

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Bluestem NEWS

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

The Power Behind Your Power

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 11

You've likely noticed Bluestem 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, Bluestem Electric's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that

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The Power Behind Your Power

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bring major power outages, lineworkers 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. Bluestem Electric has 18 lineworkers that are responsible for keeping power flowing 24/7, 365 days a year. To do this, they maintain 2,862 miles of power lines across eleven 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 life in 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 the 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 "#ThankA-Lineworker" on social media to see how others are recognizing lineworkers.

LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY



APRIL 11, 2022

We thank lineworkers for their courage and commitment to powering our community.

NOTICE TO IRRIGATORS

Contract Begins June 1

The contract year for all irrigation services is June 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023. If you need to change the rate for any of your irrigation services for any reason, please notify the office by May 1.

The appropriate equipment must be installed for the load management rate by the beginning of the contract year. If you have any questions about the load management options, any current irrigation service, or any new irrigation service, please do not hesitate to contact your cooperative office.

Keep IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT and water streams 15 feet away from overhead power lines.



Electric Lineworkers Keep the Power Moving

When people flip a light switch, they may not give much thought to why or how the light comes on.

Electric lineworkers provide an essential service: They work hard to install and maintain overhead and underground power lines that keep electricity flowing. These specialized workers are on call 24/7 in case severe storms or other circumstances cause the power to go out.

Lineworkers work with high-voltage electricity, often at great heights, in all kinds of weather conditions, such as snow, wind, rain, ice and extreme heat and cold. The work required to maintain the power grid is physically demanding. To become proficient, most lineworkers go through a technical training program and first learn on the job as apprentices under the careful eye of seasoned lineworkers who have earned journeyman status.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, electric power line installers and repairers typically:

- ▶ Install, maintain and repair the power lines that move electricity.
- ▶ Identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers and switches.
- ▶ Inspect and test power lines and auxiliary equipment.
- ▶ String (install) power lines between poles, towers and buildings.
- ▶ Climb poles and transmission towers and use truck-mounted buckets to get to equipment.
- ▶ Operate power equipment when installing and repairing poles, towers and lines.
- ▶ Drive work vehicles to job sites.
- ▶ Know and implement safety standards and procedures.

When a problem is reported, lineworkers must identify the cause and fix it. This usually involves diagnostic testing using specialized equipment and repair work. To work on poles, they usually use bucket trucks to raise themselves to the top of the structure, although all lineworkers must be adept at climbing poles and towers when necessary. Workers use specialized safety equipment to keep them from falling when climbing utility poles and towers.

Storms and other natural disasters

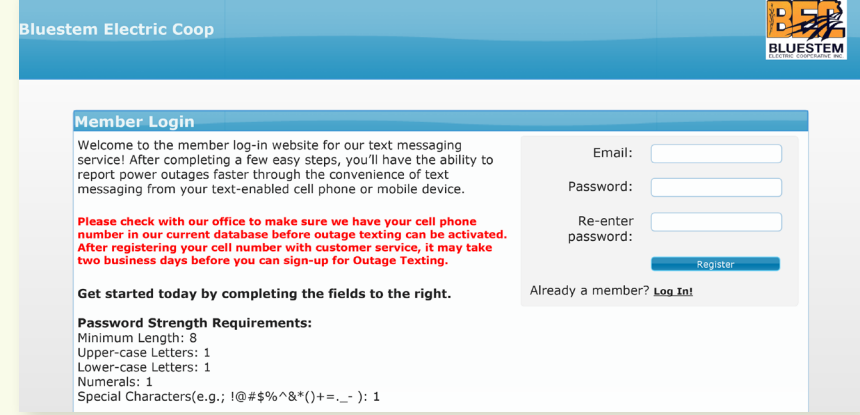
can cause extensive damage to power lines. When power is lost, lineworkers must work quickly to restore service to customers.

Although everyone at Bluestem Electric Cooperative works hard to provide reliable service, we salute our lineworkers who work around the clock to keep the power on. Their safety, as well as yours, is our top priority.

