



P.O. Box 360, 14935 U.S. Highway 36, Norton, KS 67654
785-877-3323 or 800-577-3323
www.prairielandelectric.com

PRAIRIE LAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

PRAIRIE LAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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POWER LINE ISSUES

Call 800-577-3323 to report outages and other power line issues.

POWER
to make life better

FROM THE CEO

Powered by Purpose



Kirk Girard

In October, electric cooperatives across the country take time to celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative. It's also the perfect time to thank you — the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As the CEO of Prairie Land Electric Cooperative, I see purpose in action every single day. Unlike investor-

owned utilities, our co-op doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you — our members, our neighbors and our communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op operates. You elect board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away;

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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Our summer help featured in the July issue, **COLE KEETEN** and **DAWSON SMITH**, have stayed on with Prairie Land and are now apprentice linemen. We're proud to see them begin this new chapter in their careers!

COLE KEETEN



COLE KEETEN is a native of Phillipsburg. He enjoys hunting, fishing and ranching in his free time.

DAWSON SMITH



DAWSON SMITH is a Norton native and graduate of Pratt Community College. His hobbies include sports, hunting, fishing and spending time with friends.

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they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

We do that by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technologies that strengthen our local grid and improve electric service. And when storms hit or outages occur, Prairie Land crews are here and ready to respond quickly, because we live here too.

But our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Co-ops were built to meet community needs, and that purpose extends well beyond delivering electricity. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs, or partnering with volunteer organizations, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought — it's part of our mission.

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to new technologies and economic development, electric co-ops are working to ensure we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about dependability, and we're committed to delivering.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer — you're an owner, a stakeholder, and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

County: _____

Member for:

☐ <5 Years ☐ 5-10 Years ☐ 11-20 Years
☐ 21-30 Years ☐ 31+ Years

Co-op Month Giveaway



To show appreciation for our members, we will be giving away prizes and bill credits throughout the month. We will announce three winners on Facebook each week on:

Oct. 10, 17, 24, 31.

Once you enter, your name stays in the drawing each week — enter early for more chances to win. Enter online with the QR code or return this form to:

**P.O. Box 360,
Norton, KS 67654**

ENTER TO WIN

If You Depend on Life Support, PLEASE LET US KNOW



Prairie Land Electric strives to maintain the best possible service with minimum outages. However, outages do occur. Cooperative members who depend on life support equipment should complete a Prairie Land Electric Life Support/Critical Needs form.

We keep a register of members on life support equipment, and it is important this information be current and accurate. We will make every effort to give priority service restoration to members on life support systems. However, Prairie Land advises that it is imperative for the member to have an alternate plan, such as a standby generator or a family/friend's house to stay during outages.

IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER DEPEND ON LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT, PLEASE CALL 800-577-3323 OR 785-877-3323 TO REQUEST A FORM OR DOWNLOAD THE FORM AT WWW.PRAIRIELANDELECTRIC.COM/FORMS. Please note, completing this form does not prevent service disconnection for nonpayment.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

YOUR SAFETY MATTERS. BE PREPARED THIS HARVEST SEASON!

If your equipment contacts a power line, stay inside the cab and call 911. Only exit if there is immediate danger like a fire. If you must exit, jump clear without touching any part of the equipment, and hop away keeping feet together.



COLD WEATHER ACCOMMODATION

Prairie Land wants to help members maintain electric service during winter while recognizing the member's responsibility to plan to pay for service received. The Cold Weather Accommodation allows members to set up payment plans to make sure both goals are met.

Cold Weather Accommodation is in effect Nov. 1 through March 31 and applies to existing residential members at their primary residence, subject to the rules and regulations.

HOW TO QUALIFY

- ▶ Contact cooperative if you can't pay your bill. **OPTIONS:**
 - ▶ Pay 1/12 of the total due plus all disconnection/reconnection fees, and spread the rest over 11 months OR negotiate payment plan to pay overdue amount in under 12 months.
 - ▶ You must continue paying the current monthly bill.
 - ▶ If you're behind on a previous plan, make a new agreement.

