

April 2024



West Central Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# Electric News

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## Important notice regarding email contacts from West Central

Members who have an email address on file with the cooperative will, on occasion, receive notifications from WCE via that address.

Some of the notifications that may be received are listed as: "Bill Available," "Payment Declined," "Credit Card Expired"

and "Payment Successful." The email notifications will be generated from the following address: [courier-no-reply@smarthub.com](mailto:courier-no-reply@smarthub.com).

To receive these notifications, members will need to make sure they have allowed mail from this sender. The email WILL NOT have the name "West Central" in the address or the reference line.

Please contact WCE at 800-491-3803 or 816-565-4942 regarding questions about email contacts.



## Reminder that rates change in April

Members are reminded that the 2024 rate increase approved by the board earlier this year will be reflected with members' April usage. The change amounts to a total overall revenue increase for the cooperative of 8.8 percent.

"Although the increase is necessary to continue to provide reliable service, because we are not a profit-driven company, any margins we do make are returned to our members," Newland said. "For that reason, we do everything we can to control expenses and still maintain quality service to you."

**RESIDENTIAL:** The new residential rate will see charges for the first 800 kWh set at \$0.1049 (up from \$0.096) and over 800 kWh at a reduced rate of \$0.0884 (up from \$0.0795.) The service availability charge will increase \$0.05 to \$1.37 per day.

**COMMERCIAL THREE-PHASE:** The new commercial three-phase monthly rate will be \$0.0878 (up from \$0.0798) for all kWh. The service availability charge will increase from \$2.24 per day to \$2.34 per day.

**COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LARGE POWER:** The commercial and industrial large power monthly rate will be \$0.0531 (up from \$0.0472) for all kWh. Demand stays the same at \$11.60, and service availability increases from \$4.79 per day to \$5.00 per day.

**DUSK-TO-DAWN LIGHTS:** Increases in dusk-to-dawn (\$9.20 to \$9.90) and street lights (\$14.20 to \$14.90) per month.

These decisions follow a cost-of-service study done late last year to determine what the cooperative needs to continue to provide members with reliable electric service in response to large increases over the past few years in material costs and projected increases in wholesale power.

### West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc.

#### Headquarters:

7867 S. Highway 13, P.O. Box 452, Higginsville, MO 64037  
816-565-4942 or 1-800-491-3803 • PAY BY PHONE: 1-855-874-5349

#### To report outages 24/7:

Call 816-565-4942 or 1-800-491-3803 • or report outages at [www.westcentralelectric.coop](http://www.westcentralelectric.coop) under "Report Outage"

#### District office:

506 N. Broadway, Oak Grove, MO 64075

#### Website:

[www.westcentralelectric.coop](http://www.westcentralelectric.coop)

#### General Manager:

Michael Newland

#### Board of Directors:

Densil Allen Jr., *President*; Clark Bredehoeft, *Vice-President*;  
Dale Jarman, *Treasurer*; Robert Simmons, *Secretary*; Stan Rhodes,  
*Asst. Secretary*; Richard Strobel, *Director*; Jeremy Ahmann, *Director*;  
Colby Dowell, *Director*; Elizabeth Houtsma, *Director*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

#### Sample Residential Monthly Bill Increase:

##### 1,500 kWh per month usage

Current bill: \$172.60  
New bill: \$187.47  
Difference: \$14.87  
Increase: 8.6%

##### 3,000 kWh per month usage

Current bill: \$291.85  
New bill: \$320.07  
Difference: \$28.22  
Increase: 9.7%

### WCE Rate Schedule

(Monthly Electric Rates effective April 2024)

#### Residential 101 Rate

Service Availability Charge @ \$1.37 per day  
First 800 kWh @ \$0.1049      Excess kWh @ \$0.0884

#### Commercial Three-phase 503 Rate

Service Availability Charge @ \$2.34 per day  
All kWh @ \$0.0878

#### Commercial & Industrial Large Power Rate

Service Availability Charge @ \$5.00 per day  
All Kw Billing Demand @ \$11.60  
All kWh @ \$0.0531

#### Lighting

Dusk-to-Dawn @ \$9.90 per month  
Street Lights @ \$14.90 per month

ON THE COVER: Sterling Elementary students Maddon Werner, Brady Addis and Brent Schubert learn about the equipment linemen use, and try their hand at unscrewing a nut and bolt during the school's annual STEM night.

