

## WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS



### Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

**Bruce Mueller**—General Manager

#### Board of Trustees

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|--|------------------------------------|
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| <b>Charles Ayers</b><br>Trustee        |                                    |
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#### District Offices

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Garden City</b><br>2005 W Fulton<br>P.O. Box 973<br>Garden City, KS<br>67846<br>620-275-0261 | <b>Scott City-<br/>Main</b><br>101 Main Street<br>P.O. Box 230<br>Scott City, KS<br>67871<br>620-872-5885 |
| <b>Great Bend</b><br>2300 Broadway<br>P.O. Box 1446<br>Great Bend, KS<br>67530<br>620-793-4223  | <b>Syracuse</b><br>206 1/2 N Main<br>P.O. Box 1010<br>Syracuse, KS<br>67878<br>620-384-5171               |
| <b>Harper</b><br>302 W. 6th<br>P.O. Box 247<br>Harper, KS<br>67058<br>620-896-7090              | <b>Tribune</b><br>310 Broadway<br>P.O. Box 490<br>Tribune, KS<br>67879<br>620-376-4231                    |
| <b>Leoti</b><br>N Hwy 25<br>P.O. Box 966<br>Leoti, KS 67861<br>620-375-2632                     |   |

### FROM THE MANAGER

## Self-Regulation

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees of Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., has voted to let you (the membership) decide if the cooperative should be exempt from the jurisdiction, regulation, supervision and control of the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC). The State of Kansas has allowed smaller electric cooperatives, the option to self-regulate since 1992. Then in 2009, Kansas legislation was passed—which allowed larger cooperatives, like Wheatland, the right to vote for self-regulation (K.S.A. 66-104d). Currently, 28 out of 29 electric distribution cooperatives in Kansas are self-regulated; Wheatland is the only one that is still regulated by the KCC.

We will start the process of informing the membership in the near future (March–April) about the benefits of self-regulation through direct mailings, radio and newspaper ads outlying the proposal. We also plan to conduct a series of town hall meetings that will be scheduled in each of our service districts for members who want to discuss the proposal in person (April). Once these are completed, Wheatland will engage an independent firm to conduct a mail ballot election (May).

I realize self-regulation might be new to each of you, so I have put together a list of frequently asked questions and their answers.

#### What does self-regulation mean to me as a member of Wheatland?

A vote for self-regulation of Wheatland means you trust your fellow Wheatland members (Board of Trustees) to set rates for electric service that allows Wheatland to supply reliable and competitively priced electricity. Presently, the Kansas Corporation (KCC) oversees the rate-making process.



**Bruce Mueller**

#### What are the benefits of self-regulation?

**Local control:** The democratically elected Board of Trustees is chosen by you. The Board is responsible for setting policies that govern the cooperative. They set the rates in a way which protects the cooperatives finances so that funds are available to build, repair and improve the reliability of the electric system. The Board consists of member-owners of the cooperative, just like you. When they vote about rate changes—they know the vote impacts their pocket books, as well.

**Lower costs for members:** The costs incurred by the KCC and Citizens Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB) to process a rate case are passed onto

*Continued on page 16-B* ▶

## From the Manager: Self Regulation

Continued from page 16-A ▶

the cooperative. These costs include hourly fees for lawyers, staff time to answer questions, staff time to review the answers, staff time to review materials submitted, and the cost to publish information about the proceedings in the Kansas Register. Wheatland also incurs costs for its lawyers and consultants to prepare for the proceedings. All of these costs end up in your (and mine) electric bill.

Increased flexibility and efficiency: The average KCC rate case lasts nine months and having to wait nine months for a decision to collect funds adds additional costs and time.

### Will the members have a voice in setting new rates?

Yes. The Board of Trustees has established a policy that governs the process to change rates, adding more opportunities for member information and feedback. Two of the steps included in the policy are also required by Kansas law. First, notice of the time and place of any Board meeting when rates will be discussed and voted on must be sent to members 10 days before the meeting, and that meeting must be open to members. Second, any rate change must include a notice to members of their right to request the KCC to review rate changes.

### Will self-regulation eliminate all regulatory requirements?

No. Wheatland will continue to be subject to other state and federal environmental, safety, and labor regulations even after self-regulation is implemented. Additionally, certain functions will remain under KCC authority, regardless of the members' vote.

