

www.4riverselectric.com
620-364-2116 or 800-748-7395

Northern District
2731 Milo Terr.
Lebo, KS 66856

Southern District
9346 Jewell Road
Fredonia, KS 66736

Payment Center
2501 W. 18th Ave., Ste. B
Emporia, KS 66801

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FROM THE MANAGER

Tailgate Talks Review Dangers



Dennis Svanes

I recently wrote about the need for safety around power lines, suggesting a tailgate review of necessary work to be done and the potential safety concerns every time we start a new task, i.e., pull into a field, etc. This summer, we have had several public incidents — contacts with our poles and wires from farm equipment, trucks with the hoist up, and other equipment.

When operating large machinery, safety is paramount, especially in the vicinity of power lines. Recognizing the potential dangers associated with overhead power lines is the first step in ensuring the safety of operators and bystanders.

Accidental contact with overhead power lines can result in severe electric shocks, burns or even fatalities. Therefore, it is crucial that equipment operators maintain a safe distance from power lines at all times. This distance should be at least 20 feet away from our distribution system and even further from transmission lines.

Identifying risks and areas of concern

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Heads Up for Farm Safety

Put safety first with alertness, focus and knowledge of potential hazards and safety steps. Follow these safety guidelines when operating machinery near power lines:

- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery.
- ▶ Keep equipment at least 20 feet from power lines.
- ▶ Look up when moving equipment such as extending augers or raising beds of grain trucks.
- ▶ Always set extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- ▶ Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.

If you are in an accident and power lines are touching the vehicle, remember to:

- ▶ **ASSUME IT'S LIVE:** Always assume downed lines are live and dangerous. Do not touch or remove the wires and warn others to stay away.
- ▶ **STAY PUT:** Unless there is a secondary emergency such as a fire, it is safer to stay inside the vehicle than to try to exit.
- ▶ **CALL 911:** Let the dispatcher know you were in an accident and you have a downed power line on your vehicle. The authorities will contact the cooperative and lineworkers will be sent to disconnect the power.
- ▶ **WARN OTHERS:** Witnesses may not notice the downed power line and try to help. Warn them to stay at least 40 feet away.

PHOTO ABOVE, "CO-OP SUNSET," WAS TAKEN BY MEMBER BRENDAN COULTER OF FALL RIVER. THE PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS THE BEAUTY OF OUR COOPERATIVE TERRITORY.



Co-op Leadership Camp *Powers Up* Local Teens



Shelby Smith (left) and Elizabeth Galloway in front of Elk River during the 2023 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp as representatives of 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative.

ELIZABETH GALLOWAY and **SHELBY SMITH** attended the 46th Annual Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) from July 14-20, 2023. The leadership camp was held near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and hosted student leaders from Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Wyoming, sponsored by 25 participating cooperatives.

Galloway and Smith were selected by 4 Rivers Electric Co-op based on the leadership skills, academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and character demonstrated in their applications and interviews.

During the camp, Galloway and Smith learned how an electric cooperative is organized and operated by developing a model cooperative with their fellow students, empowering the campers to elect a board of directors, appoint a

general manager, establish committees, and attend daily membership meetings. Camp participants also attended educational seminars on leadership, online reputation management, conflict management, and co-op careers, in addition to presentations on high voltage electricity, raptors and avian protection with HawkQuest, and a tour of the Craig Power Station and the Yampa Valley Electric community solar array.

Along with its professional

“The incredible way these people went from names on a paper to friends I’ll have for a lifetime has greatly affected me. I go to a lot of camps, but I’ve never been in an environment where 70 people learn everyone’s names, become friends with everyone, and cry on the last night because wanting to stay is stronger than homesickness.”

ELIZABETH GALLOWAY, CAMPER

development programs, CYLC included a visit to Mount Werner and downtown Steamboat Springs, whitewater rafting on the Colorado River, and other fun activities such as a volleyball tournament, swimming, talent show and a dance.

“The incredible way these people went from names on a paper to friends I’ll have for a lifetime has greatly affected me,” Galloway said. “I go to a lot of camps, but I’ve never been in an environment where 70 people learn everyone’s names, become friends with everyone, and cry on the last night because wanting to stay is stronger than homesickness.”

