

The Current

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Reworking takes the zzzzt out of encounters between wildlife and power lines

By Karen Kaley

You’ve seen them. Squirrels scampering across the street, safe from being flattened in traffic because they are on an overhead power line. How do they do that? Why aren’t they electrocuted?

Just like birds on a wire, as long as a squirrel, snake, possum or any other critter is touching only the energized line, it will not complete a circuit. There is no arc, deadly to humans and critters alike.

It doesn’t happen every time, but if that squirrel gets to the other side, hops onto a pole and places one paw on a piece of electrical equipment such as a transformer, the trouble can start. If the critter makes simultaneous contact with something energized and something grounded, the outcome is not good.

Squirrel + Transformer = Zzzzt!
Aww, poor little furry critter.

Don’t forget, though, that Critter + Transformer = Power Outage. What a nuisance.

This combination happens sometimes in town and a lot more in rural southwest Oklahoma, where animals are abundant along Cotton Electric’s 5,146-mile distribution system. There are more than 20,000 transformers on the system, one of the more likely spots for electrifying encounters.

And, depending on where the critter and transformer are located, the subsequent outage lasting an hour or more can affect one household or dozens. If the transformer happens to be in a substation, it can affect hundreds for several hours.

Over the last few years, Cotton Electric linemen have taken measures to prevent these nuisance outages. While out on routine maintenance calls, the linemen rework nearby transformers.

“We get daily work orders that send us all over our districts,” Matt Winburn said. Winburn is a journeyman lineman who works mainly in Stephens County.

“Anytime we go to fix a light or do any other type of service work, we try to make the most of the visit to that

location. We figure, if we’re there anyway, we can make sure all connections are tight and everything is fine before we leave.

“We cut trees, tighten hardware ... anything to maintain the line. If the overhead transformer hasn’t been reworked, we rework it.”

Reworking an overhead transformer means pulling on protective gear and a trip to the top of a utility pole, usually with the help of a bucket truck. Safety dictates the need for a second lineman, always on the ground, keeping an eye on the work above.

The truck and line are grounded, and power to the transformer is switched off.

Then Winburn or any of the other Cotton Electric linemen do a few things to ensure the transformer is in good working order and a little more critter-proof.

“We put up new connections and install insulated bird wire and bushing covers,” Winburn said.

It’s a quick procedure.

“We’ll have power off for about 15 minutes, but it may prevent a longer outage down the line. This bit of preventive maintenance is a brief inconvenience for a member but has a long-term effect.”

Winburn estimated a lineman may rework at least 500 transformers annually, probably more. He said it is time well-spent.

“It’s paying off a lot. I can’t say I’ve been called to a single outage that involves a burnt-out connection on a reworked transformer.”

Critter-related outages have dropped significantly, too. While it is less likely, it can still happen.

“I have seen one occasion where a squirrel got its head stuck down inside the bushing,” Winburn said.

“A squirrel has to try really hard to commit suicide on a reworked transformer.”

Critters aren’t the only beneficiaries of the rework.

“Members don’t sit in the dark as often and I get to stay home at night,” Winburn said.



Above, journeyman lineman Matt Winburn begins to rework a transformer. Below, all connections have been tightened and insulated bird wire and bushings installed. This 15-minute bit of maintenance means this transformer is unlikely to be the source of a long outage caused by wildlife.



See more about transformers on Pages 6 and 7

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to power bills mailed after May 1, 2015, is (\$0.00036) per kWh.

On a member’s average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of \$0.54 on the May bill.

April 2015 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	80	57	69	16	76	57	67
2	83	60	72	17	70	57	64
3	70	48	59	18	75	53	64
4	65	38	52	19	72	45	59
5	59	51	55	20	69	40	55
6	85	57	71	21	75	51	63
7	86	59	73	22	75	53	64
8	76	64	70	23	67	53	60
9	77	54	66	24	73	60	67
10	70	42	56	25	84	49	67
11	73	49	61	26	80	49	65
12	81	64	73	27	61	50	56
13	69	54	62	28	65	44	55
14	57	51	54	29	77	42	60
15	73	49	61	30	79	46	63

Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/

Average Daily High: 73 Average Daily Low: 52

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Monday, May 25 for the Memorial Day holiday. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The June issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on June 15, 2015.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for The Current or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know.

We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at info@cottonelectric.com.

You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

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More news at cottonelectric.com

Scherler inducted into Hall of Fame

Lifelong Cotton County resident Marvin Scherler has been honored with a posthumous induction into the Oklahoma Rural Electric Hall of Fame. Scherler served Cotton Electric as a trustee for 46 years, longer than any of the 51 board members that have made decisions for the co-op since its incorporation in 1938.

Marvin's wife of 66 years, Trecyl, accepted the prestigious award during the annual meeting banquet for Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC) held recently in Oklahoma City. She was joined by numerous members of the Scherler family.

Scherler was the 30th inductee into the Hall of Fame created in 1957 to honor exceptional service to rural electrification in Oklahoma and throughout the nation. Nominated for the honor by Cotton Electric Cooperative, he is the fourth inductee from that service area.

Scherler was served by Cotton Electric all his life. In turn, he served the co-op with unflagging energy for most of his adult life.

"I believe in the cooperative system," he said in a 2009 interview. "When we help each other, it is good for everybody."

Scherler was elected to serve as trustee for District 7 in 1965. At the banquet, Trecyl said Marvin's commitment to the co-op continued for the rest of his life.

"Marvin was a dedicated, outspoken and intelligent man who cared deeply about the well-being of cooperative members. Up until his last day, Marvin remained engaged in cooperative business.

"He always had a head for numbers and kept everyone on their toes," Trecyl said.



Marvin Scherler

Before Marvin's passing, Tim McCary, current president of the Cotton Electric board of trustees, shared the news that Marvin would be inducted into the Hall of Fame. The award meant a lot to Marvin and he was honored by the news.

Scherler's involvement with the electric co-op and other services benefiting rural Oklahoma is remarkable. During his years of service, he served in all officer positions on the Cotton Electric board. In addition, Scherler served on the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) board of directors and the OAEC board of directors.

Scherler became an active part of the legislative process throughout his life. He spent hours walking the halls of the Oklahoma Capitol promoting cooperative issues.

While serving in a leadership capacity for WFEC, Scherler was primarily

responsible for establishing an innovative financing plan, Safe Harbor Leasing, that was used to offset expenses incurred from the construction of the WFEC Hugo coal generation plant. Scherler worked with the Rural Electrification Administration and rallied support from senators and congressmen to advocate for WFEC Scherler's spearheading of this effort resulted in a \$130 million savings on the project.

Water and electricity are usually a deadly combination, but Scherler used what he learned about the electric cooperative system and applied it to water in a way that thrives and benefits southwest Oklahoma to this day.

Scherler is listed as an incorporator of Cotton County Rural Water District No. 2. He went on to play a major role in setting up the Oklahoma and National rural water associations and has presided over their boards. He was

nationally recognized as a National Rural Water Association Founding Father in 2003.

Scherler also lent his service to county and state soil conservation boards. Several banks and other developmental and rural organizations have had the benefit of his leadership.

Marvin Scherler once wondered out loud why he didn't just get a job with one of the many entities he served. Trecyl also speculated about how different things would be if he had worked as hard on their farm and ranch business as he had for the co-op.

It would be impossible to measure the value of Scherler's contribution to Cotton and the many other organizations he served by joining or creating. His mark is indelible and will be honored always through the Oklahoma Rural Electric Hall of Fame.

Criteria for induction into the Oklahoma Rural Electric Hall of Fame include:

- ◆ Exceptional service to rural electrification for at least 10 years;
- ◆ Contributions to the OAEC;
- ◆ Service to enhance the image of rural electrification;
- ◆ Participation in NRECA activities;
- ◆ Contribution to state and federal legislation vital to the rural electrification program;
- ◆ Involvement in precedent-setting legal administrative or regulatory proceedings; and
- ◆ Efforts to provide and develop financing alternatives for rural electric cooperatives.



Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) board of trustees recently announced the election of officers for 2015-16. David Ray of Kiamichi Electric Cooperative, seated left, was re-elected as president. Mike Lebeda of Kay Electric Cooperative, seated right, was re-elected as secretary-treasurer; Charles Hickey from Northfork Electric Cooperative, standing, left, was re-elected vice president; and Charles Spencer of Cotton Electric Cooperative was re-elected as assistant secretary-treasurer. The WFEC board meets monthly to discuss and approve business operations conducted by the generation and transmission cooperative.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Keep cool this summer! ENERGY STAR certified refrigerators are about 9-10 percent more energy efficient than models that meet the federal minimum energy efficiency standard.

