

**Clay Center:**  
524 Dexter, P.O. Box 513  
Clay Center, KS 67432  
785-632-3111

**Wamego:**  
1000 South Wind Dr., P.O. Box 5  
Wamego, KS 66547  
785-456-2212

[www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com)



# Bluestem NEWS

## Bluestem Electric Cooperative

### Board of Trustees

**Richard Ridder**

*President*

**Dan Pollock**

*Vice President*

**Bruce Meyer**

*Secretary*

**Donald Classen**

*Treasurer*

**Dean Blanka**

*Trustee*

**Patricia Bloomdahl**

*Trustee*

**Gary Buss**

*Trustee*

**Mark Diederich**

*Trustee*

**Ervin Gnadt**

*Trustee*

**Harold McCarter**

*Trustee*

**Steven Ohlde**

*Trustee*

### Management Staff

**Michael M. Morton**

*General Manager*

**Jason W. Moore**

*Assistant Manager*

**John Bettencourt**

*Power Communications Technician*

**Tim Diederich**

*Operations Superintendent*

**Kevin Heptig**

*Member Services Director*

**Marla J. Marshall**

*Office Manager/Accountant*

### Contact Us

**Wamego**

P.O. Box 5, Wamego, KS 66547  
785-456-2212

**Clay Center**

P.O. Box 513, Clay Center, KS 67432  
785-632-3111

## FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

# Power On

## October is National Co-op Month



**Mike Morton**

As an electric cooperative, our top priority is always to provide reliable, affordable energy to you, the consumer-members we serve. Because

we are a co-op, our mission is to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our local community — and this mission has never been more critical than in recent months. One of the seven principles that guides all co-ops is “concern for community.” To me, this principle is the essential DNA of Bluestem Electric Cooperative, and it sets us apart from other electric utilities.

October is National Co-op Month, and electric cooperatives across the country

are highlighting the many ways we “Power On.” Keeping this theme in mind, I recognize the essential role we play in serving a special community like ours.

Who would have fathomed in March, that the COVID-19 virus would amount to a test of our community and our nation? The changing circumstances due to the pandemic have created both challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we’ve all been challenged to operate differently, and Bluestem has stepped up to help our members and strengthen the safety net for our more vulnerable neighbors.

As an essential service, and to ensure reliability of your power supply, we modified our operations to safeguard business continuity. Our line crews and other employees began working on

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## Fall Back on Nov. 1

On Sunday, Nov. 1, remember to turn your clocks back one hour. It is also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors and have a professional check your fire extinguishers.



## Bluestem Nomination and Election Process

### EXCERPT FROM THE BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BYLAWS

#### SECTION 4.05 Nomination of Trustees.

The Board shall appoint a nominating committee, on or before the first of October of each year, consisting of not less than one nor more than five members from each district for whom a Trustee is to be elected. Board members may not serve on the nominating committee.

Only committee members from each district will nominate their own candidate. Committee members from districts one and two will meet together at Clay Center and committee members from districts three and four will meet together at Wamego. Nominating committees shall meet during the month of October. On or before the first day of November, the nominating committee shall prepare and post a list of nominations for Trustee at the Wamego office if a Trustee is to be elected from districts three or four, and at the Clay Center office if a Trustee is to be elected from districts one or two. The committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each position. Nominations may be made by petition filed on or before the close of business, November 30, at the Wamego office, for Trustees to be elected from districts three and four, and at the Clay Center office, for Trustees to be elected from districts one or two. The petition

must be signed by no less than 5% of the membership of the district for whom the Trustee is to be elected. The secretary shall immediately post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations by the committee is posted. Nominations made by the petition shall appear on the ballot in the order received.

#### SECTION 4.06 Election of Trustees.

The election of Trustees shall be by mail ballot. Only those nominees selected by the nominating committee or nominated by petition shall appear on the ballot. There may be write-in votes for a qualified member not named on the ballot. The ballot shall first list the name(s) nominated by the committee, then the name(s) nominated by petition in the order received and, at the end, a place to write in a name. Failure of strict compliance with provisions of this section shall not affect the validity of any election of Trustees.

