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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

EPA's Power Plant Rule Threatens Electric Reliability



Bruce W. Mueller

Here at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC), ensuring reliable and competitively-priced electricity is at the heart of everything we do. Transparency

remains a cornerstone at WEC, so in addition to sharing co-op successes, it is also our responsibility to keep you informed about the challenges we face.

In May, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule that impacts energy production from power plants. The power plant rule will undoubtedly threaten access to reliable electricity for communities across our service territory and communities across the country.

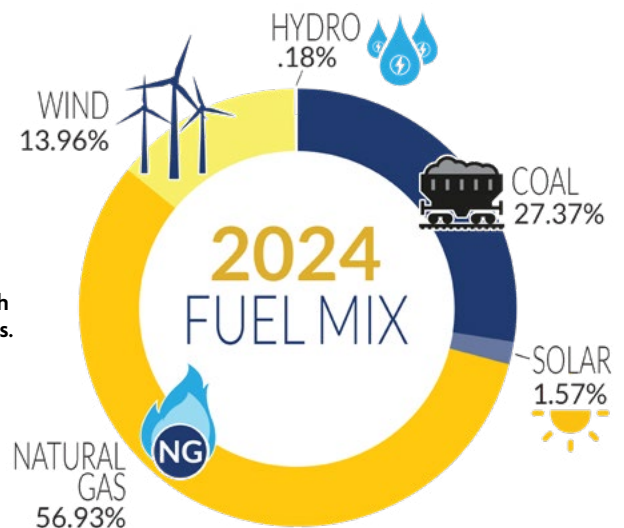
The rule constrains existing coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and

Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, our power supplier, takes a "cost-based" approach when utilizing its electric generation resources. This means they prioritize generation in the most cost-effective way possible. By keeping production costs low, Sunflower can provide lower priced energy to WEC, which helps keep your bill manageable and supports economic growth.

storage (CCS) — a technology that has potential but has not been proven to be viable as required. No power plant in North America currently uses CCS at the scale and levels mandated by EPA. When power plants are not able to comply with EPA's CCS requirements, they will be required to shut down, significantly limit operations, or switch fuels. These unrealistic standards will force the unnecessary and early shutdown of many power plants that currently provide reliable electricity 24/7.

Renewable sources, such as solar and wind, are important components of our overall generation mix. But given

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A LIFETIME OF *Service*

Director of Operations **RICK KLAUS** retires after 42 years

When **RICK KLAUS**, a Finney County native, first started as a groundman at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC), over four decades ago, his current role — director of operations — didn't exist.

In WEC's nearly 76-year history providing power to southwest and central Kansas, Klaus, who will retire Sept. 6, is only the second individual to serve in his position, overseeing a division that serves as the backbone of the cooperative.

In 1982, Klaus joined the line crew in District 5 (Finney, Kearny and Gray counties) at just 20 years old. He was driven by the promise of a stable and challenging job with good benefits. Though he struggled to find his place in those early days, Klaus now says he wouldn't change a thing when he looks back at all the "hard hats" he's worn over the years.

"My first job here, I worked in the warehouse three days and, I just hated it for some reason. I don't know why — I was just very disappointed. But my goal was to work two years until I found something better. Well, I've been here over 42 years, and I haven't found anything better," he said, with a grin.

RISE THROUGH THE RANKS

Klaus entered WEC's long-standing and award-winning lineman apprenticeship program as a first-year apprentice about six months after his first day.

In fact, Klaus' climb from groundman to director offers a glimpse into the heart and soul of the cooperative. Linework has changed tremendously since the early 1980s, from getting the job done to advancements in work culture, employee safety, cooperative policies and more.

"When I started, it was pretty basic — here's your screwdriver, here's your hammer, now don't do anything stupid," Klaus said, laughing. "I would say the equipment today is better, but I

wouldn't say the work is any easier. Because now (lineworkers) are dealing with heavier wire, taller poles, and longer crossarms."

After completing his apprenticeship training, Klaus was promoted to journeyman lineman in 1985. From there he found himself in a new role every eight years or so, each offering new challenges and opportunities.

