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**4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

# CURRENTS

# 4 RIVERS

## Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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### FROM THE MANAGER

## Excess Generation Creates System Challenges

Our cooperative is facing a challenge in regard to hosting new net metering/co-generation services in some areas of our system. What does this mean? Net metering/co-gen accounts, which consist primarily of solar photovoltaic (PV) generation and a few wind turbines on 4 Rivers' system, produce electricity when the sun is shining, or the wind is blowing, regardless of the consumer demand on the grid at that time.

Historically, when we analyze our system's capacity and demand needs, we are checking to see what is needed during the highest peak hour of the year to ensure we can provide reliable power to you, our members, when demand for power is high. However, with net metering/co-gen accounts, we must consider how to accommodate the times when member demand is low, and we have a large amount of energy being generated onto a system that needs to be consuming the energy produced.

If there is more energy being produced than consumed on a system, reliable power quality is affected. Currently, this concern is localized to a few areas on 4 Rivers' system where specific substations, feeders, or phases are approaching the point where they have more generation than they will have demand during some points of the year when sun and wind are abundant and consumer usage is lower, like the

"shoulder months" of April and May. Currently, we are completing an engineering study to determine where additional net/co-gen services can be hosted by 4 Rivers and where the system is currently at maximum net/co-gen capacity.

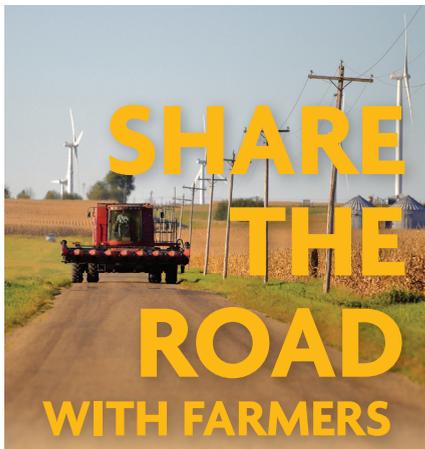
4 Rivers' two solar farms, one at our Studebaker substation near Fredonia and the other at our Americus substation north of Emporia, both have sophisticated controls to shut down generation if power production exceeds consumption. Residential units typically do not have this type of shutoff capability.

If you are considering installation of solar, wind or battery generation, please call and discuss your options before you begin installation. We can provide consumption data for your location and information on system capacity for additional generation, if available in your area. We can also help you evaluate the economics of installing home energy generation.

On a different note — this summer, we have had several poles hit by large equipment. As equipment keeps getting larger, the risks are greater of hitting or hooking electric equipment. If this does happen to you and the power lines are in contact with the vehicle or tractor, do not exit the vehicle until the power has been turned off.



Dennis Svanes



Farming season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and do the following to keep everyone safe.

**1** Be alert and cautious, and give farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.

**2** Do not pass in a “No Passing Zone,” or where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.

**3** Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.

**4** Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator’s blind spot.

**5** Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe for them to do so.

SOURCE: TEXAS TABLE TOP (TEXAS FARM BUREAU)

## SAVE A LIFE: Avoid Distractions While Driving

Some temptations are hard to resist. For some, it can be especially challenging to turn down the last piece of chocolate cake.

While driving, we may hear that “ding” on our mobile device, notifying us of an incoming text or phone call and feel the nagging need to check it. We know we should just ignore it until we are safely stopped, but we make an exception — just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and in many states, illegal? Excessive self-confidence. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. However, mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young, inexperienced drivers and school buses back on the road, it is prudent to remember the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, at least one of every ten fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually

— a heartbreaking statistic considering these accidents may have been avoided if someone had simply put down the phone while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting, talking on the phone and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At 4 Rivers Electric, safety is foremost in everything we do — for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving and hope you will have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let us work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait, and waiting just might save a life



**If it’s an emergency, pull over before answering the phone.**

# Keep Your Cool: Five Tips to Stay Safe in Extreme Heat

The dog days of summer typically bring the warmest, sultriest temperatures of the year. Even if you're a summertime enthusiast, it's important to stay cool during extreme heat.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 700 people die from extreme heat every year in the U.S.