### What if I have a dispute about my bill or quality of service?

Wheatland already attempts to resolve complaints at the

earliest opportunity. That will not change. Wheatland employees will still be the first line of contact for service and account issues. However, members may escalate unresolved complaints to the Board of Trustees.

### Will Wheatland still have a Cold Weather Rule to prevent service disconnection in the winter?

The Cold Weather Rule is currently mandated by the KCC. Wheatland would maintain this important protection for residential members under self-regulation per Wheatland Terms and Conditions policy.

### What if the members don't like the effects of self-regulation later?

While no cooperative has ever elected to do so, the same Kansas law that allows for self-regulation also allows the return to full KCC regulation if the members make that choice.

I hope these answers to our frequently asked questions have assisted you in understanding why we feel Wheatland should be self-regulated. As I mentioned earlier, we will be communicating to you the benefits of self-regulation over the next few months through a variety of mediums. It will be a major topic discussed at the Wheatland Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on April 2nd in Holcomb. I'll put in the first plug now to invite each of you to attend the annual meeting. We look forward to seeing you there.

I know I have put a lot of information in this month's article, so if you have any questions or thoughts, please call me at the cooperative any time. I will be happy to discuss this and any subject you are interested in.

Until next time, take care.

Sincerely,

**Bruce Mueller**

## Wheatland Annual Meeting

Mark the date! Wheatland Electric will celebrate their 66th Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. The meeting is for all members and will be held in Holcomb, KS.

Lunch will be served, followed by the meeting. This is your chance to get involved with the business of your cooperative. Election of trustees will be held and service awards will be given to the employees.

**Save the Date! We Hope to See You There!**

## Office Closed in Observance of Presidents' Day

All Wheatland Electric, Water, and Wheatland Broadband offices will be closed February 17, for Presidents' Day. If you have an emergency, please call our answering service at 1-800-662-4246.

| April 2014 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S          | M  | T  | W  | U  | F  | S  |
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| 6          | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13         | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20         | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27         | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |

## Wheatland Helps Members “Kill-A-Watt”

Looking for ways to save energy and money? Tracking your electricity usage is the first step in reducing both areas.

Wheatland Electric is introducing a new device called the “Kill-A-Watt EZ™ Monitoring Meter” to help members identify which of their appliances are using the most electricity and where they can save money by cutting usage. Thanks to a partnership with local libraries, members can begin checking out the devices at all local libraries in Wheatland’s service area. Due to expected high demand, the devices are limited to a two-week checkout.

“Becoming aware of how your home uses energy is key to reducing usage and costs,” said Wheatland General Manager, Bruce Mueller. “We’re excited to offer our members this free resource to help them make better informed decisions on how to save energy and control costs.”

The Kill-A-Watt device simply plugs into a wall outlet and then you plug your appliance or electronic device into the monitor. Kill-A-Watt then monitors how much

electricity the appliance is using and displays the result on a small screen, showing you both the usage and the cost associated with that usage. There are a total of sixteen devices, two at each library in Wheatland’s service territory, available for loan and they may be checked out from the libraries listed;

- ▶ Scott County Library
- ▶ Finney County Library
- ▶ Hamilton County Library
- ▶ Greeley County Library
- ▶ Wichita County Library
- ▶ Great Bend Public Library
- ▶ The Harper Public Library
- ▶ Caldwell Public Library.



The device comes with instructions and information about using the Kill-A-Watt EZ™.

Kill-A-Watt EZ™ meters can be purchased for approximately \$35 from home improvement stores or at [EnergySavers.coop](http://EnergySavers.coop) online energy efficiency store. Members may want to first try it out with the available lending program at the local libraries. “We hope this inspires our members to take more energy efficiency steps and helps them save energy and money,” said Mueller.

## Take Heart: You’re the Cure

Before you finish reading this article (about 40 seconds), an American will have a stroke. Don’t be a statistic. Be the cure.

Did you know that in Kansas, 1416 people died of a stroke in 2009? 895 were females.

Heart disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, heart disease triggers one in four deaths. The good news? Heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions.

To prevent heart disease and increase awareness of its effects,

Wheatland Electric Cooperative joins the nation this February to mark American Heart Month.

Make healthy changes to lower your risk of developing heart disease. Already have heart disease? Controlling or preventing risk factors remains important. To lower your risk:

- ▶ Watch your weight.
- ▶ Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- ▶ Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- ▶ If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.
- ▶ Get active and eat healthy.

## Welcome to the Wheatland Family

Wheatland Electric welcomes a new employee, Blake Reed, to the Great Bend district. He began his duties January 13 as a third year Apprentice Lineman. Reed relocated from Courtland KS, which is in Rolling Hills Cooperative service area.



Blake Reed

## Employee Resignation

Mark Ziemba resigned from the Great Bend office December 6. Chris Huber, line superintendent, noted, “Mark was a great employee and we are sorry to see him go to the Wichita area. He left to be closer to family.” Blake Reed, above, has replaced Ziemba.

## Tip of the Month

Fighting winter chills? A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don’t let it heat up your electric bill. To cool energy costs, keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use. Caulk around the fireplace hearth. Double up on wood-earned warmth by lowering the thermostat setting to between 50 degrees and 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Learn more at [www.energysaver.gov](http://www.energysaver.gov).



# Don't Get Scammed

Do you know Emily Williams? Numerous People thought that they did and because of this, a U.S. government agency was compromised. Emily Williams was created by Aamir Lakhani of World Wide Technology and Joseph Muniz of Cisco Systems. They conducted an experiment using social engineering to test network defenses by creating a fictitious character and seeing how far they could get within an organization. The target was an un-named US Government Agency that was involved in both offensive and defensive cyber security. In previous attempts to penetrate this agency, it had only been breached by zero-day exploits which are newly found, unpublicized software vulnerabilities. Executive approval was also given before this test was conducted.

The experiment began by creating accounts on Facebook and LinkedIn.

A local restaurant employee gave permission for her picture to be posted as the likeness of Emily Williams. The researchers created a background for her which consisted of graduating from MIT with 10 years of experience and was a new hire within the agency. Within hours of birth, Emily Williams had gained 60 Facebook and 55 LinkedIn connections. Within 24 hours, she had received three job inquiries from other companies. She even received LinkedIn endorsements. Next, she asked a senior HR member to connect on LinkedIn, he replied, "Do you need any help in getting the Service Desk to accelerate the laptop and email issues?" With this help, they were able to get their hands on an agency laptop. With the laptop they now had access to contacts within the agency. Emily then sent an electronic Christmas card which was poisoned by a signed java applet that in turn launched an attack that enabled the team to gain administrative rights on each of the infected machines. They now had access to sensitive documents that included information on state-sponsored attacks and

foreign leaders.

A targeted attack was then launched against the agency head of security. He had no Facebook connections, but others within the agency were discussing his birthday on the site. He was sent a malicious birthday card link made to look like it was coming from one of the two people discussing him on Facebook. After he opened the malicious card, his computer was compromised. The researchers are quoted as saying "This guy had access to everything. He had the crown jewels in the system"

So what does Emily teach us? Muniz and Lakhani say that it is nothing new: identities are valuable; people trust people, but men particularly trust attractive women; social engineering works; and there is no technological defense. But what Emily Williams really teaches us is that despite our knowledge of the threats of social engineering, it still

works, and it works at the highest levels.

Wheatland Electric encourages all of its members to exercise the utmost caution when it comes to giving out personal information.

Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated; they can appear to look like callers from trusted sources as well as sending authentic looking emails. Never give out your personal information through unsolicited emails or phone calls.

Don't accept "friend requests" from unknown persons on social networking sites. Never give credit card numbers to people you don't know. Remember that Wheatland Electric employees will always identify themselves.

If you ever suspect you are being scammed, or question the authenticity of a call or email, contact Wheatland Electric directly to verify the authenticity of the information request.



**BE ALERT**

Find us on Facebook

**WHEATLAND ELECTRIC**  
A Triadama Energy Corporation

1.800.762.0436  
1.620.872.5885

**Electric Utility Scams are on the Rise**  
\* Be aware that scammers are becoming sophisticated, and they can make Wheatland's name appear on your caller ID or in an email  
\* Never give out your personal information on unsolicited phone calls or emails \* Never give credit card or MoneyPak numbers to people you don't know \* Wheatland employees will always identify themselves \* Wheatland never disconnects electricity after business hours \* Contact Wheatland if you suspect you are being scammed

THE STORY ABOVE CONTAINS EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE THAT APPEARED RECENTLY IN "INFO SECURITY", A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUE OF INFORMATION SECURITY.