Source: EnergyStar.gov

The Current

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March 2015 Operating Stats

	2015	2014
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,655,146	\$6,189,683
Cost of Purchased Power	3,975,325	4,946,073
Taxes	118,368	120,040
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,063	1,253
Average Farm and Residential Bill	143	149
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,324	1,408
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,268	18,137
Miles Energized	5,146	5,138
Density Per Mile	3.55	3.53
New Service Connects YTD	62	69
Services Retired	51	58



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Mission Statement

Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the June issue, please submit information by June 2, by calling 580-875-4255 or send an email to info@cottonelectric.com.

Swimming lessons back on again

Duncan Chisholm Trail Kiwanis swimming lessons are back on again for summer 2015. Duncan citizens and the City have partnered to get the public swimming pool filled despite the ongoing severe drought.

The low-cost swimming lesson sessions will be at various times Monday through Thursday June 15-25 and July 6-16. Visit the Duncan Chisholm Trail Kiwanis club Facebook page to get details about times.

For information about enrollment, call 580-606-2358.

Farmers markets in Lawton, Duncan

A farmers market hosted by the Southwest Growers Association is held from 7:30 a.m. to noon every Saturday through October at the Comanche County Fairgrounds, 920 S. Sheridan Road, Lawton. For information, visit Lawton Farmers Market on Facebook.

A Duncan farmers market is open from 1 to 5 p.m. every Sunday in front of Orscheln Farm and Home at 3800 N. U.S. Highway 81.

Armed Forces Day parade is May 16

"We Will Not Forget" is the theme of Lawton's 51st annual Armed Forces Day Parade, which begins at 10 a.m. May 16 at the intersection of Sixth and C avenues. Participants will march west on C to 11th Street and turn north to Ferris. The procession will head east and end at Fourth Street.

For information, call Jacob Russell at 580-355-3541.

Armed Forces Day celebration continues at Elmer Thomas Park. Family activities will begin at noon. The event features military vehicle displays, a car show and live music.

Tour de Meers takes off May 23

The 26th Tour de Meers, an annual bicycle ride through the Wichita Mountains beginning and ending in Meers, will be May 23.

Registration forms can be downloaded at tourdemeers.org. Registration the day of the event begins at 6 a.m. at Meers Volunteer Fire Department station, one mile north of the Meers Store on Oklahoma Highway 115. The ride starts at 7:30 a.m. and features a variety of distances from 10 to 63 miles.

For information, visit the website, call 580-704-6002 or email tourdemeers@gmail.com.

Festival fetes Charlie Christian

The 30th annual Charlie Christian International Music Festival is set for May 28-31 at Elmer Thomas Park and other venues in Lawton. The festival honors the life and legacy of the Oklahoman who made history by bringing the electric guitar out of the rhythm section and into the forefront as a solo instrument.

Planned festivities include a balloon launch, health fair, and screenings of "The Wayman Tisdale Story" and "Take Me to the River." Vendors will offer a wide variety of food, and there will be many hands-on activities for children.

More than a dozen bands are lined up to participate in jam sessions and battle of the bands and a gospel concert.

For information, visit CharlieChristianMusicFestival.com.

Fair pageant deadline approaches

Deadline is June 2 for girls wishing to enter the Stephens County Free Fair queen pageant.

The competition will be held Aug. 1 in the Conference Center in the Stephens County fair building.

The non-glitz pageant is open to all school-aged girls in Stephens County. The number of entrants will determine the number of categories.

Entry fee is \$70.

Each contestant will receive a trophy and fair pageant T-shirt. One contestant per age group will be crowned overall winner, and will receive a tiara, sash and a cash award.

For information, official rules and entry forms, call the OSU Extension Office at 580-255-1510.

Fish, tackle show set for June 5-6

Antique lures and reels will be among the displays at the Duncan Fishing and Tackle Show from noon to 6 p.m. June 5, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 6 at the Stephens County Fair & Expo Center.

In addition to raffles and fishing and tackle vendors, this World Association Tackle Collectors Show will welcome special guest Danny King, two-time catfish angler of the year. There is no admission fee.

LCT closes with 'Addams Family'

Lawton Community Theatre closes the 2014-15 season with an original story of every father's nightmare set to music in "The Addams Family."

Wednesday Addams, the ultimate princess of darkness, has grown up and fallen in love with a sweet, smart young man from a respectable family. Everything will change for the whole family on the fateful night they host a dinner for Wednesday's "normal" boyfriend and his parents.

Performances are set for 8 p.m. June 5-7 and 11-14. Ticket information is available at www.LCT-OK.org.

DLT brings 'Sketches of Broadway'

"Sketches of Broadway" is a musical evening of hits from famous Broadway shows to popular musical genres. The magic of Broadway will come alive at 7:30 p.m. June 11-13 on the stage of the Simmons Center in Duncan.

Directed by Veronica Hodgson, the show will feature singing and dancing from local talent. For information, visit DuncanLittleTheatre.com.

Elgin alumni gathering June 6

A come-and-go reception for Elgin High School alumni is scheduled for 2 to 5 p.m. June 6 at the Elgin High School cafeteria. Student Council members will be available to lead tours of the new buildings on campus.

A post card will be mailed to alumni who have current addresses on file with the committee. For information, call Wanda Bridges Donica at 580-549-6289 or Debby King Morgan at 405-306-5808. Information is also available or by emailing elginokalumni@gmail.com.

CCC, WPA memories sought

Friends of the Wichitas and the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge are looking for families who have, or had, a family member who worked with the CCC or WPA on Refuge projects to share their stories or photographs.

Volunteers will do one-on-one interviews and scan photographs of construction and CCC or WPA workers.

The event will take place at 2 p.m. July 19 at the Environmental Education Center on the north side of Quanah Parker Lake. Email ellenfj@sbcglobal.net for information or call 405-701-3723.

Food pantry open twice monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. The pantry is in the old City

Photo of the Month



This shot of Lucky the rescue dog was selected from among the many submissions in our FURRY FRIENDS contest for May. Lucky's rescuer is Lisa Scifres of Duncan. She said, "We named her Lucky because we thought she was pretty lucky to have found a home. It turns out we are the lucky ones. If you're thinking about getting a pet, be sure to check out the local Humane Society. Adopting a pet can change your life!"

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for June is GRADUATION. Entries can be emailed to info@cottonelectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street.

Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification.

For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

Honor Guard serves area veterans

Seeing a need in the area, several military veterans formed an honor guard in 2007 to provide services at funerals for all military veterans. The

guard is made up of veterans from all branches of the armed forces and three veterans' organizations.

The uniformed guard furnishes a 21-gun salute, plays taps and folds a flag for presentation to the family. The guard travels anywhere in Stephens, Cotton, Comanche and Jefferson counties.

For information about joining the guard or securing its services, email theschg@yahoo.com.

WE KEEP THEM UP HERE FOR A REASON.

STAY CLEAR OF DOWNED POWER LINES.

Helping members use electricity safely, that's the power of your co-op membership. Learn more from the experts themselves at TogetherWeSave.com.

COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

2015 Youth Tour essay topic:

Life in rural southwest Oklahoma without Cotton Electric Cooperative

Cooperative makes a big difference in the daily lives of members



Amber Powers
Powers Academy
Homeschool

Editor's note: Four area high school juniors recently won a trip to Washington, D.C., in Cotton Electric's annual Youth Tour essay contest. Each of the essays will appear in The Current.

For a lot of people, living with the benefits of Cotton Electric Co-op is a given. You have it, your dad has it, and his dad had it before him. Cotton Electric has faithfully been serving generations of families in eight Oklahoma counties for more than 75 years.

They currently provide electricity to more than 21,000 meters. They have a firm foundation built on integrity, accountability, innovation, and a commitment to the community in which they serve. Among other services, there is a dispatcher on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help with any electrical issues their members have. Not only do their members have an active voice in business matters, but they also own the electrical system. All of this proves that Cotton Electric is dedicated to its members.

Cotton Electric's dedication might make you wonder what life was like in ru-

ral southwest Oklahoma without Cotton Electric Co-op. Before Cotton Electric was established, you would not have had the ease of flipping a switch to obtain light when it got dark outside, pushing a button to heat or cool your house, and hauling water would be an everyday chore.

There was more work for everyone. Men had to run the cream separator and corn shelling machines by hand. Women, on the other hand, spent hours scrubbing soiled clothes and household linens or washing dirty plates and cutlery by hand. Before the invention of griddles and electric skillets, flapjacks, taters, and other foods were cooked on a wood-burning stove. Cattle had to be milked every day to ensure fresh milk because there were no refrigeration systems.

This is the way most rural farmers lived up until the 1930s. Under Franklin D Roosevelt's New Deal, the government would provide funding for rural electricity. Co-ops started to spring up all over the place.

A man from Walters, C.W. Cox, asked the question, "If other communities with similar problems could work their way

into a land of better living through rural electricity, why not southwest Oklahoma?"

This statement became the beginning of Cotton Electric and brought electricity to rural southwest Oklahoma in 1938.

After 1938, living without Cotton Electric would still be very different. Friendly faces and helpful service from their secretaries make you feel like you are part of their family. They publish a monthly newspaper, *The Current*, which keeps all their members informed about current events. And now they have an online billing system where you can pay your electric bills online. Because Cotton Electric is owned by its members, they are able to provide electricity for their members at cheaper rates.

Whether you and your family have enjoyed the benefits of Cotton Electric for generations or you have never heard of them, Cotton Electric makes a difference; they genuinely care about their members. Life in rural southwest Oklahoma would not be the same without Cotton Electric to provide affordable and dependable electricity for their members.

Eighth-graders selected for 2015 Energy Camp announced

Six lucky eighth-graders from across the Cotton Electric service area will be headed to Youth Power Energy Camp May 26-29. The students wrote about why they would like to attend the camp, and were selected after an interview.

Students selected to represent Cotton Electric at this year's camp include Savana Romey, Rowdy Rhone and Madison Roberson, all of Comanche; Charles Wilson and Cheyenne Rodgers, both of Walters; and Montana Reed of Faxon.

Youth Power Energy Camp is designed to help students develop their leadership skills, have summertime fun and at the same time

learn about one of rural America's most important industries – rural electrification.

Teens from all over Oklahoma will spend a week at Canyon Camp near Red Rock Canyon east of Hinton. At Energy Camp, which is sponsored by Oklahoma's electric cooperatives, students learn first-hand the world of electric co-ops through demonstrations by electric crews. Campers will have opportunities to climb a pole and ride in a bucket truck. Plus, they will set up and run their own cooperative business.

Activities will include nature hikes, games and an outing to Celebration Station to work off some youthful energy.



A trip up in a utility bucket is one of many activities at Youth Power Energy Camp.

Goodbye, Child Care Costs ... Hello, College Savings Opportunities

If you're a working parent, you know firsthand about the difficulties of finding quality, affordable care for your children. But eventually, your kids head off to school, and those child care bills go away, or at least diminish greatly. When that happens, you could start putting away money for another one of your children's milestones: college.

Just how expensive is child care? Costs vary greatly among the 50 states, but the national average for a 4-year-old at a child care center is approximately \$7,880 per year, according to Child Care Aware of America, a child care resource and referral agency sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. What could you do with this money once your child enters kindergarten?

Of course, not all schools provide all-day kindergarten, so you still may have

some child care costs. For the purposes of illustration, let's presume you can finally say "goodbye" to child care costs when your child is in first grade, and let's also assume your child is attending a public school. If you invested that \$7,880 every year for 12 years, until your child reaches 18, you could accumulate more than \$150,000 in a tax-advantaged college savings account, such as a 529 plan — assuming the money was placed in a hypothetical investment that earned 7% per year. (Keep in mind, though, that the word "hypothetical" means exactly that, because whenever you put money in any variable investment, there are no guarantees.)

Actually, earnings in a 529 plan accumulate and are distributed tax free, provided they are used for qualified higher education expenses. (529 plan distributions not used for qualified expenses may

be subject to federal and state income tax and a 10% IRS penalty on the earnings.) Also, your 529 plan contributions may be deductible from your state taxes. However, 529 plans vary, so be sure to check with your tax advisor regarding deductibility.

A 529 plan offers other benefits, too. For one thing, the lifetime contribution limits are generous; while these limits vary by state, some plans allow contributions well in excess of \$200,000. And a 529 plan is flexible: If your child decides against college or vocational school, you can transfer the unused funds to another family member, tax and penalty free.

A 529 plan is a widely used choice for college savings, but it is not your only option. You could also consider a Coverdell Education Savings Account, which, like a 529 plan, can generate tax-free earnings if the money is used for higher education

expenses. You can typically only put in a maximum of \$2,000 per year to a Coverdell account, but it lets you use the funds on K-12 and college expenses.

Whichever college-savings vehicle you choose, it will take discipline on your part to continue investing in it, year after year. And after freeing yourself from those child care bills, you can certainly think of other ways to use this "found" money. That's why you might want to automatically move money from your checking or savings account to your 529 plan, Coverdell account or other investment earmarked for college. As your income rises over the years, you can increase the amount of these automatic transfers.

In any case, once those child care bills stop, you can put that money to work on your children's behalf. Make the most of this opportunity.

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Keep kids safe when playing outside

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

When the weather is nice, many children enjoy going outdoors to fly kites, climb trees, and play with their friends. While playing outdoors is a great pastime for kids, there are electrical hazards that children need to be aware of to keep them safe. Safe Electricity offers a variety of tips to share with children before they head outdoors.

Stay away from pad-mounted transformers. Pad-mounted transformers are green metal boxes that contain the above-ground portion of an underground electrical installation. These cabinets carry high voltages and are safe when locked, but they can be deadly if someone reaches inside. If you see one in your neighborhood that is open, call authorities and your utility immediately.

Never enter an electrical substation for any reason. If a toy enters the fence surrounding the substation, call your utility for

help. Substations hold deadly amounts of electricity and should be entered only by professionals.

Always be aware of overhead power lines. Do not fly kites or model planes near power lines or electrical substations. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead line directly to the person on the ground.

Be careful when using Mylar balloons for a party. These metallic-coated balloons conduct electricity, so never tie one to a child. If the balloon comes into contact with electricity, the child could receive a fatal shock.

Ensure your children are protected from the electrical service connection to your home. Keep ladders or long poles stowed and away from youngsters who might be tempted to use them to reach the wires connected to your

house. Also, be aware of these lines around pools. Pool skimmers can be long enough to reach service connection lines.

Under no circumstance should anyone climb trees near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches not touching power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added.

Finally, storm fronts can move rapidly, and lightning can strike 10 miles in advance of a storm.

Remember the rule of thumb from the National Weather Service, "When thunder roars, go indoors."

Make sure kids know that it is not safe to be outside during a storm.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Stay connected by updating your contact info

In the utility business, we know rough weather will occur, and sometimes power outages simply can't be avoided. But did you know there are steps you can take to ensure your electricity is restored as quickly and safely as possible? By keeping your contact information up to date, you can take full advantage of the services Cotton Electric offers.

You may have noticed prompts in The Current and bill stuffers requesting your updated contact information. If we don't have the correct phone number linked to your home address, it makes it much more difficult for you to report an outage.

Remember when you had to speak to a customer service representative in order to report a power outage? Waiting on hold could be frustrating and time consuming. Today, using the SmartHub app, you can easily report an outage. At Cotton Electric, we use the phone number you provide to link your service address to our outage management system.

For example, if you use the Report an Outage feature in SmartHub, our automated system instantly recognizes phone numbers and can determine the particular service address from which you are reporting an outage. But remember – this only works if your current phone number is linked to your service address.

Updating your contact information is helpful because it also speeds up the power restoration process. With correct information, our outage management system can predict the location and the possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

If you have a new address or phone number, please complete the form below and return with your next payment or mail it to us at 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. You may also call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to update your information.

Thank you for helping us improve service.

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Offer Good Thru May 31, 2015 - *Drum brakes slightly more expensive.



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How do transformers work?

By Tom Tate

If we were to ask you to describe Cotton Electric's system, you might say, "Poles, wires and those round gray things. Sometimes green boxes."

Round gray things? Green boxes? That is often the description given for transformers, the pieces of equipment crucial in converting electricity to a voltage that is safe for use in homes and businesses.

So, how do they work? First off, transformers are nothing like those creations of the silver screen. They don't transform from vehicles to incredible combat robots. Instead, they transform the voltage of the electricity that passes through them.

Time for a little Electric System 101.

Electricity loses voltage as it is transmitted because of the resistance in wires and other components. As a result, higher voltages are used to offset these "line losses," as we call them.

