



West Central Electric Cooperative

March 2026

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Electric News

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West Central Electric News
a news service for the members of



West Central Electric
Cooperative, Inc.



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PAY BY PHONE: 1-855-939-3639

To report outages 24/7

Call 816-565-4942 or 1-800-491-3803
Report online at
www.westcentralelectric.coop under
"Report Outage"

District office

506 N. Broadway, Oak Grove, MO 64075

Website:

www.westcentralelectric.coop



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Instagram

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*

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Owned by those we serve.

From the manager's desk

Recent events eliminate the need for 2026 rate increase

I am writing this on Saturday morning, January 24, 2026. While it's a brisk 1°F outside, I'm pleased to report that your electric system is holding up great—a true testament to the men and women who work tirelessly to provide reliable power to your families, farms, and businesses.

While we had anticipated the need for a rate increase as late as December 2025, I am especially proud to announce that after a thorough analysis of our data and finances, and a couple of recent developments, **we will not need to adjust rates in 2026.**

As we mentioned last month, we've been deep in the numbers. I want to share how we achieved this: our three-tier system, Associated Electric and NW Electric, saw better margins than expected in 2025. This resulted in a larger-than-anticipated allocation for us, allowing us to set aside revenue to offset rising 2026 expenses. We also received the sealed bids for the first part of a major project we will do in 2026 that came in less than the engineer's estimate. This allowed us to work quickly to put this into our cost of service study to determine a rate increase can be delayed.

Our teams have spent countless hours navigating the rising costs of material and electricity while continuing to invest in your electric system. West Central Electric has seen a lot of growth over the past few



Michael Newland
General Manager

years and that requires investments to continue to serve you and your neighbors.

In last month's newsletter, we featured the Holden Rural Substation. As of my time of writing this newsletter, we successfully energized this substation to serve our members!

We are also investing in a substation near Lone Jack. This substation is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026. These substations require substantial investments to better serve our existing members and future members!

The year 2026 will require a historic level of investment; however, your board of directors and employees have planned meticulously to ensure we can grow without passing those costs to you this year. I also want to commend the board's commitment to our tree-trimming program; 2025 was one of our best years for reliability, and proactive maintenance is the reason why.

I will end this message with a sincere thanks to the employees of West Central Electric, men and women who serve you, our friends, and neighbors with purpose.

Thank you for your trust. Thank you for being a member of West Central Electric.

Sincerely,
Michael Newland, CPA
General Manager

ON THE COVER: Area 4-Hers submitted photos to be considered for the 2026 WCE calendar. This chicken photo was taken by Hadley Bruner and is the featured picture for August. See all winners on page 5.

What you need to know

Reliability ↔ Affordability

“Our three-tier cooperative system is the very best system out there for accomplishing both reliability and affordability. Associated and its six member-owners’ integrated, high-voltage transmission system is a key resource for ensuring affordable, reliable power for members.”

WCE General Manager Michael Newland



WCE General Manager Michael Newland crunches the latest numbers while working to determine that a rate adjustment will not be necessary in 2026.

Power Players of the Grid

Every time you flip a switch, you’re connecting to one of the most complex systems ever built: the electric grid. Often described as the largest interconnected machine in the world, the North American electric grid stretches across the United States, Canada and parts of Mexico, linking thousands of power plants and millions of miles of power lines.

But how does electricity actually get from a power plant to your home? And where does your local co-op fit in? Let’s break it down.

Missouri’s electric co-ops operate in a unique three-tiered system to deliver affordable, reliable electricity. The first tier includes 40 distribution co-ops that provide electricity directly to homes, farms and businesses across the Show-Me State. Power is delivered to these distribution co-ops through six transmission co-ops, which make up the second tier. In 1961, those six transmission co-ops joined to form the third tier, Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AECI), which generates power for the co-op system.

