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The Cotton Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

VOLUME 66 April 10, 2023 NUMBER 8

Be prepared this spring when storms start brewing

Sometimes a storm pops up or changes direction without any warning, while other times it is forecast days in advance and follows its predicted course. In either case, knowing what

to do before, during and after a storm can help keep you safe.

When a storm hits

When stormy winds blow, follow these weather-related reminders from FEMA and the Red Cross:

- Never seek shelter under an isolated tree, tower or utility pole, since lightning tends to strike tall objects.
- Immediately vacate elevated areas such as hills and mountain ridges and peaks.
- Get away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, including wires and fences (and golf clubs). Approximately 5 percent of annual lightning deaths and injuries in the United States happen on golf courses, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Pick a safe place in your home, away from windows and doors, for family members to gather during a thunderstorm.
- Know the difference between a watch and a warning for extreme weather such as a tornado or severe thunderstorm. A watch means that the weather is possible in

and near the area. A warning means that severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. A warning is more serious than a watch and means that there is imminent danger to life and property.

After the storm

- Once the storm is over, follow these safety tips:
- Never step into a flooded basement or other standing water. The water could be covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Never touch (or use) electrical appliances, cords, wires or switches while you are wet or standing in water.
 - After a storm, a downed power line could be covered by standing water or debris. Never go near a downed line and warn others to stay away. If you see a downed line, call 9-1-1, and a crew will be dispatched to de-energize the power and address the problem safely.
 - The same safety know-how applies to a downed power line you might encounter

while driving or after an auto accident. In either case, do not get out. Instead, call 9-1-1 to report the downed line (pull over first if you are driving). If you must exit your vehicle after an accident because of a fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump out, landing with both feet together. Then make solid hops with your feet together, hopping as far away as you can.

- If your home has been damaged by a flood, turn off the power to your house if it is safe to do so. (Do not turn power off at the breaker box while standing in water or in damp conditions.)
- If the wiring, electrical system or appliances have been damaged by water, have your home inspected by an electrician; also, have appliances serviced by a qualified technician before using them.

For more information about electrical safety, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety.

Source: SafeElectricity

The Steps to Restoring Power

When a major outage occurs, our crews restore service to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible - until everyone has power.

1. High-Voltage Transmission Lines
These lines carry large amounts of electricity. They rarely fail but must be repaired first.

2. Distribution Substations
Crews inspect substations, which can serve hundreds or thousands of people.

3. Main Distribution Lines
Main lines serve essential facilities like hospitals and larger communities.

4. Individual Homes and Businesses
After main line repairs are complete, we repair lines that serve individual homes and businesses.

Work Zone Awareness Week sheds light on safety

National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 17–21, 2023, is a good time to learn more about work zone safety. However, to help save lives, work zone safety should be observed 365 days a year.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or too close to a work truck can also put an elevated worker in danger by causing their raised bucket to move or sway.

Streets and highways are lined with power

er poles and electrical equipment, and narrow roadways often require crews like ours to place their equipment in or near traffic lanes. Be alert to utility and other work zone crews for their safety and yours.

Besides our crews, you might encounter road workers, other utility crews, tree trimmers or first responders working in or on the side of the road.

According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, 774 fatal crashes and 857 deaths occurred

in work zone crashes in 2020 (at the writing of this article, data was not available for 2021). Many other work zone crashes result in injuries. In 2020, 102,000 work zone crashes occurred.

To help keep roadside crews safe:

- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so allow time for unexpected setbacks.
- Obey all signs and road crew instructions.

- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
 - Use your headlights at dusk and during inclement weather.
 - Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as texting, operating a radio, applying makeup or eating.
- Remember, slow down when approaching a work zone and move over for first responders and work crews. Do your part to help everyone return home safely at the end of the day.
- Source: SafeElectricity



Cotton Electric crews place orange cones in the road to keep employees and the public safe near work zones.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after April 1, 2023, is \$0.01210 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$15.73 on the April bill.

March 2023 Temperature Extremes							
Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	67	41	54	16	75	39	57
2	57	40	49	17	54	32	43
3	65	39	52	18	53	28	41
4	70	34	52	19	52	25	39
5	82	37	60	20	60	33	47
6	76	45	61	21	78	49	64
7	55	42	49	22	83	58	71
8	58	44	51	23	69	52	61
9	57	45	51	24	69	45	57
10	58	38	48	25	73	37	55
11	90	49	70	26	65	41	53
12	59	41	50	27	63	36	50
13	45	36	41	28	59	37	48
14	58	30	44	29	68	35	52
15	71	34	53	30	68	52	60
Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/				31	77	46	62
Average Daily High: 66				Average Daily Low: 40			

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric HVAC tune-up rebate applications are open and must be received by June 30, 2023. Tune-ups must be completed between April 1 and June 20, 2023.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on May 8, 2023.

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 TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com.

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

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to safely deliver reliable and affordable power, provide excellent member service, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

From the CEO

Thank a lineworker on April 10

If you were asked to associate an image or a person with Cotton Electric Cooperative, I bet you would picture a lineworker. One of the most visible employees of the co-op, lineworkers work tirelessly to ensure our community receives uninterrupted power 24/7.

Linework can be hazardous, so extra care and safety precautions are taken as they perform detailed tasks near high-voltage power lines. Regardless of the time of day, they brave stormy weather and other challenging conditions, climb 40 feet in the air, and often carry heavy equipment to get the job done.

Being a lineworker is not a glamorous or easy profession. It takes years of specialized training, ongoing education, dedication, and equally important, a sense of service and commitment. How else can you explain

the willingness to leave the comfort of your home to tackle a challenging job in difficult conditions, when most are sheltering comfortably at home? This dedication and sense of service to the community is truly what sets them apart. That's why we set aside the second Monday in April to celebrate and recognize the men and women who work around the clock to keep the lights on.

While lineworkers may be the most visible employees at Cotton Electric, it's important to note that there is a team of highly skilled professionals working behind the scenes. Dispatchers monitor weather and crews, serving as the first line of communication with workers in the field. Engineers provide ongoing expertise and guidance on the operations side of the co-op. Marketing and member service

representatives are always standing by to take your calls and questions. Metering and transformer technicians ensure the integrity of our metering system and prepare equipment to be installed. Our information technology (IT) experts are continuously monitoring our system to help safeguard sensitive data. Garage and warehouse staff work hard to keep our vehicles on the road and our warehouse stocked with the materials needed. Accounting makes sure invoices are paid and the cooperative's financials are in order. And, Cotton Electric Services Inc., a high voltage test lab that is a subsidiary of the co-op, ensures the safety of lineworkers across the country as they test the rubber goods and equipment used in the field.

These are just a few of the folks who work together to ensure we can deliver the service and reli-




Jennifer Meason, CEO

ability you expect and deserve. Without them, our lineworkers wouldn't be able to "bring the light" to our community.

