

www.4riverselectric.com
620-364-2116 or 800-748-7395

Northern District
2731 Milo Terr.
Lebo, KS 66856

Southern District
9346 Jewell Rd.
Fredonia, KS 66736

Payment Center
2501 W. 18th Ave., Ste. B
Emporia, KS 66801

4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

CURRENTS

4 RIVERS

Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Good Reminders for Electrical Safety Month

At 4 Rivers, 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 we serve — we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted because of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity and powers our daily lives. However, we know firsthand how dangerous electricity is, because we work with it every day of the year.

To me, safety is more than a catchphrase. As CEO, it's my responsibility to keep our employees safe. We do employee safety training on a very regular basis. Additionally, we want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That is why you will see 4 Rivers hosting safety demonstrations throughout the year, to educate others about the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution attendees on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the number of electrical devices, tools and appliances used every day to make our lives better, I would like

to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

FRAYED WIRES POSE A SERIOUS SAFETY HAZARD.

Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use, or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled or even become a fire hazard.

AVOID OVERLOADING CIRCUITS.

Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle — by having too many devices running on one circuit.

LABEL CIRCUIT BREAKERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CIRCUITS IN YOUR HOME.

Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old, and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

USE EXTENSION CORDS PROPERLY.

Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you string multiple cords together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.



Dennis Svanes

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PHOTO ABOVE "AUTUMNAL EQUINOX SUNSET" WAS TAKEN BY MEMBER MICHAEL HOAG OF WAVERLY. THE PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS THE BEAUTY OF OUR COOPERATIVE TERRITORY.

4 Rivers Holds 2nd Annual Meeting of the Members

The 2nd Annual Meeting of Members of 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative was held March 28, 2022, at Memorial Hall in Independence. There were 91 registered members with 148 total attendees present who enjoyed an Italian cuisine meal before the 7 p.m. meeting. Four rounds of prizes were given away during the meeting.

Board President Michael Springer opened the meeting by welcoming the members, and Trustee Randy Bunnell lead the invocation followed by the National Anthem. Board Vice President Robert Converse then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The agenda and 2021 minutes were approved, and Board Treasurer Larry Felts gave the financial report. President Springer's report focused on our cooperative's mission statement of "serving and caring." General Manager Dennis Svanes gave his report on events that occurred in 2021 and spoke on current and future projects.

The keynote speaker was Lee Tafanelli, CEO of Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC). Tafanelli noted KEC is an advocate for electric cooperatives with goals to educate, inform, influence and control costs. He recognized the linemen in attendance, as well as those in attendance who had served our country in the military.

The election results were given; there were a total of 595 ballots cast. In North District 2, the incumbent **DAVID KUNKEL**, unopposed, received 228 votes and was declared the winner. In



Manager Dennis Svanes welcomes members to the annual meeting.



Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. CEO Lee Tafanelli spoke to the membership about services offered by KEC.



Members pick up their giveaway prizes after the completion of the 2022 annual meeting.

North District 3, incumbent **STACY HEINS**, unopposed, received 194 votes and was declared the winner. In South District 2, incumbent Carol Wehmeyer received 75 votes. Challenger **LOREN DICKENS** received 98 votes and was declared the winner.

President Springer recognized Trustee Wehmeyer, thanking her for serving the cooperative board and membership.

With no further business for consideration, President Springer declared adjournment at 8:01 p.m.

RESTORING POWER SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY

We do our best to avoid them, but there's no way around it: power outages happen sometimes.

For most 4 Rivers members, outages are rare and may last only a few hours. But when major storms, like the Dec. 15, 2021, Kansas windstorm or 2021's Winter Storm Uri impact our area, extended outages are unavoidable.

So, when the power goes out, how do 4 Rivers electric crews know where to start working? How do you know if your outage has been reported? We have answers to these questions and more, and it all starts with a safe, efficient plan for power restoration.

When the lights go out, and it is safe for our crews to begin the restoration process, they start by repairing equipment and power lines that will restore power to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible.

This process typically begins with repairs to the larger main distribution lines that service a great number of homes and businesses. After those repairs are made, crews work on tap lines, which

deliver power to transformers, either mounted on utility poles (for above-ground service) or placed on pads (for underground service). Finally, individual service lines that run between the transformer and the home are repaired.

We can't control the weather, but we can prepare for it. 4 Rivers keeps a supply of utility poles, transformers and other equipment on hand, so we can quickly get to work in the event of infrastructure damage. When widespread outages occur, multiple crews are out in the field simultaneously working to repair damage at multiple locations. We also coordinate with nearby co-ops to bring in additional crews when necessary.

A proactive approach to maintenance helps minimize the chance of prolonged outages; this is why you see 4 Rivers crews and contractors periodically trimming trees and clearing vegetation near rights-of-way. We love trees too, but it only takes one overgrown limb to knock out power for an entire neighborhood. Trimming improves power reliability for our entire

community. In addition to managing vegetation, we regularly inspect utility poles, power lines and other critical equipment to maintain a more reliable system.

If you experience a power outage, don't assume a neighbor reported it. It's best to report the outage yourself, and we make it easy to do. The quickest way to report an outage is through the SmartHub app or by calling our dispatch team at 620-364-2116 or 800-748-7395.

