

Rural Power

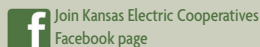
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Please send
your news
announcements to
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Stable electric rates goal of Nemaha-Marshall and Doniphan consolidation

The boards of both Nemaha-Marshall and Doniphan electric cooperatives announced in a July 30 news release their approval of a first step forward in a proposed consolidation plan. A joint member vote on this consolidation plan is scheduled for Oct. 2020.

Prior to this vote, the proposed consolidation plan will be reviewed during special meetings with employees and members of both cooperatives. If meetings are not possible due to coronavirus gathering restrictions, a special mailing will be issued.

"We have focused on every possible means to manage costs without affecting our reliable electric service for our members," said **DANIEL O'BRIEN**, Doniphan general manager. "This approach allows both cooperatives to continue to provide predictable electric service and good jobs in our communities."

"Working with several seasoned electric cooperative consultants, we relied upon their analyses to evaluate savings that could be achieved through consolidation," said **KATHLEEN O'BRIEN**, Nemaha-Marshall general manager. "This plan will benefit everyone and put our cooperatives in a stronger financial position going forward."

Under the proposed consolidation plan, a new legal entity will be created and named

Northeast Kansas Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NEKEC). The combined cooperatives will serve more than 5,000 members in eight counties. Both offices in Axtell and Troy will remain open, and all cooperative jobs will be maintained.

The proposed consolidation will provide cost savings and greater operating efficiencies neither cooperative can achieve individually.

The cooperatives are a good match for consolidation as both use NISC as their core technology for member and business information systems, and both are served by the same power supply provider under the same contract terms for their full-service power requirements.

The proposed consolidation requires approval of two-thirds of the voting members of both co-ops. Votes will be held on the same day in October and, if approved, the consolidation is anticipated to be completed by Jan. 1, 2021. Kathleen O'Brien is slated to serve as the general manager of the new entity, if approved.

"We view this proposal for consolidation as a solid investment in the future. The combined cooperatives will retain their well-established tradition of reliable service and enjoy efficiencies that will help stabilize rates through cost savings. We think this decision will provide a positive outcome for our cooperative customers for many years," said Kathleen O'Brien.

Electric cooperatives develop safety training pandemic protocols

Given the current pandemic, it is easy to understand the desire to postpone all in-person meetings; however, KEC's Loss Control, Safety, and Compliance (LCS&C) instructors have shown there are safe ways to bring training to cooperative employees.

KEC and its member-cooperatives have given serious consideration on how to keep both instructors and co-op employees safe while delivering needed training. At the start of the pandemic, LCS&C staff recorded safety training sessions and made them available through the KEC website. The department established protocols ranging from properly disinfecting equipment to requiring LCS&C staff to wear a mask when visiting the cooperatives.

"Rules change so quickly and vary widely across the state. It is too difficult to keep track of public health guidelines day-by-day, city-by-city, and county-by-

county," said **LARRY DETWILER**, director of LCS&C.

"When we are out in the field, we have concerns of bringing a virus back to the office and we want to minimize the possibility of cross contamination between co-ops. Requiring our instructors to wear a mask is an easy way to mitigate that risk."

Distribution cooperatives are also finding ways to minimize health risks.

MIKEY GODDARD, vice president of safety at Victory Electric, detailed how his co-op responded to protect employees. New procedures included staggering the crews so they would report in at different times, assigning trucks to specific crews, establishing cleaning schedules, and parking equipment outside to keep employees apart.

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Touchstone Energy names new executive director

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson announced on Aug. 3 the hiring of **JANA ADAMS** as executive director of Touchstone Energy. In this role, Adams will lead the NRECA-affiliated organization dedicated to helping 720 electric cooperatives better engage and serve their members. Adams will join NRECA's senior leadership team on August 24.

"Touchstone Energy is a brand that cooperative members across the country rely on. I am excited to lead the organization and build on its strong commitment to member service," Adams said.

"Jana has the leadership skills and experience to lead Touchstone Energy during a time of significant change in the electric sector," said Doug Miller, president of the Touchstone Energy board of directors.