THE COOPERATIVE WILL

- ▶ Inform members of Cold Weather Accommodation and any other available payment plans.
- ▶ Provide the member with a 10-day written notice before disconnection and attempt a phone or personal contact the day before.
- ▶ Share information on agencies offering financial assistance.

DISCONNECTION POLICY

- ▶ Disconnection won't occur if temperatures are forecast below 35 F within the next 24 hours.
- ▶ Disconnection may happen when temperatures are forecast above 35 F for 48 hours unless payment arrangements are made.

4 Best Bets to Stay Cyber Safe

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Protecting yourself online doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A few simple habits can dramatically reduce your risk of falling victim to cybercrime. While you can never be "hackproof," you can become resilient in the online world.

At the heart of online safety are four essential behaviors we at the National Cybersecurity Alliance call the Core 4. These simple steps will help shield your personal information, protect your online accounts and keep your devices secure.

1 USE LONG, UNIQUE AND COMPLEX PASSWORDS. Your passwords are the first line of defense between a criminal and your sensitive information. Here's how to have amazing passwords:

- ▶ **EVERY PASSWORD MUST BE LONG, UNIQUE AND COMPLEX.** Nowadays, every password should be at least 16 characters long, which significantly overwhelms password-cracking programs. Use a random mix of letters, numbers and symbols.
- ▶ **DON'T REUSE PASSWORDS.** Every account needs a unique password. Unfortunately, making small changes, like adding numbers or switching out an S with a \$, doesn't count as a unique password.
- ▶ **USE A PASSWORD MANAGER TO STORE AND GENERATE STRONG PASSWORDS.** If you're wondering how to manage so many unique, long passwords, the answer is a password manager! There are many free, secure options. Password managers are the safest way to store your passwords. If you prefer to keep a password notebook, treat it like cash.

2 ENABLE MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION (MFA). Multifactor authentication (sometimes called 2FA) adds an extra security layer by requiring something more than just your password to log in. Think of it as using two locks on your digital door instead of only one. This could be:

- ▶ A one-time code sent to your phone
- ▶ A biometric scan like a fingerprint scan or FaceID
- ▶ A physical security key

Enable MFA on your accounts — especially email, banking and social media. It's a simple way to supercharge the security on your accounts. Also, never share MFA codes with anyone — this includes not sharing them over the phone, through texts or via email. Only scammers will ask for MFA codes.

3 KEEP SOFTWARE UPDATED. Software updates don't just bring new features. They often fix security flaws that criminals exploit. It usually takes a few minutes, but updates are worth it. Here are some tips:

- ▶ Turn on automatic updates when possible for

your devices and apps. You can usually find these options in your Settings menu.

- ▶ Install updates promptly for your operating systems, browsers, antivirus tools and apps.
- ▶ Don't click "Remind Me Later" — the security is worth it.
- ▶ Remember your phones, smartwatches and tablets are computers, so keep these devices updated as well!

4 LOOK OUT FOR PHISHING AND SCAMS. Phishing remains the most common online threat. Criminals send fake emails, texts or social media messages to trick you into revealing sensitive information or clicking malicious links. These messages aim to get you to click before you think by playing on your emotions. Scammers will even call you! Here's how to look out for phishing and scams:

- ▶ Be highly skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.
- ▶ Phishing emails can light up positive emotions ("You've won our sweepstakes!") or negative ones ("You've been hacked!").
- ▶ Don't click suspicious links or download unexpected attachments.
- ▶ Report phishing attempts to your email provider, social media platform or IT department.
- ▶ If you're unsure if a message is legit, ask a friend, coworker or family member. A second set of eyes can be invaluable in spotting scams.

Article provided by the **NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY ALLIANCE**, a non-profit organization on a mission to create a more secure, interconnected world. From families to Fortune 500s and every kind of organization in between, we work together with one goal in mind: to make cybersecurity easier and more accessible, so that we can experience the benefits technology brings to our lives without worry.

4 Ways to Secure Your Data



USE STRONG PASSWORDS

Create unique, complex passwords and use a password manager.



UPDATE REGULARLY

Keep your software and devices updated with the latest security patches.



BACK UP YOUR DATA

Regularly back up your data using external drives or cloud storage.



ENABLE MFA/2FA

Add an extra layer of security with multi-factor or two-factor authentication.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION