



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

501 S. Huston Ave, P.O. Box 368, Altamont, KS 67330
866-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Ron Holsteen General Manager

Board of Trustees

Daniel Peterson
President

Bryan Coover
Vice President

Ronald McNickle
Secretary

Larry Hubbell
Treasurer

Michael Allison
Trustee

Tom Ellison
Trustee

Bryan Hucke
Trustee

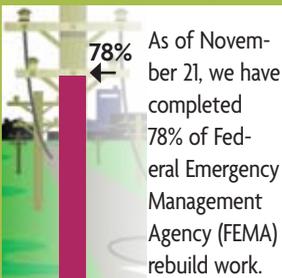
Wayne Revell
Trustee

Robert Webster, Jr.
Trustee

Office Hours
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact Us
501 S. Huston Ave., P.O. Box 368
Altamont, KS 67330
620-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

FEMA Rebuild Update



FROM THE MANAGER

Building a Better World

2012 Marks the International Year of Cooperatives

How do you build a better world? In today's uncertain economic times that question quickly comes to mind. We want our children and neighbors to succeed. We need a strong and sustainable community.

History tells us when we band together we can do anything. Together, we can build a better world. That's where cooperatives come into play.

Next month we kick off a year-long celebration marking the International Year of Cooperatives 2012. Offering a chance for us to showcase our legacy of innovation and achievement, and reminds us of what's important in business—putting people first.

You're a member of Twin Valley so you know we're focused on providing safe, reliable, and affordable power. But this community-driven business model doesn't stop at your light switch. There are 29,200 co-ops across America taking

many forms, from farmers banding together to get a fair price on supplies to credit unions delivering low fees and reasonable interest rates on loans. Our business model works for dairy farmers and small business owners, financial institutions, grocery stores, insurance, housing, and child care.

One out of every four Americans is a co-op member; there are more than 1 billion members around the world. Co-ops fill a community need, giving a voice to folks that profit-driven businesses often overlook. Co-ops share a common set of principles and values, including self-help and—one of my favorites—democracy.

Electric cooperatives may only serve 12 percent of Americans, but our lines cover 75 percent of this great nation. By banding together, we deliver power to 42 million rural Americans in 47 states—and we're not finished.

Over the last 50 years,

these efforts have provided light and hope to 100 million people in more than 40 countries. That's how electric cooperatives build a better world.

During International Year of Cooperatives 2012 it's important to remember co-ops put people first. We brought electricity to this community to improve our quality of life and keep young people from leaving to seek opportunities in electrified-cities. Nearly three-quarters of a century later we still want our children to succeed. That's why we support the Rural Electric Youth Tour. Each summer we send a high school junior to our nation's capital to learn about leadership, teamwork, and our nation's ideals. We also sent one student to Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp to learn about



Ron Holsteen

Continued from page 16-C ►

NOTES FROM OPERATIONS

Hats off to the Hardwork & Dedication of Twin Valley Employees



William Worthy

Once again your dedicated linemen and office support staff have taken on the monumental task of changing out a substation transformer. If you remember back in April, we

tried to get this done while completing some other necessary work in our Mound Valley Substation.

Unlike last time, it looks like we are going to be successful this time around. We had a few hiccups, and the hiccups led to a bit of frustration and anxiety for us, but your linemen responded and reacted to every hurdle that was thrown our way. The new transformer was energized at 6 p.m. on November 16, and let the transformer energize throughout the night to heat the copper windings. The substation was fully operational November 17.

As I reflect on the hurdles: parts missing, connectors missing, jumpers not reaching back to where they are supposed to, etc., I want to say a big thanks to the linemen that stayed strong as the weather turned ugly. They never lost focus of completing the job at hand. North winds blowing all day and snow mixed with sleet coming down on us in the afternoon made for miserable conditions, but the linemen stayed focused and we completed the task that has hung over Twin Valley for almost three years.

Have you ever thought about how your lights stay on? They do because the men and women of Twin Valley

give of themselves everyday to make sure you have what you need for yourself and your family.

