout at your local library.

*You must have a valid library card to borrow a Kill-A-Watt through this program.*

# Weathering Winter Storm Jupiter

Winter Storm Jupiter was predicted to be a crippling winter storm bringing with it destructive ice and freezing rain that posed a serious threat to electric cooperative infrastructure across Kansas. Fortunately, for most of the co-operatives in Kansas, the ice accumulations and resulting damage were far less than predicted. Here at Wheatland, we consider ourselves fortunate as our outages briefly numbered in the 100's and not the thousands like our friends over at Victory Electric, Midwest Energy and Ninnescah Electric.

At one point, during the storm on Sunday afternoon, January 15, Wheatland had approximately 200 outages across our system with most of those occurring in Scott, Kearny and Barton counties. As the storm progressed and moved into the evening most outages were restored. As the evening progressed Great Bend in Barton County soon became a problem area as tree branches and in some cases entire trees began to fall from the weight of the ice on branches. In many instances, these falling trees and branches were falling on or near member residences and were pulling lines and equipment off of member's houses resulting in damage to both Wheatland's system and our member's equipment and homes. Repairing damage house by house and clearing trees and branches from lines increases the time it takes to restore an outage exponentially. Wheatland crews in Great Bend worked tirelessly over the next few days to make repairs and restore power to those



The January ice storm caused an entire tree to come down on this member's house in Great Bend taking Wheatland's lines with it.

affected by the storm as quickly and safely as possible. After four days of near non-stop restoration efforts, nearly every member in Great Bend had their power restored. Thank you to all of our members in Great Bend for their patience and understanding during the extended outage. **A great big thank you** to all of our linemen and operations staff for their superhuman efforts to get the lights back on.

Wheatland also sent 4 line crews, trucks and equipment to assist Victory Electric (Dodge City) and Ninnescah Electric (Pratt) in their ice storm recovery efforts. Both cooperatives had outages that numbered in the thousands and lasted for days. Next month, we'll provide pictures and coverage of those efforts.



Second year apprentice lineman Jesus Villegas works to clear fallen tree branches from Wheatland lines behind a member's home in Great Bend.

# Utilities are Raising Awareness About Scams

When a scammer called Florida pet clinic operator Cindy Evers last year and demanded immediate payment on an overdue electric bill, it sounded real.

“They knew my account number and gave me a figure that I owed that’s close to what I usually pay on my electric bill,” Evers said. She paid, even though, in the back of her mind, she knew her payment wasn’t late.

“I have pets under sedation, and I’m taking care of animals. I think I just panicked, thinking they were going to shut my electricity off. I did what they told me to do.”

Unfortunately, the call was a scam, and Evers lost \$900.

The scam that duped Evers has been plaguing utility consumers across North America for several years, robbing them of millions.

Now, utilities are fighting back.

Recently, more than 80 utilities and energy industry organizations from across the U.S. and Canada joined forces to recognize the first-ever North American Utilities United Against Scams Day on Nov. 16, 2016.

Electric co-ops have increased their communication efforts, sending information directly to members and encouraging local TV stations and newspapers to warn citizens about the scam and what people should do and not do if they are targeted.

Even the wariest consumers can be duped, however. The scammers are developing new tactics every day.

The “past due” scam, similar to the one Florida customer Evers experienced, goes something like this: A

## Never share your personal information, including date of birth, Social Security number or banking account information.

customer gets a call from an 800-number that looks like a valid utility company phone number. Widely available spoofing software allows crooks to display what appears to be an official number on caller IDs. The caller threatens to cut off power if the customer doesn’t pay.

But here’s the giveaway: The crook will demand payment via a prepaid debit card or money order and will often ask for payment within a specified time frame—often an hour or less.

The scammer may even quote an amount that sounds like your typical monthly bill. That way, the threat has even more credibility.

Scammers might direct the customer to a specific store nearby that sells the prepaid cards and instruct the customer to put money on the card and provide the card number to the scammer.

Some scammers have even been bold enough to contact potential victims in person, coming to the member’s house.

Here are some tips on how to protect yourself:

- ▶ Do not assume the name and number on your caller ID are legitimate. Caller IDs can be spoofed.
- ▶ Never share your personal information, including date of birth, Social Security number or banking account information.
- ▶ Never wire money to someone you don’t know.
- ▶ Do not click links or call numbers in unexpected emails or texts—especially those asking for your account information.
- ▶ Remember, most utilities will **not** require their customers to purchase prepaid debit cards or money orders to avoid an immediate disconnection.
- ▶ If you receive a call that sounds like it may be a scam, hang up, call the police and report the incident to your local utility.

### How you can help

You can alert your family members and friends. Share the scammers’ tactics described in this article or those you have heard about. You can also help raise awareness and warn others by reposting scam awareness information on social media; use the hashtag #stopscams.

If you fear you have fallen victim to a scam, notify Wheatland Electric by calling 620-872-5885 and report the incident to local authorities.



Scammers are developing new tactics to take advantage of consumers every day. Don’t fall victim, #stopscams.

## West Earns Loss Control Professional Certificate



Luke West

Wheatland Electric Manager of Safety/ Policy & Documents, Luke West, has completed an intensive program in electric utility safety and loss control. The

Loss Control Internship is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the National Utility Training & Safety Education Association. The program is designed to instruct participants in many areas related to electric utility industry safety.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, nearly 4 million injuries occur annually in the workplace. One of the goals of a Certified Loss Control Professional is to help ensure a safe

work environment for the utility workers and the public in general. Avoiding workplace accidents avoids down time and can ultimately lead to lower utility rates.

Luke West is one of only a few electric utility professionals in the country that will receive this certification this year. The program requires the participants to complete a rigorous series of seminars and tests, a 30 hour OSHA course, and a detailed final course project.