Our dedicated and beloved lineworkers are proud to represent Cotton Electric Cooperative, and they deserve all the appreciation and accolades that come their way on Lineworker Appreciation Day.

On April 10, and any time you see a lineworker, I hope you'll join me in thanking them for their exceptional service. I also hope you'll remember that you have a dedicated team of professionals working behind the scenes at the co-op whose commitment to service runs deep.





Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

This planting season, include energy efficiency in your landscaping plans. Adding shade trees around your home can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 6 degrees. To block heat from the sun, plant deciduous trees around the south side of your home. Deciduous trees provide excellent shade during the summer and lose their leaves in the fall and winter months, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Source: Energy.gov

February 2023 Operating Stats		
	2023	2022
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,667,660	\$7,064,076
Cost of Purchased Power	4,825,855	5,139,607
Taxes	145,493	157,174
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,199	1,298
Average Farm and Residential Bill	172	186
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,395	1,598
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	19,165	19,125
Miles Energized	5,255	5,223
Density Per Mile	3.65	3.66
New Service Connects YTD	55	55
Services Retired	19	11

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current	
May	
Ad Sales	April 21
Classified	April 21
Publish	May 8
June	
Ad Sales	May 26
Classified	May 26
Publish	June 12

TheCurrent

Published Monthly at Walters, Oklahoma
By Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Zach YoungDirector
Carli Eubank..... Communications Specialist

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“Cotton Electric Current” (USPS #134-020)
is published monthly by: Cotton Electric Co-op,
226 North Broadway, Walters, OK 73572
Periodicals Postage paid at
Lawton, OK 73501-4649

Postmaster Send #3579
To The Cotton Current
226 North Broadway
Walters, OK 73572

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Energy Efficiency

Efficiency upgrades to help you save this summer

Spring and summer are opportune times for home upgrades and DIY projects. If you're planning to make improvements to your home, consider upgrades that promote better efficiency.

Here are a few projects that can help you save energy and money—and increase the comfort of your home.

- Installing a smart thermostat is one of the simplest ways to manage home energy use and keep summer bills in check. Smart thermostats are easy to install and allow you to control your heating and cooling system from your phone. You can purchase an ENERGY STAR®-certified smart thermostat for as low as \$100, which can save you 8% on annual heating and cooling costs, about \$50 per year. This upgrade will quickly pay for itself, and you'll gain insight into better ways to heat and cool your home.
- Speaking of smart, additional devices like smart LED bulbs also offer convenient control and help boost energy savings at home. With smart lighting, you can set a schedule for

when and how your lights should be turned on or off. And the next time you head out to run errands and realize you left the lights on, all you have to do is turn them off through your phone. Smart lights come in a variety of shapes, colors and brightness levels—and you can purchase bulbs for indoor or outdoor use. Schedule outdoor smart lights to illuminate your home at night and when you're out of town for better security.

- While it's not as trendy as incorporating smart technologies, sealing air leaks around your home is a simple, effective way to save energy and lower your bills. Applying new (or replacing old) weather stripping around doors and windows can instantly make your home more comfortable and reduce energy waste. Applying caulk to fill gaps can also improve the seal of your home. Caulk can be applied to a variety of areas, including windows, doors, bathtubs and sinks.
- If your home feels too warm during summer (and too chilly during winter) even after you've sealed with weather

stripping and caulk, your home may need additional insulation. Insulation is considered a more expensive efficiency upgrade; however, if your home is under-insulated, additional insulation can make a big impact on reducing energy use and costs. The cost of new insulation depends on a variety of factors like materials, size of the home and whether you use a contractor. Typically, the project costs can be recouped in a few years and your home will immediately feel more comfortable.

Of course, there are additional efficiency upgrades that can make a big impact on energy use, like replacing old appliances with ENERGY-STAR® models or replacing old, leaky windows with new, energy efficient windows. But these upgrades can be a bit pricey.

If you're wanting to make your home more energy efficient but you're not sure where to start, your best bet is to enlist the help of an expert to conduct an energy evaluation of your home. Cotton Electric provides free energy efficiency home evaluations for mem-



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

bers. Performed by the co-op's energy efficiency coordinator, careful measurements and inspections are taken of your home's foundation, floors, walls, doors, windows and attic. Results are explained and given to the member once the evaluation is completed. An energy evaluation can easily identify areas to boost efficiency, and then you can determine the projects you want to tackle first based on your budget and needs.

For more information or to schedule an energy efficiency home evaluation, call 580-875-3351.




Weather stripping and caulk can help control hot or cold air leaking from your house.



Smart LED bulbs offer convenient control scheduling when lights turn on and off.



Insulation can help reduce energy use and costs during the summer months.



WHAT'S THE ORANGE SIGN FOR?


It's not a suggestion. It's the law.

Life is fast paced, but speeding or multitasking in a work zone is not worth losing your life or taking someone else's.


To help save lives and reduce injuries, follow orange sign directives every time you approach a work zone.

2020 Work Zone Statistics*

Crashes and Injuries




Estimated total crashes
102,000




Estimated injuries
44,000

Fatalities




857
Total fatalities




244 Fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles

Pedestrian Fatalities in Work Zones




105 Pedestrians (non-workers)




51 Pedestrian workers

Do your part to help everyone return home safely. The orange sign is not meant for everyone else; it is meant for everyone.




*most recent data available

Sources: National Work Zone Awareness Week (nwzaw.org), National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, American Traffic Safety Services Association




Safe Electricity.org



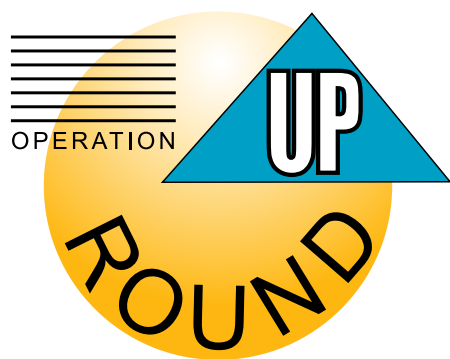
BUILT by our community.
SHAPED by our community.
LED by our community.

WE'RE PROUD TO POWER YOUR LIFE.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

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Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation



A Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) grant was awarded to Velma-Alma FFA for installation of heaters in their show barn. Pictured left to right: Jerry Garrett, Velma-Alma Middle School and High School principal; Jamie Davies, Velma-Alma agriculture education teacher; Nicki Brant, Velma-Alma federal programs director; and Zach Young, Cotton Electric Marketing and Communications Director.



A recent CECF grant will help provide items for a calming area at Will Rogers Elementary School. Pictured left to right are Will Rogers Elementary School employees: Katelyn Roberson, Pre-K Teacher; Jane Loafman, Pre-K Teacher; Marcia Vaughn, Pre-K Special Education Teacher; Kelle Jeffrey, Will Rogers Principal; Judy Dittner, Licensed Professional Counselor; and Carli Eubank, Cotton Electric communications specialist.



Gabriel's House, Inc. recently received a CECF grant to purchase a SmartTV at the organization's Empire location. Pictured left to right are Tyler Garrett, board president; Jana Bowen, executive director; and Carli Eubank, Cotton Electric Communications Specialist.



A CECF grant was awarded to Comanche Fire Department to help purchase new SCBA tanks for the crew. Pictured left to right are Scooter Bivins, Comanche Fire Chief, and Zach Young, Cotton Electric Director of Marketing and Communications.



Grandfield Senior Citizens Center received a CECF grant for a commercial refrigerator. Pictured left to right: Cotton Electric Director of Marketing and Communications Zach Young, the Center's Project Coordinator Rachel Berry, and the Center's cooks, Eduarda Cunningham and Carla Walden.



A recent CECF grant will help provide a commercial mixer for the Indianhoma Public Schools cafeteria. Pictured left to right: Carrie Thompson, Indianhoma Public Schools counselor/principal; Don Wise, Indianhoma Public Schools superintendent; and Carli Eubank, Cotton Electric Communications Specialist.



Teen Court, Inc. was awarded a CECF grant to purchase a refurbished color copier. Pictured left to right: open board meeting guest and his son; Teen Court Board Members Pam Brisolara, Leigh Smallwood, Pam Benskin, Marcia Frazier, Director, Devon Jenkins, Det. Marcus Rucker; and Cotton Electric Marketing and Communications Director Zach Young.

April 22

Registration begins 8 am
12th & Main
Awards at 4pm



2023

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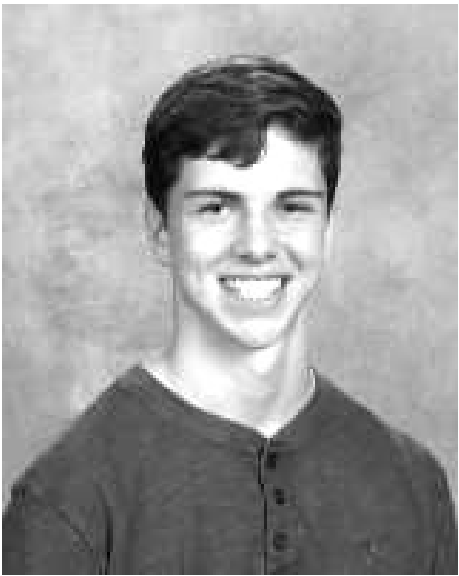
Youth Tour winners will represent Cotton Electric in Washington D.C.

After advancing through an essay competition, a video interview, and an oral presentation of their written essay, we are happy to announce Eli Hutson and Mason Meza of Cache High School are the winners of Cotton Electric’s 2023 Scholarship Contest and will represent the co-op in

Washington D.C this summer at Youth Tour. Hutson and Meza showed great efforts of speaking ability, knowledge of subject, poise and personality throughout the competition. During Youth Tour, students will meet Oklahoma’s congressional dele-

gation and learn about the cooperative form of business. They will also meet other Youth Tour winners from across the country, while touring the historic sites at our nation’s capital. Below, you can read the winning essays inspired from the following topic: “Cotton Electric Cooperative oper-

ates on the Seven Cooperative Principles. Which three of these resonate most with you, and why?” This is just one way the co-op creates opportunities and excites us about the future of our communities. Congratulations to Eli Hutson and Mason Meza.



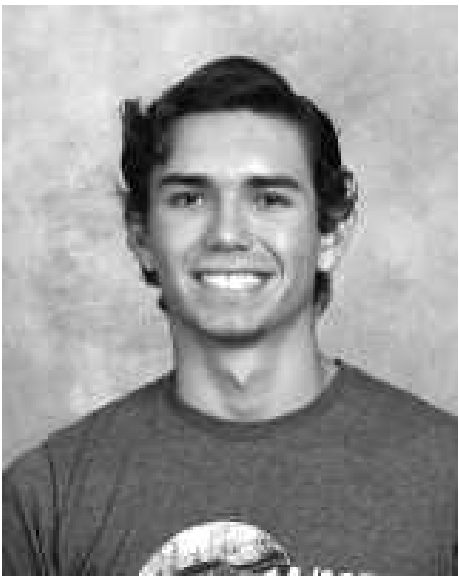
It’s the Principle! *By Eli Hutson*

I’m a teenager. The highest-earning job I’ve held so far was mowing lawns for a man who owned a nice array of rental properties. If I’m going to be completely honest, business in any form isn’t really a big part of my life, at least not in obvious ways right now. Yet somehow, the principles of one big business in my local area still resonate with me. I’m young, and I have relatively little knowledge, but I can already see the value in the princi-

ples that Cotton Electric consistently abides by. Cotton Electric has seven main cooperative principles, but three especially stick out to me. The first is their principle of “Voluntary and Open Membership.” Cotton Electric holds no discrimination in any way. Anyone who is willing to do their part as a member of the cooperative is allowed to join and gain the welcome responsibilities of membership. In all aspects of my life, when it comes to working with other people, choosing discrimination in any form would get me nowhere, and possibly even backwards. I’m glad to see that Cotton Electric easily realizes that in their own setting, and that they under no circumstances would ever discriminate. The second principle they hold is that of “Education, Training, and Information.” Cotton Electric extensive-

ly educates and trains all of their members. In my own life, I hate the feeling of being unprepared, or not understanding something when everyone else does, or the feeling of falling behind others information-wise. I doubt anyone else enjoys feeling that way either. Knowing that Cotton Electric strengthens their team and makes sure their members know what they’re doing is a comfort to me. The final principle of Cotton Electric that significantly sticks out to me is their “Concern for Community.” While Cotton focuses on developing their business, they keep in mind why they do what they do. They participate in programs like “Adopt-a-Community,” where members of Cotton do all they can in their power to provide service to those in need, the majority of the service taking place after normal hours. I try to serve whenever I am

able. While I do have my own needs, I can recognize when my own needs don’t come first. I often enjoy participating in service through my church, school, and community. The fact that Cotton Electric knows that they aren’t above helping others succeed, and that they’ve made that a core of their business, is genuinely impressive. When I find a job in the future, I know that I don’t need to compromise on these aspects of my potential career that I want because I know that there are trustworthy businesses like Cotton Electric that understand that these principles are essential to a good team. Cotton Electric gives me hope for my future, and at the same time, they make me proud. Proud that I know I can trust them, proud that they are active heroes in their communities, and proud that they serve in my area.



