

FEC® POWER Source

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Off He Goes...

By: Jason Lindsey, Member Services Rep.

As you recall, back in January, we ran a story in the *Power Source* about the heroics of Ronnie Marez, FEC meter reader. In a nutshell, Ronnie was driving along US 60 just west of Fort Sumner when he noticed a body lying in a ditch near a small bridge. It turns out that an elderly Fort Sumner resident had become confused and walked away from her home. That January day was frigid and Ronnie new he had to act fast in order to save this poor woman. Had it not been for Ronnie's selfless act of heroism, the story might have had a tragic ending, but as it turned out, the very cold, elderly lady was safely reunited with her family.

Since that day, Ronnie has been recognized by FEC with a Humanitarian Award, by the NRECA with the Hope and Hero Award, and most recently he was chosen amongst several worthy hero stories as the Hometown Hero by the USAF Thunderbirds! As part of his award... he would get to fly with the Thunderbirds!

I found out on a Monday, May 19, that Ronnie was going to get this "flight of a lifetime" and all I could think is, I wonder if there is anyway I could go? Come to find out, I was going to be allowed to accompany him and take some pictures to document his flight. I went straight to the computer to look at the weather forecast to see what kind of flying weather it would be and sure enough, big rain chances! It has hardly rained here for three years and now over the entire weekend that the air show will be here, it is supposed to rain! Don't get me wrong, I realize we need the rain, but the timing couldn't have been any worse.

That Thursday, we were scheduled to be at the base at noon, but Ronnie called me and said Thunderbird #7 (two-seat F-16) needed some routine maintenance when it landed so the flight wouldn't be until Friday. He said he was a little

worried that the plane needed work the day he was supposed to be on it. Friday finally arrived and I met Ronnie along with his mother, wife, and daughter and we headed to the base at 10:45 am. His flight wasn't until 2:00 pm, so I didn't really know what we would be doing for the next



FEC's Ronnie Marez, boarding Thunderbird #7

three hours but it wasn't long until I would find out. We got to the building where the flight briefing would take place and they got started right away. First he was fitted for a flight suit and boots and then it was time to put on the G-suit. Once it was on, the gentleman that was fitting him needed to tighten up all the strings. It was somewhat like a girdle and he asked Ronnie to, "stand right here and face that wall" as he patted his hand on the table and pointed toward the east wall. So Ronnie, in his nervousness, hopped up on the table and faced east. The

Thunderbird crewman started laughing and said he didn't mean on the table. I later told Ronnie that I would have done the same thing. Next was the harness that would attach Ronnie to the seat and then the helmet. After all of the equipment for the flight was fitted, it was time to start learning. First was a power point presentation on how to use a parachute should it be necessary and how to hit the ground without breaking a leg.

We all then got the distinct pleasure of meeting Thunderbird #1, Lieutenant Colonel Greg Moseley, who posed with Ronnie for some pictures. Then came Thunderbird #9, the team doctor, to talk to Ronnie about motion sickness and the ef-

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Manager's Message...



Lance Adkins, GM

Local Business Growth Faces Challenges

There have been a few developments in two specific issues we have been following for some time; the Cross State Pollution Rule (CSAPR) and the listing decision for the Lesser Prairie Chicken. Both of these complicated issues will have an impact on the cost of generating and transmitting electricity as well as an impact on goods and services that utilize electricity in their manufacturing and business processes.

I last reported on CSAPR in early 2012, as the U.S. Court of Appeals issued a “stay” on the implementation of regulations designed to address emissions from power plants lo-

cated in twenty-six eastern states, including Texas and Oklahoma. Improving air quality in states downwind of generating plants, primarily plants that burn coal, was the goal of the new regulations. CSAPR targets sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions that can carry long distances from the source.

While power plants located in New Mexico were not included in this specific rule, members of Farmers' Electric (FEC) receive power from plants that burn coal in Texas and Okla-

homa. Most expected the rule would eventu-

ally move forward; the greatest challenge was the time schedule for compliance, less than six months, much sooner than new control equipment could be installed.

In late April, the Supreme Court reinstated the rule, stating the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was authorized to implement the rule under the federal Clean Air Act. Further, the EPA was authorized to implement rules in individual states that had not adequately addressed pollution affecting air quality in other states. In a press-release from one of our primary wholesale power resources, Xcel Energy, they noted that during the period of “stay” Xcel Energy had made improvements to their coal-fired power plants to reduce emissions and do not anticipate the cost or impact of compliance to be as great as they estimated in 2011. For members of FEC, increases in the cost of wholesale power are passed through on the monthly electric bill in the fuel and power cost adjustment (FPPCAC) line item and new pollution control equipment is a part of that increased cost.

I'm certain that most of the membership is already aware of the decision by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Well ahead of the decision by USFWS, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) worked to develop an innovative, collaborative approach to species conservation supported by private landowners, the energy industry, and conservation groups. Commonly referred to as the five-state plan, named for the five states identified as the historic range of the LPC, it includes commitments of more than \$21 million for mitigation on more than 3.6 million acres for conservation of the LPC.