Making the Power

AECI generates power using a diverse mix of member-owned and contracted energy resources. That mix includes:

- Two coal-based power plants in Missouri
- Three combined-cycle natural gas plants in Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma
- Three simple-cycle natural gas plants in Missouri
- One liquid fuel plant in Missouri
- Contracted power from eight wind farms in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma
- Contracted hydropower from the U.S. Department of Energy and federal dams in Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas

Once power is generated, it begins a long journey to reach you. That job belongs to Missouri’s six transmission co-ops, which act as the energy superhighway connecting power plants to local co-ops. These transmission co-ops own and maintain high-voltage lines and substations that move electricity efficiently across the region. Each serves several local distribution co-ops, ensuring power is delivered safely and reliably.

Your Local Co-op

The final step in the journey happens close to home. Missouri is served by 40 distribution cooperatives, and this is the level most people recognize as “their co-op.”

Distribution co-ops own the poles, wires and equipment that deliver electricity directly to you. They also handle billing, service requests, maintenance and outage restoration. When storms roll through or temperatures soar, these are the crews working around the clock to keep the lights on for you.

As a member-owner, you’re not just a customer — you’re part of the co-op itself, with a voice in how it’s governed and operated.

Understanding how electricity flows through Missouri’s three-tier co-op system helps explain why reliability and affordability depend on teamwork. Together, Missouri’s electric cooperatives are planning for the future, investing in infrastructure and energy resources while staying true to the cooperative mission: providing safe, reliable and affordable power — owned by the members they serve.

West Central Electric Cooperative Electric News



Eliminating Invasives

Each year Missouri native plants are pushed back by invasive species. In July 2025, Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe signed Senate Bill 105 into law, halting the sale in Missouri of six invasive plants: sericea lespedeza, burning bush ('Compactus'), Callery pear, Japanese honeysuckle, perilla mint, and wintercreeper (variety Coloratus).



"Most of these plants included in the bill are 'ditch weeds,' however one of the plants on the list is the Callery, aka Bradford pear tree," West Central Electric Right-of-Way Coordinator Dru Felkins said. "This tree, originally sold as an ornamental, has taken over native habitat for Redbuds, Dogwoods, and other native trees in the state, causing harm to our great state's ecosystem."

Felkins said Bradfords can reach heights of 30 to 50 feet, which is tall enough to interfere with power lines.

"We work hard every day to keep the lights on, and part of that is removing any tree near the power lines. The Bradford pear, while pretty in the spring, is one of many species of tree that causes outages when planted too close to the line because of their weak branches and heavy leaf cover," he said.

Felkins noted that while the Missouri Department of Conservation strongly encourages citizens to remove their Bradfords, when they are located near a power line, members are encouraged to reach out to the cooperative for assistance.

To help combat the invasive issue, the Missouri Invasive Plant Council has an annual buyback program in the spring with a simple process to help replace the trees. See moinvasives.org for information on the 2026 program.

Members may contact Felkins at 800-491-3803 or 816-565-4942.

From your cooperative

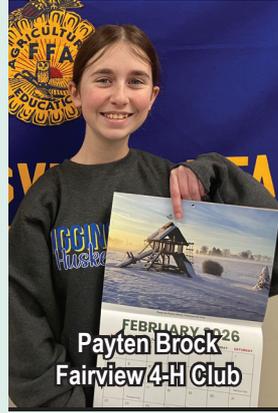
Cover



January



February



March / Dec.



April / May



Congratulations!

to our area 4-H **“click masters”** who had their photos chosen for publication in our 2026 cooperative calendar. Submissions for the 2027 calendar are being accepted now.

Contact Heather at heather@wcecoop.com or 800-491-3803 or your 4-H youth specialist for more information.

June



July



August



September



October / Nov.



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From your cooperative

Grow your savings



Landscaping that cuts energy costs

When most people think about saving energy, they picture insulation upgrades, efficient windows and appliance swaps. But your yard can play a major role too. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce air-conditioning costs by up to 25% and pay for itself in less than eight years.

Choose the right trees: deciduous or evergreen

Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the winter) block sunlight in the summer and allow light in during the colder months, helping to regulate indoor temperatures year-round.

