

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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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

### Save a Life: Avoid Distractions While Driving

While driving, we typically hear that “ding” on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn’t, but we reason that we’re going to make an exception — just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and in many states, illegal? Call it hubris. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young drivers and school buses back on the road, I thought it would be a good time to remind folks, including myself, of the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. I find this statistic heartbreaking considering so many of these accidents could easily be avoided if we’d simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or



Kirk Girard

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## PLAY IT SAFE. THAT TEXT CAN WAIT.



**If it’s an emergency, pull over before answering the phone.**

## Prairie Land Youth Attend KEY Leadership Conference

**ERIN JOHNSON** of Kirwin and **MAKENNA RUSSOM** of Phillipsburg were among 17 Kansas student delegates who attended the Kansas Electric Youth (KEY) Leadership Conference, held June 5-8 in Topeka. Johnson and Russom were selected to represent Prairie Land Electric at this exclusive leadership conference through a competitive application process that evaluated the leadership ability, community involvement and academic accomplishment of each candidate.

The KEY Leadership Conference was created as an alternative to the long-standing Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., as a safer alternative during the pandemic.

"Prairie Land is honored to sponsor our co-op's youth in developing their leadership capabilities at the KEY Leadership Conference," said Kirk Girard, CEO. "We continue to look to programs like these to provide our future leaders tools to advocate for their cooperative communities throughout their professional lives."

The four-day conference focused on the fundamentals of leadership and hands-on engagement with students representing Kansas communities. Activities included an electric safety demonstration at FreeState Electric and a tour of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Site. The students attended interactive workshops to help prepare them for success as future leaders, including seminars about online reputation management, budgeting and investment, defensive driving, energy efficiency and the transition between high school and higher education.

Student leaders explored how to be a force for

political action with state legislators Rep. Steven Johnson and Rep. Kyle Hoffman, who are both alumni of electric cooperative youth programs. They acted as guest speakers and gave the students a night tour of the Kansas State Capitol. After answering questions from the students about their reasons for entering public service and how they spend a typical day as a legislator, they shared school and career advice for the students.

The final guest speaker was Kansas City Chiefs mascot Dan Meers, author of "Wolves Can't Fly." He shared an inspirational story of his recovery from a devastating stunt injury.

Prairie Land also sent chaperones to the conference. Engineer **DAKOTA JULIAN** and his wife, **JACQUELINE**, attended all of the activities and mentored a team of five to six students over the course of the week.

For both Johnson and Russom, attending the conference as a representative of Prairie Land was a motivating experience. "The people here have taught me so much based purely by example," Johnson said. "I feel honored to be here."

"This conference has inspired me to go out of my comfort zone," Russom said. "I have always been super hesitant to try new things and the chaperones did a great job when it came to encouragement."

After attending the KEY Leadership Conference, students are eligible to apply for the KEC Auxiliary Scholarship and the NRECA Glenn English Scholarship. For more information about the KEY Leadership Conference or other KEC youth programs, contact Shana Read at [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org).



Makenna Russom, Phillipsburg, proved to be a talented ax thrower, finishing in the top three among conference attendees.



Erin Johnson, Kirwin, soared to new heights when the group visited FreeState, a Topeka-area electric cooperative.



Prairie Land's Dakota Julian (center), engineer, and his wife, Jacqueline, pose with KC Wolf while chaperoning the conference.

## Congratulations on 20 Years of Service

Prairie Land extends congratulations and appreciation to Dave Bainter and Alisha Stark for 20 years of service to our members.



**Dave Bainter**  
20 Years

**DAVE BANTER** began his employment with Prairie Land Electric on Aug. 5, 2002, as the heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician. He installs ground source heat pumps, solar water pumps and heating and air conditioning systems.

Dave and his wife, Vicki, live in Norton and are enjoying their four grandsons and two granddaughters in Norton, Hoxie and Quinter. In his spare time, he likes to bow hunt and do taxidermy.

**ALISHA STARK** began working as an accountant for Prairie Land Electric on Aug. 7, 2002. She advanced to office manager in 2011 and has been serving as director of finance since 2019.

Alisha and her husband, Jeremiah, live in Norton and have two children: Avery, age 17, and Parker, age 13.

In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with family and traveling.



**Alisha Stark**  
20 Years

## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM UTILITY SCAMS



- ▶ Never give personal information to an unknown visitor or caller.
- ▶ Demands for payment by gift card or cryptocurrency should immediately raise red flags.
- ▶ When in doubt, call your electric co-op directly.

## Save a Life: Avoid Distractions

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entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

Another way we can help keep the roads safe is by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At Prairie Land Electric, safety is foremost in everything we do — for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We can all use reminders about the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you'll discuss the subject with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let's work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: That text can wait and waiting just might save a life.

