



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# West Central *Electric News*

April 2013

West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. ~ Serving our members' needs since 1939



## Double Whammy!

# Back-to-back snowstorms wreak havoc on Missouri, WCE system

February's heavy, wet snow caused havoc for more than 55,000 electric cooperative members across mid-Missouri, including more than 5,200 West Central Electric members.

The first storm to roll through on Feb. 21, caused relatively few issues. Although snow accumulations were impressive (10.1 inches officially at the National Weather Service in Pleasant Hill), the cooperative experienced only a few scattered individual outages. The second storm, which hit on Feb. 26, however, was a different story.

"This was a heavy, wet snow which sticks to power lines. As the snow begins to fall off, it causes sagging lines to 'gallop,' or hit each other," said WCE General Manager Mike Gray. "That is what caused the majority of our outages."

Crews fought a losing battle most of the day, with outages coming in faster than they could be repaired, and outages that were repaired going off again. Linemen were also hampered by horrendous road conditions, and spent nearly as much time trying to get trucks unstuck as they did repairing outages. Snowfall totals varied widely around the WCE service area, with the hardest hit

in the southern half of the service area. The additional 8-12 inches added to the previous week's groundcover, as well as heavy drifting, made getting to outage areas extremely difficult, and impossible in many areas until snowplows were able dig a path.

WCE called for assistance with restoration efforts, and crews from United Electric Cooperative of Maryville/Savannah, Platte-Clay Electric Cooperative in Kearney and Atchinson-Holt Electric Cooperative in Rock Port responded.

Members were able to follow outage progress on the cooperative's website, as well as a running commentary on the Facebook page. For many members, internet access on their cell phones or other wireless devices was their only link to outage news.

Member Michele Titus Haynes was one member who followed along with the Facebook feed during the storm.

"Thank you so much for all your hard work. I can't begin to tell you how helpful your updates on here were. Your crews are truly appreciated," she posted.

After three days, all cooperative services were back online.



(Top photo) WCE crews work to repair one of the more than 5,200 services without power during the February snowstorm. Crews found it difficult to get to many locations until roads were plowed, and for a time, spent nearly as much time digging trucks out as they did repairing outages.

(Far left photo) Lineman Tim Frerking digs a neutral line out of the snow during repairs.

(Left photo) Drifts were more than three feet high outside the headquarters building in Higginsville.

Additional storm coverage on page 3.

**Headquarters:**  
7867 S. Highway 13, P.O. Box 452  
Higginsville, MO 64037  
1-660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803

**District office:**  
506 N. Broadway  
Oak Grove, MO 64075  
1-816-625-8211

**Website:**  
[www.WestCentralElectric.coop](http://www.WestCentralElectric.coop)

**24-Hour Number:**  
1-800-491-3803

**General Manager:**  
Mike Gray

**Board of Directors:**  
Clark Bredehoeft, President  
Ron Steelman, Vice-Pres.  
Paul Nolte, Treasurer  
Robert Simmons, Secretary  
Stan Rhodes, Asst. Sect.  
Dale Jarman, Director  
Max Swisegood, Director  
Densil Allen, Director  
Richard Strobel, Director

## Spring has sprung, so think outdoor safety

After spending long winter days indoors, most folks love to get outside in spring, even if it's just to do chores. However, outdoor chores can bring electrical hazards.

For example, ladders contacting power lines cause 9 percent of electrocution-related deaths each year, according to recent data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Landscaping, gardening, and farming equipment cause another 7 percent. To avoid electrical hazards, make sure you and your family follow these simple tips:

### GENERAL

- ◆ Avoid damp conditions when using electricity. Keep all electrical devices and cords away from water.
- ◆ Place waterproof covers on all outdoor outlets.
- ◆ Install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in outlets where water may be present.
- ◆ Only use extension cords marked for outdoor use; match power needs of an electric tool or appliance to the cord's

label information.

- ◆ Dial 1-800-DIG-RITE at least 72 hours before engaging in any type of excavation work, planting a tree or installing a fence. Local utilities will be notified to mark the approximate location of any underground lines on your property.

- ◆ Don't post or attach signs or flyers to utility poles. They create a safety hazard for our linemen who may need to climb the pole for routine maintenance or repairs.