If you have a medical condition that requires electrical equipment, please let us know and always have a backup plan in place. This plan could include a portable generator, extra medical supplies or moving to an alternate location until power is restored. If you plan to use a generator for backup power, read all safety information and instructions before use.

Mother Nature can be unpredictable, but as a member of 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, you can feel confident knowing we are standing by, ready to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

Your Member Donations to Quarter Quest Make a Difference

The most essential school supply is food — and every quarter counts!

4 Rivers Electric Cooperative and our members are proud to partner with the Kansas Food Bank to provide weekend food packets to kids who need a helping hand over the weekend.

Every Friday, the Kansas Food Bank delivers packets of nutritional “open and eat” food to more than a dozen elementary and middle schools serving the students in our service area. The packets are distributed to about 700 children each week just in our service area, who have been identified as weekend chronically hungry. For them, the food sent home in their backpack may be the only food they receive over the weekend. The program allows these children to return to school on Monday morning ready to think, listen and learn — an opportunity all children should have.

This program results in a higher graduation rate among our most vulnerable school children, enhancing our social and economic development and benefiting everyone in our area. These contributions do make that full circle back to our children in our community. Healthy students learn better, and this is one of the great programs that help keep our students healthy.

The Kansas Food Bank is in its eighteenth year of the backpack program. For children who participate in the program, marked differences are evident: grades improve, truancy dissolves, behavioral problems diminish, a better attitude toward school, and fewer developmental impairments that can affect them intellectually, physically, and emotionally. These children can reach their full potential and contribute fully to their communities in the long term.

“A staff member expressed her gratitude as she knew with the upcoming two weeks off from school, food would be an issue, and the family she works with sincerely appreciates the food. Thank you.”

To purchase the food, fill the packets, and distribute them to schools every Friday, the Kansas Food Bank incurs a cost of roughly \$5 per packet. If each of our members gave just one quarter per month, we help the most food-vulnerable children in our area. We encourage all members to support this program and make a difference in the lives of these area children who are at serious risk of present and future problems stemming from childhood hunger.

We have several ways to authorize a donation to Quarter Quest. You can enroll on our SmartHub App or simply check “YES” on your payment stub and whether you would like to have a monthly recurring donation or a one-time amount. You can also call us at 620-364-2116 and ask to add a donation to your next statement.

In 2021, member donations to Quarter Quest totaled \$2,436.59. We are truly grateful to all who have donated to this program supporting our most vulnerable youth. The most essential school supply is food — and every quarter counts!



BECAUSE THE MOST ESSENTIAL SCHOOL SUPPLY IS FOOD.

“Student A is a sixth grade student making his transition to middle school. The entire school year, he has been asking about the Food4Kids program, so he has food over the weekend. The first Friday of the year when the food was distributed, he was so happy he stated ‘I could almost cry’ and gave the coordinator a big hug when it was presented to him. Because of having access to food, Student A can make the transition to middle school even easier.”

Selecting a Tree? Know Its Mature Height

If you are considering planting a tree, carefully select its location before you begin digging. Also, call 811 before you break ground to get underground utilities marked. If trees are planted in the wrong location, they can be expensive to maintain and even dangerous. 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity offer tips on how to pick an optimal location.

A mature height of fewer than 15 feet is recommended if planting near lines. Some trees that are generally not tall enough to interfere with lines include crabapple, honeysuckle, juniper, flowering dogwood and hawthorn.

Trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

Once you have a tree selected, contact Kansas 811 by simply calling 811, visiting 811kansas.com or downloading the Kansas 811 app to schedule a utility locate before putting a shovel to the ground. The “Call Before You Dig” number is a free service that locates and marks public underground utilities in your yard or on your land. Call several business days before you plan to dig. Locators will mark public underground utilities such as electric, gas, water, cable and fiber. The service does not mark privately owned lines or

pipes such as sprinkler systems and invisible fencing.

- ▶ If your established trees are growing into power lines, contact us to ask about them. In some cases (depending on the tree’s location), we will come out and trim the tree. If it is your responsibility, do not take on the task yourself. Only tree trimmers who are line-clearance certified are legally allowed to prune and trim trees within 10 feet of power lines.
- ▶ It is important to have trees trimmed. Limbs can fall on power lines during bad weather, resulting in power outages or blinking lights. Broken or drooping limbs could also cause a fire.
- ▶ Tall growing trees with a mature height greater than 45 feet should be planted at least 45 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. Some of these trees include oak, white and blue spruce, most pines and most maples.
- ▶ Be sure no one climbs a tree near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches that do not touch power lines could become energized if a child’s weight is added. In addition, a child could climb high into the tree and be able to reach the line.

Good Reminders for Electrical Safety Month

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I encourage you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors.

One of our top priorities is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. Equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity.

Contact 4 Rivers Electric for additional electrical safety tips or if you would like us to provide a safety demonstration at your school or upcoming community event.

On another safety issue, we have contract crews providing vegetation management under and around our power lines. We do this for both power quality and safety. There are many dangers of having trees in the power lines, so we appreciate cooperation when we must clear the right-of-way areas. If you have trees in our lines, do not attempt to cut them yourself. Please contact us, so we can safely remove them.