In 1990, he became foreman of the District 5 underground crew, and in 1998, foreman of the District 5 substation crew. In 2014, he became the manager of District 5, a testament to his leadership and dedication to the co-op. In 2015, Klaus was promoted to area operations manager, overseeing all of WEC's five western territory districts, before entering his current role at the very top of the division in 2018.

As director of operations, Klaus oversees an extensive network spanning 4,600 miles of power lines across 110,000 power poles and heads a department of about 85 employees, including more than 60 lineworkers. Managing more than half the co-op's employees is no simple task. When Klaus was first hired, he never envisioned handling the immense responsibilities he has successfully managed over the past five years.

"Now, I did as a district manager, and I could see myself fitting into that role, but it's a pretty big jump where you have one district compared to seven," he said. "I've been fortunate enough to work in almost every (operations) department out here except for one or two, and I've filled in from time to time. I have no regrets of the path I've taken and all the people that I've helped."

WEC's service territory covers 14 Kansas and three Colorado counties, and Klaus is responsible for supervising four district-level managers who oversee WEC's seven districts. This ensures the functionality of more than 32,000 meters, which power over 21,000 homes and businesses across southwest and central Kansas.

His other responsibilities include budget



A headshot of Klaus from a 1993 employee handbook.

“Some of the biggest challenges, especially after (the pandemic), have been the long lead times on material and prices for equipment, which have skyrocketed. At the same time, we're trying to keep our (electric) rates stabilized — that's a big challenge.”

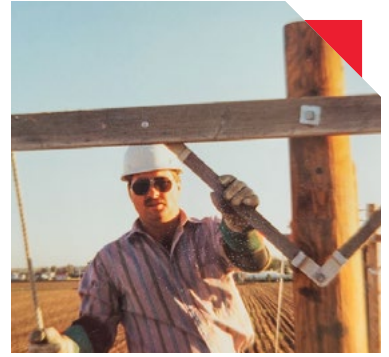
management and equipment procurement, consulting with WEC's engineers and overseeing long-term projects, such as the co-op's five-year work construction plan.

His experience in the field provided him with a unique perspective, enabling him to navigate the obstacles of modern-day operations effectively.

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Rick Klaus (far left) poses with lineworkers during 2006-2007 ice storm in Finney County, along Lowe Road. Also pictured (from left) are Carlos Pardo, Keith McMillan, Mark Douglas, Kevin Morphew and Tuan Herrell.



Rick Klaus climbs a pole in Finney County in October 1994.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Klaus became WEC's second director of operations following the retirement of Phillip Shelley, who served in the same role from Dec. 1990 until his retirement in January 2019.

In fact, Klaus and Shelley's careers both began at WEC in the same year — 1982 — and Klaus said he leaned on the former director's guidance when it came to familiarizing himself with Sunflower Electric Power Corporation's transmission system and building a relationship with WEC's democratically-elected board of trustees.

"(Shelley) was easy to approach, willing to offer advice, and talk about anything," he added.

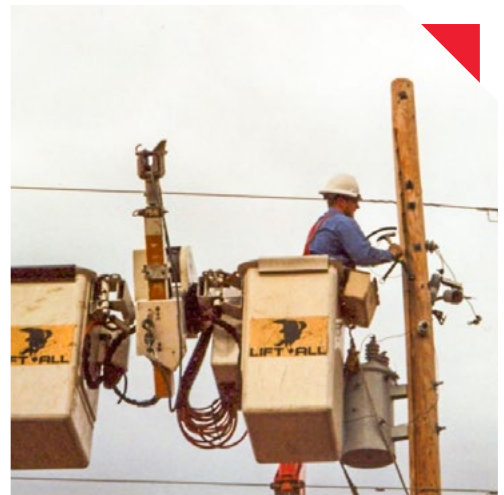
During Klaus' early decades as a lineman in the '80s and '90s, before he traded in his gear and gloves for a suit and tie, pinpointing the source of a power outage was far more challenging in contrast to today's technology driven solutions.

"Back then, a lot of the troubleshooting was done in the field," Klaus said. "You just basically drove out looking to see what caused the outage. Now, you can just about go through our system in the office and have an idea on where to send your linemen to look for the problem."