It all starts at the power plant. There, generators produce electricity at very high voltages and use transformers to step up this voltage, often to somewhere between 350,000 or 500,000 volts. Because the power plants are far away, these voltages are necessary to survive the trip over the system to where it is needed.

Transmission lines connect to substations



brimming with transformers and other control gear. Here is where the transformers step down the voltage to safer, more manageable levels.

Depending upon the distance involved to the furthest member and the amount of load served, distribution voltages can range from 7,200 to 14,200 volts. A couple more step-downs and the electricity arrives at your home through two 120-volt legs.

This is quite different from the original voltage.

Regardless of the shape and size of the transformers, they all work in the same manner. Transformers have two sides, a high-voltage side and a low-voltage side. In normal operation, electricity flows into the transformer on the high-voltage side, where it goes into a coil of wire usually wound around an iron core. As the electricity flows through this coil, it creates a magnetic field that "induces" a voltage in

the other coil.

Here is where the magic - aka physics - of transformation takes place. Each coil has a different number of turns. The greater the number of turns, the higher the voltage.

The coil on the high side will have more turns than the one on the low side. As a result, the voltage induced on the low side is less. Then transformation occurs.

Transformers aren't just limited to utility use. They can be found everywhere in our daily lives, even if not so obvious as those on Cotton Electric's system. The best example is the charger that all cell phones and many other electrical devices come with. These small cousins of utility transformers perform basically the same function.

Charging your cell phone with 120 volts will fry it instantly. So, the charger converts the voltage to a more tolerable 5 volts or so.

Take a moment to look around your home and

see just how many of these miniature transformers you have. You might be surprised.

It is important to note that transformers work in both directions. Electricity flowing in on the low side is stepped up to the voltage of the high side. This is why Cotton Electric educates members on proper connection of home generators.

A generator feeding 220 volts into a residential transformer will produce whatever voltage the transformer is rated for on the other side, creating a deadly risk for our line crews and your neighbors. So please, connect your generators according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Or give us a call at 580-875-3351 for advice. It's always best to be safe.

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the NRECA, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

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Cotton Electric transformers may be installed as singles or in groups as shown above, depending on the electrical requirements at a location. The yellow 10 indicates the kVA of the unit. The 240/480 indicates voltage, and 21736 is a serial number assigned by the co-op.

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Pad-mount transformers need room

They're big. They're often green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some folks don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences, or flower beds. But stay clear: even small additions around pad-mount transformers create hazards.

To improve aesthetics of new neighborhoods, developers often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately some homeowners, concerned about curb appeal, attempt to screen pad-mount transformers from view—creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including electric cooperative lineworkers.

"We realize landscaping represents an investment of time and money," said Mike Ottinger, vice president of operations and engineering for Cotton Electric.

"We respect the effort and care our members invest in making their properties attractive.

"However, landscaping around electrical equipment interferes with our ability to deliv-



Transformers need to be left alone

- ◆ Never enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs, or anything else with less than a 10-foot-wide gate or opening.
- ◆ Never allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.
- ◆ Never pour waste oils, chemicals, or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.

er reliable power."

Cotton Electric recommends leaving at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount transformers. Linemen repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in front of the access panel. Routine maintenance on the units is performed at varying intervals.

"In some cases, members may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer, but grow vegetation on the other three sides," Ottinger said. "This invites other problems. For example,

plant roots can interfere with its operation. Overheating is another big concern that can cause service interruptions when air circulation is compromised."

Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is compromised. Allow at least three to four feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

Members should also be aware that plantings along rights-of-way — strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires and other equipment like pad-mount transformers — could be damaged by

co-op vehicles.

"Occasionally, we may need to repair a transformer, and eventually transformers must be upgraded and replaced," said Ottinger. "To perform this work, line trucks must be driven into the right-of-way and the transformer lifted out. Although we try to minimize the impact, plants will be damaged if they're in the way."

Call before you dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 1-800-522-OKIE (6543) to find out where cables are buried.

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kV? kWh? Watt's that mean?

Common electric utility terms defined

Every industry seems to have its own language. Employees use a group of terms specific their work every day in order to communicate clearly with one another. Cotton Electric employees often use an alphabetic shorthand that will quickly leave members and others not familiar with the terms in the dark.

Here are a few terms used when discussing transformers and one that defines the unit of measure used for billing purposes.

kilovolt (kV) Equal to 1,000 V. Used to measure the amount of electric force carried through a high-voltage transmission line.

kilovolt-ampere (kVA) Equal to 1,000 VA.

kilowatt (kW) The basic unit of electric demand, equal to 1,000 W. A measure of both a utility's capacity

and a consumer's demand or load.

kilowatt-hour (kWh) A unit of energy or work equal to 1,000 Wh. The basic measure of electric energy use. A 100-W lightbulb burning for 10 hours uses 1 kWh. Cotton Electric members are charged for the number of kWh used in a billing period.

volt (V) A unit of electric force that measures the pressure of electricity.

voltage An electromotive force that acts like water pressure and causes electrons to flow. Voltage measures the potential for current flow and may exist between objects without an actual flow of current.

volt-ampere (VA) The basic unit of electric power, figured as the product of a system's voltage multiplied by amperes. Apparent power is conventionally expressed in either volt-amperes or kilovolt-amperes.

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MAY ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Put safety first this month – and throughout the year

It's May – and Cotton Electric is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is top priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety excellence.

This year, we're focusing on electrical safety in the home. Electricity is the cause of over 140,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 deaths, 4,000 injuries and 1.6 billion in property damage, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

There are many measures you can take to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Use these helpful tips from ESFI to safeguard your home.

In the kitchen

•Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create fire hazards.

•Ensure all countertop appliances are located away from the sink.

•All appliance cords should be placed away from hot surfaces. Pay particular attention to cords around toasters, ovens and ranges. Cords can be damaged by excess heat.

•The top and the area above the cooking range should be free of combustibles, such as potholders and plastic utensils. Storing these items on or near the range may result in fires or burns.

Light the way to safety

•The wattage of the bulbs you use in your home should

match the wattage indicated on the light fixture. Overheated fixtures can lead to a fire.

•Check lamp cords to make sure they are in good condition – not damaged or cracked. Do not attempt to repair damaged cords yourself. Take any item with a damaged power cord to an authorized repair center.

•Extension cords should not be used to provide power on a long-term or permanent basis. Have additional receptacles installed by a professional to provide power where needed.

Be prepared

•Nearly two-thirds of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be located on every level of your home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area.

•Test smoke alarms every month. Batteries should be replaced at least once a year – or sooner if indicated in the manufacturers' instructions. All smoke alarms should be replaced at least every 10 years.

•Talk to your family about an emergency plan in the event of a fire in your home. If you have small children, include them in planning an emergency escape route – they are more likely to remember the plan if they're involved in creating it.

Electrical safety awareness and education can save lives. For more tips and information about electrical safety, visit www.esfi.org.

10

Safety tips for avoiding common mistakes made with electricity

Electricity is an integral, yet easily overlooked, part of our everyday lives. May is National Electrical Safety Month, which is an opportune time to brush up on tips for using electricity safely.

In honor of National Electrical Safety Month, Safe Electricity offers 10 tips on how to safely avoid common mistakes made with electricity:

1 Just because a power line is down does not mean it is dead. Whether caused by a storm or a car accident, a fallen power line is very dangerous. Stay far away, instruct others to stay away, and call your electric utility immediately.

2 Never plug a generator into a wall outlet. After a power outage, many use generators as a quick solution to get the lights back on, but plugging a generator into an outlet creates dangerous backfeed. Backfeed sends electricity back through the power lines and can injure or kill the lineman trying to turn the power back on.

3 Don't step into a flooded basement if there is a chance that flood waters may be in contact with outlets or electrical cords. The waters of a flooded basement may be energized with electricity.

4 Water and electrical equipment don't mix. Replace any appliance damaged by water because it is unsafe to use, and never use electrical equipment in wet conditions – if it is raining or the ground is wet.

5 All outlets near areas with water should have GFCI protection. Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) monitor the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is an irregularity of electrical flow, the power is cut off, preventing an electric shock.

6 Extension cords should never be used permanently. Extension cords are created for temporary use only. When using them for a permanent solution, they can overheat and cause fires.

7 Never remove a plug's grounding pin. The third prong on a plug is a safety feature. If the plug doesn't fit, the outlet needs replaced.

8 Take care of electrical cords. Never tack or nail an electrical cord to any surface or run cords across traffic paths or under rugs where they can be trampled, and check cords occasionally for damage. Replace when necessary.

9 Avoid overloading outlets. Plugging too many appliances into an outlet can strain your electrical system.

10 Always call 811 before any digging project. You don't know the precise location of utilities that are buried beneath the ground, so always have your utilities marked so you know where it is safe to dig.

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New standards up the required energy factor for water heaters

By Trent Marlett

I got a memo on my desk this morning from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association about new efficiency standards regarding water heaters. The standards took effect April 16, 2015, and have to do with the minimum efficiency ratings for electric water heaters.

For example, the energy factor or EF number could have been as low as .93 for a 50-gallon electric water heater before the new standard. Now, the lowest EF number for the same water heater is .95.

All that aside, it got me thinking about ways to save some energy when using our water heaters.

Water heating in a total electric house accounts for the second largest consumption of electricity. This is mainly because water heaters have two large heating elements that use a lot of energy as they switch off and on all day long, maintaining the water temperature in the tank.

Keeping these elements from kicking on as often is as simple as adjusting the thermostat on the water heater to 120 degrees. This temperature might even save a little water, since you won't have to mix much cold water with the hot to keep from scalding yourself.

If a water heater is in an area where there is no heating or cooling, like the garage or attic, consider purchasing an inexpensive water heater blanket to wrap around it. This added insulation will keep the water in the tank from cooling as quickly and the elements will not kick on as often.

The water in the tanks comes from the ground water and, in some areas, the water can be very hard with lots of minerals. Over time, hard water can wreak havoc

Simple Savings

What's an Energy Factor?



An Energy Factor (EF), a mandatory evaluation done on all water heaters regardless of fuel source (natural gas, electricity, oil, etc.), indicates a water heater's overall energy efficiency based on the amount of hot water produced per unit of fuel consumed daily. This includes:

- **Recovery efficiency:** How efficiently heat from the energy source is transferred to the water.
- **Standby losses:** The percentage of heat loss per hour from stored water compared to heat content of the water.
- **Cycling losses:** The loss of heat as water circulates through a tank and/or inlet and outlet pipes.

The higher the EF, the more efficient the water heater. But keep in mind higher EF values don't always mean lower annual operating costs, especially when comparing fuel sources. Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

on the heating elements and the tank itself by building up sediment.

This gunky sediment builds up on the elements, creating a barrier to efficient heat transfer. The elements have to work harder and longer to keep the water at the right temperature.

Also, the sediment buildup can cause the tank to corrode quickly. It is recommended to drain water heaters at least once a year by attaching a hose to the bottom of the tank where there is a hookup.

This will flush out most of the sediment buildup and make room for more water to enter the tank.

Another way to save energy on hot water is to install low-flow

faucet and shower fixtures. When taking a shower with a low-flow shower head, less hot water is removed from the tank. In turn, less cold ground water will enter the tank, meaning that the heating elements will not have to run as long.

Lastly, when on vacation for a few days, simply turn off the breaker to the water heater. This stops the water from being heated when no one is home. Upon return, simply turn the breaker back on and wait a few hours for the water to get hot again.

By practicing these simple tips, we can save some serious energy when it comes to heating our water.

ACROSS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Cleopatra's viper									
4. Cuneiform writing									
10. Dekaliter									
11. Groaned									
12. For instance									
14. Wave in spanish									
15. Arabian gulf									
16. Written in red									
18. Denouncements									
22. Eat one's heart out									
23. Survive longer than									
24. Take priority over									
26. Foreign service									
27. Russian king (alt. sp.)									
28. Stinkheads									
30. Old name for Tokyo									
31. Box (abbr.)									
34. Red rock in Australia									
36. Not old									
37. Enlarge hole									
39. Difficulty walking									
40. The high point of something									
41. 101									
42. Hunting expeditions									
48. Unusual appearing ghostly figure									
50. Without civilizing influences									
51. Heartbeat									
52. Morning juice									
53. Wicket									
54. Head louse egg									
55. 40th state									
56. Pleasing to the eye (Scot.)									
58. Nickname for an anorexic									
59. Engaged in a game									
60. Household god (Roman)									
DOWN									
1. Admirer									
2. Mouth secretion									
3. Afterbirth									
4. Initials of "Bullitt" star									
5. Family crest									
6. Forearm bone									
7. Unable to move									
8. Loss due to a rule infraction									
9. Touchdown									
12. Accordingly									
13. Spiritual teacher									
17. A bridal mouthpiece									
19. Dress up garishly									
20. Cleverly avoid									
21. S.E. Asia goat antelope									
25. Fla. state dessert									
29. Popular legume									
31. Two-die gambling game									
32. Easily annoyed (alt. sp.)									
33. Khoikhoi peoples									
35. Cyclic									
38. Flavor of Newport									
cigarettes									
41. Jamestown was the 1st English									
43. Fine meal made from cereal grain									
44. Incarnation									
45. Norse goddess of the sea									
46. Ignores or snubs (slang)									
47. Tiny glass bubble									
49. Chinese mahogany genus									
56. Deepwater Horizon Co.									
57. --, denotes past									

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Electricity remains a good value

In today's world, you won't find many items that cost less than \$5. You can purchase a gallon of milk, a gallon of gas or a Big Mac® meal from McDonald's. But did you know that an average day's worth of electricity costs less than \$5?

Even in our country's shifting energy climate, electricity remains a good value. In fact, electricity has the lowest cost per day of any of the items listed above. And not all of those items are necessary for daily life!

At Cotton Electric, we urge you to think about your daily necessities – electricity and gasoline, to name a couple – and then think about the cost of the special treats we allow ourselves to purchase on a weekly basis, maybe even on a daily basis for some items.

We don't often question the cost of a Big Mac® meal – it costs as much as \$1 more to buy a Big Mac® meal than it does to purchase a day's worth of power.

And yet, we frequently become upset if our electricity rates rise.

It makes sense. We have become increasingly reliant upon electricity. Electricity has, for many of us, gone from a luxury commodity to a necessity and an expectation.

We expect the lights to come on when we flip the switch, and we expect our power to stay on during the best and worst conditions. How else would we keep our food fresh, our homes cool in the summer or warm in the winter?

It is easy to cut a Big Mac® out of your spending routine here and there to save a few dollars. But we cannot simply cut electricity out of our budgets if times get tough or we decide that we want to scale back our spending in order to save.

Perhaps that is why it is so upsetting to us when rates increase, even if only in small increments. It is nearly impossible for us to think about what our lives would

be like if we did not have electricity.

If at times it doesn't seem that electricity is affordable, remember – even as the demand for electricity grows – annual cost increases still remain low, especially when compared to other consumer goods such as medical care, education, gasoline and, yes, even Big Macs®.

Electricity is still a great bargain. And also remember this: as your local electric cooperative, Cotton Electric is committed to making sure that you and your family always have safe, reliable and affordable electric service in your home.

So the next time you crave a Big Mac®, remember your electric bill, and think about what a great deal you're getting for your dollar!

Source: Statista.com, 2014. Big Mac® is a registered trademark of McDonald's Corporation. McDonald's Corporation does not endorse or sponsor this material.



