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www.ninnescah.com



NINNESCAH RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# Watts Ahead

## NINNESCAH RURAL ELECTRIC CO-OP, INC.

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### IN CASE OF AN OUTAGE

If your electricity is off for more than a few minutes, please call 800-828-5538. The office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday. After hours, calls will be answered by dispatch and forwarded to our on-call personnel.

## Shaping Our Energy Future Through Innovation

The energy industry is undergoing significant change driven by technology and the transition to more sustainable forms of energy. Innovation is essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring a continuous, reliable and affordable power supply.

Electric co-ops are no strangers to adapting to the needs of the local communities we serve. Ninnescah has always leaned into change as we explore new ways to meet your energy needs.

### ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

Investing in smarter technologies also can enhance the monitoring and control of electricity flow so we can respond swiftly to changing needs. Smart electric

meters remotely collect data on how electricity is used. This helps in promptly prioritizing and dispatching crews during an outage and reducing restoration time during weather-related disruptions. Even before adverse weather arrives, advanced analytics from our systems, combined with data on weather patterns and other information, allows us to be proactive in taking preventative measures to shore up our system.

### PREPARING FOR INCREASED ENERGY USE

Today, we depend on electricity more than ever before. From vehicles to farming equipment to home heating options, more products and appliances that we depend on run on electricity.

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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home. Plant evergreen trees and shrubs to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating. **SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV**



How long will it take to **RESTORE POWER?**



Depending on the reason(s) for a power outage, power can be restored relatively quickly, or it can take a few hours or more. Restoring power safely and efficiently is always the goal.

The length of time to get the power restored depends on several factors including:



- ▶ The extent of a storm's destruction.
- ▶ The number of outages.
- ▶ How much time it takes to troubleshoot the issue(s).
- ▶ The exact cause(s) of the outages.
- ▶ Whether it is safe for utility crews to get to the damaged areas.

According to the Energy Information Administration, in 2021 Power Outages in the U.S.:

- ▶ Lasted an average of two hours, excluding major storm events.
- ▶ Were resolved after a little more than seven hours, including major storm events.
- ▶ Equaled 1.42 events per consumer per year.

**To Stay Safe:**

- ▶ If you are already inside, stay inside until the power is restored.
- ▶ Never approach a downed power line as it could be energized and deadly.
- ▶ Do not enter a flooded basement since the water could be energized.
- ▶ Keep a portable generator at least 20 feet away from all doors and windows.
- ▶ Do not turn off the power or flip a switch if you are standing in water.
- ▶ When cleaning up storm damage, look up and look out for overhead power lines.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

# WHATEVER

## Powering Life, From a Lineworker's Perspective

BY JUSTIN MCGUIRE, NINNESCAH LINEWORKER

Lineworkers are ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at Ninnescah Rural Electric work rain or shine, in often challenging conditions to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024.

My name is Justin McGuire, and I'm one of nine lineworkers at Ninnescah Rural Electric who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

### THE DANGER

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. We have to be aware of our surroundings and the safety of the person next to us. We often work on energized power lines, and we can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. We're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most is usually when the weather is worst. I'm often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we

can officially be called a lineworker. We typically start as a groundperson, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman lineworker status — that's when we're considered officially trained in our field.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

### THE PHYSICAL DEMAND

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of us complain about that. I knew what I signed up for — loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, we go places the trucks can't, so I might be hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most of us are just glad to spend our days outside.

### THE SACRIFICES

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. I'm sometimes first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things

# IT TAKES:



Ninnescah Rural Electric Lineman, from left: Devin Webb, Austin Barnard, Matt Riner, Robert Lamatsch, Brody Cronister, Chris Klein, Gage Taylor, Justin McGuire and Trevor Hassler. Not pictured: Jeff Craft.

that are devastating like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. We don't know what type of situation we're going to face or when we're going to face it. We get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. I've missed a lot of sports games and family dinners, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

### IT'S WORTH IT

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood (and sisterhood). In this work, we have to depend on the person beside us in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

I have a lot of pride in my work. Even when it's cold and wet, I know I'm working to keep people warm. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired I am or how long I've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

Ninnescah Rural Electric and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same

stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible — so you can get back to normal life.

