March 2025

THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

Behind the Outage:

How Weather, Wildlife, and Accidents Cause Power Disruptions—and the Unsung Heroes Restoring Your Electricity

Lacey Gulbranson
General Manager/CEO

We all are inconvenienced at best when the power goes out. Other than planned outages for the linemen to upgrade and maintain lines, the main causes of outages are weather, animals and accidents. Weather events that affect the reliability of electricity flow include high winds, snow and ice, and lightning. Unfortunately, at times animals such as birds, snakes and rodents find their way into substations or onto power lines which can cause short circuits and disruption to the power supply. Less frequently we experience vehicle accidents or construction and excavation work that bring down overhead lines or damage underground powerlines, resulting in a power outage until restoration efforts take effect.

As you can imagine, our employee overtime hours are highly correlated to power outages. On average, each lineman works about 100 hours of

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LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Loxterkamp Feedlot, LLC our January "Lucky Draw Winner"!

Loxterkamp Feedlot LLC is a multi-generational farming/ranching concern with a feedlot operation near Broadwater, started by Kenneth and Naomi Loxterkamp and continued by the next generation. They have been long-time Wheat Belt customers.

In their spare time, the Loxterkamps enjoy quick trips camping at the lake along with cook-outs/gatherings with family, friends and neighbors. They also take pleasure in the day-to-day activities associated with raising crops and feeding cattle.

Loxterkamp Feedlot LLC received a $50 credit on their account for their prompt payment. If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid a $5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 16th of the month.

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Editor - Kelli Chaon

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overtime each year to restore power. Historically, our after-hours crews were made up of two linemen. Two crew members help with safety, ensuring that there is someone there to help in a time of need and to be an extra set of eyes to ensure something doesn't get overlooked. Wheat Belt has several apprentices, so our after-hours crews have included three crew members so we can get the apprentices the experiences they need to become great linemen.

The next time the power is out, which we work hard to ensure this is as infrequent as possible and has minimal impact, think about our linemen who are out there working to restore your power.

- Oath of office for Stuart Morgan and Moe Moffat was conducted. Both were re-elected to six-year terms beginning January 2025.
- The results of the annual election of officers for the board of directors: Brian Zimmerman, President; Stuart Morgan, Vice President; Moe Moffat, Secretary; Marcus Milanuk, Treasurer; and Toni Blomenkamp, Asst. Secretary.
- Lacey Gulbranson reported on Wheat Belt's "mod rate" through our workman's compensation insurance carrier, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. Our "mod rate" is .77 which means our losses are lower than the average in the state. Gulbranson highlighted this is due to our safety culture here at Wheat Belt.
- Preliminary financials were presented to the board by Tim Jones. The audit for 2024 has been completed and the results of the audit should be available in the next few months.
- Bond Issuance was discussed in detail with Jay Spearman of Northland Securities. The board voted to issue bonds in the amount of $4.7M in 2025, to reimburse cash to cover the April 2024 storm costs.
- Contract extension agreements with Tri-State G&T were discussed. The Board's consensus is to table the decision until we have more information from Tri-State.
- Wheat Belt's Strategic Planning session will be held the last week in January. Strategic Planning is held every three years with the board and Wheat Belt management in attendance.

Balancing Electricty Supply and Demand

By: Abby Berry, *NRECA Straight Talk*

Electricity is essential for nearly every aspect of daily life—so essential that we rarely think about how it's produced and delivered to our homes. You might be surprised to learn that behind the scenes, a network of experts is working daily (and even by the minute) to anticipate how much electricity you need before you even use it.

We're all connected to the electric grid, so ensuring the right amount of electricity for all involves a complex process of forecasting energy demand, planning for capacity and securing enough supply to meet Americans' needs.

Powerful sources

First, electricity must be generated at a power plant using either traditional sources, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear energy, or from renewable sources, such as solar, wind or hydropower.

At Wheat Belt Public Power District we work closely with Tri-State Generation and Transmission, our local wholesale power partner, to secure enough electricity for our communities, using a diverse mix of energy sources to generate the power we deliver to your home or business. By maintaining a diverse energy mix (coal, natural gas, wind, solar and hydropower) Wheat Belt PPD has options to ensure reliable power at a competitive cost.

On a larger scale, across the country, electricity supply and demand are managed through a market that includes long-term planning agreements, where electricity is bought and sold just like other common goods and services. Because Wheat Belt PPD works with our wholesale power partner, which is a cooperative, we are able to pool resources and expertise to deliver affordable power to our local communities.

