




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
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WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Make Electrical Safety a Priority This May

At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) safety is a very serious issue, one that we don't take lightly. It is our No. 1 priority. We recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the members that we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

And that's not empty talk. A decade ago, we implemented and appointed a full-time manager of safety and compliance at WEC to develop and execute health and safety plans across our 140-plus workforce. Over time, we've created a culture of safety from the ground up by putting our employees' safety and that of the communities we serve above all else.

Our vision is to provide essential services that are safe, reliable, and competitively priced to enhance the lives of our members. At the end of the day, we strive to **DELIVER ENERGY**

FOR LIFE — but equally important — we want our employees to return home safely to their loved ones. Doing this requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

Working with electricity is an inherently dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. Our safety manager works directly with supervisors and line crews across our southwest and central Kansas service territory to keep a focus on safety.

We follow safety protocols based on leading national safety practices for the utility industry, and we require our lineworkers to wear specialized equipment when working next to or with power lines. There are specific protocols that our lineworkers follow when dealing with electricity, and staff has regular meetings to discuss



Bruce W. Mueller

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These low-to-the-ground EVs are single-driver, lightweight, aerodynamic, high-efficiency, electric cars with three or four wheels. Most teams build their cars from the ground up using lightweight components such as aluminum frames and bicycle wheels.



SUNFLOWER ELECTRO RALLY Kicks Off E-Car Racing Season

A wave of the green flag and the race is off! How many laps can specially designed electric cars — built by teams of high school students — make in a single hour around a track or course?

Spectators at the Sunflower ElectroRally watched that question and answer come to life as the first race of the 2023 racing season kicked off at the Spencer Flight and Education Center on April 6 in Scott City.

The E-car racing team from Scott Community High School — once again — took home first place in both standard and solar divisions, competing against at least nine other high schools (and one college team) from across the state.

The Scott City race is the first of three races in the Kansas ElectroRally Championship Series.

The second race, the Touchstone Energy

West ElectroRally, was held April 20 in Hays, and the final race, Touchstone Energy East, is scheduled for May 6 in Kansas City, Missouri. The state championship is awarded at the end of the race season and is based on points and scores from the combined three races. Last year and the year prior, Scott Community High School took home the state championship trophy in both divisions after competing at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City.

WEC is proud to support this local team in the annual competition that promotes science, math and hands-on learning for high school students who design, construct, develop and test these competitive electric vehicles every year.

These low-to-the-ground EVs are single-driver, lightweight, aerodynamic, high-efficiency, electric cars with three or four wheels. Most teams build their cars from the ground up using lightweight components such as aluminum frames and bicycle wheels. Teams can enter their EVs in one of two classes — standard or experimental/solar. Both standard and experimental/solar class cars are powered by a battery pack, and experimental vehicles can add solar panels for additional power to supplement the battery pack.

During the race, the EVs compete based

WEC is proud to support Scott Community High School in the annual ElectroRally competitions. This year, WEC donated \$2,000 to the ElectroRally team at SCHS and sponsored breakfast and lunch meals at the April 6 race for all schools in attendance.





Left: Students from each of the ElectroRally teams serve as lap counters during each hour-long race.



Above: Students compete at the 2021 Touchstone Energy Electrally — East Race, including members of the Scott Community High School e-car racing team.

on time, distance and how efficiently a car and driver can travel with unpredictable traffic and variable course conditions. One hour after the green flag drops, the checkered flag waves and the race is won by the team completing the most laps. Students have the opportunity to compete in all aspects of racing at these events — as drivers, pit crew members and even lap counters.

While vehicle and safety rules must be followed, plenty of room remains for experimentation and flexibility in the design and composition of their vehicles. Teams also develop race strategies, which are just as important as speed. Some drive

fast and get many laps at the beginning, and others go slower to conserve battery and to last the whole race. The cars can reach speeds in excess of 30 mph and travel a distance of 25 miles in a one-hour period.

Electric utilities like Wheatland have been actively involved in Kansas ElectroRally since 1987 and continue to support the program. The Sunflower ElectroRally event is sponsored by Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, our power supplier, and several of our sister member cooperatives. For more information or the latest race results, visit www.kansaselectrally.org.

Bottom Left: The Scott Community High School e-car racing team took home first place plaques in both the solar and standard divisions during the Sunflower ElectroRally at the Spencer Flight & Education Center on April 6.

Right: Every year, WEC employees help serve students breakfast and lunch at the Sunflower ElectroRally race in April. Pictured from left are Mary Hoisington, key accounts manager; Heather Rufenacht, member services coordinator; and Kayanna Hammeke, key accounts manager.



Kelley Burch, area wide supervisor, retrieves a pole-top dummy during safety training in 2021. Burch has dedicated over three decades to Wheatland and started at the cooperative in 1990.

THE POWER Behind YOUR Power

Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc.'s lineworkers are responsible for keeping power flowing day and night, regardless of holidays, birthdays, weddings, or other important family milestones. To perform their jobs successfully, lineworkers depend on their years of specialized training and experience and on each other to get the job done safely. It also takes a service-oriented mentality to be a good lineworker.

A lineworker's focus on service to others often extends beyond their commitment to their work at the co-op. Lineworkers are familiar figures in the community. At Wheatland Electric, a prime example of this is **KELLEY BURCH** a veteran lineworker and a familiar face in Wichita County.

Kelley started at Wheatland in May of 1990 and became a full-time employee in December of that year. He now serves as an area wide supervisor. In his 30-plus years at the cooperative, Kelley is powering the community in many ways, giving back and volunteering his time.

Kelley has been a member of the Leoti Fire Department for more than 25 years. He now serves as the assistant chief and makes it to almost every fire and rescue call.

If you are from western Kansas, you know how popular the Wichita



This undated photo (circa 1990s) features current and former members of our Leoti line crew. From left: Kelley Burch, Bruce Loy, Greg See, Chad Wilson and Terry Arnold.

County Free Fair and the 50 cent carnival rides are each July! Kelley currently serves as vice president of the Wichita County Amusement Association and dedicates his evenings and weekends to the event each summer. Kelley took on the train ride when he first started and rebuilt the engine in his garage. More recently, with the help of others, they removed old railroad ties and replaced with better materials.

Kelley is often the first person called when something needs to be fixed at the church or parsonage. He's been a trustee at Trinity Fellowship in Leoti for over 20 years. He's the one moving snow and mowing. Any event or meeting that Kelley attends he is the one making sure all the dishes are done, the floors are cleaned, and the tables and chairs are put away.

Kelley is one of the good ones. According to friends and family, he's also one of the best "grampas!" He's good about giving his time to his community and his church and playing with his grandkids, since that's what life is all about.

Wheatland and Wichita County are fortunate to have someone like Kelley in the community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of lineworkers like him, we would not have the safe and reliable electricity that we all depend on.

Kelma Burch
Thanks for what you do for our community Kelley. It's an honor to know you got appreciated for going the extra mile at your job with Wheatland Electric! We are very proud of you and all the linemen out there. You all do an outstanding job!
Like Reply 19h

Becky Miller
Congratulations!! You definitely go the "extra mile" and we sincerely appreciate you!!!
Like Reply 5h

Janice Campas
Congratulations!! He has always been such a hard worker. He deserves this!!
Like Reply 1d

Facebook comments praising Kelley Burch and the Leoti line crew during Lineworker Appreciation Day in April.

