



THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

AUGUST 2020

Earl Reilly

Operations Manager and
Safety Director

COLDWATER CREEK SUBSTATION UPDATE



Wheat Belt Public Power District was researching new ways to improve our service reliability in the northwest portion of our District when talks with Tri-State G&T (our power supplier) about building a new substation began in July 2017. A suitable site had to be located and all logistics had to be worked out and finalized before the Wheat Belt Board of Directors approved the build.

Wheat Belt and Tri-State G&T, in a joint venture, began construction of the new Coldwater Creek Substation in Morrill County in February 2020. The original completion date was the beginning of June 2020. However, the impacts of COVID-19 pushed that date into the later part of the month. With a few finishing work items to complete, our



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DRAWING WINNER

Congratulations to Darrell and Kelly Koehn, our June "Lucky Winners"! The Koehns have received a \$50 credit for their prompt payment.

Darrell and Kelly were both born and raised in Cheyenne County and graduated from High School together in 1992.

Their roots here are deep and both have family that homesteaded in this area.

The Koehns have four children and two grandsons. They live on the homestead with their chickens and beehives.

Darrell and Kelly are anxiously awaiting for their eldest son's return from his service in the United States Marine Corps sometime this winter.

If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid the \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 15th of the month. In addition to Pay Your Bill Online, we offer several other options.

Please give us a call or visit wheatbelt.com, and select the Customer Engagement menu.

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

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goal is to have the substation energized by the end of July 2020.

Advantages of our new substation include:

- Reduced circuit length, in some areas up to 20 miles
- Increased voltage levels and fewer voltage drops
- Improved service reliability

A NIGHT OUT IN GURLEY
THURSDAY - SEPTEMBER 10, 2020
5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

- TAXIDERMY DEMONSTRATION
- MULTICOOKER DEMONSTRATION
- MORE TO FOLLOW

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 EVENT A GREAT SUCCESS!

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WHY IS MY POWER OUT?

A storm or a squirrel may be to blame. When the power goes out, we work hard to resume service as safely and quickly as possible. Here are some common reasons the power goes out:

STORMS: Mother Nature can interfere with power delivery.

TREES & VEGETATION: This is why we work so hard to keep power lines clear.

ANIMALS: Curious animals can cause damage, especially squirrels.

ACCIDENTS: Run-ins with a utility pole or other equipment can cause an outage.

PUBLIC DAMAGE: Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism or theft can all interfere.

OVERLOAD: This happens when demand spikes, like on a hot summer day.

EQUIPMENT ISSUES: We maintain and inspect equipment regularly, but sometimes malfunctions occur.

Thank you for your patience during outages.

Information from "SafeElectricity.org".

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Timothy Lindahl
General Manager/CEO

Tim's Tidbits

THE PRICE OF THE STORMS



Wheat Belt is operated at cost, meaning we take our expected costs to serve electricity to you and develop a budget to set rates to cover those costs. In an effort to keep our rates as low as possible, we do not build in much cushion for unexpected events. We do build in a slight amount for unexpected items such as individual storms. Setting rates this way allows us to keep our rates low, but the trade off is when there are several large unexpected events, such as the storms we have experienced in the past nine months, we do not recover enough revenue to cover the costs. We utilize many financial tools to keep the system running, including debt. Utilizing debt, especially with the low interest rates we are seeing today, allows us to keep rates stable while tackling the rebuild of an aging system. One requirement of our debt is that we operate the financial part of our system in a manner that is sufficient to the holders of our debt. We predict the costs and the corresponding revenue by utilizing a long term forecast. This forecast looks at history, weather, changes in consumer behavior, and growth to give us guidance on predicting the costs of the future. This works well as it does account for some major unexpected events in the past, but again, does not contemplate several unexpected events, such as the storms that we have experienced since November.

Our events started last November when we had a significant ice storm. This storm was followed by an additional one in December. Since these occurred at the end of the year, most

of the expenses were required to be booked in 2020 as repairs were finalized. This put unexpected cost pressure into the 2020 budget. Fast forward a little and we saw a significant event again in March. We have also had two significant storms in June due to the high straight line winds. Some of these storms exceeded a cost of \$200,000 each, which in and of itself, can easily be absorbed, but in total, create a problem. We also still have the remainder of the year to go. Unfortunately, we cannot calculate our needs on a rolling basis, we must do so within a fiscal year, starting fresh each January 1.

In an effort to maintain our financial requirements, we have implemented several cost containment measures. Since everything we spend is essential, it is difficult to cut much out of our expenses, however, we do have the opportunity to delay some expenses and we have done just that. We will continue to cut where we can, where it does not impact safety, reliability, or efficiency. We will also continue to delay certain expenditures until such time as we have proper funding. After this though, we determined that we would not be able to meet financial requirements with this alone, so your Board of Directors approved implementing an adder to the rates to ensure we have enough revenue to meet our requirements for the remainder of the year. This increase will take effect with usage beginning August 1st, which will show on your September 1st statement. You will see this line on your bill, titled "Storm Recovery". This amount will be considered by the Board each month throughout the remainder of 2020, and may be adjusted or eliminated based on the needs to meet our requirements. The alternative solution is to set our rates higher all of the time so that we have the ability to weather several events, but ultimately, I believe it is better to keep our rates low, letting you keep that money, and only add it to the rates when absolutely necessary. It is never easy to do a rate increase, and especially when it is done in the middle of a year, but I hope I have provided you with some understanding on why it is needed. Thank you for your patience during these storms and for keeping Western Nebraska a great place to be.



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POWER RESTORATION FILL-IN-THE-BLANK



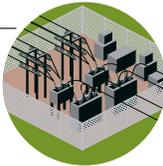
When the power goes out, line crews work hard to restore service as quickly and safely as possible. Complete the fill-in-the-blank activity below to learn about the steps of power restoration. Use the word bank if you need help, and check your work in the answer key.

WORD BANK:	distribution	transformer
	transmission	pads
		substations



1. High-voltage _____ lines are the large towers and cables that supply power to the greatest number of consumer-members. They rarely fail, but if they do, they have to be repaired first.

2. Next, crews inspect distribution _____ for damage. They determine if the problem stems from the lines feeding into the equipment itself, or if the problem is further down the line.



3. If the problem still can't be pinpointed, _____ power lines are inspected. These are the lines you typically see on the side of the road that deliver power to communities.

4. If the power outage persists, supply lines (also known as tap lines) are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers that are either mounted on poles or placed on _____ for underground electric service.



5. If your home remains without power, the service line between the _____ and your home may need repairs.

Answer Key: (1) transmission (2) substations (3) distribution (4) pads (5) transformer

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