In recent years, the addition of advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) has revolutionized outage management, allowing for quicker, more efficient responses. Two-way communication has also eliminated the need for meter readers, operations' employees who used to collect data from WEC's meters back in the day.

Of course, while some things have gotten easier, Klaus said the job not only for lineworkers but for other operations' personnel — staking technicians, engineers, mapping coordinators, dispatchers, and more — has also grown more difficult.

"Definitely (the technology) makes our processes quicker and more seamless, to the benefit of our (co-op) members," he said. "But it almost seems like the job, in other ways, has become



Rick Klaus working at a job site in Finney County circa September 1993.



ABOVE CIRCLE: A headshot of Klaus from WEC's 2024 Annual Meeting.

ABOVE: Rick Klaus (far left) with Luke West (far right), WEC director of corporate services and water, at a tabletop safety demonstration in October 2010 and celebrating 100 years of local Boy Scout troops.

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A LIFETIME OF *Service*

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more challenging because there's more equipment, there's more technology, and our system is bigger and more complicated."

WEATHERING THE STORMS

Throughout his tenure, Klaus has overcome numerous weather-related challenges and crises.

In December 2006, Klaus vividly remembers the ice and snow that hit southwest Kansas, causing widespread damage to WEC's electrical infrastructure and leaving thousands of members without power, some for many weeks.

"The 2006/2007 ice storm was just devastating to our system, especially in District 5," he said, recalling his time as a substation foreman. "Our west districts like Leoti and Tribune, instead of ice, they got hit with a lot of snow. So probably a week or two later, we were able to make it there. There was so much snow that you could walk up the snow drifts, step over the fence, and down into the substation."

The frozen ice also caused extensive damage to Sunflower Electric's transmission towers and lines, too, Klaus added, referring to WEC's power supplier.

"Sunflower had some big steel towers that just toppled, like a monster had stepped on them," he recalled. "This just baffled the engineers. They just couldn't believe that would ever happen."

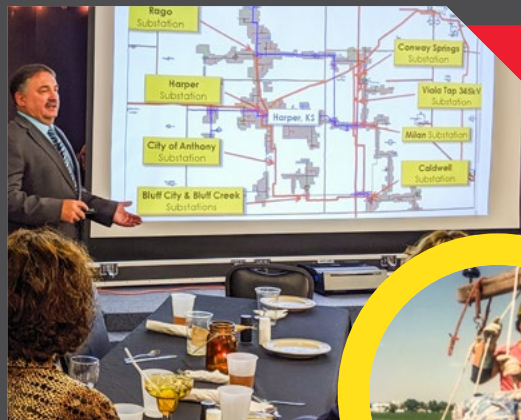
Winter isn't the only dangerous season for lineworkers, however.

Back in the spring of 1995, Klaus and his fellow line crewmen faced back-to-back tornadoes, on May 15 and 16, which caused extensive damage to hundreds of poles and power lines across Finney and Gray counties. While working to restore damage from the first tornado in wet and muddy conditions, Klaus recalls learning that another tornado was on its way.

"I remember we were east of Garden City, and we didn't know where to go because there again, the technology — we didn't have access to a smartphone radar. We just heard it on the local FM radio that there was another storm coming. So, we take off, and we started heading south, and we notice the storm chasers going north. I wasn't sure if we were going the right way!" he recalled, jokingly.

As a district manager, Klaus played less of a hands-on role to help restore power in 2017, when Winter Storm Ursa brought a crippling blizzard to southwest Kansas during the last weekend in April. Having served in various operations roles at WEC, he quickly learned the challenges of the job, both indoors and out.

"I've been out in the field, and I didn't realize how hard the office part was — you're coordinating things, and you want to put the right people in the right spot," Klaus said. "It takes a lot of coordination, and some of us in the office have joked that it would be nicer to be out there sometimes, you know just dealing with the issues."



ABOVE: Rick Klaus gives a presentation during a member engagement meeting in October 2019.



RIGHT: Rick Klaus participates in pole top rescue training in July 1989.