Glenn Fogo
Nice recognition. Thanks for all you do, Kelley!
Like Reply 1d

Lynda Goodrich
Thank you to Kelley and all those who take care of us! We appreciate you linemen!
Like Reply 1d

Danette Sam Giesick
I can't think of anyone that deserves it more! His pretty awesome!
Like Reply 1d

Audra Jo Berning
Congrats Kelly! He really does go above and beyond!
Like Reply 1d



Visit our YouTube Channel to watch our lineworkers explain what makes them go above and beyond **WWW.YOUTUBE/@WHEATLANDELECTRIC**

Make Electrical Safety a Priority This May

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upcoming projects from a safety perspective. We monitor and track near-misses of accidents to understand what went wrong, share “lessons learned,” and improve how we do things in the future.

We encourage all of our crews to speak up and hold each other accountable for safety. By cultivating a culture of openness and transparency, we promote problem-solving. We examine the information and data gleaned from near-misses and accident reports to discern patterns, and we use safety metrics to improve in those areas where we have fallen short. And, as appropriate, we brief vendors and contractors on our safety protocols and set expectations for their engagement.

Our employees live and work in the communities we serve, which means serving and caring about our neighbors, too. Our lineworkers regularly volunteer to provide electrical safety demonstrations in schools, for first responders, and at community events like trade shows and fairs. If you would like us to provide a safety demonstration at your event, contact your local WEC office today.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, each year thousands of people across the United States are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable.

There is much you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity. For one, don't attempt electrical DIY projects or overload your outlets. In fact, we have partnered with trusted, local electricians to provide professional services. Contact our local office today to get in touch.

Stay clear of and report downed power lines, unlocked substations, or padmount transformers that look amiss. When working near overhead power lines, don't put your life on the line. Before you get onsite, make sure you're aware of all overheard electrical hazards and steer completely clear!

This May, I encourage you to visit our website or follow us on social media for tips on how to keep you and your loved ones safe from every day electrical dangers. Always be mindful when it comes to electrical safety. Pause and take the extra time to plug into safety.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

NO PLACE outside is safe when thunderstorms are in the area! If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you. When you do hear thunder, immediately move to a safe shelter: a substantial building with electricity or plumbing or an enclosed, metal-topped vehicle with windows up. Stay in the safe shelter at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder.

Member Services Wins 2023 National Spotlight on Excellence Award

For the second year in a row, the member services team at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. has received national recognition in the 2023 Spotlight on Excellence Awards program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).



WEC's member services team received a Silver Award in the Best Annual Report to Members for our 2021 Annual Report: “Driving Energy for Life.”

The 2021 annual report featured WEC's efforts to promote and educate our membership about electric vehicles and infrastructure, but also highlighted new services including the purchase and financing of backup generators and electrician services.

“I am extremely proud of our member services team and the invaluable work they do each day for our co-op members,” said Bruce W. Mueller, CEO and general manager. “Their efforts deliver exceptional results, have a lasting impact and are critical to serving our community. Because of their strong communication efforts, we can further the cooperative mission to promote and support the communities we serve.”

The member services team is led by **ALLI CONINE**, director of member services and corporate communications, and also includes the following team members: **KAYANNA HAMMEKE** and **MARY HOISINGTON**, both member services and key accounts managers; **SHAJIA DONECKER**, social media specialist; and **HEATHER RUFENACHT**, member services coordinator.

Winners will be recognized this month during the CONNECT Conference in Jacksonville, Florida, a national conference for communications and marketing professionals in the cooperative electric industry. A member of the WEC Member Services will attend to accept the award and participate in this annual professional development opportunity.

The annual Spotlight on Excellence Awards program recognizes the best communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related organizations nationwide. More than 650 entries were submitted across 18 different categories, including writing, graphic design, digital communications, campaign development and more. Faculty members from the University of Missouri Columbia, as well as noted professionals in the fields of marketing and digital communications and newspapers judged the entries.



Feel the POWER

Power of Our Past

2022
Annual Report
Now Available



Pickup your complimentary copy of our 2022 Annual Report — “Feel the Power” — at your local WEC office or download online at www.weci.net/annual-meeting now!