Factors like obesity, age and alcohol intake can impact how a person reacts to extreme heat. High humidity also contributes to heat-related illness because we don't sweat as quickly — meaning our bodies can't release heat as fast — when humidity levels are high.

Take extra steps to cool off, keep hydrated and stay informed. Here are five tips recommended by the CDC to help you stay cool during extremely warm weather:

1. Stay in an air-conditioned home or building as much as possible. Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when the sun is hottest. If your home is not air conditioned, call the local health department to locate public facilities or shelters.
2. If you must be outdoors, wear loose, light-colored clothing and apply sunscreen often.

3. Drink more water than usual. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink more.
4. Take cold showers or baths to cool down.
5. Avoid using the oven or stove to cook. These appliances add heat to your home. Try using the microwave, slow cooker or grill instead. (During the summer, *Kansas Country Living* often features slow cooker and grilling recipes. Check the Let's Dish page for the recipes!)

Remember to look after those who may need extra help. People 65 years of age or older are at greater risk of heat-related illness, so check on your senior neighbors and friends. Children under the age of 2 and pets are also more susceptible to heat stroke. Never leave a child or pet in a vehicle, even if only for a minute.

If you work outdoors, use a buddy system to monitor your coworkers (and have someone do the same for you!).

Heat-induced illness can happen to anyone, even to those who are perfectly healthy. If you're outdoors during extremely warm weather, monitor how you're feeling, stay hydrated and keep an eye on those around you.

## Protect the Skin You're In

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. One in five Americans will develop it in their lifetime, and nearly 20 Americans die from melanoma every day, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Association.

Although those with fair skin are at greater risk than others of getting skin cancer, anyone can get it.

Basal and squamous cell carcinomas are the two most common types. Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, is the third most common type. The risk for melanoma doubles for people who have had more than five sunburns, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation (SCF). However, even without a burn, any sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer.

The most preventable cause of skin cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun or artificial sources, such as tanning beds.

### Safety in the Sun

To prevent skin cancer, protect yourself from UV rays, not just during the summer but year-

round. UV rays can reach you on non-sunny days (cloudy and cool days), and they can also reflect off other surfaces like water, cement, sand and snow.

In the continental U.S., UV rays are strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daylight saving time or 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. standard time, according to the CDC. The UV Index forecasts the strength of UV rays for each day. Protect your skin from too much exposure to the sun when the UV Index is 3 or higher by:

- ▶ Staying in the shade.
- ▶ Wearing sun-protective clothing.
- ▶ Wearing a hat with a wide brim.
- ▶ Wearing sunglasses that wrap around and block both UVA and UVB rays.

### Additional Tips from the AAD Include:

- ▶ Apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- ▶ Reapply sunscreen every two hours or after sweating or swimming.
- ▶ Apply enough sunscreen to cover skin not protected by clothing.
- ▶ Do not forget to apply it to the tops of your

feet, your neck, your ears and the top of your head.

### Indoor Tanning

Using a tanning bed, booth, sunbed or sunlamp exposes users to high levels of UV rays. Over time, too much exposure to UV rays can cause skin cancers, cataracts and cancers of the eye, according to the CDC.

Indoor tanning does not protect against sunburns. A "base tan" is a sign of skin damage. Using a tanning bed or other indoor tanning methods can also cause serious injury; burns send more than 3,000 people to the emergency room each year.

### The Skin You're In

The bottom line is that you should protect your skin from sun/UV exposure at all times. Consider using a self-tanning product if you want to look tan (but be sure to still use sunscreen). Perform regular skin self-exams to detect skin cancer early when it is most treatable. See a dermatologist if you notice new or suspicious spots on your skin or anything changing color, itching or bleeding.

SOURCES: CDC, AAD, SCF

## Support Mental Health in Rural America

### The value of sharing lived experiences

Throughout many parts of the country, an increased understanding of mental health has led to enhanced awareness of its importance. A catch-all description of emotional, psychological and social well-being, mental health affects how people think, feel and act, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In fact, mental health is an important component of overall health. However, in some instances, there remains a gap between understanding mental health and embracing solutions, particularly in rural areas.

