BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.
1000 South Wind Dr., P.O. Box 5
Wamego, KS 66547
800-558-1580
www.bluestemelectric.com

Bluestem NEWS

FROM THE MANAGER

Clearing the Path to Reliability

Mike Morton

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. And, we know our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That is why Bluestem Electric strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

RELIABILITY

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we have seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Bluestem Electric crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

Continued on page 12B ▶

COMPLETE OUR MEMBER SURVEY

Bluestem Electric Cooperative is conducting a member satisfaction survey. Please scan the QR code to take the survey. If you have a valid email with us on file you may have already received an email from **NOREPLY-CFI-GROUP@QUALTRICS-SURVEY.COM.** This is an email invitation from ACSI to take our member satisfaction survey. We appreciate your time and input. Thank you for being a member of Bluestem Electric Cooperative!

1 Confirm your cellphone number is listed on your account by calling the BEC office.

2 Visit https://notifications.crc.coop/?uid=6727 or scan the QR code.

3 Accept the user agreement and complete an online form to create a text reporting account.

4 You will receive a text verification code on your cellphone. Enter the code into the form to confirm your account. Click submit. You are now ready to report an outage at your location(s).

5 If you have multiple accounts, you can add keywords based on service location (e.g. home, well, shop, irrigation, etc.). Use these keywords when texting outages (e.g., outage home, outage well) to help BEC crews to expedite restoration times.

Clearing the Path to Reliability

Continued from page 12A ▶

Plus, it is more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact.

SAFETY

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

AFFORDABILITY

As a co-op, Bluestem Electric always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they are planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 feet or smaller) should be planted at least 25 feet from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 feet) should be planted at least 50 feet from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 feet from the transformer door and 4 feet from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that is dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting 800-558-1580.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

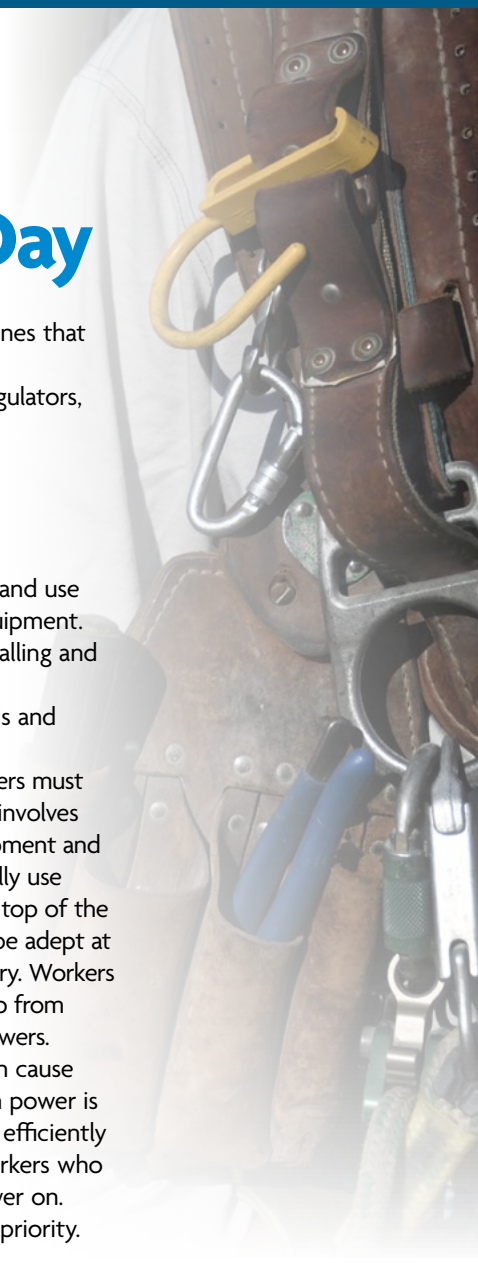
NOTICE TO IRRIGATORS

Contract Begins June 1

The contract year for all irrigation services is June 1, 2024, through May 31, 2025. If you need to change the rate for any of your irrigation services, please notify our office by May 1. Horsepower charges will appear on your May bill.

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 our office at 800-558-1580.

Thank a Lineworker
on Lineworker Appreciation Day



Electric lineworkers provide an essential service: They 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 power outages.

Lineworkers work with high-voltage electricity, often at great heights, in all kinds of weather conditions. Maintaining the power grid is physically demanding. To become proficient, most lineworkers complete a technical training program and first learn on the job as apprentices under the careful eye of seasoned lineworkers who have earned journeyman status.

Electric power line installers and repairers held approximately 122,400 jobs in 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Nearly half of these employees worked for electric power generation, transmission and distribution utilities.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

Lineworkers spend numerous hours in safety training each year and must understand and apply crucial safety regulations.

Protective clothing is required to shield lineworkers since they work around high voltages. Collectively, gear components can weigh up to 45 pounds. According to the U.S. BLS, electric power line workers typically:

- Install, maintain or repair the power lines that move electricity.
- Identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers and switches.
- Inspect and test power lines and auxiliary equipment.
- Install power lines between poles, towers and buildings.
- Climb poles and transmission towers and use truck-mounted buckets to access equipment.
- Operate power equipment when installing and repairing poles, towers and lines.
- 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 from falling when climbing utility poles and towers.

Storms and other natural disasters can cause extensive damage to power lines. When power is lost, line repairers must work safely and efficiently to restore 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.

BLUESTEM BRINGS LEGISLATORS TO COMMUNITY

On Feb. 10, Bluestem Electric Cooperative and Flint Hills REC, Council Grove, co-hosted a Legislative Forum at the Pearl Community Center in Alta Vista.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE KENNY TITUS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE NATHAN BUTLER and **SENATOR BRENDA DIETRICH**, gave legislative updates and answered questions.

In attendance from Bluestem Electric were General Manager Michael Morton and Manager of Member Services Kevin Heptig.

FROM LEFT: Representative Kenny Titus, Senator Brenda Dietrich and Representative Nathan Butler participate in the 2024 Legislative Forum.

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 firefighters. 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. Electrocution 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 potential for electrical shock or death.

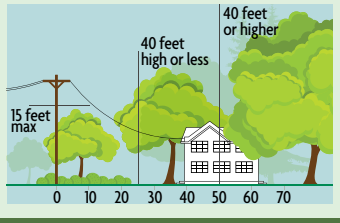
Always assume any downed power line is energized. Keep everyone away and call 911 immediately. If any poles are damaged by a fire, the person starting the fire could be liable form the damage to Bluestem Electric's equipment and the cost associated with repairing the damage.

Before burning, check the property for electrical equipment — like this pad-mounted transformer — and power poles to avoid damage and potential outages.

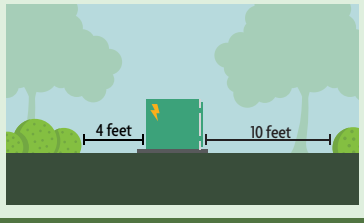
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to power lines? We do everything we can to avoid trimming them, but **here's how you can help:**

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be less than 40 feet tall should be planted at least 25 feet away from power lines (greater than 40 feet tall should be planted at least 50 feet away).



2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 feet away from transformer doors and 4 feet from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, let us know.

Trimming improves safety for all. Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees AND reliable electricity.