# Houtsma is tapped to fill vacant District 4 seat

West Central Electric's board of directors has chosen Elizabeth Houtsma of Centerview to fill the vacant District 4 seat for the cooperative, according to WCE Board President Densil Allen, Jr.

Houtsma, originally from Hartsburg, Mo., said spending her entire life as a co-op family, and being responsible for running her own business will allow her to successfully serve the cooperative as a director.

"I believe electric co-ops provide an indispensable service to their members, and I'm at a stage in my life where I'm looking for ways to give back to my community. Being a director for the co-op is a way to do that," she said.

Houtsma grew up with Boone Electric serving her family, and has had WCE since moving to Warrensburg 20 years ago. Houtsma's grandfather was a lineman for 30 years, so she said she is very familiar with the culture of a cooperative.

"As a long-time business owner I understand running a business, being fiscally responsible and having people depend upon me," she said. "I believe these are all skills that will allow me to be valuable as a director."

Houtsma said her main goals for the cooperative are to continue to provide the level of service members deserve and are accustomed to, as well as to continue excellent customer service to members.

"The biggest challenge seems to be to continue to provide reliable and affordable electricity to members, in a sea of challenges including legislative, environmental and economic issues," she said. "I hope that working cooperatively with my fellow board members, co-op employees and members, all with diverse views and experiences, will allow us to reach the best possible solutions to address any number of challenges that arise as obstacles to providing excellent service to our members."

Houtsma and her husband, Greg, own Warrensburg Animal Hospital and Hillside H Ranch. They live in rural Warrensburg with their daughters, Stella and Ava. Houtsma is involved with the Old Drum Animal Shelter, the Warrensburg Senior Center, and is a member of Northside Christian Church.

The District 4 board seat was vacated in October by former director Sandra Streit, who moved her place of residence off cooperative lines when her husband, Marshall, accepted a job out of state.

Streit served as a director for 10 years. Houtsma will serve out the remainder of Streit's term, which is up for election in August 2025. The open director position was advertised for several months, with applications being accepted through Jan. 5, and interviews conducted by the board on Feb. 12.



Houtsma

## FIRST QUARTER 2024 ROUND-UP GRANTS

\$5,000 GRANT



### Holden School District

HS Library for Books and New/Additional seating

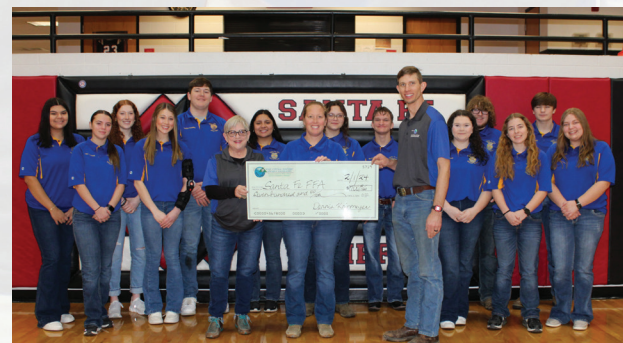
\$750 GRANT



### Oak Grove Middle School

Classroom Book and Novel Sets

\$700 GRANT



### Santa Fe High School FFA Chapter

Back Snack Program for Easter Holiday Packs

\$3,500 GRANT



### Higginsville Ministerial Fellowship

Higginsville and Corder Food Pantry



# No Foolin'...

## April is National Safe Digging Month

Planting a tree, or planning a spring project that involves digging? Spring showers bring May flowers but digging on your own this spring could spell big trouble. Even if you think you could get lucky or that digging one small hole (or two) won't matter, don't take for granted what lines might lurk beneath the soil in your yard or easement.

Before you use that post hole digger or other unearthing tools, STOP and call 8-1-1 to request that buried electric, gas, cable and other live lines in or near your yard be marked. The service is free but digging in an unmarked yard may not be.

You might think you don't have time for that and ask yourself, what's the worst that could happen? **YOU COULD DIE OR BECOME SERIOUSLY INJURED.** It doesn't make that yard project quite as pressing, does it?

