

**WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS



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FROM THE MANAGER

Have a Safe & Happy July 4!



Bruce W. Mueller

“July Fourth
is the time
we celebrate
our nation’s
independence.”

JULY FOURTH is the time we celebrate our nation’s independence. In the midst of apple pies, hot dogs, fireworks and parades, I can’t help but think about the independent streak that inspired groups of rural men and women around America’s countryside to band together and improve their quality of life.

Aside from President Franklin Roosevelt’s promise of federal aid in the form of low-interest loans and engineering expertise, rural Americans didn’t have much help in bringing electricity to their homes and workplaces. They pulled together and did it themselves.

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES form a vast network across the country, from coast to coast. Electric co-ops are in 47 states, serving 42 million people—a different world from 1935, when much of America remained without electricity. This **FOURTH OF JULY**, as we recognize and celebrate our country’s independence, I’ll also tip my hat to the **WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE FOUNDERS** who beat incredible odds to make life better for themselves and their neighbors.

Until next time, take care

SAFETY Tip of the Month

Stay safe in roadway work zones. Summer is here, which means the weather is warmer, more people are on the roads and highway construction work is underway. Federal Highway Administration statistics show that 24,745 people died in work zone crashes between 1982 and 2014. Avoid distractions and keep your eyes on the road.

Member

SPOTLIGHT

HARPER INDUSTRIES

On Feb. 6, 1998, a young **TIM PENNER** received a phone call and dinner invitation from the CEO of the public company Owosso that owned DewEze Manufacturing. Penner asked if there was anything specific to talk about, the CEO said no, he and the company's chief operating officer (COO) just wanted to have dinner with him. Penner thought they were coming for one of two reasons: to fire him or transfer him. He didn't think the CEO and the COO would fly from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to tell him he was doing a good job. Turns out it was neither scenario.

They had decided to sell the company and if Penner wanted to buy it, they had a plan for him to do so. They were surprised when Penner said, "That's great, I'll do it."

Owosso did not want to sell the business to another business primarily because DewEze was diversified—they were involved in the manufacturing of agriculture, hydraulics and turf equipment. That would have meant splitting the company and they

didn't want to do that to the employees.

Penner now serves as president of Harper Industries, where he started with DewEze Manufacturing in 1991 and where he says he always wanted to be a part of ownership. That is why Penner gives his management staff employees the opportunity to be shareholders—he believes you make things happen as a team.

Penner is often asked "Where did you get such good people?" Maybe he's just fortunate, but people are what make a company. You can attribute the growth of Harper Industries to its employees. They started as a \$5 million company and today they're a \$25 million company. Success like that doesn't happen without great employees—it's a team.

Harper Industries recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. In 1969, the start date of DewEze Manufacturing, the goal was to move hay better. Dewey Hostetler, a local entrepreneur, built the Hay MoBale and other useful tools in handling and

Mark Pulliam and Mark Struble from research and development work on the tooling for the new line of Butler Beds at Harper Industries. Machine tooling is the process of acquiring the manufacturing components and machines needed for production. All production of Butler Beds has moved from Bixby, Oklahoma, to Harper, Kansas.





Left: Logan Livengood inspects a TV35, a self-contained turf vacuum that verti-cuts and vacuums all in one pass.

Right: Harper Industries employees make adjustments to a hillside mower. The slope mower is a safe solution to mowing slopes as it keeps the operator and the engine upright on hills up to 34 degrees.

feeding hay. The DewEze product line has grown and expanded over time.

Harper Industries products are now distributed worldwide. The Ag & Hydraulics Divisions span throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Turf Division's most popular product, the TV40 turf vacuum, features Harper's patented Recirculating Air System which is a popular choice to clear leaves and debris. The TV40 is distributed worldwide, particularly in the U.S. and Southeast Asia.

The company is also celebrating the acquisition of Butler Beds of Bixby, Oklahoma. All production of Butler Beds, a simplified version of the DewEze bed, will be moved to Harper. With the acquisition, Harper Industries will likely produce several thousand beds a year. The DewEze brand and Butler Beds brand target two different segments in the market.

Where does a company that has grown 500% over the last 20 years go from here? The goal is to grow another 25 percent over the next three years. Harper Industries has also identified four growth initiatives—the four areas they need to be most strategic in. Their ultimate goal is to increase revenue and jobs in rural Kansas. Each year, Harper Industries donates 10% of its profits to charity. Through increased revenue Harper Industries wants to give back more to the community and employ more people.

They've also identified product innovation and distribution as a growth initiative. They want to be as effective as possible in sales and marketing. Harper Industries has a go-to-market strategy—they want to grow through their dealers.