In addition to a comprehensive look at our financial performance and operations during the previous year, this year's published report is special because it highlights stories and photos covering the last 75 years of our cooperative history, such as the stories you see here.

Read more about Wheatland's past, present, and future in this year's special publication!

A Powerful Vision

One Member, One Voice

In the mid-1930s, nearly nine out of 10 rural homes across the country were without electricity, according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Farmers milked their cows by hand in the dim light of a kerosene lantern, and families relied on the wood range for cooking and washboard for cleaning.

While demand for electricity in rural areas grew during these years, investor-owned utilities were not interested in serving America's farmlands. The costs of stringing wires over long distances clearly outweighed the bottom line for these for-profit companies.

In 1946, nine visionary Kansans took matters into their own hands and joined forces to build an electric cooperative to serve our southwest Kansas communities that would supply both reliable and affordable electrical power for themselves and their neighbors.

These individuals — Jess Taylor, Frank Crouch, Bernarr Nelson, Kenneth Davis, Abram Buck, Joseph Ridder, Paul Johnson, Iman Wiatt and Richard Hobson — served as trustees, with the first four gentlemen serving as officers of the cooperative.

They held their very first documented meeting in Leoti on Nov. 22, 1946. Over the next few years, meetings rotated between Leoti, Tribune, Syracuse and Scott City, as they laid the groundwork for a powerful idea — an electric cooperative, open to all, where the needs of its members are put first and the voice of every person holds power.

In 1948, the group submitted its first loan application to the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to purchase facilities in Greeley, Hamilton, Kearny, Scott and Wichita counties owned by Inland Utilities of Kansas City, Kansas.

With this nearly \$5 million request, the group's plan was to not only enlarge and improve these facilities, but also construct 820 miles of distribution lines to serve an additional 720 members eager to join the growing co-op.

The group received its official charter from the REA on Oct. 25, 1948, making Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc., one of the newest co-ops in the nation and one of the youngest in Kansas.

Trustees adopted the co-op's first mission statement shortly thereafter: “It shall be the aim

Organized in 1946
The Wheatland Electric Cooperative was organized in 1946 by nine farm leaders in Greeley and Wichita and contiguous parts of Scott, Hamilton and Kearny counties. It also will serve farm members in the extreme south part of Wallace and Logan counties, and in Towner, Colo. The group which was instrumental in organizing the cooperative was comprised of Jess Taylor, Tribune; Frank Crouch, Syracuse; Bernarr Nelson, Modoc; Richard Hobson, Marienthal; Abram Buck, Syracuse; Kenneth Davis, Lakin; Paul Johnson, Tribune; Joseph Ridder, Marienthal, and I. C. Wiatt, Lakin.
These men worked three years to achieve their purpose, and on June 14, 1949, the Rural Electrification administration granted the cooperative a loan of \$5,400,000 with which to purchase and rehabilitate the Inland Utilities Company's holdings, which formed the nucleus of the system, and to construct a new plant, transmission lines and distribution system.

A Syracuse Journal clipping (early 1950s, date unknown) details the efforts of Wheatland's founding trustees.

A Powerful Vision

One Member, One Voice

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of Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc., to make electric energy available to all its members at the lowest cost consistent with sound economy and good management.”

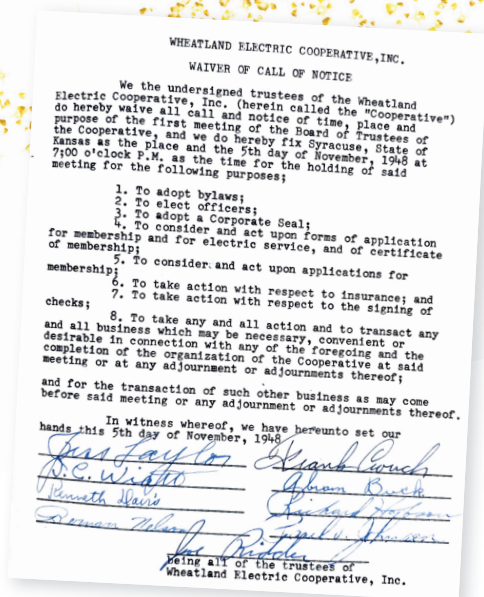
After the REA granted the co-op its multimillion-dollar loan, things accelerated: the trustees moved to purchase Inland's assets, employees were hired, power contracts were made with other existing co-ops (including Kansas Electric Cooperatives Inc. and Lane-Scott Electric), agreements and contracts with engineering and construction firms were entered to lay miles of lines, and the First National

