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**PRAIRIE LAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**



NEWS

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

Power Restoration: Lessons Learned from Line Crews BY PAUL WESSLUND

Whether the lights go out because of weather or squirrels, safety comes first for lineworkers

You can learn a lot about power outages and restoration by watching, from a safe distance of course, a utility crew at work.

The first thing you'll notice is the deliberate, careful pace. They deploy signs to alert motorists. They mark the work area with orange cones. Always in hardhats and fire-protective clothing, anyone working on a power line pulls on heavy rubber gloves and spreads insulating blankets over the wires. Those gloves they pulled on have been tested by a machine that blows air into them to make sure there's not even a pinhole that could allow a deadly electric current to pass through.

And there's more you won't see. That morning, they likely huddled at the back of a truck to discuss what each of them would be doing that day, with an

emphasis on safety. It's a best practice in the industry — so common it's often called a "tailgate meeting" or "tool-box talk."

Making Safety a Habit

There are a lot of reasons your electricity might go off, with weather by far the leading cause. But to a lineworker, all power outage repairs have one thing in common — safety.

Safety is common sense — people want to get home alive, after all. But it's also drilled into the utility workers. In their pole-climbing contests, the fastest time will get disqualified with the slightest safety misstep.

Co-op leadership makes it clear that skipping any safety measure or proce-

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PRACTICE STORM SAFETY

Have a plan in place and make a storm kit.

Listen to local alerts and know where to shelter.

Stay off the roads if trees or power lines are down.



Beware of Electric Shock Drowning

“If you feel a shock, swim away from the dock,” is a good thing to remember when swimming. Knowing what to do if water becomes electrified can help swimmers avoid an invisible hazard called electric shock drowning (ESD).

Outdated wiring and a lack of proper safety equipment on boats and docks can cause situations where electricity seeps or leaks into the water. It is a particularly dangerous hazard because it is impossible to tell by looking if water is energized. According to the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention

Association, between 10 and 15 milliamps, which is just 1/50 the wattage of a 60-watt lightbulb, can cause drowning.

Safe Electricity recommends that individuals do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If you are in the water and feel electric current, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not swim to boat or dock ladders to get out.

If you see someone who you suspect is getting shocked, do not immediately jump in to save them. Throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible, then call 911 for help.



Congratulations to Our Graduates



Foreman Waylon Lawson (left), Concordia, with his son, Braxton Lawson.



Foreman Spencer Ketterl (left), Oberlin, with his son Ryan Ketterl.



Norton employees with children graduating are (from left): Safety Coordinator Garrett Willour with his son, Matt Willour; Nataley Schumaker with her dad, Director of Technical Services Shane Schumaker; and Lilly Beikman with her dad, Crew Foreman Gary Beikman.



Crew Foreman Marshall Hespe (left), St. Francis, with daughter Nellie Hespe.



ONE MORE CAST could be deadly

Don't become part of a tragic fishing story. Keep an eye on weather conditions and know when to call it a day.

SOURCE: NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY COUNCIL

SEEK SHELTER

If you see or hear signs of weather rolling in, stop fishing and retreat to a four-sided building or hard-top car. If you ignore the signs and keep fishing, it could cost you your life.



WAIT 30 MINUTES

Wait 30 minutes after you see or hear lightning before heading back outside.

REMEMBER

Always look up for overhead power lines before casting.



LIGHTNING FACTS 2006-2020



Two-thirds of lightning deaths occurred during outdoor activities.



Of those deaths, 33% happened during water-related activities.



Fishing accounted for most, or 44%, of those water-related activities.

Prairie Land Electric Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Prairie Land Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held April 12, 2022, at the Prairie Land headquarters in Norton.

A brisket lunch prepared by Phat Boy BBQ was served to 205 members and guests by Prairie Land employees and members of the Kansas Association for Youth (KAY) from Norton Community High School.

Prairie Land Board President Ron Griffith chaired the meeting and called it to order at 12:45 p.m. Griffith introduced our special guest, Senator Jerry Moran, who provided a brief update of current events and other items of interest to Congress. Afterward, Griffith recognized the members of the board of trustees for each district, then called on John McClymont, attorney for Prairie Land, who gave the results of the 2022 trustee election.

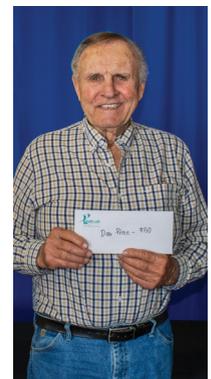
CEO Kirk Girard recognized additional special guests and gave the annual report. The report included comments on Prairie Land's financial status and company highlights for 2021.

John Atkins, director of member services, conducted the drawings for door prizes. Winners and their prizes are pictured below.

There being no further business, Griffith declared the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.