Efficiency and employee engagement are their third and fourth initiatives. It's easy for them to tie product innovation and distribution to increased revenue, but they firmly believe that efficiency and employee engagement correlate with that and are equally important. Each initiative has a cross-functional team of five to six employees from different departments. Most of the teams are made up of people who would never regularly work together. They're building relationships and trust while making improvements to the company.

Harper Industries may be one of the nation's leading producers of agricultural, turf and hydraulic power equipment, but the people who make up the company are also having fun. Every Friday the service department welcomes Harper Industries employees to the local pizza parlor, where they brainstorm and come up with some wild and crazy ideas.

The suggestion to blow up a giant hay bale sparked a creative April Fool's Day prank that reached more than 3 million viewers across social media. Terry N. Tugwell (also known as TNT) gave a video testimonial about the best way to "distribute" hay at the touch of a button. Harper Industries continues to reach millions through their creative YouTube videos each year. Tugwell reprised his role as an innovative rancher in 2019 in the "BeefCake Cotton Candy Edition" video.

Check out these videos and more at www.youtube.com/user/HarperIndustries/featured.

It was evident in our time spent with Penner and Harper Industries that the employees are the company's greatest strength and No. 1 asset. Penner's story should motivate and inspire.

"Go for it! You make things happen as a team," Penner says.

HARPER INDUSTRIES

Wheatland Member Since 2007

151 E US Highway 160, Harper, KS

1-800-835-1042

harperindustries.com



Tim Penner

FROM Summer Fun TO **SEARCH & RESCUE**

Wheatland Electric is guided by the seven cooperative principles. The seventh cooperative principle is “Concern for the Community;” and while we usually hear stories about Wheatland working with the communities inside our service territory, sometimes our employees take those principles to other communities.

JIM WELKER, manager of IT/ Broadband, has been with Wheatland for 12 years. On Memorial Day weekend, Welker’s family met up with some friends north of Amarillo, Texas, to do some ATV/UTV trail-riding and camping near the Canadian River.

“We go ride every chance we get,” Welker said. “It’s family time. We get to unplug for a few days, and just spend some time outdoors doing what we love.”

After the long road trip, they set up camp, and everything was going as planned but soon the rain poured down. In between downpours, they were able to ride, but now they were being more

cautious. The riders had to watch out for deep mudholes and quicksand, all the while being caked in red Texas mud.

“When I’m unsure of river crossings and mudholes I will get out and walk them before I drive just to be safe—the common saying is ‘turn around, don’t drown,’” Welker said.

On Saturday, Welker and his wife, Teri, were leading a convoy of riders on a night excursion. A few minutes after the group had crossed a river, Teri noticed the water level rising.

“When she (Teri) said something about the river coming up, I initially thought the dark was playing tricks on us, but 10 to 15 minutes later you could see how quickly things were changing,” Welker said. “It was almost like a dam was opened, the way the water level came up so fast and the speed at which the river started running.”

The convoy continued down the riverbank until one of the UTV drivers, Jason Hundertmark, thought he heard cries for



Brady, Jim, Bailey and Teri Welker; Jamie and Janelle Woods; and Justin, Bryce, Seth, Robbie and Jason Hundertmark enjoy ATV/UTV trail riding north of Amarillo, Texas Memorial Day weekend.





Campers helped the search and recovery teams on the Canadian River near Amarillo, Texas.

help. When Welker realized the riders behind him had stopped he knew something was wrong.

“When I circled back, I saw Jason shining his lights on a married couple whose SUV had broken down in the middle of the river,” Welker said. The wife was still in the vehicle and the husband had water up to his chest and was clinging to the door. We were able to throw them a rope and hook it onto the wench and pull them to safety.”

This was only the first recovery of what would turn into a long night filled with adrenaline and scrambling to help those in trouble.

Shortly after that first rescue, the trails were buzzing with other riders searching for stranded motorists. The muddy trails made it impossible for standard motor vehicles to reach the water’s edge, but campers were able to shuttle emergency crews in their UTVs. Throughout the night campers assisted fire rescue dive teams and the Highway Patrol in rescue efforts.

During the night the rescuers found a family of eight, including two small children, sitting on top of their SUV. By the time the last victim was brought to shore, the water was inches away from completely submerging the vehicle. Throughout the night, first responders and good Samaritans had rescued a total of 15 people. By 4 a.m. the Highway Patrol had flown drones with heat cameras over the river and were confident no one else was out there.

Community isn’t just a group of people living near one another, rather a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.

“When we go out riding, people are always willing to help one another. We all look out for each other,

Two girls await rescue while stranded on a sand bar in the Canadian River.



because you never know when you might be the one who needs help. It really is a tight knit community,” Welker said. “I’ve never been in that situation before, but now that I have seen how quickly conditions can change on a river, I will be adding several items to my emergency kit—inflatable life jackets, longer ropes—and next time we will be that much more prepared to help out with any type of emergency situation.”