Adams most recently served as senior vice president overseeing business operations and marketing strategies at the American Wind Energy Association. In seven years at AWEA, she was responsible for marketing, education programming and logistics, member recruitment and retention, and revenue development.

She brings to Touchstone Energy a mission-minded, member-centric approach honed in leadership roles at the Personal Care Products Council, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and American Public Power Association.

jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website.

Visit www.kec.coop/careers to learn more about the following positions.

► Prairie Land seeks an electrical/system engineer.

► Sunflower has multiple openings.

Send your open position listings to ruralpower@kec.org.

Positions will be posted on the website for one month, unless otherwise directed by the co-op.

co-opcalendar

AUGUST

- 19 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, via teleconference, 1:30 p.m.
- 19 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters (Hays) and via teleconference, 8:30 a.m.
- 24-28 **Supervisory and Management Development Program Courses**, Topeka - **POSTPONED**
- 26 **Wheatland Annual Meeting**, Caldwell Community Building, meal at 11:30 a.m., meeting at 12:30 p.m.
- 27 **MDM Meeting** - **CANCELED**
- 28 **KCRE Golf Tournament**, Sand Creek Station Golf Course, Newton

SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 **REC Managers Meeting**, Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan
- 7 **Labor Day**, KEC Office Closed
- 10 **Pioneer Annual Meeting**, Grant County Civic Center, Ulysses, 6 p.m.
- 16-17 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, TBD
- 18 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters (Hays) and via teleconference, 8:30 a.m.
- 21-23 **NRECA PowerUp Conference**, Savannah, GA- **CANCELED**
- 22-23 **KMSDA Fall Meeting**, online

KCRE to host 24th annual Golf Open on Aug. 28

The Kansas Committee for Rural Electrification (KCRE) will host its 24th annual Golf Open on Aug. 28 at Sand Creek Station Golf Course, located at 920 Meadowbrook Dr. in Newton.

Registration for the four-person scramble begins at 7:30 a.m. at \$70 per participant. Included in the registration fee are green fees, the use of a cart and the driving range, mulligans, lunch, and a chance to win a prize.

The tournament begins at 8:30 a.m. A shotgun start will commence the fundraising event for KCRE, a political action committee that supports state legislators, elected officials, and candidates who support issues of concern to electric cooperatives and rural Kansans.

To donate prizes, sponsor a hole, or play in the tournament, contact **KIRK THOMPSON**, CMS Electric, at 620-873-2184.

upcomingtraining

KMSDA to hold virtual fall meeting, Sept. 22-23

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association (KMSDA) 2020 Fall meeting will be offered online on Tues., Sept. 22 and Wed., Sept. 23.

Topics will include governance communications and reputation management by **STEPHEN BELL**, NRECA; assessing workplace safety and preventing violence by **TIM DAVIS**, Constangy Brooks, Smith & Prophete LLP;

a resource review by **ANNE HARVEY**, Touchstone Energy; Best practices for Operation Round Up by **SARAH FARLEE**, FreeState; and updates by KEC, KEPCo, and Sunflower staff.

In addition, **CARRIE KIMBERLIN**, KEC, will pre-record Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, and PhotoShop tips and tricks prior to the meeting, but will host a live Q&A session.

Save-the-Date: virtual 2020 IT Summit

The 2020 KEC IT Summit will be offered online from Sept. 29 through Oct. 1.

Topics will include Microsoft licensing and Microsoft 365 product offerings, the benefits of software assurance, incident response and incident response planning, a review of emerging tech-

nologies in the modern workplace, and cybersecurity capabilities and resources offered through the Department of Homeland Security.

A complete schedule and log in information will be emailed to the cooperatives closer to the virtual meeting dates.

Webinar, scholarship offered to students of canceled camp

Leadership is an important theme at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC). Despite the fact that camp was canceled this summer due to COVID-19 concerns, the Colorado and Kansas statewides offered an exclusive leadership opportunity for those students selected to attend the camp.



Reagan Bales, Rolling Hills 2020 camp winner, earned the CYLC Scholarship.