Despite the many adversities, Klaus' dedication to ensuring reliable service has never wavered, much like the men and women he's worked alongside over the years. Ensuring the delivery of safe, reliable and competitively-priced electricity and other essential services is more than just a job — it's a commitment, Klaus emphasized, something he wishes more co-op members knew.

"These guys are hard workers — sometimes they're working 16 hours a day in these storms, getting very little rest, (dealing with) the heat, the cold, fighting the flies, and everything else," he said. "All at the same time, they're taking their time away from their family. They might have damage at their own house, maybe their basement has water. But instead of dealing with those things, they're trying to provide power to our members and trying to get the lights back on."

GONE FISHIN' ... FOREVER

Looking back, a lifetime of service in the co-op world has been both "rewarding and very challenging," according to Klaus.

In the restful years ahead, he plans to "slow down," enjoy hobbies like boating, fishing and golfing, and take the time to be more involved with friends and family, including his very supportive wife of 38 years, Tammy, he said.

Though he won't miss the pressure and responsibility at the top, Klaus said he will miss the "satisfaction of accomplishment" that comes from tackling problems with a great team. His 42-year journey is one of growth, perseverance and an unwavering commitment to the cooperative.

"I was always told that if you were stranded on the side of the road and a co-op vehicle pulled up, that was a good sign because they're good people and they're willing to help you," he added. "So, I've just been very fortunate to work around a great group of people and a very good organization."

Help Us Celebrate National Drive Electric Week

Join us for Dine and Drive in Great Bend on Sept. 30

DINE & DRIVE IN GREAT BEND

DATE: Sept. 30, 2024

TIME: 11 a.m.–1:30 p.m. CDT

LOCATION:

200 10th St., Great Bend, Kansas

ADMISSION: FREE

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) is participating in this year's **NATIONAL DRIVE ELECTRIC WEEK** with an electric vehicle (EV) Dine and Drive event in Great Bend!

Join us from 11 a.m.–1:30 p.m. CDT on Sept. 30, 2024, at our office (200 10th Street), to enjoy a delicious lunch, discover the power of driving electric and explore benefits of renewable energy at our Great Bend Green Space.

National Drive Electric Week (Sept. 27–Oct. 6) is a nationwide initiative designed to promote electric vehicle adoption and raise awareness about their environmental benefits. This year, WEC is proud to be part of this initiative, offering an engaging and educational experience for its members and the chance to experience the future of driving.

“We’re excited to be part of National Drive Electric Week and offer our members an opportunity to experience the future of transportation,” said Alli Conine, director of member services and corporate communications at WEC. “We are committed to helping our members make informed choices about clean energy and to find the best solutions for their families.”

WEC invites all members to join them for this engaging and informative event. Whether you are an EV enthusiast or simply curious about electric vehicles or renewable energy, this event is the perfect opportunity to learn more, get behind the wheel, and feel the power of driving electric!

JOIN US TO:

► TEST DRIVE AN EV:

Members will have the opportunity to experience driving WEC’s all-electric Hyundai Kona and Ford F-150 Lightning. Experience firsthand the power and efficiency of these electric vehicles, whether you want to try out a high-performance pickup with exceptional torque and acceleration or a smaller energy efficient vehicle perfect for commutes or

just driving around town. This is your opportunity to ask questions and experience the power of driving electric without any sales pressure.

- **EXPLORE OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY PARK:** Join WEC in their Green Space, which features both solar and wind generation systems along with a rainwater harvesting system. Learn about renewable energy and EV charging options. WEC staff will also be on hand to answer your questions about our policies and requirements for installing solar panels at your home or business and about their residential community solar program, which gives both residential renters and homeowners the opportunity to reap the benefits of clean energy without the huge financial investment.
- **HAVE LUNCH:** The grill will be hot and loaded with delicious burgers and brats! Allow WEC to fill your belly while learning how renewable energy can fit into your lifestyle. Renewable energy and electric vehicles are more accessible than ever before in our rural community.
- **WIN A DOOR PRIZE:** Enter for a chance to win a fabulous door prize. You do not need to be present to win!

