

# Rural Power

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## Kansas co-ops join forces to provide rate stability with solar power

Using the sixth cooperative principle of cooperation among cooperatives, 12 cooperatives in Kansas are joining to make a small investment for the next 25 years or more in the harvesting of sunshine. Participating electric cooperatives will be able to procure low-up-front-cost solar energy to serve their membership through the Kansas Cooperative Sun Power Program and reduce their peak demand.

Under their unique cooperative programming, the Kansas Cooperative Sun Power Program is a series of solar farms developed by Today's Power, Inc. (TPI)'s to harvest renewable energy in the state for participating electric cooperatives. This 25-year program has attracted the best possible long-term pricing and will result in the construction of more than 20 Megawatts (MW) of solar power spread out across more than 800 miles of the sunflower state.

This opportunity began when the wholesale power contract between all participating cooperatives and KEPCo was recently modified to provide Kansas electric cooperatives with the ability to self-procure up to 15% of peak demand, with 5% of that amount specifically allowing for the addition of solar.

Proving that utility scale solar provides more cost-effective ways to benefit all consumer-member of the cooperatives, TPI was chosen to be the developer and energy partner for this venture through extensive research undertaken by participating cooperatives and a comprehensive Request For Proposals (RFP) process administered by GDS & Associates.

Owned by electric cooperatives, TPI was created to provide solar facilities to Arkansas' electric cooperatives that could otherwise not utilize federal tax incentives. Fellow cooperatives in neighboring states quickly learned of TPI's program and wanted a "known business partner" to provide their solar system.



Pictured from left: Mike Morton, Bluestem; Ben Whiteside, Butler; Mark Scheibe, Heartland; Scott Ayres, Sedgwick County; Tim Powers, DSO; Michael Henderson, Today's Power, Inc.; Dennis Svanes, 4 Rivers; Jackie Holmberg, Ark Valley; Angie Erickson, Twin Valley; Teresa Miller, Ninnecah; and Steve Foss, FreeState. Not pictured are Dale Short, Butler; Coni Adams, Sumner-Cowley; and Kirk Thompson, CMS.

TPI has constructed solar arrays for 15 of the 17 electric cooperatives of Arkansas as well as cooperatives and cooperative organizations in Oklahoma and Tennessee.

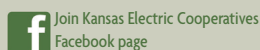
All systems installed will be sized in the 1 MW range. Each system is contracted through a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement with additional 5-year options. Cooperatives will simply be responsible for the purchase of electricity generated from the solar farms and will have low-upfront costs associated with the development of renewable solar energy.

This method of generation makes it possible for these cooperatives to increase the production of renewable energy year-round and to reduce peak demand. The reduction of peak demand will enable each cooperative to provide financial stability to its members while also reducing their carbon footprint. This is just another way electric cooperatives in Kansas are helping support local businesses, industries, and individuals with the resources they need to grow as efficient, responsible, and successful contributors to our communities.

Currently, these projects are in the engineering process and construction will take place in phases beginning in 2021 and running to 2022. Individual projects for participating cooperatives will be announced as initiated and completed.



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## Doniphan's board names Don Hellwig as interim manager

The Doniphan Board of Trustees has named Don Hellwig as its interim general manager. Hellwig took his new position at the co-op on Nov. 2.

Hellwig has served electric cooperatives since 1978 when he was elected to the Board of Trustees of Twin Valley Electric Cooperative. He became the general manager for Twin Valley from 1986 to 1996, and then was named general manager & CEO of DSO Electric Cooperative from 1997 to 2015.

Since his retirement, he has served as interim CEO of Macon Electric Cooperative in Macon, MO, and of Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative. He also served as a senior consultant to Bluestem Energy Solutions, headquartered in Omaha, NE.

Hellwig replaces Dan O'Brien who served as the general manager since January of 2020.

## KCC Hall of Fame nomination deadline approaching

Nominations are now being accepted for the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame.

The program was established in 1999 to honor individuals in Kansas who have been instrumental in developing and spreading the cooperative philosophy.

To download the nomination form, visit [www.kansasco-op.coop](http://www.kansasco-op.coop). Application deadline is Dec. 1.

## jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website. Visit [www.kec.coop/careers](http://www.kec.coop/careers) to learn more about the following positions.

- ▶ FreeState seeks a tree crew/groundsman.
- ▶ KEPCo seeks an administrative assistant - receptionist.
- ▶ Sunflower has multiple openings.

Send your open position listings to [ruralpower@kec.org](mailto:ruralpower@kec.org). Positions will be posted on the website for one month, unless otherwise directed by the co-op.

## co-opcalendar

### NOVEMBER

- 20 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays, and via teleconference, 8:30 a.m.
- 26-27 **Thanksgiving**, KEC office closed

### DECEMBER

- 2 **KEC Committee Meetings**, virtual, Policies and Bylaws at 9 a.m., Legislative at 1 p.m.
- 3 **KEC Special Meeting of the Members**, virtual, 9:30 a.m.
- 3 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, virtual, immediately following the KEC Special Meeting of the Members
- 11 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays, and via Microsoft Teams, 8 a.m.
- 17 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, virtual, 8:30 a.m.
- 24-25 **Christmas**, KEC office closed

## KEC Auxiliary launches scholarship for youth alumni

The KEC Auxiliary is accepting applications for its inaugural scholarship program. The KEC Auxiliary is offering two \$1,000 scholarships to current college students who participated in either the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour or the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp.

Applicants must have been sponsored by a KEC member-cooperative for one of the youth programs, and they must have completed at least one semester at an accredited university, college, or trade school as a full-time student at the time of application.

Eligible students must complete the online application and submit a short video that focuses on one of the Seven Cooperative Principles and how his or her life has been impacted by KEC's youth programs. Recipients of the scholarship will be awarded during the KEC Annual Meeting in January 2021.

Deadline to apply is Dec. 31. Applications and eligibility requirements are online at <https://www.kec.coop/form/kec-auxiliary-scholarship>. For additional information, contact Carol Dorr at [cdorr@kec.org](mailto:cdorr@kec.org).

## upcomingtraining

## New directors Board Leadership course set for February

KEC is hosting a series of training locations for a newly-developed directors course, Feb. 8-11.

**BRYAN SINGLETARY** will facilitate the brand new *971.1 Governance Challenges of the Evolving Distribution Cooperative*. This course will be taught at Victory's headquarters in Dodge City on Feb. 8, DSO's headquarters in Solomon on Feb. 9, and at 4 Rivers' headquarters in Lebo on Feb. 10. In addition, a virtual option is available on Feb. 11.

The co-op marketplace is changing faster today than at any time since our foundational period. Distribution co-ops' relationship with their members are transforming due to changing member preferences, new business models, new technologies and third-party applications. This course focuses on how these changes call for different ways of thinking, data collection and

analysis at the board level if boards are to fulfill their oversight responsibilities and strategic vision.

Participants will learn to recognize the drivers of the changing industry landscape, and they will discuss how the evolving energy landscape impacts governance and the way a board performs its oversight function. Attendees will also envision where directors see their co-op in 5-7 years, and they will identify specific data necessary to inform a recommended course of action.

Cost to attend the one-day training is \$300 per person. Seating is limited, and safety protocols will be followed. If an in-person training is deemed unsafe as we near the training dates, all courses may be offered virtually.

Registration will be emailed to each cooperative. For more information, contact Shana Read at [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org).

## Lane-Scott joins high school work-study program

Lane-Scott has joined other local businesses to take part in Dighton High School's work-study program. This program gives juniors and seniors the opportunity to learn hands-on job skills as part of their class schedule.

Joining the Lane-Scott staff this semester is **ELI RUPP**, a senior at Dighton High School. Rupp will be working with **MARK MCCULLOCH**, Lane-Scott's master HVAC technician, where he will learn about ductwork, gas piping, basic electrical tasks, troubleshooting, and servicing furnace and air conditioner units. Upon graduating, Rupp's intent is to enter the HVAC



Eli Rupp shadows Lane-Scott's HVAC department through Dighton High School's work-study program.

Certification Program at Hutchinson Community College.

To be considered for the program, students are required to complete a detailed application and interview by a panel of community members and administrators. Upon completion of the program, an exit interview is conducted, evaluations

are given by the place of work, and students complete a final reflection project as part of their grade. Students not only gain essential skills during this process, they get to experience an industry of interest prior to continuing their education after graduation.

## Pioneer brings annual Safety Fest to local students—in a bag

Unable to host Safety Fest in-person, Pioneer Electric joined other community partners to bring the event to local elementary students in the form of Safety Fest—in a bag.

Nearly 800 students were gifted the annual Safety Fest backpack, containing a variety of materials all with the theme of safety. Each bag contained a mask, water bottle, ear buds, lanyard, hand sanitizer and many other gifts from community donors.

The Grant County Junior Leadership class assisted with stuffing and delivering the backpacks.

"We brought Safety Fest to them,"



Rae Gorman, manager of energy services, shows preschool students contents of the Safety Fest backpacks.

said **ALYSSA HAMMOND**, communications specialist for Pioneer Electric. "This project was something that we were passionate about making happen. We wanted to ensure the kids still received the items that they normally would if Safety Fest had been held in person."

## Kansas Touchstone Energy holds hybrid meeting

The Touchstone Energy Annual Membership Meeting was held at Butler Electric Cooperative on Oct. 22.

Touchstone Energy's **JANA ADAMS** and **ANNE HARVEY** reported virtually on the national program activities. **SHANA READ**, KEC, presented the state program review and **NIKKI PFANNENSTIEL**, Sunflower, gave an ElectroRally update.

The Kansas Touchstone Energy Executive Council approved the 2021 budget and set the 2021 dues assessment. The Council

also re-elected **LINDA TOMLINSON**, CMS; **STEVE FOSS**, FreeState; and **KEVIN HEPTIG**, Bluestem; and appointed **CINDY FOSTER**, Sedgwick County, to fill the vacant Trustee position.

Officers **BRUCE MUELLER**, Chairperson; **STEVE FOSS**, Vice Chairperson; and **TRAVIS GRIFFIN**, Secretary/Treasurer; were also re-elected.

The national Touchstone Energy Business Meeting and Elections will be held online and are scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 10 at 2 p.m.

## Despite pandemic, Wheatland's members show generosity

Since 2014, Wheatland's "Cram the Van" food drive program has collected more than 47 tons (95,527 lbs.) of food donations, all of which have all been delivered to the local food banks in the communities in which they were donated. Now that the program is in its seventh year, co-op staff was unsure how the campaign would be received during a pandemic.

"We find ourselves humbled and in awe of the generosity of the communities we serve," said **ALLI CONINE**, Wheatland's manager of member services & corporate communications. "Amid a public health pandemic and with so much uncertainty and so many challenges, we knew we needed to act, even if things looked different this year."

Co-op staff drove the red van, which is the largest vehicle in their fleet, across the co-op's communities to grill hamburgers and to collect non-perishable food items. Staff set up a drive-thru style collection and distribution system.

Donations for this year's community food drive will be accepted through the end of November. The cooperative is also accepting monetary donations to benefit local food banks online.

**insympathy**

## Delbert E. Tyler

Delbert E. Tyler, former general manager of Ark Valley, died on Oct. 28. Tyler served the co-op from 1980 until 1993. Memorials may be sent to Jones-Walker & Son Funeral Home, 1209 Live Oak, Commerce, TX 75428.

## Max Lowrey

Max Lowrey, retired Sumner-Cowley board member and former KEC Board President, died on Oct. 31. Lowrey was elected to fill the seat previously held by his father, and he served his co-op from 1988 to 2018. He served as the Sumner-Cowley board president from 1999 to 2014, and as the KEC board president from 2006 to 2008.

Memorial services were conducted Nov. 17 in Argonia Cemetery, Argonia, KS. Memorials may be sent to Ebersole Mortuary, 219 W. Spring Ave., Conway Springs, KS 67031.



# Kansas linemen aid Oklahoma co-ops following early ice storm

Electric cooperatives across Kansas traveled to Oklahoma to restore power after an abnormally early ice storm crippled large portions of the state. The mix of freezing rain combined with high winds led to a large ice storm which first struck on Oct. 25 and downed electric co-op lines serving more than 76,000 consumer-members in central and western Oklahoma.

Muddy roads and strong winds challenged the electric cooperative crews, contractors, and mutual aid crews from across Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Kansas co-ops that sent aid included 68 line workers from: **4RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Lebo; **ARK VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, South Hutchinson; **BUTLER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, El Dorado; **DSO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Solomon; **FLINT HILLS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Council Grove; **FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**, Topeka; **HEARTLAND RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Girard; **LANE-SCOTT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Dighton; **NINNESCAH RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Pratt; **PIONEER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Ulysses; **ROLLING HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Beloit; **SOUTHERN PIONEER ELECTRIC COMPANY**, Liberal; **TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Altamont; **VICTORY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, Dodge City; and **WESTERN COOPERA-**

**TIVE ELECTRIC**, WaKeeney.

“Linemen feel the need to help other cooperatives around the state and nation because they know it may be them who needs the help the next time,” Stacey Marston, KEC instructor of loss control, safety, and compliance, said. “Long lasting friendships are made while the crews are working extended hours to get to co-op consumer-



Photo courtesy of Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives.

many of the linemen power restored members and stay in touch even after the storms have passed and the restoration is complete.”

The Kansas crews deployed between Oct. 28-30. They worked seven-day, extended hour shifts until power was restored to all residential accounts on Nov. 10 for the Oklahoma co-op members served by

Central Electric Cooperative, Cimarron Electric Cooperative, CKenergy Electric Cooperative, Northfork Electric Cooperative, and Rural Electric Cooperative. These cooperatives reported more than 4,000 downed poles. However the largest problems across the state was the downed power lines due to ice-covered tree limbs and leaves, and extensive mud, which slowed access to the affected areas. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, a generation and transmission electric cooperative and the power supplier for 17 rural distribution electric cooperatives in Oklahoma, reported 173 downed or heavily damaged transmission structures.

The Kansas crews were equipped with 23 bucket trucks, 14 digger trucks, pole trailers, foreman pickup trucks, and additional equipment.

The damaging storm is considered historic due to its early fall timeline.



Photo courtesy of Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives.

On Oct. 26, an emergency declaration for 47 Oklahoma counties was issued due to severe winter weather, freezing rain, and ice accumulations. Heavy ice caused trees to snap, and high winds caused galloping lines in areas where power lines are already coated in thick layers of ice.

## PSE launches free, monthly webinar series for Kansas electric cooperatives

In response to the current pandemic, Power System Engineering (PSE) has adapted its cooperative-driven training from in-person to online. PSE has launched a monthly, one-hour live interactive webinar series for Kansas cooperatives. This online training, which is held on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to noon, is free of charge.

The first webinar was held on Oct. 6 and focused on Residential Demand Charges, and the second was held Nov. 3 and focused on Distributed Generation Rates. The next session will be Dec. 15 and will focus on Power/Energy Cost Adjustments. Topics will include calculation options, treatment of unique purchases, relationship of wholesale

vs retail PCA/ECA, application to unique customers, true-up of over/under collection, roll-up, and transparency.

Future topics will include time-of-use rates, the evolving electric industry, electric vehicle rates and programs, customer segmentation/subscription and/or life-style rates, and mergers and acquisitions.

After each Microsoft Teams webinar, links to the slides and a recording of the presentation are made available. To be added to the training list, or if you have any questions, please contact PSE's Elena Larson at 785-224-3065 or email [larsons@powersystem.org](mailto:larsons@powersystem.org), or Rich Macke at 612-817-3462 or email [macker@powersystem.org](mailto:macker@powersystem.org).