“4 Rivers Electric is proud to continue sponsorship of our co-op’s student leaders at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp,” said General Manager/CEO Dennis Svanes. “It is an honor to help provide students opportunities to grow in their leadership potential and develop the knowledge to engage in our cooperative community.”

High school juniors whose parent/guardian is a member of 4 Rivers Electric are eligible to apply. The application period opens in January. For more information on how to attend camp, contact April Engstrom, manager of member services, at 620-364-2116 ext 306.



Shelby Smith (front) and her small group built a model of the electrical infrastructure that brings power to electric cooperative members.



Shelby Smith smiles during a camp presentation.



Rafting on the Colorado River is always a camp highlight.



Students toured the Craig Station Power Station during camp.



Campers complete team building activities to get to know each other better and learn about communication and leadership skills.



Elizabeth Galloway (second from right) during the camp tour of the Craig Power Station.

Tailgate Talks Review Dangers

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is the first step in preventing contact with the electric grid. This is where reviewing the dangers in a tailgate talk comes into play. Even if you have worked a field for decades, reviewing safety risks is extremely important. Complacency is one of the biggest threats to one's safety. Knowing and identifying where all the poles, wires and guy wires are located is a basic key to working safely around power lines.

Even with all safety measures in place, accidents can still occur. Therefore, having an emergency response plan is vital. It is important to know who owns the utilities in the area that you are working. If something happens, reporting the incident to authorities is simplified by knowing who owns the power lines and shortens the response time of the utility. If power lines come in contact with your vehicle or equipment, stay in the vehicle and call for help. Exiting the vehicle will most likely cause electrocution.

Please stay safe as the late season harvest and fall prep work begins and keep an eye out for those school buses!

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a heating system tune-up? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment. Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV



Hearing Loss Common in Farming, Can Be Prevented

BY MADDY ROHR, K-STATE RESEARCH AND
EXTENSION NEWS SERVICE

Natural hearing loss comes with age, but exposure to a loud environment — common in agriculture — can cause noise-induced hearing loss, said a pair of Kansas State University safety experts.

Loud machinery, equipment and even animals can play a role in hearing loss related to farming and ranching, said Brad Dirks, associate director of the K-State physician assistance program.

“Exposure hearing loss can be from a one time experience like a loud concert or using a circular saw without protection,” Dirks said. “Cumulative (hearing loss) can happen over time, like working 40 to 50 years around machinery that push you above the decibel cutoff of 80 to 85.”

For reference, Dirks said people talk at about 60-70 decibels, a movie theater ranges from 75-105 decibels and a motorcycle produces 80-110 decibels.

“How close you are to the noise and how long you're exposed is very important,” Dirks said.

Tractors with a cab are more muffled compared to those without, and machinery in open spaces will dissipate noise compared to those in enclosed areas. Tractors normally produce 110-120 decibels.

Animals can also cause exposure to hearing loss. Their effect is often overlooked when compared to machinery.

“Pigs squealing can be around 100 decibels, and so prolonged exposure to something like pigs ... in a closed environment can be a problem,” said Tawnie Larson, project coordinator with the Carl and Melinda Helwig Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering.

She also mentioned the noise from working cattle and calves that are calling

back and forth with mothers as being a cause of hearing loss.

Dirks recommends using foam plugs in ears or earmuffs as a preventative measure.

“If you really want to protect your ears, do both; use the foam earplugs and then put the headphones or the earmuffs over and it becomes much more protective in those environments,” he said.

Ear plugs are convenient to keep in pockets and many headphones can be carried around the neck until needed.

“Producers, parents or managers need to think about providing everyone that's working with them and working on the farm or ranch to have something that can protect their ears,” Larson said.

Youth and babies are also at risk of induced hearing loss and should be provided with appropriate protection at an early age.

“It's a cumulative thing, so the younger you start with that noise exposure, the more years you have to be exposed to high noise levels,” Dirks added.

Hearing safety is important because it is permanent, and not something that can be fixed.

“And you can get hearing assistive devices, hearing aids that will amplify (sound), but that vocal range and the high range of those sound waves is gone — and once it's gone, it's gone. You can't bring them back,” Dirks said.

Dirks added that hearing loss can also come from an obstruction in the canal, such as wax or build up. Those can be solved by a doctor.

“(Hearing loss) is preventable,” Larson said. “You can turn it down, walk away, or you can wear hearing protection. (Hearing protection) is pretty easy to find at any hardware store.”