Other consequences of blindly digging and taking a chance are causing a power outage, hitting a gas line and getting burned or causing an evacuation in your neighborhood, or getting fined. If you hit a telephone line or fiber optic line, you might lose your telephone, cable TV or internet service. Worse yet, it could interfere with your neighborhood's emergency assistance technology.

Although it all seems like "your" yard, utilities have the right of way to the live lines lurking under the ground in places where you might dig.

In fact, an underground utility line is damaged once every nine minutes across the nation because someone decided to dig without getting their yard properly marked, according to data collected by Common Ground Alliance. You may think one or two "small holes" won't matter, but that's what the person thought who hit a line nine minutes ago.

Take a deep breath, look over your landscaping or fence plans, and call 8-1-1 before you dig. Each state has its own call center to help you get digging safely. In Missouri, that is 1-800-DIG-RITE (344-7483). By calling 8-1-1 or your state's digging call center directly, utilities or the companies they contract with will come to your home and mark your yard before you dig.

Safe Electricity reminds you that Call811.com lists the name and contact information for each state's digging notification service. The site also lists the advance notice required for marking services, which is usually two days, not including the day you call.

So tiptoe through the tulips this spring and summer, both literally and figuratively. Know what's underneath that flower bed and everywhere else in your yard.

As call811.com says, "Know what's below." Then dig safely. For more about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

### Know your colors

What do the flags and markings in your yard mean when you call 811 for a locate?

