

4 RIVERS Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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 **CURRENTS**

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FROM THE MANAGER

Do Your Homework if Considering Solar

Electric cooperatives are different from other utilities. A primary difference is that we exist to do the best for the owners of our company, who happen to be our consumer-members. I am amazed at how many people believe that means selling as much as possible, which is far from the truth. We always encourage efficient use of energy.

I have heard people say that switching to solar is energy efficiency – it is not! It is just switching the generation source. For anyone interested in installing solar, I have two suggestions.

First, make your home as energy efficient as possible. The 'bang for the buck' is in efficiency measures – LED lighting, Energy Star appliances (including the old fridge or freezer in the garage) and HVAC systems, insulation (including insulation on hot water pipes and for outlets and light switches on an exterior wall), and efficient doors and windows. These types of measures will save money – whether a solar system is being considered or not. After all the energy efficiencies are installed, if solar is still wanted, the amount of solar needed will be reduced – also saving money.

My second suggestion—talk to us at 4 Rivers before buying solar. We are here for the long run, not just a one-time sale. Electric energy rates do not act like salespersons tout. 4 Rivers, as a reminder, came from the consolidation of Lyon-Coffey Electric and Radiant Elec-

tric. The last time Lyon-Coffey had a rate change was in 2012. Radiant had rate adjustments in 2018 and in 2019 with the energy rate decreasing and the fixed fee increasing. Energy is not the expensive part of our system costs; it is the demand and fixed costs. I'm not saying we won't have rate changes, but it is our fixed costs and demand costs that are primary drivers of how our rates are designed.

The main complaint on solar I have received over the years is that the payback and cost savings are not realized. When taking everything into consideration (including the cost of money), solar on a home is currently tough to justify financially (this is my CPA training kicking in).

If you are installing a system, contact us. Among other things, we will assist you in properly sizing the system. Oversizing the system will only help the salesman.



Dennis Svanes

2021 TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

Members living in districts with a trustee election this year can expect to receive a ballot in the mail in late March. Completed ballots must be postmarked or received at the Lebo office on or before April 20. For more information about the 2021 election, visit www.4riverselection.com.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING SOLAR SCAMS

As the popularity of rooftop solar panels increases, so do solar scams. Here are a few tips to consider before you install a solar PV system for your home.

- Talk to your electric co-op first. They can offer guidance and recommendations.
- Get at least three quotes from solar companies, and thoroughly read their reviews.
- Avoid solar companies that use high-pressure tactics.
- Don't believe unrealistic promises.
- Only sign clear, easy-to-understand contracts.



Avoid Solar Energy Scams

Solar energy is booming, and the future is brighter than ever. With rooftop solar panels, many homeowners can now harness the sun's natural rays to produce their own electricity.

Unfortunately, with the increasing popularity of solar, some businesses are taking advantage of consumers who are interested in generating their own energy through rooftop panels.

While many solar companies are genuine and truly want to help consumers with a successful solar installation, there are the occasional bad apples.

You have likely heard a story or two about solar vendors that promised rooftop panels that would generate enough electricity to power the entire home. Then, after the homeowner has paid thousands of dollars for the installation, the solar panels are not working, and the vendor is nowhere to be found. Sadly, this story has been the reality for many consumers.

If you are interested in solar panels for your home, consider these tips before installation:

- ▶ Talk to us at 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative first. We want you to feel confident about any decisions you make regarding your home energy use, especially decisions about generating energy at home.
- ▶ Collect at least three quotes from different solar companies to ensure you are getting a competitive deal. As with any major purchase, research is key, so thoroughly read customer reviews for

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each of the three solar vendors.

- ▶ If you speak to a solar vendor and they use high-pressure tactics, like an offer that is only good for 24 hours, run! Any reputable solar company will recognize that you need time to review a proposal and thoroughly weigh your decision.
- ▶ You know if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If a solar company is making promises that sound unachievable and outlandish, they probably are. Remember, if you have any questions, you can always count on your electric co-op for advice.
- ▶ Finally, when it is time to review and sign a solar contract, make sure the language is clear and easy to understand. Ensure any prior verbal or emailed promises are also included in the contract.

Going solar is a major decision, so you want to conduct a good bit of research first. If you are looking for a general starting point, check out the Department of Energy's Homeowner's Guide to Going Solar.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer. Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Getting to Know Your Co-op Team

From lineworkers to member service representatives to managers, your 4 Rivers team is dedicated to providing safe, reliable, cost-effective electric service to our membership. Meet three co-op team members who go above and beyond to serve you.



Lindsey Audiss

LINDSEY AUDISS is the cooperative's human resources director and started with Lyon-Coffey Electric in 2009. She says that no two days in human resources are the same, especially with COVID-19 affecting employees. New challenges arise daily, and she enjoys getting to know fellow employees, helping them as much as she can, and the camaraderie. Audiss believes laughter is the best medicine, and her family and friends are familiar with her prankster side.

Audiss lives in Yates Center with her husband, Tyson, and two children, Blake, 16, and Braelyn, 9. In her free time, she enjoys camping and family time and keeps busy driving the kids to their activities

throughout the year. She looks forward to watching her children, who are the highlight of her life, grow and succeed in whatever they do all while being respectful humans.

She grew up on a farm northwest of Yates Center, where some of her fondest memories include working summers for her grandparents in the hayfield. She is inspired by her dad, who she describes as the absolute definition of a hardworking farmer doing as much as possible to help someone, who continues to put in those long hours while keeping up with his grandkids' activities.

Audiss says she has learned a lot working at the cooperative and holds the linemen in high regard for the work they do and their dedication to their job. She would like our members to know that 4 Rivers' dedicated employees are working for them daily to keep the cooperative operating successfully.

