



Bluestem NEWS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative

Board of Trustees

Richard Ridder
President

Donald Classen
Vice President

Bruce Meyer
Secretary

Mark Diederich
Treasurer

Patricia Bloomdahl
Trustee

Gary Buss
Trustee

Amanda Gnad
Trustee

Michael Leitch
Trustee

Steven Ohlde
Trustee

Stephen O'Shea
Trustee

Matt Rezac
Trustee

Management Staff

Michael M. Morton
General Manager

Jason W. Moore
Assistant Manager

Trisha Bradley
Manager of Accounting and Finance

Jerod Chaffee
Manager of Line Operations

Ben Easterberg
Manager of AMI and IT

Kevin Heptig
Manager of Member Services

Contact Us

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.
P.O. Box 5
Wamego, KS 66547
800-558-1580

FROM THE MANAGER

Sustaining a Reliable Electric System

We have all heard the phrase, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." This popular adage is often used in conversation or a story when someone is about to do something foolish or risky. If they heed this advice, it means they did not commit to "one basket," but instead hedged their bets with multiple options.

This strategy is how I describe Bluestem Electric's common-sense approach to the current energy transition. We know that consumer interest in renewable energy continues to grow. We have seen this trend here in Kansas.

Recent innovations and advances in renewable energy technologies have led to sharp decreases in costs, making renewables more feasible, accessible and upgradable. Over the last few years, Bluestem Electric's power supplier has adjusted our fuel mix by using more renewables, and today, 64.4% of our fuel mix is comprised of non-greenhouse-gas-emitting resources (which include

nuclear, hydro, wind and solar). That is a significant increase compared to a number of years ago.

Nationally, there is increasing reliance on renewable energy sources at the same time that we're seeing fossil fuel plants taken off-line, often ahead of schedule. Additionally, there is more pressure on the electric grid due to the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events and rising electricity demand.



Mike Morton

Competing Pressures

So how do we reconcile these challenges of grid pressure and a changing fuel mix? Solar and wind energy are certainly beneficial for the environment, but they are limited resources because the sun does not always shine, and the wind does not

Continued on page 12D ▶



Work Zone Awareness Week Sheds Light on Safety

National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 17–21, 2023, is a good time to learn more about work zone safety; however, work zone safety should be observed 365 days a year to save lives.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground but also workers in the air. Driving too fast or too close to a work truck can put elevated workers in danger by causing their raised bucket to move or sway.

Streets and highways are lined with power poles and electrical equipment, and narrow roadways often require crews like ours to place their equipment in or near traffic lanes. Be alert to utility and other work zone crews for their safety and yours. Besides our crews, you might encounter road workers, other utility crews, tree trimmers or first responders working in or on the side of the road.

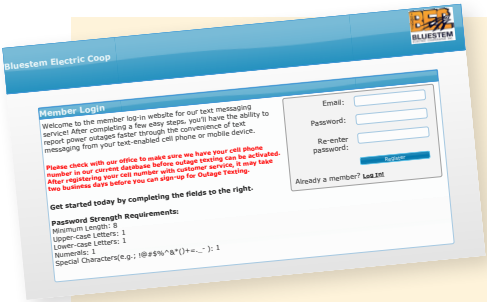
According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, 774 fatal crashes and 857 deaths occurred in work zone crashes in 2020. Many other work zone crashes result in injuries. In 2020 alone, 102,000 work zone crashes occurred.

To Help Keep Roadside Crews Safe:

- ▶ Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- ▶ Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so allow time for unexpected setbacks.
- ▶ Obey all signs and road crew flag instructions.
- ▶ Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- ▶ Use your headlights at dusk and during inclement weather.
- ▶ Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as texting, operating a radio, applying makeup or eating.

As drivers, we know to move over and slow down for emergency vehicles as required by the Kansas Move Over Law. In 2021, a new section was added to the law to include stationary utility vehicles displaying flashing lights. If you are approaching a utility or emergency vehicle, slow down and, if possible, move over a lane to provide more space for safe operations on the side of the road.