**GREEN** = sewer & drains

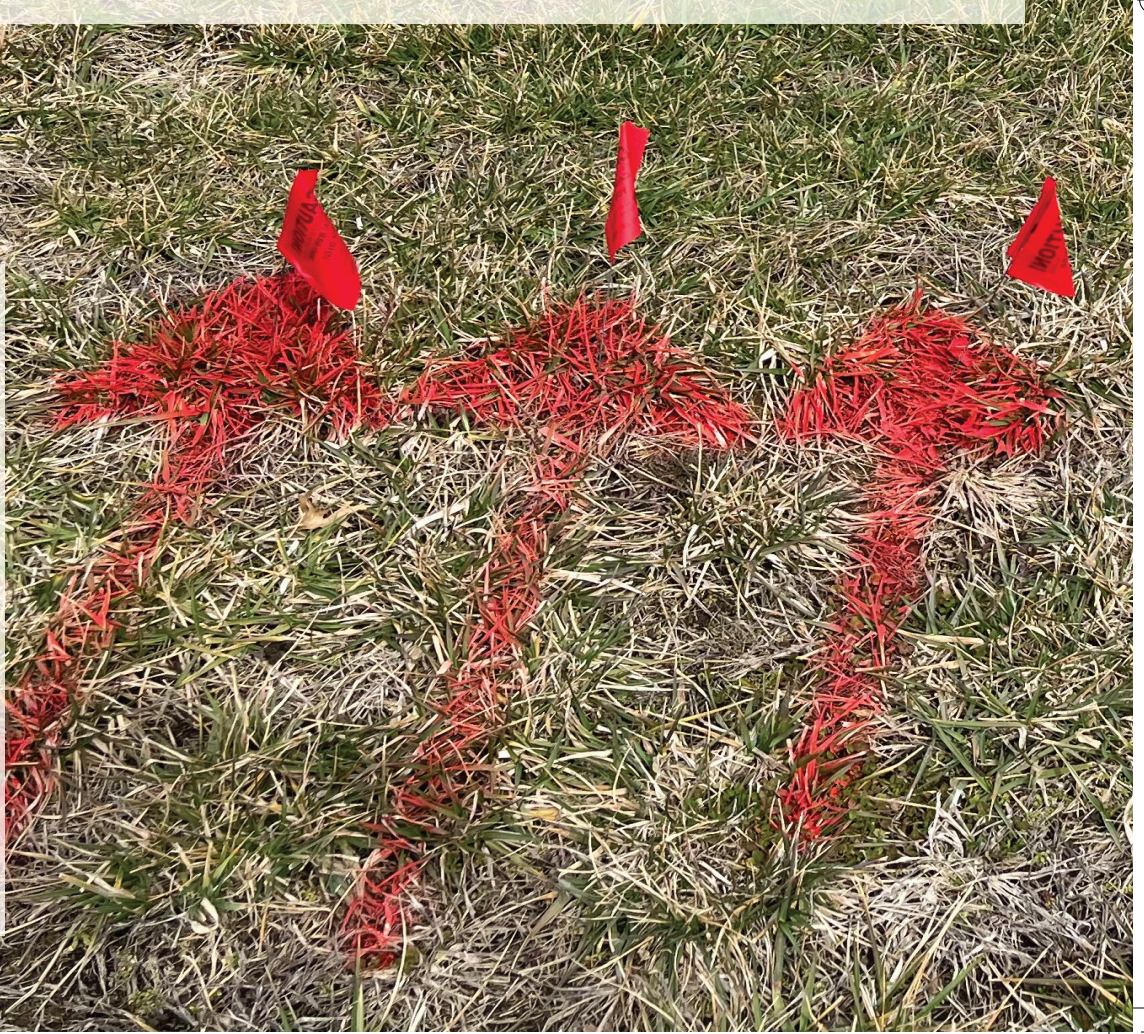
**RED** = electric

**ORANGE** = communication

**YELLOW** = gas, oil, steam

**PURPLE** = reclaimed water

**BLUE** = potable water





# What you plant must be trimmed...

## Unruly trees and power lines

# We're on it!

We love trees. They beautify our landscape, provide shade and are an essential part of nature.

When you see our contractors out trimming trees, know that we are doing so to keep you safe and prevent service issues.

### Too close for comfort

Although most trees do not present a problem, some of them grow into or crowd power lines or other utility equipment. When greenery becomes too close for comfort, we have to address it because overgrowth can interfere with power distribution and create a fire hazard.

Power lines can give off a spark or arc that may land on a nearby branch and ignite. Additionally, the lights in your house may flicker when tree branches brush power lines during high winds. Stormy weather can also cause limbs to break off and land on lines.

In fact, the majority of power outages are caused by tree-related issues. It is our job to ensure trees, branches and limbs are a safe distance from power lines.

Clear power lines make it easier and safer for lineworkers to access lines and fix problems that may occur. When clearing around lines, we make sure proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health as much as possible. Pruning is the first line of defense against unruly trees, although sometimes a tree must be removed. This is a last resort for certain scenarios: when a fast-growing tree is located directly under a power line or for trees that are leaning, in decline, cracked or split.

### In your own yard

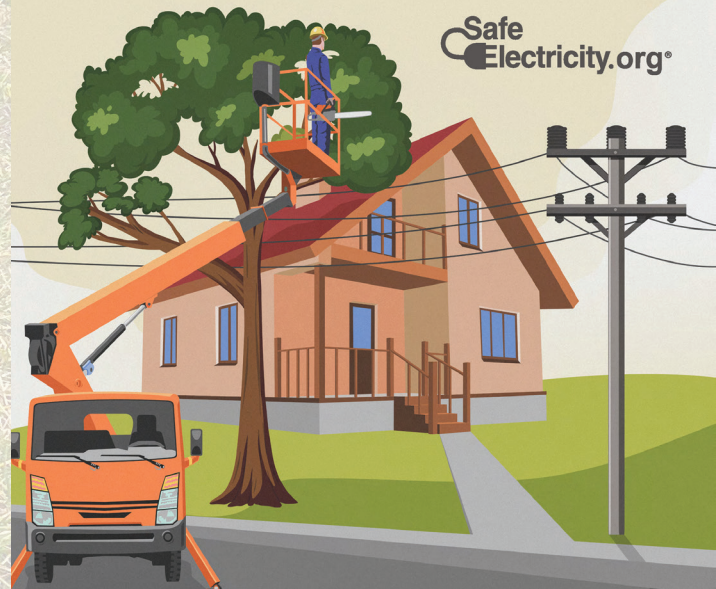
When hiring someone to trim trees on your property, know that most tree-care workers are not qualified to work around energized power lines. By law, only OSHA-certified utility line clearance workers are allowed to work on trees or branches within 10 feet of a power line.

Contact West Central Electric Right-of-Way Coordinator Dru Felkins at 800-491-3803 with questions about trees around power lines. For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

TREES — TOO CLOSE FOR (YOUR) COMFORT

## TREES CAUSE MAJORITY OF POWER OUTAGES

Safe  
Electricity.org®



## WHY DOES YOUR POWER PROVIDER TRIM TREES?

Although most trees do not present a problem, some of them grow into or crowd power lines, poles or other utility equipment and cause service issues. Unruly and overgrown trees can:

- ⚠️ Cause outages.
- 🔥 Create fire hazards.
- ⚡ Break off and land on power lines.
- 🌀 Cause lights to flicker during high winds.
- ❄️ Get weighed down with ice and cause issues.

Proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health, although sometimes a tree must be removed. This is a last resort, but it can be necessary if there are:

- ⚠️ Fast-growing trees directly under power lines.
- ⚠️ Trees that are leaning into lines.
- ⚠️ Trees that are declining, cracked or split.

Unobstructed power lines make it easier and safer for utility crews to repair or service lines.

✔️ Power companies trim trees to better serve you.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)





# Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 8

## *Lineworkers light up our lives!*

If you were asked to associate an image or a person with West Central Electric, you would probably picture a lineworker. One of the most visible employees of the co-op, lineworkers work tirelessly to ensure our community receives uninterrupted power 24/7.

“Lineworker” is listed as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. This is understandable as they perform detailed tasks near high-voltage power lines. Regardless of the time of day, having to brave stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers must climb 40 feet in the air, often carrying heavy equipment to get the job done.

Being a lineworker takes years of specialized training, ongoing education, dedication, and equally important, a sense of service and commitment. This dedication and sense of service to the community is truly what sets them apart. That’s why we set aside the second Monday in April to celebrate and recognize the men and women who work around the clock to keep the lights on.

While lineworkers may be the most visible employees at West Central Electric, it’s important to note that there is a team of highly-skilled professionals working behind the scenes. Engineers provide ongoing expertise and guidance on the operations side of the co-op. Member service representatives are always standing by to take your calls and questions. Our information technology (IT) experts are continuously monitoring our system to help safeguard sensitive data. And these are just a few of the folks who work together to ensure we can deliver the service and reliability you expect and deserve. Without them, our lineworkers wouldn’t be able to “bring the light” to our community.

Our dedicated lineworkers are proud to represent West Central Electric, and they deserve all the appreciation and accolades that come their way on Lineworker Appreciation Day.

## West Central Electric Cooperative Linemen

### HIGGINSVILLE

Adam Beck  
Derek Cole  
Tucker Crowe  
Tim Frerking  
Scott Gard  
Todd Gast  
Brandon Heck  
Nathan Johnson  
Conner Lamphier  
Dylan Lilleman  
Cabot Long  
Billy Mackie  
Pete Nelson  
Zac Wallpe

### OAK GROVE

Jeff Campbell  
Kade Collins  
Austin Hatfield  
Garret Nair  
Matt Schellman  
Johnathon Sullins  
Jesse Underwood  
Eric Wegener  
Wyatt Wilkinson