### POWER TOOLS

- ◆ Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housing, and repair or replace damaged items.
- ◆ When you use electrical appliances and tools outdoors, make sure they are properly grounded and that your work area is dry.
- ◆ Make sure outdoor outlets each has its own waterproof cover.
- ◆ Store power tools indoors.
- ◆ Unplug outdoor tools when not in

use.

- ◆ Do not carry power tools by the cord.

### LADDERS

- ◆ Use only a fiberglass or wooden ladder if you must work near overhead wires.

- ◆ Never touch a person or an object that has made contact with a power line.

### HEY KIDS!

- ◆ Fly kites with dry string only. Never fly kites or model airplanes near power lines. If a kite gets caught in a power line, drop the string immediately and call us.

- ◆ Teach children to stay away from electric transformers and substations and explain what posted warning signs mean.

- ◆ Remind your children never to climb utility poles or play near substations, pad-mounted transformers (you know, those "big green boxes,") or any fence, building or equipment marked "Danger: High Voltage."

Make it a safe spring!

## West Central allocates capital credits for 2012

West Central Electric Cooperative's margins have been allocated to each member/owner who purchased electric energy in 2012, according to General Manager Mike Gray.

Because rural electric cooperatives' business structure differs from investor-owned utility companies, the money WCE makes as margins (profits) is returned to the member/owners who use the service, rather than to unknown investors. The money is used as equity in the cooperative, and is returned to the members over time as determined by your board of directors.

West Central Electric tries to balance the system by staying financially strong while also returning the profits to its members over time. Each year, the board of directors decides how this will be accomplished.

You can calculate your own allocation for the year by using the formula in the box below.

The percentage used in the formula was determined by the total margins (profits) of the cooperative, and the total cost paid for our wholesale power in 2012. This year, your allocated amount for 2012 will appear on the bill you receive at the end of March or in April, depending on which billing cycle you are on.

If you have a non-rural/residential account, any questions regarding how to calculate your allocation, or if you do not know your year-to-date patronage, contact Sandy Starke at the Higginsville office at 660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803.

Total paid for electricity in 2012  
(Beginning with the amount due Feb. 15, 2011,  
and ending with the amount due Jan. 15, 2012.)

0.03797997042

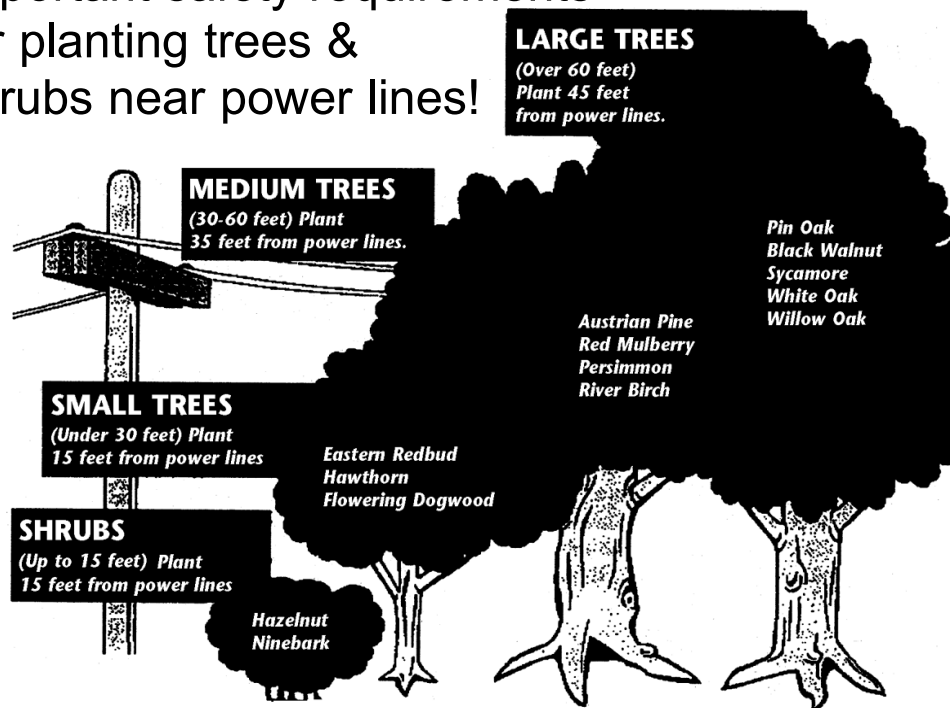
2012 allocation  
(Applies to rural/residential rate only.)