Do your part to help everyone return home safely at the end of the day.



Set Up Outage Text Reporting

1. Check with the BEC Office to make sure your cell phone number is listed on your account.
2. Go to the following link in a new window to set-up service: <https://notifications.crc.coop/?uid=6727>
3. Follow the instructions on the above link to set-up an account that will allow outage text reporting.
4. 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 mobile phone.
5. 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").

NOTICE TO IRRIGATORS

Contract Begins June 1

The contract year for all irrigation services is June 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024. 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.



Lineworker Appreciation Day April 10

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 the power to go out.

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 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.

Electric power line installers and repairers held approximately 126,600 jobs in 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Nearly half of these employees worked for

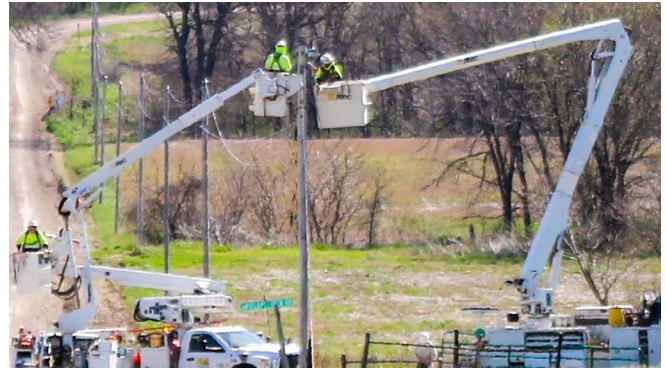
electric power generation, transmission and distribution utilities.

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 installers and repairers typically:



Bluestem Electric linecrew repairing power lines.

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ String (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 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, 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 Welcomes New Employee



Tristan Soukup

Bluestem Electric Cooperative welcomes **TRISTAN SOUKUP** to the co-op. Soukup started May 2, 2022, as an apprentice lineman in Wamego.

He grew up in Wilson where he attended high school and participated in football, basketball and baseball. In his free time, he enjoys being outdoors and spending time with family and friends.

Prior to joining Bluestem, Soukup completed a summer internship at Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative and was then hired as an apprentice lineman at the City of Russell. He attended Pratt Community College where he graduated with an associate's degree in Electrical Power Technology Program.

"The Wamego community has been very welcoming and I'm excited to continue my career with a great company, and look forward to being an employee at Bluestem Electric Cooperative for many years to come," he said.

Sustaining a Reliable Electric System

Continued from page 12A ▶

always blow. Our primary responsibility is to provide electricity 24/7 to you and our community. To do this, we need reliable sources of power that will meet all the peaks and valleys of on-demand energy in our connected world.

So where are we netting out? That's where our familiar adage comes into play. While utilization of renewables is increasing, we still need to incorporate other forms of energy in the mix to ensure reliable service. Remember, solar and wind are intermittent power sources. This fact coupled with the growing demand for renewables creates its own challenges.

That's why we spread our eggs into multiple baskets. There is great value in maintaining a diverse mix of fuel sources — fossil fuels and renewables work together to ensure reliability and resiliency and meet the growing demand for electricity.

Reliability also means repairing and replacing utility equipment to prevent

wear-and-tear, ensuring our equipment can withstand severe weather. We are laser-focused on providing our Bluestem Electric members with safe, reliable energy. That's why fuel diversity — placing our eggs in multiple baskets — is essential to reliability.

The Bottom Line

Lowering the overall carbon footprint in this country means we're going to electrify more and more of our economy. Solar and wind power are an important part of a broader energy portfolio, but they are not available 24/7. In today's ever-connected world, people need power around the clock.

As our nation increasingly depends on electricity to power the economy, Bluestem Electric is working to anticipate, plan and respond to market trends and policy shifts. That's how we can power your home and our economy, while continuing to serve as your local energy provider.

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 should 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 injuries 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.