## Driving Behind Farm Equipment: Do Your Part

Spring planting and fall harvest are busy times. There are big equipment and implements on the road. Navigating roadways can be dangerous for both equipment operators and auto drivers.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 410 farmers and farm workers died from work-related injuries in 2019. Transportation incidents, including overturned tractors, were the leading cause of death for this group.

Follow these tips to make it safer for everyone involved:

### Equipment Operators

- ▶ Make sure all flashers and lights are operational.
- ▶ Drive as far to the right side of the road as possible when going around a curve.
- ▶ Pull over and allow vehicles to pass when traffic builds up behind you.
- ▶ Take care at railroad crossings.
- ▶ Avoid traveling during busy traffic times.
- ▶ Be mindful of the height and width of machinery, watching power lines, bridges and other hazards.
- ▶ Along with turn signals, use hand signals.
- ▶ Stay rested; do not drive too tired or hungry.
- ▶ Keep a first-aid kit onboard in case of emergencies.

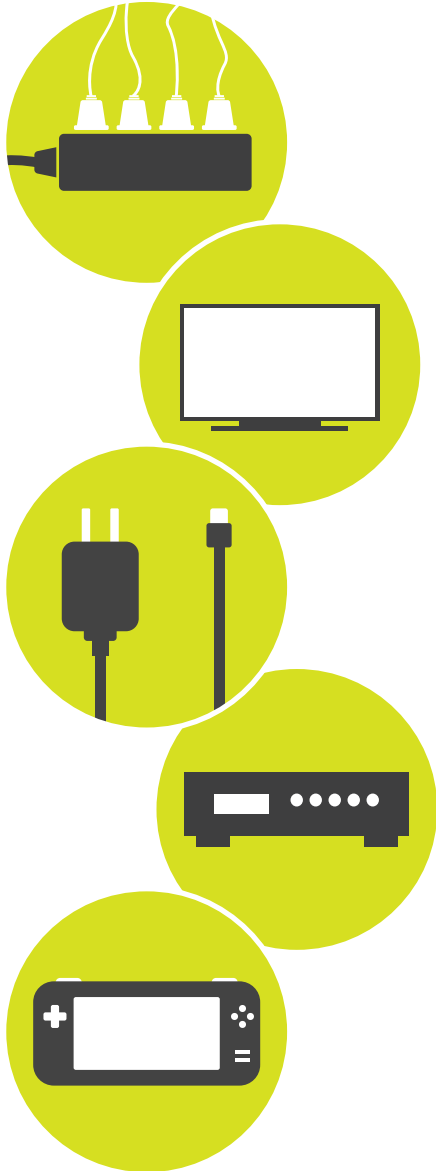
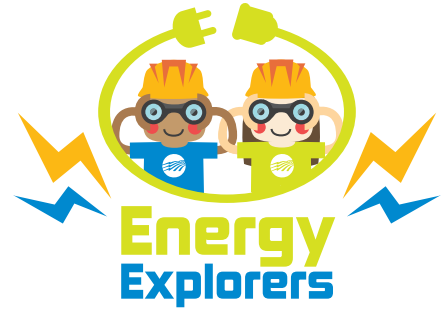
### Auto Drivers

- ▶ Think about how long it will take to get to your destination and add extra time for busy farm roads.
- ▶ Give farmers plenty of room on the road. If a piece of equipment takes up the entire road, pull into a driveway or area and wait for them to pass.
- ▶ When passing, be sure you do so in a passing zone where there is clear visibility around farm equipment. Watch for oncoming vehicles.
- ▶ Go slow. Farm operators often stop or turn into fields. In addition, cars going at or over the speed limit can catch up to farm machinery quickly, since farmers in equipment move slowly.
- ▶ Do not assume that a farmer can move over in narrow areas — it is not always possible.
- ▶ Do not tailgate; the farmer often cannot see you. Honk or motion when passing. They may not know you are there as their equipment is big and noisy.
- ▶ Do not pass and then slow suddenly in front of equipment with implements behind it or farm trucks full of grain. They cannot stop quickly.
- ▶ Farmers make very wide turns. Give them plenty of time and room.

# ELECTRONICS WORD SCRAMBLE

You can be more energy efficient by turning off unused electronics. Many electronics consume energy even when they're not being used. Unplug them to save energy.

Unscramble the letters below to reveal electronics you can turn off when not in use. Use the pictures for clues and check your work in the answer key.



1. NEPOH EHGRAC

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2. MGAE NOESCLO

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3. LCAEB XBO

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4. EWROP PRTIS

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5. ONSILEETIV

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## WORD BANK

Power strip      Television      Game console  
 Cable box      Phone charger

ANSWER KEY: 1) PHONE CHARGER 2) GAME CONSOLE 3) CABLE BOX 4) POWER STRIP 5) TELEVISION