



BLUESTEM
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
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New Employees at Bluestem East and West

Derek Francis is not a new face at Bluestem East for he did his summer internship at Bluestem East in 2004.

After graduating from the Manhattan Technical College's Electric Power and Distribution Program, Derek went to work for Clarke Electric Cooperative in Osceola, Iowa.



Derek Francis

Derek is the son of Debbie and Devin Francis of Wamego. His hobbies include fishing, hunting and riding motorcycles. Welcome back Derek!

Staushua Dougherty is the new Apprentice Lineman at Bluestem West.



Staushua Dougherty Bluestem.

He is originally from Phillipsburg and recently graduated from Manhattan Technical College's Electric Power and Distribution Program in December 2005.

He and wife, Billie, now live in Clay Center and are the proud parents of Harlie Christine featured in New Arrivals at

Lightning and Surge Protection

Once the snow and ice are gone, it's time to get ready for thunderstorms, lightning strikes and the summer heat! Bluestem Electric Cooperative is offering services that will help keep you safe and comfortable through all Kansas weather.

- Whole house lightning and surge protection—protect your major household appliances from lightning strikes and other power surges. With this program you can lease the basic package for only \$4.95 per month, which will be added directly to your power bill. Our technicians do the installation for a one-time fee of \$69.95. However, with our Spring Special, if you act before May 31, we will drop the installation fee to \$34.95

Additional Services to Consider...

- Security lights—have peace of mind knowing your property is well lit at night and enjoy safer working conditions in the evening.
- Cash rebates on the purchase and installation of electric water heaters or replacement of an electric water heater, energy efficient air source heat pumps and ground source heat pumps that qualify for a reduced electric rate.
- Give us a call at Bluestem for information on these and other member services.

Inspecting Your Furnace Before the Cooling Season

Your furnace has worked hard to keep you warm all winter. Now is the time to be sure it does the same for the summer, since a little attention to your heating, ventilation and air-conditioning equipment can produce big savings in the long run. The following tasks are the most important.

Clean or replace your furnace filter. All furnaces should have a filter installed in the return air duct to clean the air as it is drawn in from your home. A dirty filter will reduce the airflow through your equipment, and lower its efficiency. It's hard to say how often to replace or clean your furnace filter, since it varies a lot from home to home, two to three times per year is typical for most families, but a once a month inspection would be ideal.

The air-conditioning compressor is located outside your home. It has cooling fins that surround the compressor, which in turn have refrigerant lines located within. These fins need to be cleaned prior to the cooling season in order for the heat that is extracted from your home

to be dissipated into the air. If these fins are clogged with grass clippings, cottonwood fuzz or other matter, the efficiency of the air-conditioning unit can be reduced by as much as 30%.

Inspect your duct system for leaks by looking for gaps or feeling for escaping air. Your furnace uses a lot of energy to heat and cool your home's air, and duct leaks can waste up to 30 percent of this energy before it ever reaches your living space. If you find disconnected ducts or loose joints, seal them up with metal duct tape or with duct mastic. Avoid common gray fabric "duct tape" since it tends to come loose.

Clean your supply grills or registers. If your registers have adjustable shutters, it's best to leave them in the full-open position. Clean inside your ducts, too, for as far as you can reach from the register opening. When more air can flow through your furnace, it will operate more efficiently and won't need to run as long. This will save both energy and money.

New Arrivals At Bluestem

Congratulations to BEC Employees on the birth of:



Kendan James Blacketer

Born: January 17 at 12:45 a.m.

Weight: 8 lbs - 4 1/2 oz

Height: 22 inches long

Parents: Journeyman Lineman Steven Blacketer and wife, Melissa.



Harlie Christine Dougherty

Born: February 3 at 10:14 p.m.

Weight: 4 lbs - 4 oz

Height: 17 inches long

Parents: Apprentice Lineman Staushua Dougherty and wife, Billie



Garrison Allen Grater

Born: March 13 at 2:19 p.m.

Weight: 7 lbs - 12 oz

Height: 20 inches long

Parents: Journeyman Lineman Courtney Grater and wife, Jeanette.

What Is That Third Prong for Anyway?

Most modern appliances come with three-prong plugs and that presents a problem for homes with two-prong outlets. The solution isn't to force the three-pronger into two holes by cutting off the third prong or using a two-prong adapter, it is to update your outlets.

While that might cost a bit of money, it could save your life.

That third prong is a grounding tool. (The left prong is neutral, and the right prong is "hot.") The third or middle prong is round and is the grounding prong.

If you remove the grounding prong by cutting it off, or if you disable it by plugging the three-prong plug into a two-prong adapter, you're plugging in an ap-

pliance that is not grounded. An ungrounded appliance can shock someone who touches it – and sometimes those shocks can be fatal.

Even appliances that appear to have plastic cases – like computers – might have a metal-encased power supply inside. If a hot wire comes loose inside an ungrounded

metal case, and the loose wire touches the case, anyone who touches it will get a shock.

If the case is grounded with that third prong, however, the electricity from the hot wire flows straight to the ground, and this will blow a fuse or trip a breaker to the circuit. The appliance won't work, but it won't kill you either.

So forget about disabling that important third prong. It's there for your safety. Instead, call an electrician to upgrade your outlets from two prongs to three prong outlets. Also, if those outlets are located in a bath or kitchen near water, they need to be upgraded to GFI's (Ground Fault Interrupting outlets).