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**PRAIRIE LAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS



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

Prairie Land Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

FROM THE CEO

The Power Behind Your Power

You've likely noticed Prairie Land Electric's crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in our community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough — but it's a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. This month, as we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 11, I thought I'd share some interesting facts about electric lineworkers with you.

The work can be heavy, in more ways than one. Did you know the equipment and tools that a lineworker carries while climbing a utility pole can weigh up to 50 pounds? That's the same as carrying 6 gallons of water. Speaking of utility poles, lineworkers are required to climb poles ranging anywhere from 30 to 120 feet tall. Needless to say, if you have a fear of heights, this likely isn't the career path for you.

Lineworkers must be committed to their career — because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly

take a toll. In fact, being a lineworker is listed in the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

Lineworkers often work non-traditional hours, outdoors in difficult conditions. While the job does not require a college degree, it does require technical skills, years of training and hands-on learning. Did you know that to become a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (or about four years)? That's because working with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience and an ongoing mental toughness. Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work.

Despite the many challenges, Prairie Land Electric's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers



Kirk Girard

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Pictured below from left: James Nobert earned first place in our scholarship contest; youth trips remained on hiatus in 2021 due to COVID-19. Purchasing Agent Kevin Black volunteered to host a game at the Norton County Fair. Journeyman Lineman Luke Lister delivered a bike to one of our safety poster winners and a check to his teacher. Over the holidays, employees donated food, money and toys for local food banks and the Christmas Blessings program. Member Services Assistant Kenzie Griffiths and Customer Service Representative Jamie Leduc presented a check to the Concordia Food Bank. Technical Assistant Kelly Jones joined four other employees at Sebelius Lake to cook 600 hamburgers on the Prairie Land grill for the OK Kids Day in June. Journeyman Lineman Brett McChesney and Member Services Director John Atkins drove a bucket truck in the Norton Veteran's Day Parade.



Concern for Community *Excerpt from the 2021 Annual Report*

Our employees live and work in the counties we serve. They serve on boards and councils, attend churches, send their kids to our schools, coach sports and participate in countless other activities. Prairie Land and our members are one and the same, and we are happy for opportunities to support our local communities in a variety of ways.

Economic Development

While we don't have the expertise or resources to directly impact economic development, we have worked closely to support the Sunflower Electric Economic Development

(S.E.E.D.) program offered by the generation and transmission cooperative that provides our electric power. S.E.E.D. focuses on assisting communities to develop and certify sites and on building the capacity to compete for new business projects.

Safety Demonstrations

The highly-anticipated safety demonstration model started traveling the territory by trailer in 2021, targeting emergency personnel and schools. Built with genuine, life-size equipment, the model is assembled on site. Local lineworkers set up and perform the demonstrations when possible. The presentation is aimed at reducing electrical contact accidents among the public.

Youth Programs

In 2021, our traditional youth tours and trips were converted to scholarships due to COVID-19. Winners of a \$1,500 scholarship were **JAMES NOBERT** of Clyde and **PHILLIP SHIRKEY** of Concordia. Morland's **LEAH LINDENMAN**



Safety Coordinator Garrett Willour got third graders into full safety gear to drop an egg from a bucket truck to test the engineering of their containers. His daughter, Adlie, happened to be in the class.

Journeyman Lineman Ryan Culwell leads a safety presentation in St. Francis.



and Stuttgart's **TREVOR JOHNSON** won \$1,000 each.

The annual safety poster contest for third graders continues to bring in several hundred entries, providing an impressive display of electrical safety concepts. The top three designers win a bike and helmet, and their classroom earns cash for supplies. **RUGAR BRYANT** of Clifton-Clyde, **CRUZ VAN PATTEN** of Northern Valley and **COOPER BUFFINGTON** of St. Francis were our winners.

Employee Service

Prairie Land receives countless requests for donations regularly, and we do have a modest budget to contribute to local organizations. Oftentimes, we can make a bigger impact with volunteers and equipment. Whether it's staffing a game at the county fair, using trucks to help beautify a city, hauling out the grill, joining a parade, or giving kids a ride in the bucket, we appreciate the opportunity to be an essential part of our communities.



Pictured above from left: Journeyman Lineman Austin Wieden hung Christmas decorations for the City of Agra. Journeyman Lineman David Rose decorated a bucket truck for the holiday parade in St. Francis. Crews donated equipment and labor for a major reimagining of Pleasant Ridge Church to a community center in Phillips County. Staff from Prairie Land and Sunflower Electric Power toured new businesses in Courtland after introducing Republic County leaders to the Sunflower Electric Economic Development resources. Crews provided mutual aid to Western Cooperative Electric after the Dec. 15 windstorm. The new safety demonstration model started touring in 2021 — Metering and Apparatus Technician Keath Christy ran the main power supply for a demonstration in Norton. Smith Center crews unloaded and set up the model for a demonstration in Kensington. Journeyman Lineman Blake Krien set a model on fire during a demonstration in St. Francis. (It's all part of the show.)

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are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done, often days later. That's why the lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to the community.

Nationwide, there are approximately 120,000 electric lineworkers. Here at Prairie Land, we have 46 lineworkers that are responsible for keeping power flowing 24/7, 365 days a year. To do this, they maintain 6,989 miles of power lines across parts of 18 counties. In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing utility poles to repair a wire. Today's lineworkers are information experts who can pinpoint power outages from miles away. Line crews now use laptops, tablets,

drones and other technologies to map outages, survey damage and troubleshoot problems.

Being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, but it is absolutely essential to the life of our community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hardworking men and women, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.

So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power. Please join us as we recognize them on Monday, April 11, and follow "#ThankALineworker" on social media to see how others are recognizing lineworkers.

Leadership Program Winners



Sophie Imm
Phillipsburg



Cappi Hoeting
Stockton



Erin Johnson
Kirwin



Makenna Russom
Phillipsburg

Prairie Land has a long tradition of sponsoring high school juniors for all-expense-paid trips designed to enrich their leadership potential. Students have benefitted from leadership camps in Colorado, youth tours in Washington, D.C., and scholarships.

This year, the traditional youth tour has been replaced with a new Kansas Electric Youth (KEY) Leadership Conference held in Topeka June 5-8. Then, after a few years hiatus due to COVID-19, the beloved Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp is back near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, July 15-21.

The competitors came to the head-

quarters on Feb. 13 to complete an examination and participate in interviews.

Our winners are pictured above. **SOPHIE IMM** of Phillipsburg and **CAPPI HOETING** of Stockton chose to attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp. **ERIN JOHNSON** of Kirwin and **MAKENNA RUSSOM** of Phillipsburg will attend the KEY Leadership Conference.

This is an outstanding opportunity for these students to network with other young leaders, learn about electric cooperatives, practice some engineering and watch our government in action. Congratulations to these impressive young leaders!

Plan Ahead to Dig Safely

Damaging underground utilities can be costly, dangerous, and disruptive. Before picking up your shovel for your next project, plan ahead to be safe or you just might dig up trouble or even tragedy.

Call 811 a few business days before your planned digging date. Once you have reported where you plan to dig and what type of work you will complete, the area will be surveyed and marked for public utilities within two to three days. This service is free of charge.

If you have any private utilities, you will need to hire a private utility locator. Examples of private utilities include underground sprinkler system, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.

Once all marks have been made to indicate the location of underground utilities in the area, respect the boundaries, and dig carefully. Keep at least 24 inches away from the utility line markings. It can be helpful to excavate by hand when more control is needed to maintain this safe distance.

Stop work immediately if contact is made with an underground line. Your first priority should be evacuating the area for safety. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and the affected utility. Even small nicks in underground lines can be expensive, but necessary, to fix.

If you believe it may be an electrical line that was damaged, warn those nearby that the ground and any nearby equipment may be energized. Individuals should take precautions to prevent becoming electricity's path to ground by remaining still with both feet together. If the area must be evacuated, keep your feet together and hop to safety as you leave the area. Do not resume work until the area has been confirmed safe by your electric utility.

For more information about digging safely, visit Call811.com



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.