Loss Control participants go through four six-day sessions that are designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative safety techniques. Participants must also maintain their certificate by attending courses every year in order to stay on top of changes in the industry. Luke West has been with Wheatland for 11 years. He graduated with a degree in Agribusiness from Kansas State University.

## Staying Safe on Winter Roads

Winter months can bring snow, ice and windy conditions, which create additional hazards for drivers. Should an accident occur, it is important to be prepared. Automobile crashes always present danger, but when electricity is involved, the decisions made in the moments after the accident are especially crucial.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 24 percent of weather-related vehicle crashes occur on snowy or icy pavement.

In case of an emergency, pack a kit that includes blankets, flares, a flashlight and a window scraper. If you are stranded after an accident, watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia. Do not stay in one position for too long, remain awake, and do not overexert yourself as this could strain your heart.

Due to the potential for a winter storm to bring down power lines, individuals should only venture outside if absolutely necessary. Slow down when driving in icy

conditions, and always keep your eyes on the road to look out for hazardous conditions or downed power lines. Also watch for debris near downed poles and lines, as it may be energized as well.

If you see a vehicle in an accident with a power pole, your first instinct may be to rush toward the vehicle to offer help. But remember to keep your distance from the vehicle and all electrical equipment that has been damaged. Instruct those in the car to stay inside until power has been shut off.

Keep in mind that a downed line does not need to be sparking to be energized. It is best to assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous.

Never drive over a downed line because that could pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. If you see a downed line do not get out of your car. The safest place is inside the vehicle. Contact 911 to have your electric utility notified immediately.

## Get to Know Your Co-op Staff

### Randy Rogers

Journeyman Lineman  
17 years in Scott City

#### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My wife, Stacy, is a veterinarian and we have been married for 19 ½ years. We have two daughters: Kodi, 16, and Kate, 10; and one son, Isaiah, 7. We also have a golden retriever, a German shorthair, a mini dachshund, and several cats of all ages.

My kids also raise Boer goats as a 4-H project. We have 10 nannies and one buck.

#### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Rexford in northwest Kansas, but I went to high school in Channing, Texas.

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

Chase after kids in all of their activities, travel to my brothers' homes, and I also like to remodel homes and do woodworking.

#### WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE TEAM?

Any team my kids are playing on.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Going to Disney World.

#### WHAT IS SOMETHING NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I have an adopted child.

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

Landing a career that I love and having a great family living in a perfect farm home.

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

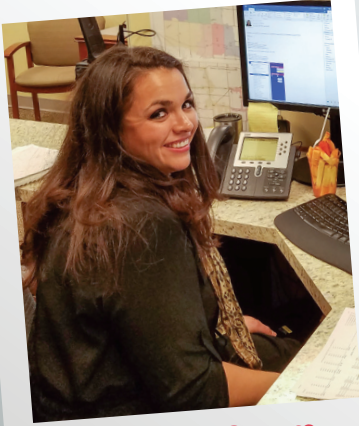
My dad. He always said that "can't never did nothing," which taught me to never quit or give up.



Randy Rogers

# A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY SHAWN POWELSON



**Maria "Lupe" Carrasco**  
Dispatcher  
9 months in Garden City

The first thing you notice when you step into Maria "Lupe" Carrasco's domain in the dispatch center is the row of four large-screen TVs mounted to the wall in front of her. It makes for an impressive sight. A close second, is her light-up-the-room smile.

As I took inventory of the impressive display of information and images splashed across the four TVs, I could only make sense of some of it. The first screen was easy. It contained a live weather map covering all of Wheatland's service territory. With the second, I was less certain but could generally decipher it as a representation of Wheatland's distribution system (wires, poles, transformers, etc.), overlaid on a geographical map of Wheatland's service territory. The other two screens...not a clue.

As I sat down next to Lupe at her "command center," I nodded to the row of TVs in admiration, "Pretty sweet, what's all that for?"

Lupe began by explaining that the first thing she does every morning is turn on the TVs and start checking any outage alerts that were received through the outage management system (OMS) overnight. She goes through each alert verifying information and making sure that the outage has either been resolved or has been assigned to a crew or serviceman who will work the outage that day. She explained that even though our new meters report outages automatically, some of the detailed information about the outage and the process of assigning the outage to a crew or serviceman requires hands-on work.

After going through the outages and making

sure all the information is accurate, she moves on to checking meter alerts. Alerts are the process of the meters "talking" back to the command center. The meter alerts can cover a wide range of issues including reverse rotation, temperature, unexpected usage and many more. As we covered the different kinds of alerts, she stopped to show me a temperature alert and how she could then take a subsequent reading to verify the temperature reading. "Like a kid, she said, "I can take it's temperature." After pressing a few buttons and a few seconds of waiting...*voila!*...our temperature reading. Good news, no fever.

Meanwhile, as Lupe continued explaining to me all the other alerts and routine duties she performed as a dispatcher, the phone at her desk rang constantly. Each call was greeted with a friendly, "This is Lupe." Followed by a quick exchange of information about a repair a serviceman or line crew was working on. With a couple of quick key strokes and a click or two of the mouse she was on to the next thing. All the while, her attention bounced from one of the four big screen TVs to the three smaller computer monitors in front of her and even occasionally a separate laptop behind her. Color me impressed. She was in constant motion. At one point, during a few minutes without a phone call, she continued explaining her other duties. She mentioned a few projects she was helping other departments with when she ran out of things to do. As I stared at her incredulously, she smiled and said, "I like to stay busy."

As we finished our time together, I asked what she liked most about working for Wheatland. "I like learning and evolving. Learning how my job fits into the whole company. It's very interesting." I couldn't agree more—it is very interesting. Thanks for sharing your day, Lupe!

**SHAWN POWELSON, Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications**