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Building Resilience: The Critical Role of Storm Stock Inventory for Public Power Districts

BY: JIM WEEDA, ASSISTED BY CHATGPT
Manager of Technologies

Maintaining a robust storm stock inventory is essential for Public Power Districts (PPDs), especially in regions like western Nebraska where power lines are vulnerable to winter and spring ice storms. This practice not only ensures rapid restoration of services during natural disasters but also aligns with strategic goals of infrastructure resiliency.

Ensuring Rapid Response and Service Continuity

Natural disasters can cause significant damage to electrical infrastructure, leading to prolonged power outages. Having a well-stocked inventory of essential materials—such



as transformers, poles, wires, and other critical components—enables PPDs to respond swiftly to emergencies. This readiness minimizes down-

time and ensures that customers regain access to electricity as quickly as possible. The warehouse and storage facilities at PPDs are key to all materials and inventory-related activities, especially during storm seasons when the focus is on “keeping the lights on.” PPDs plan for these natural disasters and are operationally prepared to focus their efforts on

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LUCKY DRAWING



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Editor - Kelli Chaon

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P.O. BOX 177, 11306 RD 32, SIDNEY, NE 69162

P 308.254.5871 | T 800.261.7114 | wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com | www.wheatbelt.com

Wheat Belt PPD Employee Feature

Chris Schilz - Purchasing/Inventory Coordinator



How did you hear about Wheat Belt?

I heard about Wheat Belt from an old fishing friend of mine that was the Meter Technician at Wheat Belt at the time, Sonny Copely (Retired now). He had worked for Wheat Belt for many years and absolutely loved it.

Why did you decide to go to work at Wheat Belt?

I decided I wanted to join the Wheat Belt team in 2004. At that time I was working for the Nebraska Department of Roads while raising a family and needed a better paying career, with better benefits.

What do you like most about working at Wheat Belt?

I like the people I get to work with and that everyday seems to have a new challenge.

Is there any special training or education needed for your job/career?

As far as training goes, I have worked in warehousing much of my life, operating forklifts, loading and unloading material on and off trucks, standing on concrete for hours at a time, working with vendors etc. So a lot of the experience and training came from many years in this field, even though I knew nothing about the electrical industry.

As with everything nowadays, this job changes as we evolve with technology. We have useful tools to help us keep track of inventory and to see what the crews are doing in the field. GPS, Digital Work Orders just to name a few.

Tell us about your family:

I have been married to Christina Schilz for 27 years, we have 3 kids, son Dalton 27, son Hunter 24, and daughter Shayla 22.

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my free time, I like to spend time with my family, working on old cars, and fishing.

In your position you deal with the reliability of our electric system. Tell us your thoughts about reliability and how Wheat Belt is working to a more reliable system.

In April 2024, as many know, we lost over 1,200 poles due to a big snow/wind storm. That is nothing you can ever prepare for. The only thing to do is rebuild what has been weakened or broken. While repairing and rebuilding, we are installing heavier wire, stronger poles and new hardware to make our system stronger and more reliable for the future.

DECEMBER BOARD MEETING UPDATE



- Wheat Belt PPD By-laws were reviewed, and changes were made in Section 12 regarding filing the certified copy of the annual audit to the Auditor of Public Accounts of the State of Nebraska within 180 days of December 31 each year. This change was made to match Nebraska State Statute 70-623.
- Gulbranson reported the reorganization of the Board policies to align with the departments responsible for each policy is complete with the policies approved this month. The review schedule for the following year was provided.
- The Board reviewed and signed the engagement letter for the 2024 audit from Dana F. Cole.
- Gulbranson reported that material has finally arrived that was needed to complete work that had been on hold since the storm in April. She also stated the contractor that was hired to fly our line with a Drone has completed the project and crews will begin working on line sagging issues and leaning poles.
- Finance and Administrative Services Manager, Tim Jones, reported there were no changes to the approved 2025 budget from the November Budget Hearing. He also requested the annual bad debt write-off in the amount of \$6927.20. Discussion was held, and the board approved the write-off.

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keeping line crews supplied with the necessary material and equipment.

Enhancing Infrastructure Resiliency

Infrastructure resiliency involves the capacity to anticipate, withstand, and recover from adverse conditions. By maintaining an adequate storm stock inventory, PPDs can promptly address infrastructure damages caused by ice storms, thereby enhancing the overall resilience of the power grid. This proactive approach reduces the risk of extended outages and contributes to the long-term reliability of the electrical system. Investments in grid resilience, such as maintaining storm stock inventory, are crucial for strengthening critical infrastructure before and after natural disasters strike. (hoyle.house.gov)



natural disasters. This preparation ensures that resources are readily available when needed while emphasizing the importance of maintaining strong relationships with suppliers. These relationships are vital for acquiring additional inventory quickly in case of unexpected shortages, providing an extra layer of reliability during emergencies. Proper PPD asset management, including

effective storm stock inventory practices, allows PPDs to effectively service energy and power needs, prevent system failures, and ensure long-term operational efficiency and reliability. (camcode.com)

For Public Power Districts in western Nebraska, maintaining a comprehensive storm stock inventory is a critical component of disaster preparedness and infrastructure resiliency. This practice ensures that, in the event of ice storms or other natural disasters, PPDs can restore services swiftly and efficiently, upholding their commitment to reliable energy provision for their customers.

Strategic Planning, Risk Mitigation, and Supplier Relationships

Incorporating storm stock inventory management into strategic planning allows PPDs to mitigate risks associated with

COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.

WEATHER

High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.

CRITTERS

Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.

ACCIDENTS

Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.

Scheduled MAINTENANCE

Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: energy.gov



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers will try anything to deceive utility customers, including a tactic that claims customers have overpaid their bill. If you receive a call, text or email from someone claiming you overpaid a utility bill and need to provide your banking or credit card information to receive a credit, it's likely a scam. In most cases, your utility will apply a credit to your account to cover future charges or refund an overpayment with a mailed check.

Source: *Utilities United Against Scams*



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P 308.254.5871 | T 800.261.7114 | F 308.254.2384

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