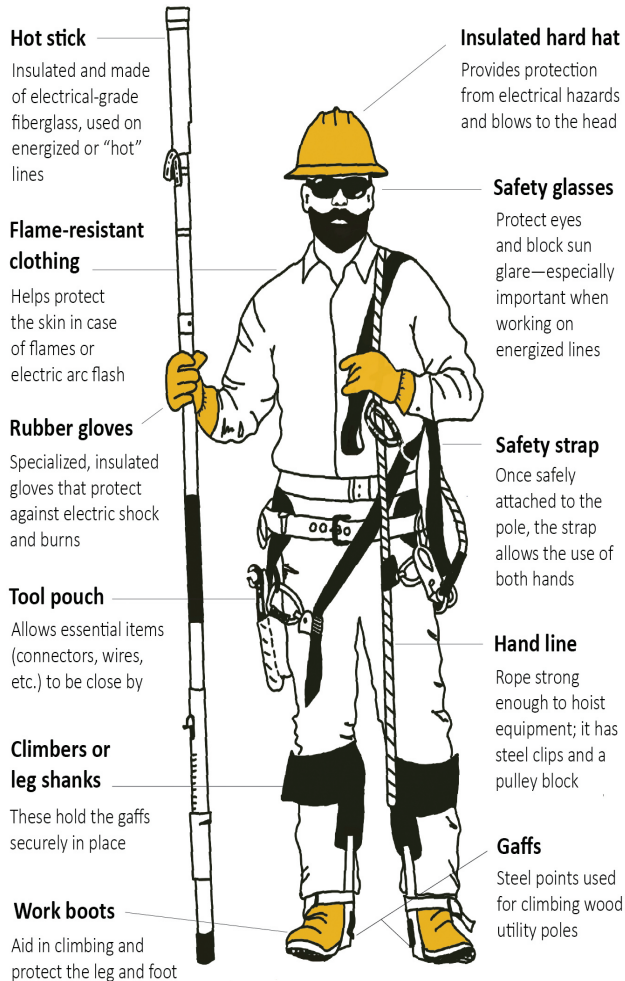
# ELECTRICAL LINEWORKERS

Lineworkers install and maintain overhead and underground electrical systems. We rely on their expertise to power our world.

They must commit to safety above all else for the benefit of those they serve (you!), fellow crew members and themselves.

## WHAT THEY WEAR

Protective clothing is required to shield lineworkers since they work around high voltages. Gear can vary depending on pole structure (wood or steel) and weighs up to 45 pounds.



Safe  
Electricity.org®

## FROM THE WCE BOARDROOM...

*Special meeting of the Board of Directors held February 12, 2024*

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the offices of the Cooperative in Higginsville, Missouri, at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 12, 2024, for the sole purpose of interviewing and selecting a board candidate to fulfill the seat left vacant in District 4 pursuant to the bylaws of the cooperative.

The meeting was called to order by President Densil Allen, Jr. Robert Simmons, secretary of the cooperative, caused the minutes of the meeting to be kept. The following directors were present: Jeremy Ahmann, Robert Simmons, Colby Dowell, Dale Jarman, Stan Rhodes, Richard Strobel, Clark Bredehoeft, Allen and Simmons. Also present at the meeting was General Manager Michael Newland and attorney Sheri Smiley.

### BOARD CANDIDATES INTERVIEWED

The board then interviewed and reviewed the applications all of the candidates who had filled out an application for the District 4 vacancy. Following the interview process pursuant to the bylaws, the board selected Elizabeth Houstma to serve for the unexpired term of the position.

### MEETING ADJOURNED

## A well-designed landscape can save you some green

Thinking of planting some trees in your yard this summer?

If the answer is yes, giving some thought about where to put them could help reduce your energy bill. Not only are trees beautiful, but shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun – a good thing in the summer.

And the savings are nothing to sneeze at. According to the Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs by 15 to 50 percent. Our nation's energy authority also boasts that on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than 8 years.

Although effective, shade-producing landscaping strategies vary by climate, here are some general planting guidelines from the Arbor Day Foundation:

Plant on the west and northwest side of your home to provide mid- to late-afternoon shade.

Plant shade trees over patios, driveways, and air-conditioning units (but never crowd or block your A/C unit—it should have a five-foot clearance above it and three feet on all sides).

Use trees to shade east and west windows. If they block your view, prune lower branches.

In general, large, deciduous trees planted on the east, west, and northwest sides of your home create shade in the summer and can help decrease the cost of running your air conditioner in the heat of the summer. Deciduous trees shed their leaves annually. Although it equates to a lot of leaves to rake come October, the annual cycle lets the sunshine through in the winter but blocks the sun's rays in the summer. This helps reduce energy costs if trees are strategically placed in near your home.

Trees that don't shed leaves are called evergreens, which usually block the sun year-round. That's great in the summer but not so hot in the winter. Consult a landscape professional for specific climate/region recommendations.

*NOTE: When planting trees, be sure to consider height potential. Do not plant trees within 20 feet of power lines. Taller-growing trees (taller than 15 feet at maturity) should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines -- the taller the tree, the farther away.*



# FROM THE WCE BOARD

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors held January 25, 2024

The meeting, was called to order by President Densil Allen Jr. Robert Simmons, secretary of the cooperative, caused the minutes of the meeting to be kept. The following directors were present: Clark Bredehoeft, Richard Strobel, Stan Rhodes, Dale Jarman, Jeremy Ahmann, Colby Dowell, Allen and Simmons. Also present was General Manager Michael Newland and attorney Sheri Smiley.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

After discussion, the agenda was approved.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

The board approved its consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of Dec. 21, 2023; expenditures for the month of December 2023; new membership applications and membership terminations.