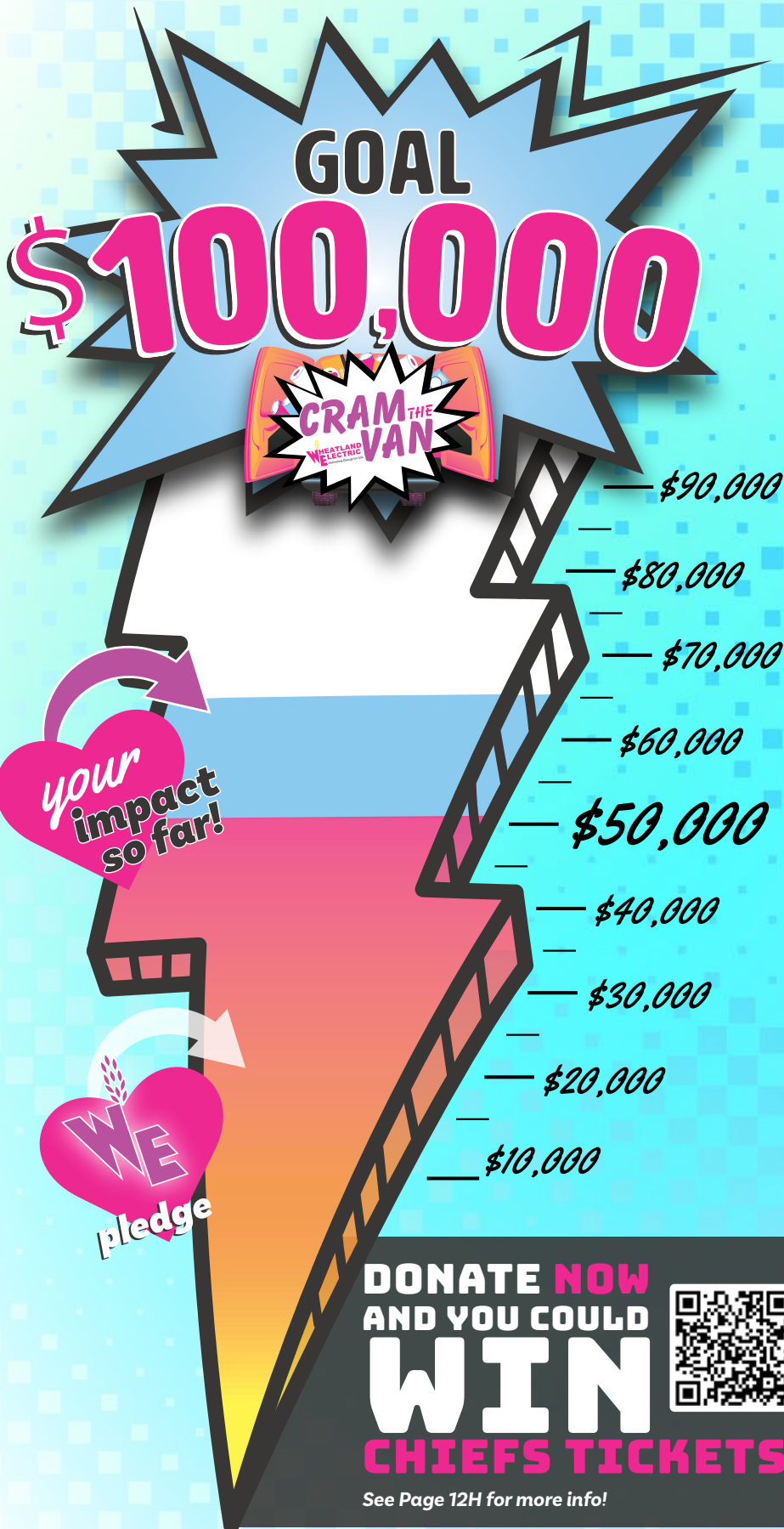
Join us for our
DINE & DRIVE
event in Great Bend on
Sept. 30!

WIN A DOOR PRIZE!

- Test drive our 100% EVs!
- Tour our green space!
- Enjoy lunch on us!