Cotton Kingdom *By Mason Meza*

Thinking of the seven principles, three resonate most with me: cooperation, independence, and concern for community. I believe that these three principles are crucial not only just for cooperatives, but also in everyday life. In fact, the value of the principles bring to mind a story.... A long time ago, the year 1638 to be exact, there was a king named King Cotton and the king ruled over a vast kingdom with many villages. There

was a problem in his kingdom though, many of the villages were isolated because there were no roads that went from the main castle to the villages, so the king gathered groups of people together from all the villages to build roads. He called his team the Touchstone Road Layers and, on September 15, 1638, gave them 5,000 gold coins (valued at \$230,000 by today’s standards) and tasked them with building roads to connect all the villages of his kingdom. They got to work laying roads, but soon two problems emerged. First, the team didn’t know how to work together efficiently; they misplaced bricks and bickered amongst themselves. The second problem was that King Cotton wasn’t a very concerned leader; he let neighboring kings interfere with his kingdom and the construction of the

roads. One day a wise wizard came to visit the king and he told the king three values that would make him a great, wise leader. The wizard told the king that he needed to be independent and not let his neighbors, who did not care for the best interest of the kingdom, interfere, so King Cotton sent away the other kings. Next, the wizard told the king to promote cooperation in his team because a team that did not work together could not function. Lastly, the wizard advised that the king pay heed to the problems of his team, so that he could address them properly which would make the team happy. Then, the wizard departed as swiftly as he came. King Cotton respected the wizard and decided to implement all the principles into the way he ruled. With the new principles in place, the Touchstone Road Layers worked

at an unprecedented pace, and, just a year later, laid roads connecting all the corners of the kingdom. On August 6, 1639, the last brick was laid, and the day was referred to as “the day of travel,” by all villagers of the Kingdom. Finally, the villages were not isolated, and the people could freely travel and ship goods. From then on, the villages of the kingdom were connected and all the citizens’ lives were made easier. Similarly, Cotton Electric and its larger cooperation, Touchstone Energy, strive to supply communities with electricity; much like how King Cotton wanted to connect his kingdom with roads. By sticking to its core principles, Cotton Electric not only provides reliable electricity to thousands of people, but also creates a community of people who each work for the best interest of one another.

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Supporting area schools has always been a priority for Cotton Electric Cooperative. It is our privilege to provide educational presentations, sponsorships and assistance when needed.

The membership of Cotton Electric makes a substantial impact on local schools in several ways. For example, electric cooperatives in Oklahoma are levied a 2% gross receipts tax on the revenue at both the wholesale and retail level in lieu of an ad valorem tax.

When Cotton Electric members pay electric bills, the cooperative remits the 2% gross receipts tax to the state, and 95% of those funds go directly back to local school districts. During 2022, \$2,961,689.10 was apportioned back to the 31 school districts in our service area. The amount in 2021 was \$3,033,932.63.

On a percentage basis, electric cooperatives contribute more tax dollars to local school districts than other utilities. In Oklahoma, investor-owned utilities pay ad valorem taxes instead of gross receipts tax, and only 58% of these tax monies go to school districts within which investor-owned utilities own property. Municipal utilities contribute no tax money to public schools.

The Oklahoma Tax Commission oversees the apportionment of the gross receipts tax. The amount paid to each school is based upon the number of miles of power lines that Cotton Electric Cooperative and Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) have in each school district. WFEC, Oklahoma's largest locally-owned power supply system, is a generation and transmission cooperative owned by 21 distribution cooperatives, including Cotton Electric.

The table shows the miles of line serving each district and an estimation of amounts contributed through the 2022 gross receipts tax.

2022 Gross Receipts Tax by School Districts		
District	Cotton & WFEC Taxes	Cotton miles of line
Apache	\$44,235.55	1.26
Big Pasture	95,640.01	237.49
Bishop	331.16	1.27
Bray	131,222.45	141.09
Cache	127,247.30	214.87
Central	109,382.46	240.81
Chattanooga	252,520.71	321.38
Comanche	230,621.38	316.49
Davidson	28,199.51	33.45
Duncan	103,129.92	198.75
Elgin	111,818.07	339.47
Empire	98,198.96	243.46
Fletcher	46,076.88	27.10
Flower Mound	375.47	1.44
Fox	4,514.63	17.03
Frederick	76,447.47	6.18
Geronimo	60,010.09	170.06
Grandfield	54,433.50	163.08
Grandview	58,940.27	114.61
Indiahoma	79,850.98	158.05
Lawton	49,101.86	125.13
Marlow	62,176.46	240.03
Ringling	65,351.86	23.90
Rush Springs	164,379.32	154.65
Ryan	47,272.67	120.40
Sterling	76,214.46	171.08
Temple	63,549.75	229.90
Terral	18,223.33	69.74
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Investment ideas for business owners

By definition, business owners put a lot of their financial resources into their enterprises. But as an owner, you may need to invest in more than inventories and payroll to help achieve the future you've envisioned.

Here are a few investments you may want to consider:

- Retirement account – Depending on the nature of your business and how many employees you have, you can choose from a variety of tax-advantaged retirement plans, such as an owner-only 401(k), an SEP-IRA and a SIMPLE IRA. By contributing regularly to one of these accounts, you can avoid being entirely dependent on the sale of your business to pay for your retirement years.
- To fund your 401(k) or other retirement plan, you'll have many investment options — stocks, bonds, mutual funds and so on. And if you "max out" on your retirement plan, you may even be able to build a separate investment portfolio. In any case, keep in mind that you're already putting a lot of money into your business, so, to achieve a level of diversification, you may want to concentrate your investment choices in areas outside your industry. However, while diversification can help reduce the impact of market volatility on your portfolio, it can't guarantee profits or protect against losses in a declining market.
- Property – Your physical space is a key part of your business' success. So, you may want to invest some time in comparing the pros and cons of renting versus owning. Of course, owning your building may require a big financial commitment, and it may not be feasible, but it could free you from worrying about untimely rent increases.
- Disaster protection – If a fire or a weather-related disaster should strike your business, would you be prepared? It's important for you to create a disaster recovery plan, which can include business interruption insurance to pay for your operating costs if you're forced to shut down for a while.
- Emergency savings – While a disaster protection plan with appropriate insurance can help keep your business afloat, it's unlikely to cover other types of emergency needs, such as a major medical bill or an expensive repair to your home. For these unexpected costs, you may want to build an emergency fund covering at least a few months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid account. Without such an emergency fund, you may be forced to dip into your 401(k), IRA or other long-term investment vehicle.
- You'll also want to invest the time and energy into creating a business succession plan. Will you keep the business in your family? Sell it to outsiders or a key employee? If you do sell, will you do it all at once or over time? Clearly, the answers to these types of questions will make a big difference in your ultimate financial security.
- Finally, invest in help – Enlist the services of a financial advisor and business-planning professional, so you'll be able to make the decisions that work best for your business and you.
- Your business may well be a lifelong endeavor — so make sure you're investing whatever it takes to earn a lifetime of benefits.

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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Play it safe: 10 Do's and Don'ts when using portable generators

Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, Cotton Electric reminds you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

- 1. DO: Install backup CO alarms.
- 2. DO: Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
- 3. DO: Position generators at least

25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.

4. DO: Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.

5. DO: Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.

6. DON'T: Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.

7. DON'T: Open windows or doors while the generator is running.

8. DON'T: Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential



Position portable generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home. Photo Source: Honda.

equipment or appliances.