Evergreen trees provide consistent shade and can serve as wind-breaks, which is especially helpful in cool climates.

Tip: In hot climates, choose native or drought-tolerant species. They require less water and are typically more resilient.

Placement matters

West and northwest sides: Plant trees to block strong mid-to-late-afternoon sun.

East and west windows: Use deciduous trees to block summer sun but still allow winter light.

South side: Tall trees planted at a distance equal to two to five

times their mature height can shade your home without blocking winter sun.

West side: Shorter trees and shrubs help shield against intense, low-angle afternoon sun.

Patios and driveways: Shade to reduce reflected heat.

Home perimeter: Bushes can absorb sunlight and reduce heat transfer, but avoid dense plantings in humid climates, where airflow is important to prevent excess moisture.

Tip: Be mindful near solar panels. Avoid planting tall trees on the south side of panels to prevent shade during peak sun hours.

Plan for a tree's mature height

West Central Electric prohibits the planting of trees and shrubbery within 30 feet of either side of the power line to prevent safety hazards and avoid future pruning.

Call before you dig!

Before you plant anything, call 811 to check for underground utilities. This free service marks public lines, like electricity, water and gas, so you avoid costly and dangerous mistakes. Call several business days before you plan to dig.

From your cooperative

New Employee Spotlight



Dani Kirchhoff • Member Service Representative

Dani Kirchhoff is following in her father-in-law's and aunt's footsteps as she begins her career at WCE as a member service representative.

"I'm looking forward to being a part of this strong, community-focused organization that takes care of both its members and its employees," she said. "(Eric and Ricki) both retired from West Central, and their long careers here have shown me this is where employees can build a meaningful future. Being a part of a company with such deep ties to my family is something I would be proud of."

Kirchhoff works at the Higginsville location, and lives in Higginsville with her husband, Caleb, and their three sons, Laith, Layden and Lawson.

New Employee Spotlight



Matt Jeske • Operations Asst./Line Inspector

Matt Jeske of Higginsville is West Central Electric Cooperative's newest operations assistant and line inspector.

Jeske works out of the Higginsville location, and says he is happy to be a part of the cooperative family.

"I look forward to starting a new career where I am able to learn and grow and help provide an important service to our members and my local community," he said.

Jeske and his wife, Becky, live in Higginsville, and have a son, Maxson, and daughters Kodi and Kamryn.

Employee Retirement



Jeff Rhoades retires after 33 years at WCE

Jeff Rhoades has spent many years as WCE's staking engineer, working with members to get their new services set up. After 33 years at the cooperative, his agenda changed in January to "doing the traveling we always talked about and catching up on some fishing and hunting that I've kept on the back burner."

Rhoades started his cooperative career in 1993 as a groundman, and worked his way to staking engineer, the position he held at his retirement on Jan. 2.

"Some of the changes I have seen have been with the technology. I remember when we used paper maps to find the place we were going, and now it is all on the iPad," he said. "The newer employees put everything on the computer, and I'm still using paper for my documents."

The people he has met over the years are counted among his best memories.

"I have made some good friends along the way, and some I still see today," he said. "I

also like all of my coworkers -- some who have been here a long time, and the newer employees -- we have had some good times."

Rhoades said he is looking forward to spending more time traveling and antiques with his wife, Laura, and watching his grandchildren's sports.

"My mom is also needing some things done around her house, so I will have plenty to do," he said.

From the WCE boardroom

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors held Dec. 18, 2025

A meeting of the board of directors of West Central Electric Cooperative was held at the offices of the cooperative, in Higginsville, Missouri, at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 18, 2025, pursuant to the bylaws of the cooperative and previous resolution of the board of directors. The meeting was called to order by President Densil Allen Jr. Attorney Sheri Smiley caused the minutes of the meeting to be kept. The following directors were present: Allen Jr., Clark Bredehoeft, Richard Strobel, Dale Jarman, Robert Simmons, Stan Rhodes, Jeremy Ahmann Colby Dowell and Elizabeth Houtsma (by phone). Also present was General Manager Michael Newland.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

The board approved its consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting on Nov. 25, 2025; expenditures for the month of November 2025; new membership applications and membership terminations, and the treasurer's report.

FINANCING AND TREASURER'S REPORT

CFO Rebecca Hoeflicker presented the November 2025 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. She reported on interest rates, the impact of large loads on the budget and projections for December. She gave updated budget numbers. She reviewed investments. New services connected were reported on. The RUS loan has been approved. She reported property taxes paid by the co-op will exceed \$1 million. The financial reports were accepted as presented.

APPROVAL OF STAFF REPORTS

The following staff reports were approved:

Operations Report

Operations Manager Scott Gard provided an oral report to supplement his written operations report. He reported on crews, pole change outs, banners installed at the veteran's home, regulator inspections, the new Holden Rural Substation and the snowball drop in Holden. He gave numbers of outages and causes for the month. He gave a mechanic and fleet report. A brush crew and right-of-way report was given and spraying bids are coming in. He reported on a business that was broken into and the thieves removed the business's meters.

Safety and Engineering Report: Engineering Manager Pete Nelson provided an oral report to supplement his written safety and engineering Report. As of Nov. 30, 2025, employees have worked 1,124 days without a lost-time accident. Co-op employees drove a total of 29,051 miles as of the end of November without a serious accident. He reported on safety meetings, staffing, crew visits, and gave an engineering/staking department report. He also gave an update on Lone Jack, work being done on subdivisions and projected new services.

Member Services Report: Member Services Manager Brent Schlotzhauer provided a written member services report. He provided updates on Operation RoundUp, the communication department activities



including Youth Tour presentations, the website and publications. Net metered solar systems and rebates were reported on. Vanilla Direct cash payments were reported on. Chamber meetings attended were reported on. School reality checks were participated in and discussed. The electronic handbook and bill re-design were discussed. PCI compliance on credit cards was reported on.

Policy 5.6

Newland presented changes to Policy 5.6, which was reviewed by the Policy Committee and passed by the board.

Appoint NRECA Voting Delegate and Alternate

Newland was appointed as the delegate and Simmons as the alternate.

Appoint NRTC Voting Delegate and Alternate

Simmons was appointed as the delegate and Newland as the alternate.

AMEC REPORT

Bredehoeft gave an update on the December meeting he attended. He provided department reports in the board packets. Pole attachments were discussed. An AECl report was given and data centers were discussed. Upcoming conferences and meetings were reported on.

NW BOARD REPORT

Simmons and Newland gave the NW Board report. They reported on deferred revenue, Lone Jack, and gave an AECl update. Work orders were also discussed.

LEGAL REPORT

Smiley gave the legal report for the month.

MANAGERS REPORT

Newland gave the manager's report. He had provided a written report to the board prior to the meeting. He discussed the cost of service study and rates. He provided options for rate increases. The board consensus was to have the rate increase reviewed further and brought back to the board. He reported on the AECl manager meeting he attended and discussed equity. Advertising and marketing in Lone Jack were discussed. The board retreat agenda was provided.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive session was called at 11:23 a.m. and was out at 11:43 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned.

FINANCIAL REPORT

November 2025 Statement of Operations

	This month	YTD 2025	YTD 2024
Revenue	\$2,953,015	\$38,481,843	\$33,726,176
Power Bill Expense	2,146,584	23,767,204	20,712,174
Operation & Maintenance Expense	670,252	8,322,276	7,917,191
Depreciation Expense	223,379	2,411,758	2,315,535
Interest Expense	<u>132,580</u>	<u>1,514,814</u>	<u>1,463,358</u>
Total cost of Service (Total Expenses)	3,172,795	36,016,052	32,408,258
Operating Margins (Revenue less Expenses)	(219,780)	2,465,791	1,317,918
Other Margins	<u>17,443</u>	<u>444,938</u>	<u>315,226</u>
TOTAL MARGINS	\$(202,337)	\$2,910,729	\$1,633,144