Example:

\$1,000 total billing for 2012

\$1,000  
X  
0.03797997042 =  
\$37.98  
2012 allocation

## Spring planting? Don't forget these important safety requirements for planting trees & shrubs near power lines!







## The Cooperative Spirit

The cooperative spirit was alive and well during the disastrous February snowstorm. WCE employees sincerely appreciated all of the positive and encouraging comments from our members, their thoughts and prayers for our linemen out in the field and their families back home, the members who came out to help our crews get unstuck, and our friends at United, Atchison-Holt and Platte-Clay electric cooperatives who helped us restore power. Below are just a very few of the many comments received from members via our facebook page during the storm and repair efforts:

*"Thanks for all you all do! Been praying for all the guys out in this mess today, and for all the office workers for handling all the calls and being so helpful too. I'm sure today their job was pretty thankless. Keep up the good work WCE!"*

*"Thank you for all the long hours that you have worked to get power back on for so many households and so many more to go. Thank you to all the families of the linemen for your sacrifice of holding down the fort alone while your loved ones are out there in the cold and wet weather."*

*"You guys be careful out there! Thank you sooo much for getting our power back up this evening!"*

*"Even though we have power...it makes u stop and be thankful for those who put the long hours in and brave the weather conditions. Thanks guys and gals!!!"*

*"Prayers for the crews! Stay safe!"*

*"My power hasn't gone out. I'm praying it doesn't, but it's nice to know you are hard at work to get power restored. I'll be praying for the safety of those brave linemen too. Thanks."*

*"Thanks so much guys!!! Nothing like being a member of a Coop!"*

*"Thanks for working so hard in these terrible conditions."*

*"We were out for only an hour...I was expected a day or two. YOU GUYS ROCK!"*

*"THANK YOU West Central Electric & Coops for all your hard work & long hours of storm restoration. All those on our electrical circuit got ours back on this evening after being out for a good 2 days. We ALL appreciate what you go thru to do get our lights back on! Bless Each of YOU!"*

*"Thanks to each of you at West Central for all of your hard work and determination in getting power restored to so many today. I saw that over 1300 in Johnson County had no power this morning, and now at 273. Considering the road and weather conditions, that is a pretty successful day --- THANK YOU!!!"*

*"I imagine I'm speaking for LOTS of people here but you guys are HERO's today."*

## •Cooperation Among Cooperatives•

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.



(Top photo) Crews from United Electric Cooperative meet with WCE Line Superintendent Randy Burkeybile after answering the cooperative's call for help.

(Left photo) Snow sticks to guy wires. Photo courtesy of Tim Cunningham/Platte-Clay Electric

(Right photo) WCE Serviceman Eric Kirchhoff prepares for Day 3 of outage repairs.





## 2013 West Central Electric Cooperative Employee and Board Service Recognition

### 15 YEARS OF SERVICE...

Those recognized for 15 years of service to the cooperative are: front row (l-r) Journeyman Lineman Pete Nelson, Journeyman Lineman Billy Mackie and Executive Secretary and Benefits Administrator Kim Lewis. Back row (l-r) General Utilityman Eric Wegener, Line Foreman Todd Gast and Board Member Max Swisegood.



### 20 YEARS OF SERVICE...

Those recognized for 20 years of service to the cooperative are: front row (l-r) Groundman/Truckdriver Doug Bird and Operations Clerk Jeff Rhoades. Back row: Right-of-Way Coordinator Steve Long.



### 30 YEARS OF SERVICE...

WCE Board President Clark Bredehoeft (left) congratulates General Manager Mike Gray on 30 years of service at the cooperative.



### 35 YEARS OF SERVICE...

WCE General Manager Mike Gray congratulates Ricki Kirchhoff on her 35 years of service to the cooperative. (left photo)

### 25 YEARS OF SERVICE...

Employees recognized for 25 years of service are: front row (l-r) Manager of Engineering Dan Disberger, Operations Clerk Wes Schloman. Back row: Branch Manager Brent Scholtzhauer. (right photo)