9. DON'T: Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.

10. DON'T: Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility

lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous—even deadly—if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, give us a call at 580-875-3351.

Source: Cooperative.com



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Understanding service interruptions

Cotton Electric strives to safely deliver quality electric service to our members. Our average system reliability was 99.96% in 2021, with most outages being caused by weather, animals and other events. However, we know another key measure of service quality in the eyes of our members is the number of times their lights blink, dim or go out.

Power Blinks

Power blinks are brief service interruptions, typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that is working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Brief power blinks caused by protective devices are good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Let's talk a bit about how the grid is designed as a back-drop to how technology is improving reliability by reducing blinks and outages. Along the power lines that bring electricity to your home, Cotton Electric installs protective devices in the form of fuses and reclosers (high-voltage circuit breakers). Fuses and reclosers serve the same purpose as the

fuses and circuit breakers in your home. A fuse is a one-shot device. When a fault occurs, the fuse blows and everyone downstream from it loses power. Reclosers are multi-shot devices, meaning they can operate a certain number of times before they stay open and an outage occurs. A common setting is what's known as a triple-shot. Here's how it works: A tree limb contacts the power lines and creates a fault. The recloser senses it and opens, creating the first blink. Here's where a recloser differs from your home circuit breaker. It waits a certain amount of a time (typically a few seconds), then recloses to try and complete the circuit. If the fault is still there, it opens again. This creates the second blink. Triple-shot settings allow the device to reclose a third time and if the fault is still there, it stays open and the members downstream experience a power outage.

Blinks are a nuisance, but they eliminate a lot of extended outages by protecting wires and equipment from serious damage. Because of their short duration, they do not register as an outage in our metering system and we may not be aware of the issue. We want to hear from you when you experience blinks so our crews can inspect the line and make necessary repairs. "Our members are a great source of information and the more detail they can provide, the better," said Mike Ottinger, Vice President of Engineering and Operations. "Our linemen are very good at taking small details and piec-

ing them together to diagnose the issue." That's what happened recently when a member called in to let us know that they had experienced several blinks in one day. Crews were sent to investigate, and during the investigation, a neighboring member told the linemen that he'd recently seen sparking on a pole. The crews were then able to locate the problem: a lightning arrestor that had been struck by lightning and was beginning to fail. Thanks to the member reporting the blinks and the observations of their neighbor, the arrestor was quickly changed out and the problem resolved.

Dimming and Half-Power

Occasionally members report that their lights are dimming. One of the common reasons for dimming is the residence or business may have outgrown the available power capacity. For example, a new building addition has been made or new home appliances or equipment may have been installed. If members experience dimming with their lights, call the co-op so that crews can check the current voltage and put together a plan to resolve the issue. It's important that members are present when crews are on-site, said Ottinger.

Half-powers typically happen on underground equipment to a house when one of the service wires have failed. When this occurs, a portion of the house may have power while another does not. Crews can assist in finding where the issue is located and, if neces-

SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS

Blinking

when voltage goes completely away for a brief period of time and comes back on

Dimming

when voltage decreases and amperage increases; power does not completely go away


Half-power

half of the house has power and the other half doesn't; typically happens on underground equipment

Outage

when voltage goes complete away for an extended amount of time

If you experience any lighting issues or have questions, please call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.



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sary, work with the member's electrician to resolve the issue. "I encourage members to call any time they experience disruptions in their electric service," said Ottinger. "It may seem like a small thing but if we can address the issue early, we can prevent a longer duration outage from happening in the future." Members can reach the co-operative at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

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Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center

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Providing up-close experiences to native animals

Oklahoma is known for its diverse regions with many animals within those natural environments. Native animals aren't frequently spotted in the outdoors, but Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center provides visitors an up-close experience of what's within our state.

Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center is a non-profit eco-tourism business that opened its doors to the public June 2017 and later became a Co-op Connections partner in 2021. Their discount offers 10% off admission or 10% off family or individual annual memberships for Cotton Electric members.

Medicine Park Aquarium has over 100 native and non-native species on exhibit, along with their six-acre botanical garden that features many plants native to the area. Visitors can see an array of fish species drifting through cool, dim waters. Exotic, colorful frogs resting on dense logs. Bobcats enjoying a nap in the warm sun with native grasses blowing against their coats.

"We mostly have native species, except for a few exotic animal displays," said Nicole Brown, Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center deputy director. "The exotic species allows us to show comparisons and contrasts with animals that can be found in our native environments."

There are a lot of fun, educational experiences for all ages at Medicine Park Aquarium. The daily Wildlife Discovery Program showcases some of the Medicine Park Aquarium Animal Ambassadors and

their unique qualities. Visitors can also watch one of the Feeding Shows for different animals, including frogs, fish, eels, and others. Many people gather around to watch otters splash out of the water trying to catch their midday crawfish snack. Check the schedule posted in the gift shop for weekly feeding time changes based on the animals' needs.

Children can learn more about the outdoors at the kids camps that Medicine Park Aquarium hosts during spring and summer school breaks. The Medicine Park Aquarium is a popular choice for tours, school field trips and other educational experiences, as well. Special event packages are offered for birthdays, weddings and other private events.

"We encourage people to come experience what's in your backyard up-close," Brown said. "We pride ourselves in education through conservation, allowing visitors to see native animals without disturbing them in their natural habitat."

Don't have your Co-op Connections card? No problem! They are available to all members and can be downloaded in the app, printed online, or picked up at Cotton Electric offices in Walters or Duncan. You can also visit www.connections.coop.com or www.cottonelectric.com under the Member Services tab to discover how you can be part of this free, money-saving opportunity.

To learn more about Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center, visit their website at www.mpmns.org, or call 580-529-3601.



Poison Dart Frogs are one of the exotic animals species displays. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Otters are one of the animals visitors can watch at the feeding show. Photo by Carli Eubank.



There are approximately 80 fish species at the Medicine Park Aquarium. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Visitors can purchase food cups to feed the quail. Photo by Carli Eubank.

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The *people* behind your *power*

By Carli Eubank

The night sky cools down the evening while dark storm clouds slowly roll in the distance. The wind begins to howl and raindrops fall heavier as each minute goes by. Roars of thunder echo all around and suddenly, the only light coming into your home is from the sporadic flashes of lightning zipping across the sky. You and your family gather in a safe place during the storm, prepared for an outage. Cotton Electric linemen are also prepared for an outage, leaving their family at home, as they walk out the door to brave the brutal weather conditions and bring power back to members.

Every second Monday in April, we recognize our linemen during National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year the official 2023 calendar date falls on April 10. Even though National Lineman Appreciation Day is recognized one day out of the year, any day is good to show your appreciation.

Going through the lineman program is no easy course. Crewmen are entered into the lineman apprentice program after being on the job a minimum of six months. Apprentice linemen then spend three years studying, taking tests and receiving on-the-job training before officially becoming a lineman.

Ely King has been with Cotton Electric for almost five years and is currently an apprentice lineman. King started at the co-op on the Vegetation Management crew before working to become a lineman.

“Each day is different, depending on which crew I am on at the time,” King said. “I am currently with the underground crew, and some of my daily tasks include connecting services to new structures, digging trenches, and pulling wire.”

Days are filled with different jobs as a lineman, but working with a great group helps make the days better and get the challenging jobs done, King added.

“I really enjoy working with my colleagues,” King said. “Everyone on the Operations crews like to work hard and have fun while completing a job. The work atmosphere is something money can’t buy.”

After an additional year in the field, a lineman may be considered for a journeyman position.

For the past five years, Braylin Dowlen has worked through each program before becoming a journeyman lineman for Cotton Electric in July 2022. Dowlen has lived and learned many experiences during his career at the co-op.

“A few qualities that describe the lifestyle of a lineman are commitment, safety and strength,” Dowlen said. “You have to have mental strength, along with physical strength to overcome obstacles and safely restore power.”

Whether it’s a cold winter night or a beautiful spring day, linemen always have to be ready for the call – sometimes leaving your family, not knowing how long it will take to restore power and return home.

“It’s not only my commitment to the cooperative, but it’s a family commitment, as well,” Dowlen said. “Every one of us have to be ready at any moment and leaving my family for a call is always the toughest part of the job.”

While Cotton Electric crews maintain power lines, fix broken poles and keep electricity running, their dedication to membership flows throughout our local communities.

“To me, a lineman has always meant someone willing to go the extra mile for not just the company, but for anyone in need,” King said. “The reward is definitely worth the risk.”

More than 7,000 hours of training for each individual. Over 5,000 miles of line to maintain in eight counties. More than 20 linemen, crewmen and heavy equipment operators on call 24/7, 365 days a year. These are just a few statistics that represent Cotton Electric Cooperative linemen, not including the incalculable amount of heart and determination they devote to their goal: To serve our members while keeping the lights on.

Thank you, linemen.



Clint Ingram
Operations Superintendent



Chad Cowan
Operations Superintendent



TJ Birdwell
Apprentice Lineman



Marc Boball
Journeyman Lineman



Larry Crowell
Journeyman Lineman



Conner Daniel
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Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the May issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by April 21. Only events occurring after May 8 will be published in the next issue.

Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.

Southwest Coin Show

Buy, sell, trade or admire coins, currency and more at the Southwest Coin Show. There is no admission fee. The event is open Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 21-22 at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 1618 S. 13th St. in Duncan. For more information, call Ed at 580-475-4570.

Fundraiser helps local school

Grab a pair of running shoes for the We Are Indiahoma 5K and 1 Mile run. There will also be a Senior Stroll. Registration opens the morning of the race at 8:30 a.m. There is a \$25 registration fee. Proceeds benefit Indiahoma Public School and Indiahoma Volunteer Fire Department. The event begins at 10 a.m. on April 22 at the Indiahoma Public School auditorium. To register for the event, visit www.WeAreIndiahoma.net.

Plant swap in Duncan

The Stephens County Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE) clubs will sponsor a plant swap in Duncan. Attendees should bring at least one of the following (pest-free and tagged): plant, cutting that has rooted, bulb, rhizome, tuber, seed (may be saved or unused), bush, or tree. The plants may be houseplants or outdoors, as long you would like to share them. The purpose is to share extras and nourish a love of plants. The event is from 10 a.m. to noon on April 22 in the Heritage Room of the Conference Center at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 1618 S. 13th St.

in Duncan. For more information, call 580-255-3460.

Grand opening in Walters

Pack Mule Cigars will open their doors to the public for their official Grand Opening. The day will be filled with fellowship, cigars, food and games. One dollar from every cigar sold will go to the Comanche Masonic Lodge Restoration Fund. The event is April 22 and located inside Horse Sense Graphics, 629 E. Missouri Ave. in Walters. For more information, 580-512-9452 or 580-512-7047.

Annual Poker Run

The Cache Valley Lodge #530 will be hosting their third annual Southwest Oklahoma Mason's Poker Run. Routes will take riders through local Masonic Lodges to collect different cards varying points, as well as a chance to enter into raffle prizes drawings. Registration begins at 9 a.m. on April 29 at Diamondback Harley Davidson in Lawton. For more information, visit the Southwest Oklahoma Masons Facebook page or contact Jamon Kelley at 580-512-7047.

Grief group meets monthly

The Heritage Oaks Church of The Nazarene will be hosting a "Grief and Bereavement" group starting at the beginning of January. The focus of the group, led by Phil and Nancy Evans, is to offer a safe place for those who have gone through the passing of a loved one to share their feelings, to create an environment where it is conducive to find friendship with others going through the grief process, and to bring healing and hope to those who have struggled with loss.

Starting Jan. 3, the group will meet each Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Heritage Oaks Church of The Nazarene, 4595 W. Beech, Duncan. For more information, please contact the church at 580-255-2869 or Pastor Jon at 580-730-9431.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Cotton Electric member Dawn Dettlaff has bright, beautiful pansies blooming in Marlow.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for May is Hobbies! Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize.