200 10th St., Great Bend, KS | 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. CT

NATIONAL Drive Electric WEEK
September 27 - October 6



WE
POWER
the Pantry
in 2024

Over the past **11 YEARS**, we have collected more than **159 TONS (317,693 LBS.)** of food donations through Cram the Van, our annual food drive.

For the second year in a row, we're committing **\$50,000** to a dozen local food banks to **POWER THE PANTRY IN 2024**. These dollars will directly impact the neighbors in our community who need it most.

Thanks to sponsors for our 6th Annual Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament, so far we've collected **\$65,000!** But we need your support, too. Help us reach our \$100,000 goal! **FOR EVERY \$20 YOU DONATE** to your local food bank, you'll be entered to **WIN FOUR TICKETS TO SEE THE CHIEFS PLAY THE BRONCOS** at Arrowhead Stadium on Nov. 10!

You can make a quick and easy donation online at www.weci.net (click the **DONATE NOW** button at the top of the page) or make a cash donation at your local Wheatland Electric office. Choose from 12 food banks across southwest and central Kansas and **HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

EPA's Power Plant Rule ... *Continued from page 12A* ▶

the intermittent nature of these energy sources, we simply cannot depend upon them to consistently be available because the wind does not always blow, and the sun does not always shine. The need for dispatchable (always-available) power generating resources is still essential.

The timing of the power plant rule is equally troubling. At the same time the EPA is leading our nation down the path to fewer power plants, utilities are facing a surge in electricity demand — driven by the onshoring of manufacturing, the growth of the American economy and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and cryptocurrency.

Many states have already experienced rolling outages, and if the supply of electricity is further threatened by the EPA's power plant rule, the problem will only get worse. In fact, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the nation's electric reliability watchdog, recently forecasted that over the next five years, all, or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling power outages during normal peak electricity demand conditions.

It is also no secret that when demand is high and supply is low, costs go up. We are concerned about threats to reliability as well as cost increases to our members.

I do not say all of this to worry you, but I do want our members to understand the challenges that lie ahead. Just as we have always done, we will look for solutions that serve our members best. We are joining electric co-ops across the country and our statewide trade organization, Kansas Electric Cooperatives,

Inc., to fight these regulations, and we are working with our local elected officials and statewide policymakers to help them understand the consequences this would have on all Kansans.

Co-ops are no strangers to innovation, and we are taking proactive steps to address today's energy challenges and tomorrow's energy needs. We have led the charge on industry endeavors such as community solar projects, and we will continue to explore new technologies and strategies that bolster reliability and our local grid.

Electric cooperatives like WEC deliver power to 42 million Americans. At the end of the day, our top priority is to meet our members' energy needs, and fulfill our Mission: Delivering Energy for Life. But we must have reliable electricity available to do that.

How can you help? Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) is a grassroots network of electric co-op members like you, dedicated to transforming rural and suburban communities, shaping the future of local electricity, and ensuring reliable power for all Americans. Members of VCP shape public policy and leave a lasting impression on the direction of our communities.

Last summer, over 100,000 VCP members submitted letters to the EPA, stressing the impact the EPA's regulations would have on their co-ops and access to reliable power.

Act now! Join VCP (visit www.weci.net) and tell your members of Congress that the EPA's regulations are harmful and will affect your ability to keep the lights on.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

As information technology becomes increasingly integrated with all aspects of our society, there is increased risk for wide scale or high-consequence events that could cause harm or disrupt services upon which our economy and the daily lives of millions of Americans depend. Using strong passwords, updating your software, thinking before you click on suspicious links, and turning on multi-factor authentication are the basics of what we call "cyber hygiene" and will drastically improve your online safety according to KnowBe4, a cybersecurity training firm.

HIGH SCHOOL LINEMAN OF THE WEEK

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON OUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL POWER PLAYERS!

#LINEMEN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA DURING HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SEASON!

WIN 4 TICKETS TO SEE THE

CHIEFS VS BRONCOS

NOV. 10, 2024

FOR EVERY \$20 YOU DONATE TO YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK, YOU'LL BE ENTERED TO WIN!

DONATE BY
OCT. 23
TO ENTER



SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT
WWW.WECI.NET/CRAM-VAN-FOOD-DRIVE