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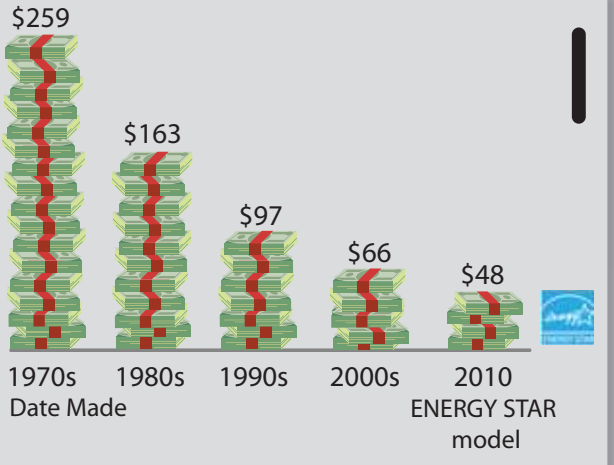
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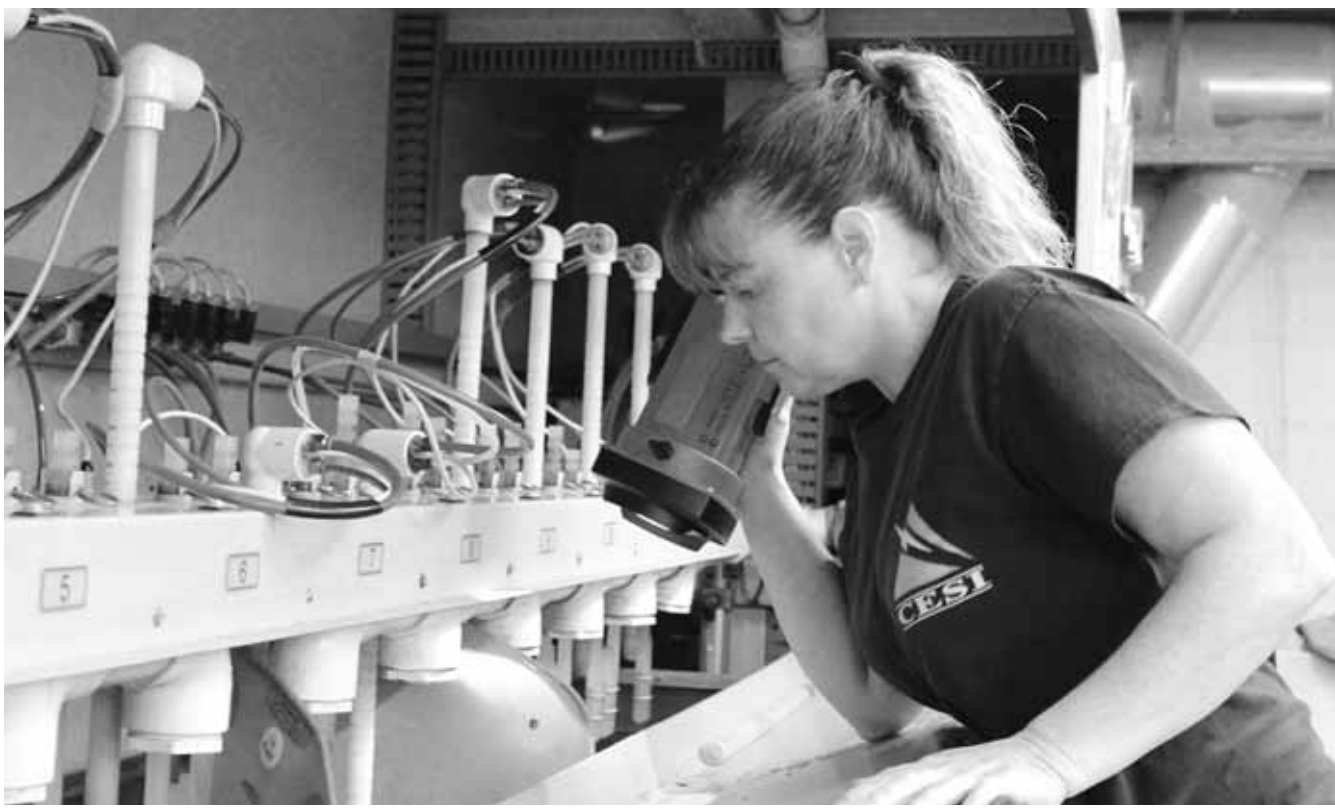
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Testing, testing ...

Sehrt electrifies rubber goods to keep others safe

By Karen Kaley

Safety is at the top of everyone's mind in the electric utility industry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the work of an electrical power line installer or repairer ranks ninth among the deadliest occupations.

That's why Shelly Sehrt takes her job so seriously. She and her co-workers at Cotton Electric Services Inc. (CESI), a subsidiary of the co-op, test personal protective equipment (PPE), the rubber goods that insulate line workers while carrying out their tasks.

The test lab receives thousands of items each week from utilities all over Oklahoma and several surrounding states. When Shelly first came to work for CESI in 2007, her part-time job was to sort through crates filled with gloves, sleeves, line hose, blankets, hot sticks, overshoes and hoods that arrive daily.

"I would begin the process by writing up receivables," she said.

Process is a very good word to describe what happens to each shipment. Shelly learned about the different pieces of equipment during the year she unpacked crates, matched up items and created lists of the contents.

She would check CESI records for specifics about how each customer wanted their goods handled. When sent along to the next step, the batch would include paperwork indicating those preferences.

"Some customers want rejects returned. Some want automatic replacement. Some want us to call with test results," Shelly explained.

All items that come to CESI are tested. "Nothing goes out the door untested," Shelly said. "We even test new products before we send them to customers."

CESI keeps new items on hand to sell or to replace rejects. Shelly said CESI runs a test on those items in order to guarantee their safety.

The items go on a journey through the test lab and one could say Shelly has traveled through the lab, too. There are two test labs at CESI. Shelly's first few years as a lab technician were in the lab that focuses on gloves. She has since moved to the lab that tests sleeves, line hose and many other items.

The testing process is similar for most pieces. They are washed, dried and subjected to electrical testing in a special mechanized tank. That test involves exposing PPE to electricity at the level it is rated to withstand.

"We are testing for weaknesses. The electricity will burn a hole through the item at the weak point," Shelly said.

This either sets off an alarm on the machinery or makes the weak point easier to find during the visual inspection step. Lab employees use special markers to circle the failure point and mark the item

Employee Spotlight Shelly Sehrt



Top, Shelly Sehrt checks water levels before running electrical tests on rubber sleeves. While the test runs, she checks rubber gloves for dryness by pulling them on, above.

as a reject. Some items are cut to ensure they will not be used.

After that, each device that passes is marked with the new test date, then bagged and sealed with its mate, if it has one. The containers are repacked and shipped back to clients.

"We try to turn orders around in two weeks. Sometimes we have to work overtime to meet that goal," Shelly said.

As quick as they send tested items out, more comes in.

Shelly grinned and said, "We get daily deliveries from UPS and FedEx. We know the drivers by name."

There is never a shortage of work. That is probably why the Walters native says she is a homebody who goes home at the end of the workday and stays there. Oh, she gets out to her son Bouchee's football games and she has to spend a lot of time mowing the five acres where she lives.

But mostly, she takes it easy, resting up so she will be ready for another big day in the test lab. She wants to be at her best because doing her job well ensures many line workers will be safe when they do theirs, will go home to their families at the end of their workday.

Pretty serious stuff.

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Dreams, visions come true at The Vine and The Fig Tree

By Karen Kaley

If using only one word to describe The Vine and The Fig Tree, it would be versatile. No, fabulous. No, perfect place for a party.

That last one is too many words. That's because one word hardly does the place justice. A few hundred may not, either, but here goes:

The Vine and The Fig Tree is an event center located just west of the Lawton/Duncan Y in Stephens County. The building has several rooms to accommodate large or small indoor gatherings. The grounds feature a variety of scenic settings and focal points for great outdoor events, too.

Perhaps the greatest asset one finds at The Vine and The Fig Tree is the 30-plus years of event planning experience that owner Linda Nelson offers. The arrangement of the rooms and gardens, the attention to details and the breadth of possibilities are all results of her expertise.

"I provide underpinnings," she said. "I provide a venue and backdrop for each person to flesh out with their dream."

She does this because "I want my gifts to help others. I love to bring families and friends together.

So, she has the Vine Room, a place where tea parties and showers fit well. It is room enough for a bride and her attendants to prepare for a grand entrance.

It is an excellent place for children to explore costumes transforming them into cowboys and cowgirls. Birthday boys and girls become knights and princesses. Fairy wings are passed out for little-girl spa days.

The Fig Room is the big room. Decorated in muted golds, greens and khakis, the tables and chairs can be arranged to accommodate 200 for finger foods or 125 for a full sit-down meal.

A net canopy can be filled with balloons, rose petals or snowflakes. Twinkle lights

adorn pathways, pillars and greenery. All decorations can be rearranged and supplemented with what clients bring or what they may find in Linda's supply room full of vases, silk flowers, tulle, mirrors and more.

Outdoors, there is a patio, gazebo, wedding garden and pavilion. A bridge and a working fountain provide excellent spots for great photos. Graceful trees and flowering bushes enhance the setting.

Want to dance? Plenty of room. A sound system that works indoors and out can work with CDs or a favorite mix from an iPod.

Want to eat? Bring in food, hire a caterer or use the catering service offered by The Vine and The Fig Tree. Linda and her experienced staff can provide everything from hors d'oeuvres to complete meals served with elegant presentation.

The Vine and The Fig Tree offers so many possibilities, it becomes a place where dreams can come true.

"I want people to have what they want, what they envision," Linda said.

The center suits all budgets, too.

"Clients can just rent the room or add services such as our catering and decorating services. We also provide packages.

"We are different than some event centers as we allow our clients to choose just the services they need."