Thanks to Lindsey for her dedication to the cooperative and keeping her co-workers laughing.



Chad Guimond

CHAD GUIMOND is a journeyman lineman in the north district and went to work for Lyon-Coffey in 2016. As an area foreman, Guimond oversees the construction of new services and works with the crew maintaining existing line. He enjoys being outside and having new projects each day, like system upgrades, changing out poles and conductor and seeing a job come together for the members.

Guimond lives in Yates Center with his wife, Brooke, and their children Mylin, Bektin and Huxton. He likes to hunt and fish and spend time outdoors. Guimond's love of nature makes beautiful Yellowstone one of his favorite destinations. He looks forward to when he can travel again with less worry and talk to our members face-to-face without masks.

He is inspired by his parents, who have always provided for the family and taught them the value of hard work. He is proud of becoming a journeyman lineman. He has seen changes in the field over the years, including better equipment and safety being a bigger priority. He says working for a co-op is different from working other places, because the focus is on serving the members. He wants members to know that they are our No. 1 priority.

Thanks to Chad for his years of service to the cooperative and our members.



Ryan Huser

RYAN HUSER is a journeyman lineman in 4 Rivers' south district and started working for Radiant Electric in 2004. As a district serviceman, his day often includes performing

system maintenance, responding to outages and updating services. Huser enjoys his role as each day is different, and he never knows what the day will bring — from fixing a security light to having a substation outage. Huser has witnessed many changes in the technology and equipment to make the job safer and provide better member service.

Huser grew up southwest of Fredonia. He and his wife, Karla, live north of Independence, with their four daughters ranging from 9 years to 6 months old. He enjoys spending time with his family and working on the family farm. An interesting pastime of his has been competing in combine demolition derbies (yes, the farm equipment) and racing school buses at the speedway. One of Huser's favorite travels was to Italy on a pilgrimage.

He is inspired by his dad, who raised a great family, successfully built his farm, and taught him that with hard work and dedication you can do anything you want.

He would like our members to know that we are working for you! 4 Rivers Electric is your cooperative and he encourages members to be actively involved.

Thanks to Ryan for his continued dedication to the cooperative and our members.

Remember to Use Caution When Burning

Each spring, all across 4 Rivers Electric's service territory, members prepare to burn pasture for the upcoming spring grass season.

Every spring 4 Rivers Electric's employees witness damage being done to co-op poles and equipment by "controlled" burns. Please be aware that burning or even scorching a pole will compromise the integrity of the structure.

Power poles are treated with a protective coating that prevents moisture from entering the core of the pole and causing deterioration. If a pole is scorched or blackened, the protective coating is damaged. Though it may appear as just

a discoloration or slight burn, this is, in fact, damage to the pole. This will significantly shorten the life of a power pole. This pole may then become a hazard and could cause an outage.

4 Rivers once again reminds members to plan burning before you begin. It is much cheaper to prevent a pole from catching fire than to pay for a new pole. Members will be held liable for the replacement cost of pole(s) and/or equipment due to fire damage. This cost may vary from \$1,000 to more than \$2,000 depending on the structure of the pole and equipment. It only takes a little extra effort to prevent pole damage and help control costs for you and your cooperative.

Burning of pastures and ditches does not have to result in the burning/scorching of power poles. If there are power poles in the area to be burned, clear the vegetation/weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole and wet the base of the pole with water before beginning to burn.

If the fire does get away from you and a pole becomes engulfed in flames, immediately call the fire department and 4 Rivers Electric. Do not spray water close to the conductors! Water and electricity do not mix! This may cause



Before burning, check the property for electrical equipment and power poles to avoid damage and potential outages.

a short circuit. You and/or the firefighters could be in the path of that current and serious injury or death may result.

Report any fire-damaged pole to 4 Rivers Electric immediately. Not reporting the damage may cause a serious accident to happen later.

A pole that has been burned through is likely to fall over. This can leave the energized lines about a foot off the ground. If a person comes into contact with the line, they most likely will be seriously burned or even killed. This carelessness could cost a life.

LIEAP Application Period Closes March 31

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded program that helps keep families safe and healthy by assisting eligible households with a portion of their home energy costs by providing a once-per-year benefit.

The 2021 LIEAP application period is open; applications must be received online or in a Kansas Dept. for Children and Families (DCF) office by March 31 to be considered for eligibility. For more information, call 1-800-432-0043 or visit www.dcf.ks.gov.

REMEMBER ELECTRICAL SAFETY

As you prepare for planting season don't forget to plan for safety. There are many aspects to safety on the farm, but electrical safety is often overlooked. Keep these safety tips in mind as you prepare for planting.



TRAIN OTHERS: Train anyone working on your farm, including family members and seasonal workers, on electrical hazards.



SAFETY FIRST: Have daily meetings to review the day's work and discuss safety implications. Know and review where the power lines are, the clearance required, and the proper position of extensions as they are transported.



WAIT TO UNFOLD: Remind workers to fold or unfold extensions well into the field, not close to the field's edge where power lines are typically located.



USE A SPOTTER: When working near power lines, always have a spotter on the ground who can direct you away from power lines or poles if you are getting too close.



DO NOT EXIT YOUR CAB: If your machine or truck makes contact with a power line, pole or guy wire, you could become electricity's path to ground and become electrocuted if you step out of the cab.



CALL 911: Call 911 to have your electric utility dispatched to deenergize the power source. Only exit the cab if your equipment is on fire. If that happens, make a solid jump out and hop away with feet together as far as you can.