Electricity supply changes throughout the day because demand fluctuates based on consumers' needs. For example, Wheat Belt PPD knows that we need to ensure more electricity in the mornings when you're starting your day, and in the evenings when you're cooking dinner, running appliances and watching TV. Demand also increases when weather patterns change, such as extremely warm or cold temperatures.

Managing supply and demand across the grid

Across the country, other electric utilities are managing the same task of balancing supply and demand, which is why we have a larger network of key players in place to ensure enough power is delivered across the grid.

In most cases, the amount of electricity generated and how much is sent to specific areas are coordinated and monitored by regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). In other areas, individual electric utilities perform these tasks.

RTOs, ISOs and electric utilities act as air traffic controllers for the electric grid. They forecast when you, your neighbors and communities across a large region will need more power. These organizations take measured steps to ensure there's enough supply to meet demand.

Looking ahead

As the energy sector undergoes rapid change, it's important for all consumers to understand the basics of electricity supply and demand.

Electricity use in the U.S. is expected to rise to record highs this year and next, with the demand for electricity expected

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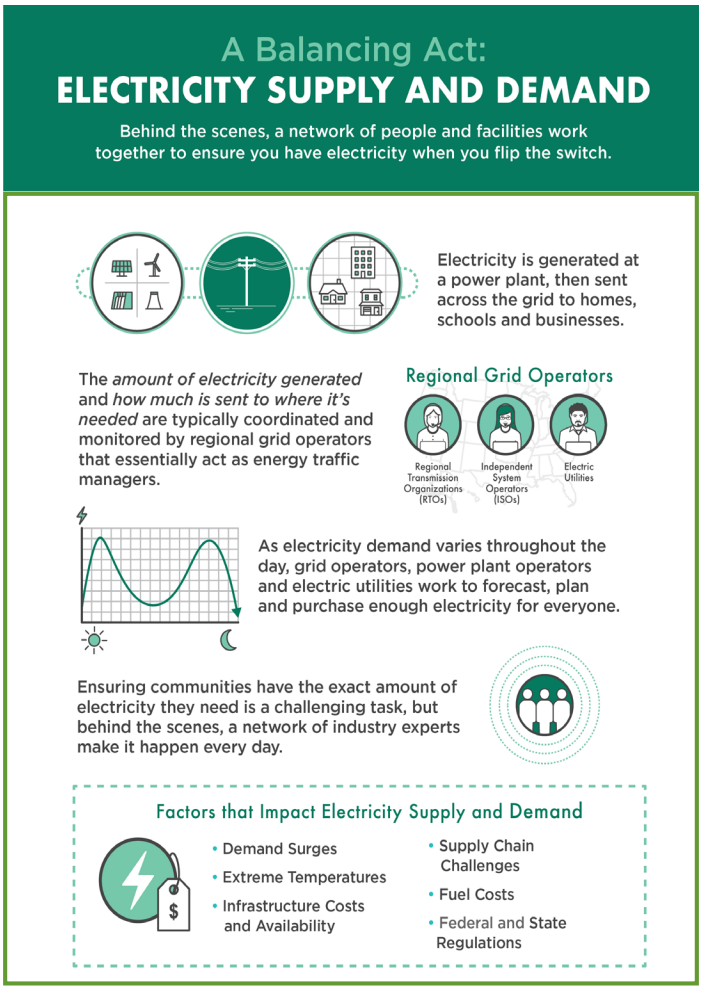

Balancing Electricty Supply and Demand cont'd from 3-C

to at least double by 2050. At the same time, energy policies are pushing the early retirement of always-available generation sources, which will undoubtedly compromise reliable electricity.

Wheat Belt PPD remains committed to providing affordable, reliable energy to the customers we serve. That's why we are preparing now for increased demand and other challenges that could compromise our local electric supply.

Wheat Belt PPD implemented time-of-use rates for our irrigation customers back in 2017 and extended those rates to our "large power" consumers in 2023 based on the results of our rate study. We continue to analyze energy needs and work with Tri-State G&T on future time-of-use rates and potential demand response programs for all our customers.

Managing the balancing act of electricity supply and demand is a complex job, which is why we have a network of utilities, power plant operators and energy traffic managers in place to direct the electricity we need and keep the electric grid balanced.

To learn more about Wheat Belt PPD's power supply, visit https://tristate.coop/resources.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.

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OFFICE HOURS:
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Our Mission

Deliver electricity safely, reliably and efficiently.