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AUTOS 1966 Chevy SNB, 350 Automatic. Recently restored with new bed, bumpers, grill, fender, all new interior, new tires and wheels and much more. 1964 Chevy LNB. Restored 2016. Many new parts. Very nice truck. 2014 Buick Enclave. 1977 Chevrolet. **SHOTGUNS** Browning BS 12 ga - Remington 1100LT-20 Magnum 20 ga - Browning BPS Hunter 12 ga - Browning Citori Grade V 20 ga - Browning Ultra Over/Under 12 ga - Mossburg Model 500E 410 Pump - ComLanber Over/Under 12 ga NIB - Remington Model 940 Super Mag 12 ga NIB - Remington M-1100 12 ga - SKB Arms Co. Model XL 12 ga Auto - Remington Model 11-48, 28 ga Auto - Stevens Model 48 Dbl Barrel 12 ga **LEVER ACTION RIFLES** 1873 Replica 45 Colt (Made in Italy) - Winchester Model 94 Wrangler 44 mag Loop Handle NIB - Marlin 1895-GS SS 45/70 NIB - Marlin M1894S 44 mag - Marlin M-1895G 45/70 - Ruger Model 96, 44 mag - Browning BL 22 Lever Action - Winchester Model 94 30/30 (Made in 1928) - Marlin Model 1894 25/20 - Henry Repeating Arms 45 Colt - Winchester Model 1894 32/40 (Made in 1907) - Model 11873, 32 cal **RIFLES** M1 Garand w/Scope - Browning A-Bolt SAS 300 Win Mag w/Scope - Winchester M-70 XTR Feather Weight 6.5 x 55 mm w/Scope - Ruger M77 Mark 2 SS 7mm mag w/Scope - Remington M-700 BDL w/Engraved Receiver 223 cal w/Scope - Ruger M77 Mark 2 SS 300 Win Mag NIB - Browning A-Bolt 25-06 w/Scope - Marlin MR-7 30-06 w/Scope - Rossi Gallery Rifle 22 cal NIB - Ruger Mini 14 Ranch Rifle w/Custom Stock 223 cal w/Scope - Norinco ATD Rifle 22 cal NIB - Browning BAR Grade 2, 30-06 cal w/Scope - Parker Hale 7 x 57 mm - Kimber M-82 22 WMR w/Scope - Remington Woodmaster M-81 300 Savage - Weatherby Mark V 240 WBY - Winchester M-70 SA Bull Barrel 308 cal w/Scope - Marlin Model 336-RC Micro Groove Barrel 30/30 - Winchester Model 1903 22 cal Auto - Savage Model 93R - 17 HMR Single Shot - Stevens Arms Co., Single Shot 22 LR - Taurus Model 62 22 LR Pump - Winchester Model 70 SS 7 mm mag - Winchester Model 94 22 Win Mag - Remington 32 cal Single Shot - Savage model 10 243 **HAND GUNS** Colt (The Duke) New Frontier 22 Revolver NIB - Mitchell Arms Victor Target 22 LR SS Automatic - Ruger Red Hawk SS 357 mag w/Scope Revolver - Ruger Vaquero 44 mag Revolver NIB - Ruger Red Hawk SS 44 mag Revolver - Ithica 45 Auto - Smith & Wesson Model 645 SS 45 Automatic - Smith & Wesson Model 1989 SS 45 cal Automatic - Smith & Wesson Model 659 SS 9 mm Automatic - Smith & Wesson Model 4006 SS 40 cal Automatic - Smith & Wesson Model 457 45 Automatic - Smith & Wesson M-910, 9 mm Automatic - Colt Target Model SS 22 LR Automatic - 18 Marlin Model 336-A 32 Special - Ruger Mark II Target 22 Auto - Taurus Groucho 45 Colt Revolver - Charter Arms Bulldog 44 Special Revolver - Colt Series 80 Mark IV Gold Cut National Match 45 Auto - Colt Army Special 32/20 WCF Revolver - Model 1873 Replica Colt 45 Revolver - Black Powder Musket Eagle Engraved Grips - Black Powder Musket Eagle Engraved Grips - Black Powder Musket (Made in Spain) **SHOP TOOLS** Kerosene Heater - Hand Tools - Garden Tools - Aluminum/Fiberglass 6' Step Ladder - Boxes of Sheetrock Screws - Lumber - Stainless Rolling Shop Vanity - Craftsman Table Saw - Gas Heater - Stainless Work Benches w/Light & Pegboard - Heavy-Duty Metal Lift Welding Lead - Honda 2500 Generator - Cordless Drills - Radial Arm Saws - Homecraft Scroll Saw - Ammo Cans - Flexible Gas Lines - Plastic Gas Cans - Chop Saw - Right Angle Grinder - Mover's Dolly - Hose Reel - Electric Drills - Motor Stand -- Tackle Box - Delta 10" Miter Saw - Band Saw - Work Benches - Limb Saws - Magna Force 6.5 hp Air Compressor - Weed Eater - Another Craftsman Table Saw - Rolling Stainless Table - Tackle Box - Patton High Velocity Shop Fan - Big Proto Open-End Wrenches (1 7/8" to 2 1/2") - Pallet Jack - Air Hoses - Levels - Extension Cords - Freon Gauges - Heavy-Duty Shop Shelving, 3 sections - Bar Clamps - Grease Guns - Shop Racks - 8' Fiberglass Step Ladder - Extra Heavy-Duty Shop Shelves - Come-Alongs - Shelving Live Trap - Chicken Wire - Wheel Barrow - Yard Tools - Stock Tank - Shop Dolly - Fertilizer - Spreader - Coleman Lanterns - Chains - Electric Wire - Hand Saws - Assortment of Table Saws - Drill Presses - Heavy-Duty Post Driver - T-Square - Bench Sander - Bench Grinder - Mac Rolling 20 Drawer Tool Box - Tool Boxes - Limb Saw Poles - Matco 6-Drawer Rolling Tool Box **ANTIQUES** Old Records & Albums - Old Milk Can - Hand Planes & Rasps - Singer Treadle Sewing Machine - Cedar Wardrobe - Lots & Lots of Hand Tools **HOUSEHOLD** Weber Gas Grills - Walker - Firewood Racks - Glider Chair Set - Poly Folding Tables - Little Red Wagon - File Cabinet - Upright Freezer - Chest Freezer - Stereo - Fishing Rods & Equipment

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Diet, exercise and Parkinson’s disease



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

April is Parkinson’s Awareness Month. According to the Parkinson’s Foundation, one-million Americans live with Parkinson’s disease, making it the second most prevalent neurodegenerative disease behind Alzheimers.

Given that getting older increases your chances of developing Parkinson’s, the prevalence is projected to continue to rise with the advancing age of the U.S. population. Researchers continue to seek answers to the cause, prevention, and treatment of the disease. While the world waits for a cure, medical advancements improve the quality of life and life expectancy of individuals with Parkinson’s. Of particular interest is how diet and exercise play a role in the management of the disease.

Scientists believe Parkinson’s disease is caused by a mix of environmental and genetic factors. The quality and quantity of food and exercise at this time are not linked to the development or prevention of the disease. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest making changes in diet and exercise habits can affect the progression, help manage symptoms,

manage medication side-effects, and improve quality of life while living with Parkinson’s disease.

For diet, general advice for individuals with Parkinson’s encompasses all the habits outlined in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Some care teams will recommend further modifications like a plant-based diet and specific diets like the Mediterranean Diet and the DASH diet.

It is most important that the healthy diet is individualized for your tastes, preferences, and changing dietary needs as medication side-effects and disease symptoms arise. Individuals with Parkinson’s may experience taste and smell changes, constipation, increased calorie burning due to tremors, muscle loss, bone loss, and, as the disease advances, with difficulty eating, swallowing, and digesting.

Many of the medications used to treat Parkinson’s have side effects like nausea, dry mouth, and constipation that can negatively impact food intake. These symptoms and side-effects happen over the course of the disease, so starting with a healthy diet and then modifying as needed is essential.

The recommendations for exercise are consistent - exercise can attenuate debilitating symptoms by keeping muscles as healthy as possible, contributing to greater quality of life even as the disease progresses.

The Parkinson’s Foundation collaborated with the American College of Sports Medicine to create Parkinson’s disease exercise recommendations. The group of experts recommends patients with Parkinson’s disease start by seeing a physical therapist who specializes in Parkinson’s to design an ex-

ercise regimen that includes 150 minutes a week of vigorous exercise, employing two or three days of strength training, balance exercises, and stretching. Research suggests that 2.5 hours of exercise per week can result in better quality of life for individuals living with Parkinson’s disease.

There are several not-for-profit organizations that offer healthy eating and exercise suggestions for individuals with Parkinson’s disease and their families and caregivers. Reviewing websites for the Michael J Fox Foundation and the Parkinson’s Foundation are a good start, but it is essential to seek out individualized nutrition and exercise recommendations from your physician, a registered dietitian, and a physical therapist so a diet and exercise regimen can be customized to your medications, disease symptoms, and food environment.




Some care teams recommend following the Mediterranean diet for those with Parkinson’s disease.



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7 garden growing basics for beginners



Growing your own produce is an all-around smart practice, from the money you'll save at the grocery store to the contributions you can make toward a cleaner planet.

Maintaining a garden takes some effort, but it's a project even a beginner can tackle with ease. Consider these tips to start growing your at-home garden:

1. Select a perfect spot.

You'll want to place your garden in an area where you see it often so you're reminded to weed and care for it regularly. Find a flat area you can access easily, where erosion and other pitfalls (including hungry wildlife) won't be a problem.

2. Choose between ground and containers.

There are pros and cons to gardening in containers vs. the ground, and there's no universal right choice. Rather, the best garden depends on your goals and preferences. A ground garden usually offers more space and may provide a better growth environment for roots. However, a container garden is often easier to maintain and may be all you need if you wish to grow just a few plants.

3. Understand the importance of quality soil.

You may think any dirt will do, but keep in mind the soil you plant in will be the primary source of nutrients for your produce. Not only that, but quality soil provides stability so plants

can root firmly and grow healthy and sturdy to support their bounty. Quality soil also allows for ample drainage. Organic matter like compost, leaf mold or aged manure all help improve soil quality.

4. Keep water close.

Lugging water can quickly eliminate the pleasure of tending your garden, so be sure you're situated near a hose. You'll know it's time to water when the soil is dry about an inch below the surface.

5. Plan for plenty of sun.

A bright, sunny spot is a must, since most vegetables, herbs and fruits depend on six or more hours of sun every day. Remember the sun's path changes throughout the year, and as trees and foliage grow, they may produce more shade with each growing season.

6. Consider what you'll grow.

Starting with veggies you know you like is a smart starting point since you'll be pouring sweat equity into making them grow. Over time, you might add new varieties, but early on, keep your focus on foods you know you like so you can see a meaningful return and avoid waste. You'll also need to consider what you can grow to maturity within your area's growing season. If necessary, you might want to start transplants you can nurture indoors before moving them outside when the temperatures allow.

7. Plant according to a calendar.

Knowing how long it takes different foods to mature will help you create a planting calendar. You don't want to harvest everything at once, and if you stagger planting and replant what you can, you'll have a garden that produces food for your family for a longer period of time.

Find more helpful tips for managing your home and garden at eLivingtoday.com.

Photo courtesy of Unsplash



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The same old brunch menu week after week can become tiresome and dull. It's bland, boring and your tastebuds get used to the same flavors repeatedly. It's time to add something new to the table with fresh ingredients and simple instructions to enhance your weekend spread.

Try this recipe for an Easy Brunch Quiche that is sure to have your senses swirling with every bite. This quiche is layered with many tastes and a variety of ingredients to give it crave-worthy flavor.

To create this dish, start with one package of broccoli and cheese then microwave it for 5 minutes until heated through.

Add 12 slices of chopped bacon to a skillet. While cooking, add 1/2 cup of green onions. Cook for 2 minutes then add 1 cup of mushrooms to the skillet. Cook for 4 minutes and drain the grease.

In a small mixing bowl, combine four eggs and 1 cup of milk. Whisk together. Add egg mixture to the broccoli and cheese. Also add 1 cup of shredded cheese and stir the ingredients together.

In two separate pie shells, spoon in the bacon mixture then pour the egg and broccoli mixtures over the top. Sprinkle with a little more cheese then bake for 35-45 minutes at 350 F.

With a range of ingredients from broccoli to bacon, this quiche is a brunch hero. While baking, the cheese gets all melty, and with every bite the mushrooms add texture and earthy flavor. The ingredients combine together to make something warm, hearty and fresh.

Find more brunch recipes and cooking ideas at Culinary.net.

Easy Brunch Quiche

Serves: 12

- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen broccoli with cheese
- 12 slices bacon, chopped
- 1/2 cup green onions, sliced
- 1 cup mushrooms, sliced
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 1/2 cups shredded cheese, divided
- 2 frozen deep dish pie shells (9 inches each)

Heat oven to 350 F.

In medium bowl, add broccoli and cheese contents from package. Microwave 5 minutes, or until cheese is saucy. Set aside.

In skillet, cook chopped bacon 4 minutes. Add green onions; cook 2 minutes. Add mushrooms; cook 4 minutes, or until bacon is completely cooked and mushrooms are tender. Drain onto paper towel over plate. Set aside.

In medium bowl, whisk eggs and milk until combined. Add broccoli and cheese mixture. Add 1 cup cheese. Stir to combine. Set aside.

In pie shells, divide drained bacon mixture evenly. Divide broccoli mixture evenly and pour over bacon mixture. Sprinkle remaining cheese over both pies.

Bake 40 minutes.

Allow to cool at least 12 minutes before serving.

Note: To keep edges of crust from burning, place aluminum foil over pies for first 20 minutes of cook time. Remove after 20 minutes and allow to cook uncovered until completed.

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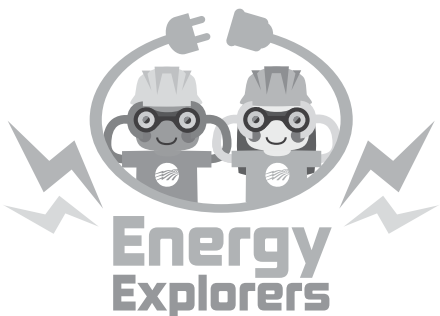


SPRING EFFICIENCY
WORD SCRAMBLE

Did you know there are several ways you can save energy during spring months?

Read the efficiency tips below and unscramble the bolded letters to reveal how you and your family can save energy during springtime.

Don't forget to check your work in the answer key below!



1.

Sealing air leaks around doors and **diwwson** saves energy and keeps your home comfortable.
2.

LED **hlgist** typically use 75% less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs.
3.

Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone **scragher**.
4.

Planting shade **esrte** around your home can block unwanted heat from the sun.
5.

Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when you leave the room to save **yengre**.

Answer Key: 1) windows 2) lights 3) chargers 4) trees 5) energy

5	1	3	8		7			
6		2	9	1				
9						7	6	
1	5		3	7	2		4	
4		9	1					
	2	7			9	1	3	
				4	8		7	
			7		5	9	1	
		5	2	9				

Level: Beginner

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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Parting Shots



Cotton Electric Field Meter Technicians had some fun on a job near the Wichita Wildlife Refuge. Pictured top to bottom: Cotton Electric Apprentice Field Meter Technician, Bryan Goode and Journeyman Field Meter Technicians Rex Hiebert and Josh Belcher.

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