United States Senator Jerry Moran stopped in to share some remarks as we kicked off the annual meeting.



Door prize winners at the annual meeting are pictured above. Paul Cox (pictured with wife, Su) won an Evluma light, including installation. Marlene Peters won a 32-inch HD Smart TV donated by Sunflower Electric. Bill Schrum (pictured with his wife, Marilyn) won a \$100 bill credit, and \$50 bill credits were won by Ken Ruda and Margaret Wetter (not pictured).

\$1.13 Million BASE Grant Award

Prairie Land Electric Cooperative Inc. has been awarded \$1,130,490 from the Building a Stronger Economy (BASE) grant program. The grant will help fund Project Summit, an electrical infrastructure expansion project to support the electrical distribution needs of the Prairie Horizon Ethanol Plant east of Phillipsburg.

Prairie Horizon is transforming the existing corn ethanol plant (Prairie Horizon Agri-Energy) into an expanded wheat processing, vital wheat gluten extraction and low carbon fuel production business.

The Department of Commerce received 446 applications requesting a total of \$1.8 billion. Prairie Land Electric was one of just 35 applicants that were awarded grants. Investments that created long-term systemic impacts were given priority.

Project Summit is expected to create such impacts. Prairie Horizon's transition from corn ethanol to wheat processing will provide significant economic development to the area, adding approximately 50 jobs, enhancing domestic food product development, and generating low-carbon fuel.

Project Summit will require about four times more energy capacity than is currently available. As such, Prairie Land Electric will invest in additional electrical infrastructure to provide sufficient power capacity for the expansion project.

"While these upgrades are required for Project Summit, they will also provide excess load capacity for other growth and economic development in the area," said Prairie Land CEO Kirk Girard. "This capacity will allow Prairie Land Electric to connect other 34.5 kV circuits, providing redundancy and increased reliability to Phillipsburg and nearby communities, positioning them nicely for future growth."

The total cost for Project Summit is estimated at \$1,536,816. Prairie Land Electric will provide a \$406,326 match to the \$1.1 million awarded grant. Among the 35 BASE grant recipients in Kansas, the \$100 million awarded generates an additional \$889.6 million in matching investments by public and private stakeholders.

"We are honored to be chosen to receive this grant," added Girard. "This is truly a blessing for our local economy, and the grant funds, in conjunction with the additional baseload from this project, will reduce the burden on our membership, benefitting the entire region we serve."

Prairie Land Welcomes New Employee

RYAN BARNES began working for Prairie Land on April 4 as a journeyman lineworker in the Concordia area. He completed his lineworker program in Manhattan in 2014, and has most recently been working in the Burlington area for 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative.

Ryan was raised in Clifton and his wife, Rebecca, grew up in Concordia. We are delighted to have them back in the area. Ryan and Rebecca are currently expecting their first child. In his spare time, Ryan likes to go hunting and fishing.



Ryan Barnes

Power Restoration: Lessons Learned from Line Crews

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sure is a firing offense. Line crews attend lectures aimed at driving home the importance of safety protocols.

So, if you ever wonder why restoring electricity after an outage can take a while, there's a good answer: line crews never compromise on safety.

The next thing you can learn from watching a line crew at work comes from seeing what task they're doing. There's a good chance they're replacing old equipment. Poles and transformers wear out, and failing equipment is one significant cause of power outages. The crew you watch might be restoring an equipment outage, or they might be switching out an old device to prevent a future outage.

You might see them replacing a downed utility pole, a painstaking process of removing the old and hauling in and raising the new, using trucks specifically designed for the job.

Trees vs. Power Lines

The pole might be down because a motorist ran into it — another cause of outages. Or it could be weather related. Wind, ice, fires — these natural disasters cause about 80% of power outages. One characteristic of those natural disasters is that the damage can be widespread. If one pole is down, lots of others could be as well. That means crews will be repeating the pole-replacement process, one job at a time.

That's why bringing the lights back on after a major storm with widespread outages can take days, or even weeks.

It's also likely the crew you're watching will be trimming trees. Trees are beautiful but a common cause of outages as wind and nearby branches can lead to wires getting knocked to the ground. Electric cooperatives devote a lot of time and resources to urging and enforcing limits on planting anything too close to power lines. And crews regularly set up to trim limbs that get too close to the wires.

One fairly common cause of outages you probably won't learn about by watching a crew make repairs is wildlife. Squirrels and other critters routinely crawl around utility equipment, occasionally making a connection between high-voltage wires. Snakes that slither into an electric substation bring consequences — for them and the utility. Sometimes crews need to investigate and correct the cause. Often the system will reset itself after only a brief power interruption.

Lessons from the lineworkers? Outages can be caused by a variety of factors. Restoring power is an intricate process in a complex utility system. And safety — for crews and the community — will always be the top priority.

PAUL WESSLUND writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.