**APPROVAL OF REPORTS**

The following January 2024 reports were approved:

Financing and Treasurer's Report: Accounting Manager Rebecca Hoefflicker presented the December 2023 Operating Report (RUS Form 7) and Comparative Operating Statement. She reviewed the Financial and Statistical Report and Treasurer's Report with monthly and annual budget comparisons. She also gave the investment report. She presented and reviewed statistical data pertaining to operating revenue, expenses, margins, assets, liabilities, cash flow management, and KWH sales and ratios.

Operations Report: Operations Manager Scott Gard provided an oral report to supplement his written Operations Report. He reported on crews and recent peer reviews. He reported on the Jan. 9 snow and wind storm and outages from that. Mechanic work and fleet were reported on. He gave an update on pressure washers. Brush crews and right-of-way was reported on. Spraying will begin sometime after Memorial Day weekend.

Safety and Engineering Report: Engineering Manager Pete Nelson provided an oral report to supplement his written Safety and Engineering Report. A safety meeting was held with operations and engineering with clear expectations set for the following year. Crew visits were done. An energy/staking department report was given. Hours worked without a lost-time accident, and hours driven in December were reported on.

Member Services Report: Member Services Manager Brent Schlotzhauer provided a report to supplement his written Member Services Report. His report included RoundUp enrollment and RoundUp updates. Youth Tour presentations were given to local schools. Net metering contracts, incentive rates and member survey were reported on. The employee award banquet and changes to the office building were reported on. He reported on AECI Take Control and Save Rebate changes for 2024. He gave an overview of the electric car's performance for the year.

**NW ELECTRIC REPORT**

Simmons and Newland reported on the January NW meeting. They reported on the deferred revenue, staffing and outages.

**POLICIES 5.3, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.11**

The board approved staff's recommended changes to policies 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, and 5.11.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE SECTION 23**

Schlotzhauer presented a change to the AECI rebates. A motion to



change Section 23 to reflect the policy change was approved.

**DISCUSS AND APPROVE REVENUE DEFERRAL**

Newland and Hoefflicker reported on revenue deferral. The final numbers from NW Electric will be coming soon. The recommendation to record \$750,000.00 in deferral was approved.

**APPROVE FINANCIAL POLICY 3.16**

Newland presented Policy 3.16 which was approved.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE 2024 BUDGET**

Newland and Hoefflicker presented the 2024 budget. They reported on assumptions, estimates of demands, wholesale energy charges, rate increases, deferred revenue, staffing, revenues, expenses, margins, capital credits, projected sales and growth, right-of-way costs, the cost of purchase power, property taxes, depreciation, plant, fleet, interest expenses, work plan projects and historical data including proposed cash flows for the year. The budget was approved.

**ROUNDUP FOUNDATION REPORT**

Dowell reported on the RoundUp meeting and donations given.

**NRECA VOTING DELEGATE AND ALTERNATE**

Bredehoeft was named the NRECA voting delegate and Rhodes alternate.

**LEGAL REPORT**

Attorney Sheri Smiley gave the legal report for the month.

**MANAGER'S REPORT**

Newland presented the monthly Manager's Report. He reported the Lafayette County sheriff wants to use poles to set up license plate readers. The agreement was approved. He then gave a detailed presentation of the districts of the co-op as set out in the bylaws. He showed where meters and members are, and a discussion was held on equitable representation under the bylaws. No further action was taken on the districts. The Policy Committee will meet at 9 a.m. before the next board meeting.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**FINANCIAL REPORT • Statement of Operations • December 2023**

	This month	YTD 2023	YTD 2022
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,003,111</b>	<b>\$32,952,911</b>	<b>\$33,220,176</b>
Power Bill Expense	1,749,264	19,197,477	18,994,257
Operation & Maintenance Expense	641,307	7,586,394	8,270,634
Depreciation Expense	229,736	2,695,089	2,560,041
Interest Expense	127,236	1,490,532	1,382,428
<b>Total cost of Service (Total Expense)</b>	<b>2,747,543</b>	<b>30,969,492</b>	<b>31,207,360</b>
Operating Margins (Revenue less Expenses)	255,568	1,983,419	2,012,816
Other Margins	896,147	1,510,723	1,265,929
<b>TOTAL MARGINS</b>	<b>\$1,151,715</b>	<b>\$3,494,142</b>	<b>\$3,278,745</b>