I know a lot of the members only see the trucks at the convenience store in the morning as the guys head out or sitting on the side of the road as if just killing time; but believe me, every action they take is with direction and with taking care of the membership of Twin Valley.

Along with the linemen handling their assigned tasks, the office personnel handling multiple requests for service, concerns from the membership about trees or service problems and a multitude of other phone calls that come into the office everyday; it seems like some days the phone never stops ringing.

This past summer, southeast Kansas experienced one of the hottest summers on record and it affected every employee at Twin Valley. From the linemen who were out working, doing high voltage work with unbearably hot rubber cover-up on, to the office staff who endured many phone calls and notes from our members about their high bills, every employee stepped up to the challenge.

Our electric usage soared to record levels, nearly twice the average for August and September of any previous years, which lead to many of our members using double or even triple amounts of electricity. And yes, we heard about it! People seem to forget that when the temperature rises and stays up, every appliance in your house, barn or shop is working harder than it has ever worked before. The old, faithful freezer (that could be considered a treasure if found by

“American Pickers”) you have sitting on the porch or in a barn, probably never turned off for the entire duration of the heat wave that we had. Or where you have an air conditioner that hasn’t been serviced or updated since it was installed; as the temperature kept rising, you kept the thermostat where it was or even dialed it down a few more degrees in search of relief. Think about that.

On top of all this, we are at the mercy of Mother Nature when it comes to storms; careless drivers when somebody hits a pole on the side of the road; farmers who upgrade their implements, but still think they are operating the old ‘Johnny-popper’; or parts of our membership who doubled the square footage of their house, but are still powering everything from the old 100 amp loop and 10kVA transformer, we have seen it all.

Very little of this happens or goes wrong Monday through Friday during business hours. Middle of the night, on the weekends or as one of the youngsters is blowing out the candles on their birthday cake; this is when the phone rings. Your Twin Valley personnel never complain or grumble about leaving home in the middle of the night or during one of the family celebrations. We understand it is part of the job and will do whatever it takes, as safely and as quickly as possible, to get the lights back on. It takes a special person to do what we do, and I am proud of everyone who works hard and keeps the lights on for Twin Valley.

In closing, I would like to say Merry Christmas to you and yours, and my hopes that everyone has a blessed 2012!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Twin Valley’s office will be closed December 23-26 and January 2 to celebrate the holidays. The Board of Trustees, management and employees would like to wish all of our members a safe and happy holiday season! May you all enjoy this time with your family and friends.



Building a Better World Continued from page 16-A ▶

the cooperative industry and build leadership skills.

We also want to celebrate our legacy of innovation. Co-ops adapt quickly to change, and we work together—cooperatively—to find solutions to improve service for our members. Can you imagine profit-driven utilities working together to keep bills affordable?

Twin Valley innovation takes many forms, from our energy ef-

iciency and renewable energy efforts to transforming the electric grid. Each innovative step forward builds a better community for all of us.

Whenever a community faces a need—a challenge to make life better—the cooperative business model comes into play. By putting people first and innovating to meet member needs, cooperative enterprises build a better world. To learn more, visit www.go.coop.

Avoid a Holiday Decorating Disaster

Few traditions are as unique to the holidays as festooning our homes and yards with twinkling lights and festive decorations. While these displays add to the magic of the season, they also increase our risks for holiday fires and injuries. Follow these steps to ensure that your traditions result in a safe, bright and happy time for your family.

Carefully inspect each electrical decoration and extension cord before use, and discard any damaged items. Cracked sockets, bare or frayed wires and loose connections may cause a serious shock or fire. Avoid overloading outlets, which can overheat and also cause a fire.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends never connecting more than three strands of incandescent lights together. Do not pinch cords in windows or doors, or under heavy furniture.

When decorating outside, make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Check that all items and extension cords are marked for outdoor use. And exercise extreme caution when decorating near overhead power lines. Use a wooden or fiberglass ladder instead of metal. Keep yourself



Check to make sure connections are secure and cords are not worn or frayed.

and all of your equipment at least 10 feet from power lines.

