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Clay Center, KS 67432
785-632-3111

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Bluestem NEWS

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Clay Center

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

On April 13, Remember to #ThankALineworker

Lineworkers serve on the frontlines of our nation's energy needs, and on April 13, 2020, Bluestem Electric Cooperative, along with other electric cooperatives across the country, will honor the brave men and women who work hard to keep the lights on.

Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing to our local communities. Whether they're restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers are at the heart of our co-op.

When a storm hits, they set aside their personal priorities because

Mother Nature doesn't work around holidays, vacations and birthdays. A service-oriented mentality is one of the many admirable characteristics of an electric lineworker.

Bluestem Electric is proud to honor the 18 lineworkers who maintain 2,861 miles of power lines in the cooperative's service territory.

To honor them, Bluestem Electric invites all co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for the important work they do. On April 13, you can use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support for the brave men and women who power our lives.

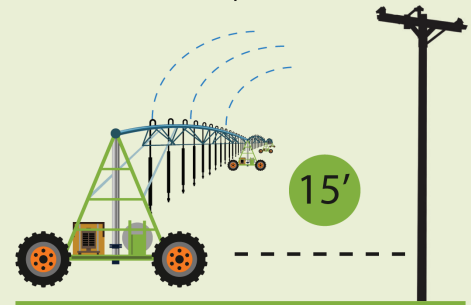


NOTICE TO IRRIGATORS — Contract Begins June 1

The contract year for all irrigation services is June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021. If you need to change the rate for any of your irrigation services for any reason, please notify the business 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.



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 POWERLINES** 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 from 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 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 for the damage to Bluestem Electric's equipment and the cost associated with repairing the damage.



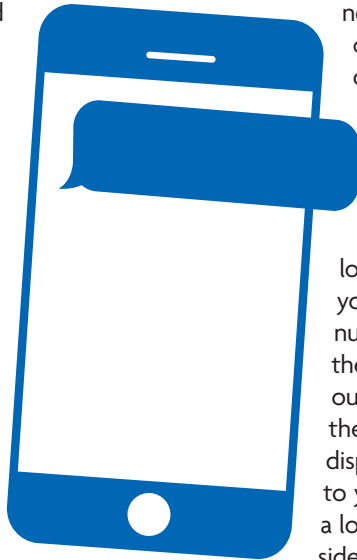
Please check your property for electrical equipment and take precautions prior to burning to avoid damaging the equipment.



A Faster Way to Report an Outage

When you text the word “outage” to 55050 it notifies us that you are without power. You will receive a text that says “Outage Reported Successfully.” When your electric service has been restored, you will get a second message that says “Power in your area has been restored.”

Reporting your outage by texting should only be used to report a total service outage. If you need to report items such as blinks, partial power, broken pole or other service-related items, or



need to report a safety concern, please call the office at 785-456-2212 in Wamego and 785-632-3111 in Clay Center.

Before texting, verify your service is without power by looking at your meter. If you cannot see the digital numbers in the display, then there truly is a service outage. If you can see the numbers in the digital display, then there is power to your meter and you have a localized issue on your side of the meter. You will need to check for tripped breakers or blown fuses, or will need to contact your electrician.

Reporting Your Power Outage by Text

How do I sign up for outage texting?

- ▶ **STEP 1** Contact Bluestem Electric at 785-456-2212 (Wamego) or 785-632-3111 (Clay Center) to confirm the correct cell phone number listed on your account.
- ▶ **STEP 2** Go to [HTTP://TEXTING.CRC.COOP/DEFAULT.ASPX?U=6727](http://texting.crc.coop/default.aspx?u=6727) and follow the instructions as listed on the Member Login page. (See actual member login screen below.)

Member Login

Welcome to the member log-in website for our text messaging service! After completing a few easy steps, you'll have the ability to report power outages faster through the convenience of text messaging from your text-enabled cell phone or mobile device.

Please check with our office to make sure we have your cell phone number in our current database before outage texting can be activated. After registering your cell number with customer service, it may take two business days before you can sign-up for Outage Texting.

Get started today by completing the fields to the right.

Password Strength Requirements:

Minimum Length: 8
Upper-case Letters: 1
Lower-case Letters: 1
Numerals: 1
Special Characters(e.g., !@#\$%^&*()+=,.-~): 1

Email:

Password:

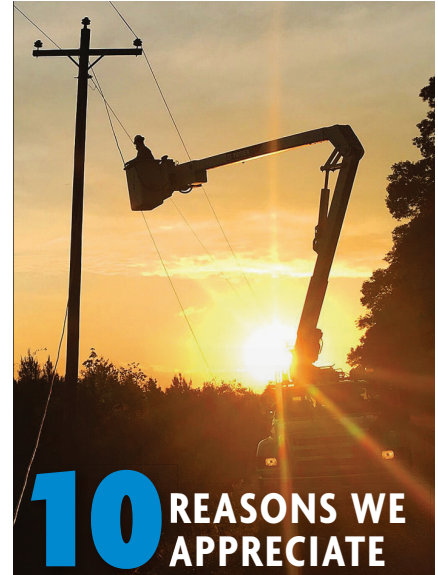
Re-enter password:

Already a member? [Log In!](#)

- ▶ **STEP 3** Once you receive a text verification on your cell phone, you are ready to report an outage at your location(s).