Keynote speaker **CRAIG ZABLOCKI** presented an interactive webinar on July 14 that focused on understanding important leadership traits.

Students who participated in the webinar were invited to submit a video about what quality they think is most important in a leader. There were 19 application videos submitted by students

from across Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

The \$500 KEC scholarship was awarded to **REAGAN BALES**, who was sponsored by Rolling Hills. In his video titled Lead like a Child, Bales stresses that leaders should be energetic, authentic, bold, teachable, and passionate.

"When listening to the webinar with Craig Zablocki, I couldn't help but notice that every one of the traits that he mentioned he tied back to youth. Children don't take themselves too seriously, they aren't prideful, and they're willing to learn," Bales said. "I know that as I move forward in life, I can either sink back into the crowd or I can stand out as a leader."

"I plan to continue to seize the opportunities that are presented to me, even if they're different than what I'm used to," he added.

Bales, currently a senior at Osborne High School, plans to study kinesiology and exercise science after graduation.

annual meetings

Twin Valley

Twin Valley's annual meeting was held on July 28 at the Labette County High School in Altamont. Due to concerns with COVID-19, temperatures were taken at the door and masks and hand sanitizer were provided. Members were given the option to cast their ballots for the board election at registration.

The meeting program was streamlined to include essential business and brief reports from the 2019 youth program winners. Boxed dinners were served to nearly 120 members and guests by Chicken Annies. In lieu of door prizes, 40 members received \$50 bill credits.

Re-elected to the board were **RODNEY BAKER, TOM ELLISON, and DARELD NELSON.**

Alfalpa

Alfalpa's rescheduled annual meeting was held at the Alfalfa County Fairgrounds on Aug. 6. The co-op changed the format of the meeting due to COVID-19, eliminating the meal, entertainment, and prizes. Masks and hand sanitizer were provided. Fifty-eight registered members, including the AEC employee members, attended.

Two trustees were newly-elected during the district meetings in March: **STAN DILLER** and **GARY OLSON.**

Victory

Victory's 75th annual meeting was held at the Western State Bank Expo in Dodge City on Aug. 13. More than 100 members attended.

Changes to this year's meeting included express registration, and the registration gift was replaced with a \$20 bill credit. Masks and hand sanitizer were available at the door. No meal was provided. Cold bottles of water and bags with a snack and a packet of information were placed on each chair, which were set up six feet apart. The abbreviated meeting was less than 20 minutes. Videos will be posted online. Members approved a bylaw change to clarify language pertaining to capital credits.

Re-elected to the board were **JOHN LEIS, JIM IMEL, KENNY WEHKAMP, and RANDY QUINT.**

Golfers invited to Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament

The second annual Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament, co-hosted by Victory Electric and Wheatland Electric, is scheduled for Aug. 28. This fundraising event will support both Victory's Avenue of Flags, a program to honor veterans, and Wheatland's Cram the Van food drive.

Businesses, organizations and individuals are invited to participate in the tournament at the Mariah Hills in Dodge City beginning at 9 a.m. The format includes a 4-man scramble and a shotgun start with a \$100 per player or \$400 per team entry fee. The entry fee provides players with a light breakfast, lunch, beverage tickets, registration gift bag, and the opportunity to win prizes.

More information about the tournament, including registration forms and sponsorship opportunities can be found

2ND ANNUAL CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

HOSTED BY: **WHEATLAND ELECTRIC** (Delivering Energy for Life) and **THE VICTORY Electric Cooperative Assoc., Inc.** (A Touchstone Energy Cooperative)

TO REGISTER: VISIT THE CO-OPS CARE GOLF PAGE AT VICTORYELECTRIC.NET OR CONTACT: WHEATLAND ELECTRIC (620-674-4563, ACONINE@WEELC.NET) or VICTORY ELECTRIC (620-371-7738, ASKCOMMUNICATIONS@VICTORYELECTRIC.NET)

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28 MARIAH HILLS GOLF COURSE DODGE CITY, KS

8 A.M. REGISTRATION 9 A.M. SHOTGUN START

4-MAN SCRAMBLE \$100 PER PLAYER | \$400 PER TEAM

BENEFITING: **CRAM THE VAN** and **AVENUE OF FLAGS DODGE CITY VETERANS COUNCIL**

The health and well-being of players is paramount and we will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation. In the event the Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament must be canceled or rescheduled, sponsors and players will be offered a refund on registration fees, donations and/or sponsorships.

on Victory's website at victoryelectric.net/co-ops-care-golf-tournament or by contacting Alli Conine at Wheatland or Jerri Whitley at Victory.