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Set Up Outage Text Reporting

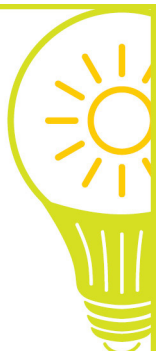
- ▶ Check with the Bluestem office to make sure your cell phone number is listed on your account.
- ▶ Go to the following link in a new window to set-up service: [HTTPS://NOTIFICATIONS.CRC.COOP/?UID=6727](https://notifications.crc.coop/?UID=6727)
- ▶ Follow the instructions on the above link to set-up an account that will allow outage text reporting.
- ▶ Once you receive a text verification code on your cell phone enter it into the window prompt on your computer to confirm your account and click "submit." You are now ready to report an outage at your location(s). A welcome message should be sent to your cell phone.
- ▶ View your account set-up screen on your computer and associate key words for each account based on their service location (e.g. "Home", "Well", "Shop", "Irrigation", etc.). Use these key words when texting outages to allow Bluestem crews to expedite restoration time (e.g. "outage home", "outage well").



ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

When streaming content, use the smallest device that makes sense for the number of people watching. Avoid streaming on game consoles, which use 10 times more power than streaming through a tablet or laptop. Streaming content with electronic equipment that has earned the ENERGY STAR® rating will use 25%-30% less energy than standard equipment.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



Be Aware of Utility Poles When Burning!

Before burning, check the property for electrical equipment and power poles to avoid damage and potential outages. Electrical power lines and transmission equipment can pose special hazards for prescribed burns. Special consideration during the planning and conducting of a prescribed burn can eliminate or greatly reduce injury and damage from these factors. When burning under or near electrical power lines or high voltage transmission lines, exercise extreme care. Mow or remove vegetation from around any poles or equipment. Back burn to create a fire break and keep people and equipment away from overhead power lines. The following situations can lead to injury or death:

► **SMOKE BUILDUP:** Smoke consists of carbon particles, which can conduct electricity. If the concentration of carbon is high enough, an electrical discharge from the line to the ground, like lightning, can occur. The discharge hazard increases as line voltage increases, distance to the ground decreases, and the amount of smoke increases. Such discharges have killed fire fighters. To reduce the potential for discharges, the fire front should not be allowed to cross under the lines in large areas. By properly

coordinating the location of the burn with the wind direction or by lighting the fire parallel to the line, no major smoke buildup can occur.

► **WATER AND POWER LINES:** When working below power lines with water hoses, extreme care must be taken to keep water streams out of overhead lines. Water will conduct electricity and the water stream will act as a conductor. Water should never be directed toward the power line or poles.

► **DOWNED POWER LINES:** Power lines can be downed during a prescribed burn by vehicles colliding with poles or poles being burned. If power lines are downed, there are two hazards: the lines themselves and the combination of lines on wire fences, which can produce the potential for electrical shock for long distances. When lines are downed, they become hard to see and people or vehicles can run into them. Electrocutation or serious shock injury can occur. Also, wildfires can be started by the downed lines arcing. If lines fall on fences, a new hazard is created. Electricity will be conducted by the fence wires for long distances. As long as the wires contact each other, there is the po-

tential for electrical shock or death. Always assume any downed power line is energized. Keep everyone away and call 911 immediately.

If any poles are damaged by a fire, the person starting the fire could be liable for the damage to Bluestem Electric's equipment and the cost associated with repairing the damage.



DON'T DRIVE DISTRACTED

For your safety and the safety of crews who often work roadside, do one thing at a time. Put all your attention on driving — the rest can wait.

SOURCES: NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL, AAA

FACT VS. MYTH				
	Drivers can multitask.	Hands-free calling is safe.	Texting at red lights is OK.	Voice-to-text is safe.
	The human brain cannot do two things at once; it switches between tasks, slowing reaction time.	Drivers on a call can miss seeing up to 50% of what they need to, including pedestrians and red lights.	People are distracted up to 27 seconds after texting, often well after the light turns green.	Your mind is thinking of what to say, and you could be visually distracted by autocorrected errors.
	THAT TEXT OR CALL CAN WAIT. GET WHERE YOU ARE GOING SAFELY.			