Spring Storms Cause Flooding and Outages



Great Bend crews look toward the Wheatland substation northwest of Great Bend after heavy rains fell in the area.

An unusually wet spring has taken its toll on many residents across several Midwestern states, and Wheatland Electric Cooperative's service territory is no exception. Linemen in a few of our territories have been hit especially hard in May with the significant increase in precipitation and spring storms.

In District Six (Great Bend), many areas recorded nearly double the monthly average of rainfall with 10 (or more) inches falling in the area.

Many members experienced water damage to their homes particularly in basements, while other members sustained damage from the hail and strong winds. Damage to our members' homes has been devastating, and Wheatland's own buildings have been no exception.

Great Bend's pole yard was flooded the week of May 20 due to the heavy rainfall over an extremely short time period. Our Great Bend crews encountered up to a foot of standing water during these rainstorms, which added an additional danger element to their daily work. During flooding, when linemen are called out, they must be extremely careful and cognizant of their surroundings when. For example, if a pad-mounted trans-

former, which is located underground, takes on flood water, it needs to be de-energized before any work is performed.

Additionally, Wheatland Electric employees living in surrounding communities, such as Hoisington, had to find alternate routes to travel home after work while U.S. Highway 281 south of Hoisington was closed due to water on the roadway. As did many of our members, a few of our employees dealt with water in their basements. With a portion of our territory in flood watches or flood warnings, linemen were extremely cautious with flooded roadways when going out on calls.

Safety is always our linemen's main priority and lightning adds extra precautions to their routine. Over Memorial Day weekend, our crew had several calls dealing with the effects of lightning, such as blown fuses and poles struck by lightning. Some houses were even hit by lightning. As always, we appreciated our members' patience as we worked to get their power back on.

If you are ever without power, remember to call your local office during normal business hours or call 1-800-ONAGAIN (800-662-4246) at any time.

Fourth of July Safety Tips

Nothing says "Fourth of July" like a spectacular fireworks display. The safest way to enjoy this part of the celebration is to head to a local fireworks show. But, if you want to put on your own show at home, be sure to follow these safety tips:

- ▶ Always follow the instructions on fireworks packaging and never give fireworks to children.
- ▶ Keep a supply of water close by in case of fire.
- ▶ Make sure to wear protective eyewear when lighting fireworks.
- ▶ Light only one firework at a time and never attempt to relight a "dud."
- ▶ Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.
- ▶ Never throw or point a firework toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials.

Fireworks are especially dangerous when used near power lines, so stay clear. Light fireworks only in open areas where no power lines can be seen, and call Wheatland Electric Cooperative (800-ON-AGAIN or 800-662-4246) immediately if your celebration gets tangled in an overhead wire.

Night Outages at Crest Theatre to Install HVAC System



Our Great Bend crew worked with the Crest Theatre and neighboring businesses to conduct two separate night outages.

A “night outage” or “after-hours outage” is a planned electricity outage typically scheduled with our business district members. Our linemen work with our members to schedule these outages at a time that minimizes business disruption and alleviates unnecessary time without power for our members.

Our teams typically conduct scheduled night outages between 6 and 10 p.m.

When scheduling a night outage, our Wheatland crew communicates with all neighboring businesses to ensure that they are aware of the planned outage. We also work with surrounding businesses to do our best to accommodate each business’ schedule.

At the end of May, our Great Bend crew conducted two, night outages behind the historic Crest Theatre. The



An older platform and transformers were removed from the alley behind the Crest Theatre in Great Bend during a night outage on May 30.

new HVAC system at the Crest required an increased energy load, so our crews replaced the three older transformers that powered more than a block and a half of businesses in downtown Great Bend. The businesses relying on these three older transformers were then divided into four groups and each group was allocated to one of four new sources of power.

As a result of this division, if an outage occurs in the future, it will be easier for our team to troubleshoot the cause. It will also minimize the interruption to other members, as the entire block and a half will no longer lose power from the same group of transformers. In addition to removing the old transformers, the crew completely rehabilitated the alley with new poles and overhead wire. This after-hours outage in Great Bend affected 29 meters and our crew coordinated the date and time of the outage with 11 members.

We thank our business members for their cooperation and flexibility in dealing with these night outages as we work to help their neighbors.



One of the old platforms that a transformer sat on is ready to be hauled away.

CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Golf Club at Southwind

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 13

9 a.m. SHOTGUN START

4-MAN SCRAMBLE/ \$100 PER PLAYER

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFITING



Wheatland's Cram the Van Food Drive and Friends of the Wright Park Zoo in Dodge City



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



TO REGISTER CALL 620-275-4080 OR EMAIL NNUMRICH@WECI.NET