How do I report an outage via text?

- ▶ Text “Outage” to **55050**. If multiple accounts, add a key word after “Outage” — such as home, well, irrigation, etc. — depending on how you have the account listed.
- ▶ When CRC receives your message they will autorespond with “Outage reported.”
- ▶ When power is restored you will receive the message “Power Restored.”



10 REASONS WE APPRECIATE LINEWORKERS

Although we appreciate each and every co-op employee, it takes a special kind of person to be an electric lineworker. Here are the top 10 reasons we appreciate our lineworkers.

- 10 They are specially trained to work on power lines and related equipment.
- 9 They are dedicated to safely and efficiently restoring power following weather or outages.
- 8 They work overtime, many holidays and get up in the middle of the night to help restore power.
- 7 They enjoy serving our communities.
- 6 They aren't afraid of heights.
- 5 They help other electric co-ops with major outages at a moment's notice.
- 4 They lend their talents in many ways, including educating the public about electrical safety.
- 3 They have each other's backs.
- 2 They are trained to work safely on both dead and live power lines.
- 1 We couldn't provide excellent service without them or any of our other dedicated employees.

Respect the Orange Signs and Cones

Many people say they can't find enough hours in the day to complete all their tasks. For that reason, they try to use drive time to be productive. They might call their boss, text their best friend or apply mascara.

Multitasking can be an effective use of time — but not while driving.

In 2017, 799 people died in work zone accidents, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Although this reflects incidents that took place in road construction zones, know that accidents, injuries and deaths can happen in any roadside work zone, including utility work zones.

That is why we ask you to help keep our crews safe by slowing down and following work zone instructions — including moving over to give them space — anytime you see orange warning signs and cones leading up to a work zone.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground, they can threaten workers in the air. Driving too fast or not moving over can endanger a lineworker elevated in a bucket truck by causing the bucket to move or sway.

Lineworkers already face enough hazards to contend with by working high up on power lines while battling the elements. Their profession consistently ranks on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' most dangerous jobs. Do your part — please don't add noncompliant drivers to the mix.

Other 2017 statistics released by U.S. DOT's FHWA show there were:

- ▶ **203** fatal crashes where speeding was a factor
- ▶ **222** fatal work zone crashes involving large trucks or buses
- ▶ **132** worker fatalities in road construction sites

Do us a favor, drive safely and undistracted.

Beautify Your Yard, Not Utility Equipment

Green or grey utility boxes, known as pad-mounted or padmount transformers, are part of the supply chain that helps provide power to your neighborhood. Those boxes sit on an easement allowing our utility workers access to them.

What are the green boxes for? Their job is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires supplying power to the lights and appliances in homes.

Please do not paint, enhance, block or otherwise obstruct padmount transformers. By respecting all utility equipment, including meters and transformers, you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe.

As you beautify your yard this spring and summer, Bluestem reminds you of these safety tips:

- ▶ Do not plant shrubs and trees close to green box transformers or other utility equipment. Limiting or restricting access to the box in your yard could delay restoration work during an outage and create a serious safety hazard. Our crews need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of the transformer (the side that is pad-locked), as well as 4 feet of clearance on the other three sides.
- ▶ Contact us with questions about landscaping around or installing fencing near a padmount transformer (or any other changes) to learn what is allowable.

Disconnects Suspended

Bluestem will suspend all disconnects for non-payment until May 1, 2020. With Kansas Governor Laura Kelly's Executive Order No. 20-05, prohibiting utility disconnects, and with the uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic, we know that our consumer-members are facing many concerns. Effective immediately we will forgo the disconnecting of electric service to our consumer-members for non-payment until May 1, 2020. Bills, late notices and disconnect notices will continue to be sent as usual. We encourage any member who is facing financial difficulty and cannot pay their bill to call us at 785-456-2212 or 785-632-3111.

- ▶ Contact us if the transformer becomes unlocked or if it or any other type of utility equipment appears to be damaged.
- ▶ Call 811 prior to digging around a transformer and respect the clearance requirements noted above. If you dig near a transformer (even if it is beyond the clearance requirements), you could inadvertently hit a live underground cable. Always call Kansas One Call at 811 before digging so they can mark underground lines and help prevent a digging accident.
- ▶ Don't forget that with time, erosion or root structure growth may shift the locations of utility lines, so remember to call 811 each time you are planning a digging job.
- ▶ Keep in mind, 811 does not mark private utility lines such as privately installed electric lines, sprinkler systems or invisible fences. To have these utilities located and marked, you will need to contact a local private utility marker.
- ▶ Keep a clear path to the transformer. Even though the transformer seems like it is in your yard, it is technically on an easement, and our workers need clear access to it to maintain equipment and keep power running smoothly. Contact us with any questions or concerns about the safety of padmount transformers. Always teach children that they should not sit on, open or play around the green boxes.

Congratulations Shellee!



SHELLEE MAGINNESS, Bluestem member from the Westmoreland area was the winner of an Instant Pot at the Flint Hills Home Show.