Bank of Scott City was selected as the co-op's primary depository — a fact that still holds true today.

At this time, Wheatland was serving members in Scott City, Dighton, Leoti, Tribune and Syracuse with a 69-kV transmission line and substation in each community.

Growing demand required additional power sources, so on April 29, 1949, trustees hired the co-op's first general manager, Frank C. Arthur, and put him immediately to work.

Arthur's first major mission? Arrange for suitable power facilities that could accommodate the ever-growing demand for power across our region.



The signatures of Wheatland's nine original trustees can be seen above in this document dated Nov. 5, 1948, shortly after the cooperative received its official charter from the REA.

Local Power to the People

The Jess Taylor Plant

Until 1950, WEC membership was comprised of only the nine original founders.

During the second annual meeting of the membership, held Feb. 15, 1950, in Scott City, the nine original trustees voted to welcome an additional 2,246 applicants into the cooperative, bringing the total membership to 2,255. And by fall of 1950 an additional 650 members were voted in.

To join the cooperative, members signed a membership certificate and paid a \$5 fee, to be used toward development of infrastructure and electric service in the region, according to the application. The signed agreement also granted them voting powers:

“Each member of the cooperative, or in the case of a joint membership, the holders thereof jointly, or either of them, but not both, shall be entitled to one vote, and no more upon each matter submitted to a vote at all meetings of the members of the cooperative,” according to the original document drafted in November 1948.

As WEC's membership grew, the original trustees began looking for a site for a new generating plant that could furnish the demand for power, growing at a rate of about 500 kWh annually.

In late 1949, the original founders selected a site for a new generating plant 1 mile west of Scott City on U.S. Highway




The Jess Taylor Plant completed in 1951, improved electric service and reliability for miles around.

96, a move that would allow the co-op to retire existing and outdated facilities to standby mode.

The new plant — christened the Jess Taylor Plant in honor of the co-op's founding president — went online in late summer 1951, and “the effects of this sweeping move were felt almost immediately,” according to an article about the state-of-the-art facility published in the October 1956 edition of *Diesel Progress*.

The new plant not only allowed the co-op to retire facilities, but also increased the reliability and affordability of electricity for Wheatland's burgeoning membership, making it a “model of efficiency” and “showplace for the region.”

“In every aspect, the Jess Taylor Plant at Scott City is an up-to-date, attractive power station, operating an excellent efficiency and economy,” the *Diesel Progress* reported in 1956. “Wheatland Co-op's success in overcoming a seemingly hopeless rural electrification problem is outstanding and is an excellent reason why American farmers today are enjoying the full benefit of power-driven tools, pumps and appliances.”



Wheatland Electric Presents

LET'S PAINT IT RED!

CHAMBER BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

WEDNESDAY **DRY LAKE BREWING**
JUNE 7 **4 to 7 P.M.**

DOOR PRIZES **SIGNATURE DRINKS** *Boots & Brews* **RED DIRT MUSIC** **FOOD & FUN**



GREAT BEND
Bat Cats

Game Night

June 29
at the Bat Cats

TAILGATE WITH US!
FREE HAMBURGERS + HOTDOGS
FIRST 200 PEOPLE
serving at 6 pm
Al Burns Memorial Field
Gates open at 6:30 p.m.

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC
Delivering Energy for Life
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative