A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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FLINT HILLS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

This Magazine Cost-Effectively Fulfills Several Cooperative Principles


Chuck Goeckel

What's delivered to your home each month, provides something for everyone in your household and costs less than a cup of regular (not a fancy frappé or lavish mocha) coffee at McDonald's? *Kansas Country Living* magazine, and it's the most cost-effective way to share important business information with our consumer-members along with interesting features about this great state and the communities in which we live, work and play.

As a consumer and a member of Flint Hills RECA, you are entitled to know and understand how your cooperative operates. Cooperative Principle No. 2, Democratic Member Control, means our consumer-members participate in setting policies and making decisions for the electric co-op. It's Flint Hills RECA's responsibility to keep you informed of the co-op's business in a timely, and hopefully interesting, manner so when it's time to vote on issues and for representation on the board of directors you will have the knowledge to make informed decisions. By doing so, we fulfill Cooperative Principle No. 5—educate our members about their electric cooperative so they may effectively contribute to its development.

So, for less than the cost of a decent cup of coffee, Flint Hills RECA keeps you abreast of annual meeting details, legislative issues potentially affecting our rural way of life, cooperative youth programs, and outage and construction activities. Through the magazine we introduce you to co-op employees—your neighbors—who work to maintain safe and reliable electricity, and bring you safe electricity tips for around the farm and home, plus ways to use electricity wisely. By law, some of this information must be received by members and verified, and the magazine fulfills that requirement in the most cost-effective way possible.

Continued on page 16C ▶

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Routinely replace or clean your air conditioner's filter. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter can reduce your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5-15%. **Source: energy.gov**

Is a Power Line Insulated? (and Other Myths Debunked)

Have you ever wondered why a bird can sit on a live wire or what you should do if a power line is on the ground? Here are some Q&As to clear up common misconceptions concerning power lines, birds on a wire and other conundrums:

Why can a bird sit on a power line and not be hurt? Doesn't that mean the line is insulated?

No. Lines are sometimes coated for protection against the elements but still deadly upon contact. A bird or other critter can sit on a power line all day happy as a lark because there is no path to ground. If the animal were to come in contact with the utility pole or other grounded source while sitting on the line, it will be electrocuted, just as a person would be under the same circumstances.

What do I do if I see a downed power line?

Vacate the area. Call 911 to report it. Do not return to the area until you are given the go-ahead by authorities.

Can I tell from looking (or listening) if a downed power line is still live?

Absolutely not. A live wire may not spark or arc and it may not make any noise at all (although it could).

Where might downed power lines be?

A downed power line might be in a street, ditch or field after a bad storm or car accident. It could also be lurking in flood waters or under debris, trees or other objects after a severe storm.

Why might a power line be down or damaged?

A car accident may cause a line to hang down or be on the ground; severe weather could damage a pole or line; or in some cases it's caused by another unforeseeable reason, such as a storm-damaged tree or a hungry squirrel.

Do different kinds of utility lines look different?

Perhaps, but a non-utility professional cannot know what kind of line it is and what it carries (electricity, phone service, cable TV and so on) just by looking. You also can't tell how much voltage it is carrying by its appearance.

If a line is on the ground, is it dead?

Once a line is on the ground, it is not automatically dead, even if the power is off in your area. There's a good chance the line is still energized, which means you should not touch it, the surrounding ground or any metal objects nearby as they all could be energized and extremely dangerous, even deadly. Remember, even objects that don't normally conduct electricity can do so if they are remotely wet.

What if my car comes in contact with a downed power line?

Do not get out. Do not try to drive over it. Call 911 and wait for utility personnel to de-energize the line. If you smell gas or if there is a fire, exit your car with a solid jump landing on both feet (but don't touch the car at the same time) and **DO NOT WALK,** but hop away.

Can I help someone who has been in an accident involving a downed power line?

No. Do not go near the scene and warn others not to do so. Although our first instinct is often to help, a person running near an energized area could get electrocuted.

For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

RIGHT TREE RIGHT PLACE

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.

Some examples with a height/spread less than 25 feet are:

- Star Magnolia
- Crab Apple
- Lilac

Got fall planting plans? Before planting your next tree, consider its mature height and how it will affect power lines.

Brought to you by the electric cooperatives of Kansas. KEC KANSAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES, INC.

Building a New Grain Bin on Your Farm?