“When my 28-year-old nephew died by suicide in a farming community where mental illness was a subject never discussed, my mother courageously announced ‘Enough is enough. We are going to talk about this, and we are going to talk about this in detail,’” said Jeff Winton, founder and chairman of the board of nonprofit Rural Minds.

His commitment to confronting suicide and mental illness in rural areas supports the goal of the organization, which is to serve as an informed voice for mental health in rural America and provide mental health information and resources. A major barrier to individuals seeking help in rural communities is the stigma often associated with mental health challenges. The organization is working to confront the stigma through people talking about their personal, lived experiences with mental illness.

Recognizing the value of sharing deeply personal accounts of mental illness is also the message of Jeff Ditzenberger, a farmer who attempted suicide. His own challenges confronting and managing his bipolar II disorder while returning to farming motivated Ditzenberger to found TUGS, a mental health nonprofit with the mission to address the stigma surrounding mental health challenges and suicide.

Passionate about normalizing discussions about mental illness, Ditzenberger is working with Rural Minds to encourage others in rural areas to talk about their challenges with PTSD, bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia or other mental issues. The goal is for people to become as comfortable with the discussion of mental health as they are talking about COVID-19, the common cold or the flu.

Mental health professionals agree that opening up about mental health challenges can be the first step to finding a path forward.

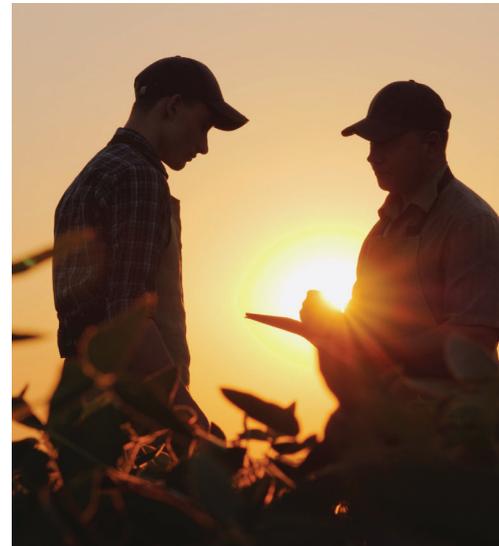
“Sharing the burden of mental illness and life experiences can be really, really powerful,” said Dr. Mark A. Fry, consultant in the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology at Mayo Clinic. “As a psychiatrist, I would tell you it’s a critically important part of the overall treatment plan. In my opinion, the concept of providing peer support — sharing lived experiences with mental illness and supporting each other — really is invaluable.”

#### Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Support in Rural Areas

While mental health is imperative for overall health, some people do not recognize mental illness as a disease; rather, it is sometimes perceived as a character flaw or personal weakness.

“Mental illness is an illness — just like cancer or diabetes,” Winton said. “Just as it is with many other diseases, the person who is ill is not responsible for getting the illness. Much of the stigma around mental illness may be rooted in the misdirected and unfair shame that can be an added burden for someone who is already suffering with a mental illness.

“Similar to many people in rural America, I grew up on a farm and was taught to pull myself up by my bootstraps and get over it, to just move



on and to not think about it. Well, that is not an acceptable response to a mental illness. You don’t do that with other illnesses. You can’t do that with mental illness.”

#### Collaboration is Key

In the spirit of collaborating to better serve the mental health needs of rural America, Rural Minds is partnering with The National Grange, a family, community organization with roots in agriculture that was founded in 1867.

“Our aim in collaborating is to develop a grassroots, person-to-person approach to provide people who live in rural communities with mental health and suicide prevention information by working with local Granges, civic groups and community leaders across the country,” Winton said.

#### Help is Available

There are several established organizations that provide mental health information and services across the country, but Rural Minds focuses entirely on confronting the mental health challenges in rural communities.

Find a compilation of free mental health crisis resources and support and overall mental health resources and support at RuralMinds.org, which also offers access to recordings of educational webinars presented by the organization.