Take special care with Christmas trees. If purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Heated rooms dry out live trees—even fresh ones—rapidly. Place the tree at least three feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces and space heaters. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water. For artificial trees, look for the label “fire resistant.”

Decorate your tree, live or artificial, with non-combustible or flame-resistant materials. Never use burning candles on or near your tree.

Whether your house is the most festive on the block or you prefer a more low-key style, make safety an important part of your holiday preparations.

12 Days of Holiday Safety

It's easy to make safety a part of your holiday with these tips. Tackle one a day and you're well on your way to a safe New Year!

Day 1 **What's that noise?** Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they hear them.

Day 2 **What a shocker!** Before use, inspect all electrical lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage.

Day 3 **Two's company, three's a crowd.** Do not overload outlets with too many decorations or devices.

Day 4 **Is it working?** Test your ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) to make sure they're protecting you.

Day 5 **Ouch!** Prevent trips and falls by keeping cords safely along walls and out of doorways and high traffic areas.

Day 6 **Kids eat the darndest things!** Avoid putting lights, metal hooks, breakable ornaments and other small decorations within reach of young children.

Day 7 **Thirsty?** Keep your Christmas tree stand full of water. A fresh, green tree poses less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.

Day 8 **Make a wish!** Blow out the candles before leaving a room or going to bed.

Day 9 **Nice and warm.** Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn—decorations, trees, gifts and curtains.

Day 10 **Can't touch this!** Consider installing tamper-resistant outlets/receptacles to prevent kids from inserting objects into the slots.

Day 11 **Escape Route:** Share your family fire escape plan with overnight guests.

Day 12 **Hot stuff!** Keep children away from cooking areas; use back burners and turn pot handles in away from little hands.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

It's Christmas Time at McConnell Tree Farm

Have you ever thought about visiting a Christmas tree farm and getting the tree straight from the source? That is just what you do at the McConnell Christmas Tree Farm. There, you get to pick out your tree and they do the rest. They cut, shake, bag and assist in loading your perfect Christmas tree.

DAVID AND DIANE MCCONNELL planted approximately 500, one-foot-tall, Christmas trees in 1999. He got the idea after years of delivering Christmas trees and supplies to another farm while working for UPS. He thought the Christmas Tree Farm would be a great adventure for their retirement years. He has now retired from UPS while Diane still works full-time at Labette Bank.

Over the years, the amount has grown to nearly 2,000 living trees. In 2006, they started selling a modest amount of trees and now are selling over 100 per season. They offer three types of pine trees: Austrian, Scotch and White.



There are nearly 2,000 trees from which to choose this season at McConnell Christmas Tree Farm.

Not only will you find trees upon your visit, you will find wreaths and handmade wooden items too. Wreath assembly begins for Diane in November. The wreaths are made of real greenery, decorated with a bow and are 24-inches in diameter. They have had wreaths purchased in November that last all the way into February! David makes the handcrafted wooden items, such as bowls, cutting boards and other miscellaneous items, throughout the rest of the year.

The tree farm is a year round process for the McConnell's. In the spring, they plant 300 to 500 trees and prune the others. Summers stay busy with spraying and mowing and with autumn comes measuring and tagging each



David and Diane McConnell have been raising trees since 1999.

tree that is ready to sell. It is a family affair not done by just one person. Their son, Matt, comes home to help with the planting and pruning regularly.

The last few years, they have provided several of the Christmas trees at the Stella Wells auction. The Stella Wells auction is when elaborately decorated Christmas trees are sold at auction to the public to help raise money for feeding the local needy.

If you would like to visit the only retail "choose and cut" Christmas tree farm in Labette County and take advantage of free cider and cookies while browsing, visit the McConnell Christmas Tree Farm located at 18065 Queens Road in rural Parsons. Their hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, beginning



The McConnells offer handmade wreaths and woodcrafts.

the Saturday after Thanksgiving. For more information call 620-421-4671.

David and Diane McConnell have been members of Twin Valley Electric since 1998.