The secretary shall mail the ballots to the respective members on or before the 10th day of December of each year. On or before the first day of January of each year, ballots must be postmarked or received at the Wamego office or the Clay Center office.

## Cold Weather Rule: Effective Nov. 1 – March 31

Bluestem Electric Cooperative members who are unable to pay their electric service bills during the cold weather period may qualify for this program. The requirements members must meet to qualify are summarized below:

- ▶ Members must notify Bluestem Electric of their inability to pay their bill in full.
- ▶ Members must apply to federal, state, local, or other financial assistance programs for which they may be eligible to receive aid in paying utility bills.
- ▶ Members and Bluestem Electric will reach a mutually agreeable payment arrangement.

Please note that failure to follow the above requirements, illegally diverting utility service, receiving service by tampering, or defaulting on a payment agreement will disqualify the member from receiving benefits under the Cold Weather Rule.

Bluestem Electric will send one written notice mailed first class at least five days prior to termination of service. A member may not be disconnected until a recognized regional weather forecasting agency predicts a 24-hour forecast above the activating temperature.

The co-op shall make at least one telephone call attempt and a personal contact attempt with the member of record on the day of termination of service prior to termination of service.

In no event will Bluestem Electric disconnect service if the temperature is forecast to fall below 35 degrees Fahrenheit within 24-hours following the time of disconnection.

The Cold Weather Rule is to ensure that human health and safety are not unreasonably endangered during the cold weather months.



## Know What to Do Around a Downed Power Line

Old Man Winter can create some pretty severe storms, which can interfere with power distribution or even bring down lines.

What is the most important thing to remember about a downed power line?

**DO NOT GO NEAR IT.** For any reason.

After a storm has caused damage in or alongside a roadway, be alert and slow down. Do not attempt to drive over downed lines. Do not try to drive through water or over snow or debris that may be covering downed lines. Driving over a line can pull more lines or related equipment down.

If you encounter a downed line, pull over and report the location to 911.

Here is some additional information about downed lines, which can occur after a severe storm or an accident involving a power pole.

**Q: Can I tell if a downed line is energized by looking?**

**A:** No, there is no way to tell. Always assume a downed line (or any line) is live, even if it is not buzzing or sparking.

**Q: What should I do if I am in an accident involving a power line or other electrical equipment?**

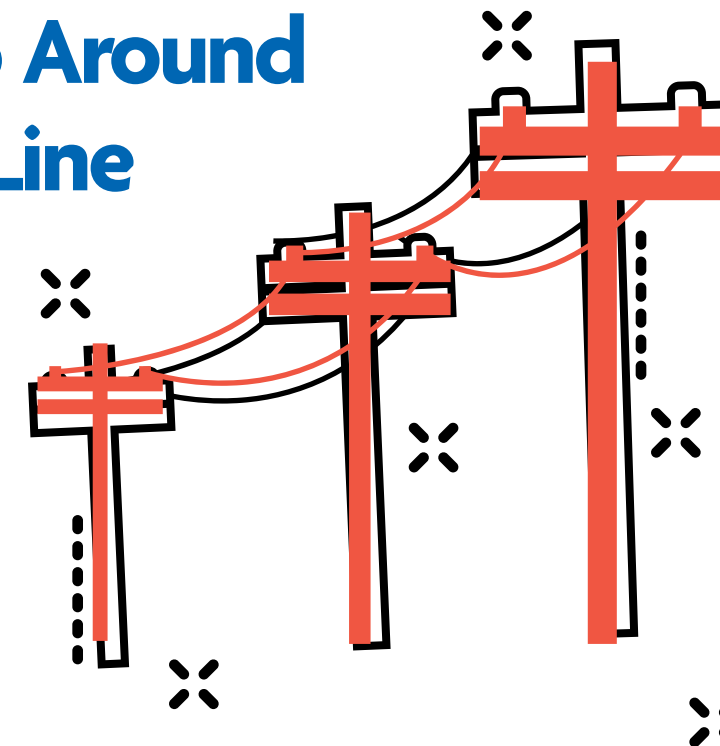
**A:** DO NOT get out of your car or truck. It is always safer to remain inside a vehicle, which acts as an insulator and keeps you out of the path of stray electricity. Call 911, and tell the dispatcher a downed line or other electrical equipment is involved. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to de-energize the electricity.