Co-ops develop safety training pandemic protocols, *cont.*

Victory's operations team postponed work requiring close contact with the public, and focused on the co-op's rural projects to allow the line crews to spread out.

"It's part of the job to knock on doors and visit with members, and our guys have done a great job of moving our projects to the rural areas," Goddard said. "We also take care of the two big packing plants in our town. So we are careful to follow all safety guidelines."

When the crews started meeting in person, they utilized new locations to allow for safe physical distancing.

"We have 40 front-line personnel and there was no way to safely space everyone out in the normal meeting room, so we now meet in our warehouse" Goddard said. "Prior to COVID, our last in-person safety meeting was in February. I think they were really happy to resume meetings even if we had to try to beat the heat in western Kansas."

To make the warehouse meeting as comfortable as possible, trucks are parked outside and meetings start at 6 a.m. Fans run to keep things cool, and crews have bottled water.

"July was our first meeting when we were all back together. We're going to do whatever it takes to continue having our monthly safety meetings," Goddard said.

JOHN MALONE, safety and resources manager at FreeState, has also staggered his crews and implemented equipment disinfecting protocols.

"The guys show up at the same time and use the same trucks," Malone said. "We were thrown a big curve ball in middle of March, and I can imagine they miss the camaraderie of seeing everyone. But they're taking it well in stride."

FreeState already had emergency procedures in place, which were expanded in response to the pandemic.

"There was a lot of guidance out there," Malone explained. "We took in recommendations from NRECA, KEC, and other cooperatives. We were able to use those resources to develop our pandemic plan."

Part of the pandemic response has prompted crews to look for ways to accomplish more with technology solutions they've had or acquired.

"We've had virtual safety meetings. Most of our linemen have iPads, and we use the Microsoft Teams app and the Highfive video conferencing app," Malone said. "We have everyone log in just like Zoom, and we do that on a monthly basis."

Victory crews have also made good use of technology to prevent missing any safety training.

"We embedded the recorded safety sessions from LCS&C along with the tests in Microsoft Forms. Our crews could watch the videos while in their trucks wearing facemasks and take the test, and we would have real-time reports of who completed them," Goddard said. "We also utilized Yammer to house all of our safety resources and videos. Yammer is just like a social media page and people can post and comment just like Facebook. I work very closely with our IT department. I dream it up and the IT department makes it happen."

Both cooperatives stated the new protocols are successful because, ultimately, the employees know their cooperative has their best interests at heart.

"It's now just a way of life out here in western Kansas with the number of COVID

cases in our area. I don't know if we'll get back to the old ways," Goddard said. "We're doing our best to keep our people safe, and they know we'll take care of them."

Goddard said employees are asked to stay home if they feel sick.

"We'll make sure the sick leave is there. For our younger linemen who haven't accrued sick leave, other employees can donate their sick leave if necessary," Goddard explained.

"I see just about everything we're doing is sticking. We've been doing this for four months and everyone who works for FreeState has adapted to them and has done well," Malone said. "The feedback I get is that our crews are thankful that we're looking out for them and that their jobs are secure."

Malone added, "From the very beginning, we recognized the importance of taking care of our members and keeping the lights on. That just makes our job that much more important."



Above: KEC's Stacey Marston wears a face mask during the June 9 pole-top rescue training at FreeState in McLouth. Below: KEC's Bruce McAntee presents safety training on July 23 at Victory's warehouse in Dodge City where the attendees sit six feet apart.