## If there is a DOWNED POWER LINE THINK BEFORE YOU ACT



An overhead power line can become damaged or fall due to many reasons including a severe storm, car accident or public damage. If you see a downed power line, take these actions:

- ⚠️ Consider all power lines energized and deadly.
- 🚗 Do not get out of a vehicle or cab.
- 👤 Stay at least 50 feet away.
- 🚫 Do not approach the scene.
- ☎️ Call 911 or the utility to report the downed line.
- 🗣️ Warn others to stay away.
- 🚫 Do not approach the line or try to move it with another object.
- 🔄 Turn around and go another way.

### OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

Even if you do not see a downed line, realize one could be hidden by storm debris, water, snow or ice.

- ⚠️ Energized downed lines spread voltage through the ground or nearby objects.
- 👁️ You cannot tell if a power line is live just by looking at it.
- ⚡ If you go near a downed line, you can become electricity's path to ground.
- 👤 Even if a power line appears coated, it is never safe to go near it.

While transmitting and distributing power is typically safe, extreme scenarios like downed power lines are dangerous. NEVER APPROACH A DOWNED POWER LINE.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG



## Shaping Our Energy Future Through Innovation

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### COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

You may not realize it, but Ninnescah is part of a larger network of 900 electric co-ops nationwide. While we are locally owned by you, the members of the co-op, we also have the advantage of working with co-ops across the country to share ideas and leverage the innovations our colleagues might have tried out first. As cooperatives, we're collaborators instead of competitors — it's a unique aspect of our business model, and we're stronger because of it.

Our energy future will look different than it has in the past, but Ninnescah is prepared to adapt for the members we serve. Our mission and commitment to you remain steady — to provide reliable power at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Brooke D Fisher &/or Zakary C Butler-Brown – *Pratt*

Duane K Johnson – *St. John*

MVP Logistics LLC – *Wichita*

Bruce L &/or Lorraine S Raber – *Haviland*

MJE LLC – *Montezuma*

Steven D Lukens – *Medicine Lodge*

Cynthia Rice Revoc Trust – *Great Bend*

Tracy Freeman – *Kinsley*

## 5 Tips to Promote Financial Success

BY PAT MELGARES, K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS SERVICE

### April is Financial Literacy Month

Americans may view April as tax season, but Kansas State University family resource specialist Elizabeth Kiss says it can also be a springboard to plan for financial success.

In fact, in the U.S., April is recognized as Financial Literacy Month.

"The thing about money is it's a process, right?" Kiss said. "It's not one-and-done usually, and so a whole month gives us a chance to think about our money in different ways and to think about what actions we might take to use it wisely."

Kiss said the U.S. Government's Financial Education and Literacy Commission promotes five principles for Americans to keep in mind as they make day-to-day decisions about money and plan their financial goals.

#### THEY ARE:

**1 EARN.** Make the most of what you earn by understanding your pay and benefits. For example, Kiss said, "we can talk about vacation pay or personal days off. If you're not using those, that's a benefit you're leaving on the table and you're not getting the rest and leisure that you're eligible for."

**2 SAVE AND INVEST.** "It's never too early to start saving for future goals," whether they are short, medium or long term, Kiss said. She noted that those with retirement accounts should also routinely review their accounts to make sure they are on track to meet their goals.

**3 PROTECT.** This includes making sure you have emergency savings, and that insurance plans provide adequate coverage for home, car and other property.

**4 SPEND.** Be sure you are getting good value for your purchases. Shop around and compare, especially on big purchases. "And we might make choices on some things we're going to splurge on, and some things we're going to be more frugal on, and that's totally alright," Kiss said. "It's about balance."

**5 BORROW.** "Most of us have to borrow money to buy a house or other large purchase at some point," Kiss said. Borrowing money and paying back loans helps to build credit. However, remember that borrowing money comes at a price — paying interest. When you borrow, you repay the debt and pay interest.

"Everybody will manage their money differently, and these are principles — they're not hard and fast rules," Kiss said. "We can't always stick to these principles depending on our circumstances."

Kiss said parents should also consider discussing the family's financial strategies with children, considering what is age appropriate. She and a colleague — child development specialist Bradford Wiles — have published a fact sheet, *Through a Child's Eyes*, which can be found at the K-State Research and Extension bookstore, aimed at teaching children about earning, spending, sharing, borrowing and saving.

Kiss also recommends the publication, *How Are You Doing?*

*A Financial Checkup*, also available from the K-State Research and Extension bookstore. More information also is available at local extension offices in Kansas.