**Q: Is there any reason I should get out of the vehicle?**

**A:** Yes, but only when your vehicle is on fire or if you see smoke. If that is the case, make a clean jump from the vehicle without touching it (cross your arms closely to your chest), and then hop with feet together as far as you can — preferably 50 or more feet away.

**Q: What happens to the electrical current when a line is down?**

**A:** Once a power line is in contact with a vehicle, the ground or other objects, it energizes the area. The electrical current spreads to the vehicle and ground, and it ripples out. Each “ring” of the ripple represents a different voltage. Stepping from one voltage to the next can cause your body to become a path for electricity and electrocute you. This is why you should hop or shuffle once you make a clean jump from the vehicle. Always keep your feet together — think of hopping like a bunny or shuffling like a penguin.



**Q: What else can I do?**

**A:** Put your window down and yell to others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.

**Q: What if I can't tell what type of line is down?**

**A:** Either way still stay in your vehicle and wait for the utility personnel to arrive.

**Q: Are there any other instances when these same safety tips apply?**

**A:** Yes, the same rules apply to any type of equipment (e.g., farming and construction equipment) that comes in contact with overhead lines or electrical cabinets or equipment.

**Q: So just to review, why am I safe in my vehicle?**

**A:** Because you are not a path for electricity while in a vehicle.

**Q: What should I do if the windshield is broken and the downed wire is in my car or truck?**

**A:** Stay in the vehicle and do not touch or try to move the wire or attempt to use other objects to move the wire.

**Q: What if I hit a pad-mounted transformer (metal cabinet or green box) in a yard?**

**A:** Pad-mounted transformers house electrical equipment connected to underground power lines. The same safety precautions apply to all to these cabinets and the voltage that could stray when damaged.

## Power On: October is National Co-op Month *Continued from page 16A* ▶

staggered schedules to maintain separation. Some staff worked remotely. In the office, we limited and modified meetings and gatherings to allow for safe separation. We also adjusted our walk-in office availability and in-person service calls to ensure the health and safety of our employees and our valued members. In addition, we canceled the annual meeting for the health and safety of everyone. We think these measures were the prudent course of action for the times.

And while we certainly missed visiting with you in person, we have tried to find new ways to stay connected.

We tell you about these efforts to explain how much Bluestem cares about this community — because we live here too.

We've seen other local businesses rising to meet similar challenges during this time, because that's what communities do. While the challenges caused by COVID-19 have been daunting, I'm encouraged to see how everyone is pulling together.

From the beginning, Bluestem Electric was built by the community to serve the community, and that's what we'll continue to do — Power On.

## Bluestem Employees Accept No Lost Time Accident Award



Safety Coordinators Kevin Swenson (left) and Derek Francis (center) receive No Lost Time Accident Award Certificates from Bluestem Board President Richard Ridder (right).

Bluestem Electric Cooperative employees were recognized for their commitment to safety. Safety Coordinators **KEVIN SWENSON** and **DEREK FRANCIS** accepted the No Lost Time Accident Awards from Board President Richard Ridder at the August board of trustees meeting.

The awards, from Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, were the result of Bluestem Electric employees working safely to maintain and keep the power on, enduring all weather conditions for 278,975 employee hours from Feb. 11, 2016, to Dec. 31, 2019, without a lost time accident.

Safety is at the top of the list for the Bluestem Electric Cooperative strategic plan. The Bluestem board of trustees would like to thank and congratulate all the employees for their dedication to safe work procedures.

## Be Wary of Third-Party Bill Payment Services

Bluestem Electric **DOES NOT** charge members to make payments on our website, [www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com), through the SmartHub app or by phone. Third-party payment locations and websites are **NOT** affiliated with Bluestem Electric. Payments made through these sources cannot be guaranteed.

If you have any questions regarding making a payment, please call 785-456-2212 (Wamego) or 785-632-3111 (Clay Center).

To make an online payment, visit Bluestem Electric's website at [www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com) and look for the BEC logo. Click "Pay Online," then enter your login information.