It all starts with a conversation with Linda. Call her at 580-658-3377 to arrange a walk-through, prepare a plan and book a date with a \$50 non-refundable deposit.

Cotton Electric members should remember to take a Co-op Connections Card with them to get a discount of 5 percent off food, up to \$25 off in-house catering and 5 percent off rentals.

Here is a final word about The Vine and The Fig Tree: If you've never been to an event there and are lucky enough to be invited, go!



Possibilities are endless inside and outside at The Vine and The Fig Tree. Owner Linda Nelson stands under the net canopy in the Fig Room, above. The grounds are about to burst into springtime colors around outdoor settings. Some features, shown below, include a wedding garden and a picturesque bridge.



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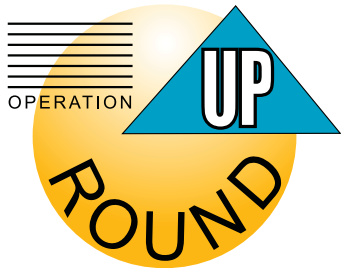
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Download CECF grant applications at cottonelectric.com. Deadline for second-quarter 2015 grant applications is June 3.

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program and members may opt out at any time by calling or sending a letter or email stating the account holder's name, account number and the request to be removed.



Volunteer William Shane installs one of 17 mattresses purchased for C. Carter Crane Shelter for the Homeless. Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation provided the funds.

Sleep tight

CECF grant provides mattresses for shelter

By Karen Kaley

There is a two-story structure in the south part of Lawton, painted a dull yellow, kind of boxy, looks like a barracks. In fact, that's what it was in a former life. It is an unremarkable building except for what one finds inside: Hope.

C. Carter Crane Shelter for the Homeless is "not any Taj Mahal, not any Hilton Hotel, but it is clean, warm, and serves three meals a day," Virginia Spencer said.

She is the executive director of Great Plains Improvement Foundation (GPIF), Community Action Agency. The shelter is one of many programs administered by GPIF.

Spencer said the shelter is unique in a few ways. Clients may be single men, single women or families. They may stay as long as six weeks, which is long enough to take a deep breath and focus on moving toward a better circumstance.

Six weeks is also long enough to look for a job, to arrange for affordable housing, and to sort through other supportive services. Many of those

services are programs offered by GPIF, such as Child Support Services, Affordable Health Care Navigation, Rx for Oklahoma and Transitional Housing.

GPIF has a big umbrella designed to carry out a mission to improve the overall quality of life and economic vitality for clients and the service area by promoting opportunities in order to achieve a better standard of living. This goes well with the CCC Shelter's mission of assisting and empowering the homeless to achieve their goals of lasting independence and self-reliance by increasing their income and helping them achieve stable housing.

The shelter is a homelike environment and provides all clients with strong supportive case-management services to help meet those goals. Clients are also provided transportation to appointments in the form of bus passes. Necessary hygiene items are provided to all clients during their stay at the shelter.

A United Way of Southwest Oklahoma agency, the shelter also receives funding from the City of Lawton

(CDBG), Wyle-CAS Cares, Inc. and a Federal Emergency Solutions Grant. These funds cover a lot of administrative costs and helps with some but not all client needs.

"We are always in need of donations," said William Shane, a volunteer who has been with the shelter for several years.

"We need things like laundry detergent, towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant ... average household and personal hygiene items. We don't have the funding to keep these supplies up."

Sometimes the need is larger. Mattresses, for example.

There are 17 single beds and bunk beds that were used when they were donated to the shelter. The mattresses that came with the beds are stripped and cleaned between clients. Some 200 clients pass through the shelter annually.

That's a lot of wear and tear on mattresses that had already seen a lot of use. It was determined they must be replaced, but there was no room in the shelter's tight budget to purchase stur-

dy mattresses that could be sanitized frequently.

GPIF applied for and received a \$3,000 Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation grant in the first quarter of 2015. Employees, volunteers and clients were full of sunny good cheer on the dreary drizzly day the mattresses were delivered.

"This is just like Christmas," Shane said, as he pushed a new mattress into the metal frame of a top bunk.

He and Spencer were excited about the impact the new bedding would have.

"Part of helping a person along is to put them in a positive atmosphere," Spencer said. "They need a warm comfortable bed to sleep in. If a person doesn't rest well at night, he or she won't function as well."

Just imagine for a moment: If you were at a low point of your life, sleeping in a homeless shelter, wouldn't a good night's sleep be a key part of working to improve the situation?

Wouldn't it change a feeling of hopelessness to one of hope?

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Drinking well is key to summer fun

Now, before you draft a letter to the editor about the scandalous nutrition article, read on. Heat and physical exertion during the summer increase your daily need for fluid. While all liquid counts toward total fluid intake, some liquids are better than others.

You have to consider your health

goals and listen to your body to make the best hydration decision.

Here are some things to consider:

Water is truly the best choice. Unless you are an elite athlete, are doing vigorous physical activity for an extended period of time, or have some special health circumstance, water plus your normal food intake provides what your body needs to stay hydrated and have

enough electrolytes like sodium and chloride in your bloodstream.

Water is friendly to your waistline. It does not add calories. It can be flavored easily with fruits and herbs.

Don't wait until you are thirsty to hydrate. You are already behind at that point. Drink water throughout the day to avoid getting thirsty.

Hunger can also be a sign that you have not had enough fluid to drink. If you find yourself hungry at an odd time during the day, try drinking some water before you opt for a snack.

The amount of liquid needed to stay hydrated varies from person to person, and changes based on many factors – altitude, temperature and exertion, to name a few.

The best way to tell if you are drinking enough fluid is the color of your urine. The lighter it is, the closer you are to being properly hydrated. Signs of dehydration can include dark urine, thirst, dry lips, dry eyes, headache, dry skin, dry mouth, and infrequent urination.

Making sure you drink water throughout the day is key to staying on top of your fluid intake.

Even though all fluid counts in total fluid intake, some fluids are better than others. With sports drinks, juices and sodas, you have to take into account the extra calories, and specifically sugar, they add to your diet.

Chocolate milk has been touted as an excellent "recovery drink," but that recommendation is for individuals who are exercising at high intensity and



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

are trying to maintain or gain weight and muscle mass. Chocolate milk has calories that must be considered if you are going to drink it after a workout.

Beverages with caffeine increase your fluid loss slightly but do not result in negative fluid balance. They add more fluid to your body than you lose because of increased visits to the bathroom.

Alcohol is similar to caffeine but it also impairs your judgment, making it harder to stay on top of hydration. It also adds calories.

It is best to consume water before and after caffeinated beverages and alcoholic beverages just to stay on top of your hydration.

This summer, make a hydration plan. Know what drinks work best for your body, keeping you hydrated without undermining other health goals. Listen to your body, and try to avoid getting to the point that thirst or dark urine is your cue to drink more.

Stay hydrated throughout the day, and you will be able to keep your body hydrated in the warm months to come.



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How to make the ultimate burger

(Family Features) Grilling season is here, and that means burgers – the No. 1 grilled item in America – are on the menu at backyard cookouts and week-night dinners across the country.

This summer, upgrade from a simple patty slathered with ketchup and mustard. Create mouthwatering burgers by seasoning the meat, then building with unique toppers and condiments like grilled avocado, mango slaw or lime mayo.



Southwestern Smoky Ranchero Burger with Grilled Avocado

Serves: 4

Lime Mayonnaise:

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 package McCormick Grill Mates Smoky Ranchero Marinade, divided

Stuffed Avocado:

- 2 ripe avocados
- 1/4 cup crumbled Cotija cheese
- 1/4 cup diced tomato

Burgers:

- 1 pound 80 percent lean ground beef
- 4 kaiser rolls
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced

For lime mayonnaise, mix mayonnaise, lime juice and 1 teaspoon of

the marinade mix in small bowl until well blended. Cover. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

For stuffed avocado, halve and seed avocados. Carefully remove peel, leaving each half intact. Lightly season with salt and pepper. Mix cheese and tomato. Set aside.

For burgers, mix ground beef and remaining marinade mix until well blended. Shape into 4 patties. Grill over medium heat 4-6 minutes per side or until burgers are cooked through (internal temperature of 160°F). Grill avocado halves, cut-sides down, 30 seconds. Turn over avocados. Place 2 tablespoons of cheese mixture into each avocado half. Drizzle with hot sauce, if desired. Grill 4-5 minutes. Toast rolls on grill, open-side down, about 30 seconds.

Serve burgers on rolls topped with stuffed avocados and onion slices. Press roll gently to smash stuffed avocado. Serve with lime mayonnaise.

F-U-N Learning with food

(Family Features) If you're searching for ways to get little ones excited about learning, try combining fun and function, using food as your teaching tool. Foods that come in letter shapes are a great way to introduce young learners to the alphabet and make learning delightfully F-U-N.

Although it may contradict the popular mealtime mantra to "quit playing with your food," teaching children to recognize letters using a familiar food, such as cereal, can actually be a great way to promote literacy and a love of reading early on.

You can get started promoting the joys of learning with these "snackactivities" to make snack time as entertaining as it is educational for your littlest family members. Use a nutrient rich cereal, such as Post Alpha-Bits, so when letters start disappearing into those tiny tummies, you can feel good knowing each serving provides 12 of the essential vitamins and minerals growing kids need.

Family tree

Draw a big tree with lots of branches on construction paper. After the tree is drawn, write out each family member's name on the branches with colorful markers. Encourage your little ones to match the letters you have written with letters from the Alpha-Bits box. Let them glue the cereal

pieces to the tree so you can display their works of art on the refrigerator.

Vowel play

Give your little one a one-cup serving of Post Alpha-Bits and ask them to eat all of the consonants and leave only the vowels. They'll learn their letters a little better and get 20 grams of whole grains along the way.

ABC Crispy Bars

- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter or margarine
- 1 package (10.5 ounces) miniature marshmallows
- 8 cups Post Alpha-Bits Cereal
- Alphabet-shaped cookie cutters
- Line 13-by-9-inch pan with foil; lightly grease foil.

Microwave butter in large microwavable bowl on high for 45 seconds or until melted. Add marshmallows and mix well.

Microwave on high for 1 1/2 minutes or until marshmallows are completely melted and mixture is well blended, stirring after 45 seconds.

Stir in cereal. Press cereal mixture firmly into prepared pan. Cool.

Using the alphabet-shaped cookie cutters, cut cereal mixture into 12-15 pieces.

Store in airtight container at room temperature



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Early Detection Saves Lives!

FREE Lung Screening For High Risk Individuals

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women worldwide.
- Nearly 160,000 Americans die of lung cancer each year.

Based on findings of the National Lung Screening Trial (NLST), we know that CT lung screening can save lives of people at high risk for developing lung cancer.

Low-dose CT (LDCT) lung screening is quick and easy and results in a minimal amount of radiation exposure. The Cancer Centers of Southwest Oklahoma is determined to raise awareness and improve access to this testing for all people at high risk. Therefore, Cancer Centers of Southwest Oklahoma and Jackson County Memorial Hospital are now offering in conjunction **FREE LDCT lung screening** to individuals who meet the established high-risk criteria.

QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

You may qualify for a free LDCT lung screening if you fall into one of these categories:

Category 1	Category 2
You are between 55 and 74 years of age	You are between 50 and 74 years old
You are currently a smoker or have quit in the last 15 years	You have a 20+ pack-year* history of smoking
You have a 30+ pack-year* history of smoking	You have one additional lung cancer risk factor (not to include secondhand smoke exposure)

*pack-years are calculated by multiplying the number of packs a day you smoke by the number of years you have smoked.

Example: 2 packs a day for 15 years = 30 pack-years

Call to schedule a screening
1-877-231-4440 to see if you qualify.

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CANCER CENTERS

of Southwest Oklahoma

www.cancercentersswok.com

Weeknight meals just got easier

(Family Features) Don't let the stress of a hectic schedule interfere with your desire to prepare a wholesome, satisfying meal for your family. A pantry stocked with canned foods is all you need to ensure mealtime success, any day of the week.

"With a well-stocked pantry full of canned ingredients, I know I always have the makings of a nutritious and flavorful meal," said Kelsey Nixon, host of "Kelsey's Essentials" on Cooking Channel and Food Network.

Bring to life your family's favorite recipes with pantry staples such as canned chicken, tomatoes, green beans and broth. Like the home canning process, cans seal in foods' nutrition, freshness and flavor, making naturally delicious, homemade dishes achievable and easy.

For more information about the canning process, delicious recipes and to learn how you can get cooking with canned foods, visit www.CansGetYouCooking.com.

- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
- 3 (14.5-ounce) cans chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups ditalini pasta (short tubular pasta)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

In large heavy-bottomed pot, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Brown pancetta bits just until they start to crisp, then add onion, garlic and thyme. Season with salt and pepper, and saute until fragrant and golden brown.

Add canned beans, tomatoes and chicken broth. Bring soup to rapid boil before adding pasta. Reduce to simmer and cook soup covered, stirring occasionally for 8-10 minutes or until pasta is cooked al dente.

Season with salt and pepper to taste before serving. Garnish with Parmesan cheese and serve with crusty bread.

Note: You can substitute bacon for pancetta, if desired.



Pasta e Fagioli Soup

Recipe created by Kelsey Nixon
 Prep time: 5 minutes
 Cook time: 25 minutes
 Servings: 4
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 4 ounces chopped pancetta (about 1/2 cup)



Quinoa Chicken Vegetable Salad

Quinoa Chicken Vegetable Salad
 Prep time: 5 minutes
 Cook time: 10 minutes
 Servings: 6
 1 (14.5-ounce) can chicken broth
 1 cup quinoa
 1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
 1 (10-ounce) can chicken breast, drained and flaked
 1 (8-ounce) can cut green beans, drained
 1 (8.75-ounce) can corn, drained

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 In medium saucepan over high heat, heat chicken broth and quinoa to boiling. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.
 In large bowl, combine cooled quinoa, diced tomatoes, chicken breast, green beans, corn, olive oil, lemon juice, parsley and pepper; toss to mix well.

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 Shotgun Start-9:00 am

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PUBLIC AUCTION

Sat., May 30th, 2015 @ 10am Preview: Friday May 29th 1pm-6pm

Location: 207 West Steele Marlow, OK

Scroggins Auction Service has been commissioned to offer at public auction the Real Estate and Personal property of Mrs. Barbara Troutman former owner of Patio Casa. Real Estate Consists of: Very nice 1,508 sq ft., 3 bedroom 2 bath home on 2 lots with CH&A, large walk in closet in master BR, large laundry room. Also includes a detached 2 car garage, small storage building and large metal storage/shop building. House shown by appointment only. Contact: Parker Scroggins 580-656-4416 For photos log onto: www.auctionzip.com Enter Auctioneer ID #17788

<p>Equipment & Storage</p> <p>Trailer Mate Eagle (EP) Picher Fork Lift 2 1/2 ton TM 50 Warehouse Upper Floor Elec. Fork Lift 40x8x8 Metal Storage Container</p> <p>Tools & Misc Items</p> <p>Electric Welder Hand Tools Heavy Duty Metal Shelves Brick Collection Indoor Décor Home Décor Motorcycle Clothing (New) - Chaps/T-Shirts/Jackets Patio Table w/chairs and lounge</p>	<p>Wrought Iron Items</p> <p>Tables w/Chairs Misc Metal Chairs Bakers Racks Misc Plant Holders Arches Metal Fence Texas Star Table w/2 bar stools Lots Misc Candle Holders Table w/8 chairs Black Table w/5 chairs Large Standing Metal Trellis Small Standing Metal Trellis Cross Yard Art Hanging Star Horse/Flower/Cow Yard Art Praying Man w/Cross</p>	<p>Christmas Tree Yard Art</p> <p>Concrete Statuary</p> <p>Motorcycle 2 seat bench Dog Statues Horse w/Rider Statue Elephant Statues Gnome Statues Jesus & Mary Statues Dragon Statues Indian Statues Bird Statues Lion Statues Lots Misc Animal Statues Elephant Concrete Planters Bird Baths Water Fountains Stepping Stones Tables and 2 benches</p>
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Auctioneers Message: Announcements made day of sale supersede any previous advertisements. Everything sells AS IS, WHERE IS. **Terms & Conditions of Sale:** Cash, Personal Check and Company Check accepted with positive ID. Buyers MUST provide a copy of Sales Tax Permit day of sale to avoid sales tax. **Terms & Conditions of Real Estate:** 5% Earnest money down day of sale. Property is Sold AS IS, WHERE IS. Property sells subject to owners confirmation. Possession at closing. Please have financing arranged prior to auction.

<p>Scroggins Auction Service Auctioneer - Parker Scroggins 580-656-4416</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Land Pros Real Estate & Auction Co.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Broker - Todd Robertson Sales Associate - Parker Scroggins</p>
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