Remember Grain Bins Have Clearance Requirements

To stay safe, many farming tasks require looking up and around for power lines. Be sure to do so when operating large equipment with antennas or when using long implements, for example.

Another safety issue to keep in mind is grain bin and power line location. The National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with very specific requirements. The code does so to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with a live electrical line.

If you plan to build a new grain bin or remodel around an area that already has one, contact Flint Hills RECA at 620-767-5144. We can help with specific code requirements. The taller a grain bin, the farther it must be placed from a power line. Placing a grain bin too close to a power line is extremely dangerous, and will most likely need to be relocated due to one or more code violations—usually at the owner's expense.

The NESC specifies both horizontal and vertical distance requirements so don't leave a bin's location to chance. For example, a 30-foot high grain bin must be at least 93 feet from a power line, and all bins must have an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the bin's filling port. There are also distance requirements for non-loading sides of bins. In addition, changes to the ground (landscaping, filling) and drainage work can affect clearance heights.

Remember, calling us before installing a new grain bin or making changes around an existing one is free. Moving one is costly, it interrupts your farming schedule and is more than just a hassle.

Even if you are not getting a new grain bin or making changes around an existing one, remember to always maintain adequate clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin or when moving machinery or farming equipment anywhere on your farm.

Contact with a power line could be deadly. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

SAFETY NOTE: If your machinery or vehicle does come in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab. Call 911 and the dispatched utility will de-energize the power so that you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle.

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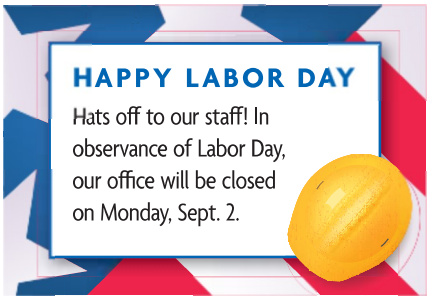
This Magazine Cost-Effectively Fulfills Several Cooperative Principles

Continued from page 16A ▶

Flint Hills RECA is one of 24 Kansas electric cooperatives providing *Kansas Country Living* to their consumer-members. By combining forces with other electric co-ops, the cost to produce our local co-op pages and the magazine make it our main communication vehicle of choice to get substantive information to you, which relates directly to Cooperative Principle No. 6—Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

Our social media channels—Facebook and Twitter, as well as our website—enhance what we provide in *Kansas Country Living* and offer immediate response for outages and other time-sensitive announcements. All of these communication channels work together to meet all of our consumer-members where they choose to access their information.

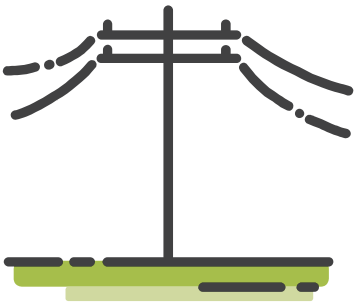
This month, more than 131,000 magazines will be mailed to electric cooperative consumer-members in Kansas, including those representing us in Washington, D.C., and at the Kansas Statehouse. By keeping our policymakers informed of rural and cooperative issues, we help fulfill Cooperative Principle No. 7—Concern for Community, which arguably is the most important of the Seven Cooperative Principles as we all work for the sustainability of our communities.



ENERGY TERMS QUIZ

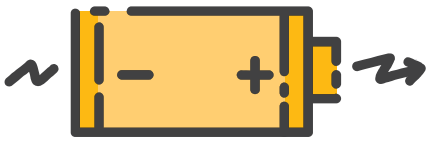
Can you match the definitions below with the correct energy terms?
Use the word bank for clues!

1. These energy sources, like coal, oil and natural gas, were formed from the remains of ancient plants and animals buried underground and are used to generate electricity.



2. This is the network of poles and power lines that sends electricity from where it's generated to homes and businesses all over the county.

3. These energy sources include natural energy from the sun, wind and water and are used to generate electricity.



4. This is the flow of electrically charged particles like electrons within a conductor or circuit.

5. This is the act of using less energy.

Word Bank

CURRENT	RENEWABLE RESOURCES
ELECTRIC GRID	ENERGY CONSERVATION
FOSSIL FUELS	

Answer Key: 1. fossil fuels 2. electric grid
3. renewable resources 4. current
5. energy conservation