While the USFWS publically endorsed the five-state plan in October of last year, the decision to list effectively pre-empts the voluntary plan. While the full effect of the decision is not known at this time, the listing is certain to cost more for local businesses than the voluntary five-state plan, without any guarantee of being more effective in conserving the LPC.

“Currently, there are more than 200 species under review by USFWS through the Endangered Species Act, including several more in New Mexico.”

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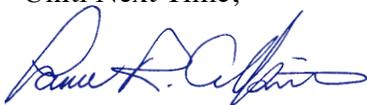
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We are not the only group disappointed with the “threatened” finding. While we hoped the USFWS would find a listing “not warranted,” several special interest groups have joined in law suites because they feel the “threatened” finding didn’t go far enough. They feel the LPC should have received a finding of “endangered,” triggering even more extensive conservation efforts and more private land use restrictions. We are also aware of ongoing efforts to organize in New Mexico to oppose the listing decision as well as prepare to challenge the potential listing of other species. Currently, there are more than 200 species under review by USFWS through the ESA, including several more in New Mexico.

It is difficult to gain significant political pressure to make changes to the ESA due to the fact that the people with the greatest impact and cost for preserving a species live in rural areas with low population. We recently asked our congressional delegation to support four specific legislative proposals seeking balance between preserving native species without destroying economic opportunity and growth. While these proposals are not a complete solution, they are a step in the right direction.

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Operating Heavy Machinery? Don't Do it Near Power Lines

If your to-do lists involve working with ladders, irrigation pipes, awkward machinery, or any tall implements, keep them as far away from power lines as possible.

Rule number one: Look up for safety! Other things to remember:

- Most local laws require you to leave a clearance of at least 10 feet from power lines (depending on voltage) when you're operating machinery. Best practice:
- Give your equipment twice the required clearance to minimize the electrical risks. The manufacturer of your equipment might recommend even greater clearances. Follow those guidelines.
- Face away from power lines while you work. If a chore requires you to work near a power line, enlist the help of a friend or family member to watch you work and alert you if you're inching too close to the line.
- If your helper is going to take over the job for a while, stop and re-evaluate the safe clearances. Talk about safety plans so anyone who is operating equipment on your property is aware of necessary clearances.
- Use highly visible ground markers to alert your helpers that they're near overhead power lines. Use maps or diagrams to show the location of power lines when planning or performing work.
- Machinery such as irrigation pipes, grain augers, silos, drill rigs, cranes, and excavators can easily contact a power line if you change the position or elevation. Always lower machinery before relocating it.
- Designate areas for high-risk operations such as elevating machinery. Evaluate machinery height before work begins when the tools are well clear of power lines.
- Carry pipes horizontally – and get a partner to help you. If you try it on your own, you'll wind up carrying the pipes vertically, which makes them more likely to swipe a power line.
- Never touch a downed power line; always assume it is live. If your vehicle or tractor or anything you have in tow comes into contact with a power line, do not exit the vehicle. Call Farmers' Electric Cooperative, 800-445-8541. We urge you to enter this number in the list of contacts in your cell phone. You could also dial 911. We can disconnect the line in order for you to safely leave your vehicle. It's always better to be safe than sorry.



HERO from PAGE 1

fects of G-forces on the body. He demonstrated to Ronnie how to breathe during a high G turn and what to do if he started getting nauseous. Next was his pilot, Thunderbird #7, Major Tyler Ellison. The Major went over what Ronnie would see around him in the cockpit and what he could and couldn't touch, explaining that all of the controls in the back seat would be live. He explained what maneuvers they would be executing and asked Ronnie if he had any questions. Then it was off to the flight line.

Once at the plane, all the gear was put on again and up into the F-16 Ronnie climbed. He was strapped in, and then after a few minutes of warming up the engine and checking



Ronnie being presented with a framed picture of the Thunderbirds from his "Hero Flight" pilot, Major, Tyler Ellison

to make sure it was ready to fly, off they went. They took off and flew just over the runway until they reached 450 knots (just over 515 mph) and then went into a 90 degree vertical climb up into the clouds. While Ronnie was over the Melrose bombing range seeing what an F-16 was capable of and feeling the G's, we were able to watch the Thunderbirds practice for the shows to come on Saturday and Sunday. After a little more than an hour, we heard that old familiar sound of a jet coming in from the wild blue yonder as Thunderbird #7 flew over and banked, then lined up to come in for a perfect landing (Ronnie told me later that the plane lands itself, all the pilot has to do is line it up with the runway). Once the F-16 was lined up perfectly with the one beside it and the jet engine was shut off, the canopy opened and out came Ronnie with the biggest smile on his face. Major Ellison talked about the flight and how great Ronnie did. He was then awarded a framed picture signed by all of the Thunderbirds and shook all of the crews' hands. Then it was back to the briefing room, to reality and civilian clothes for Ronnie. I know it was a great experience for him and his family. I would like to thank him for letting me share it with him and a special thanks to the Thunderbirds for their VIP treatment of Ronnie that day and all of us who were there with him.



Ronnie with Thunderbird #1 pilot, Lt. Colonel, Greg Mosley

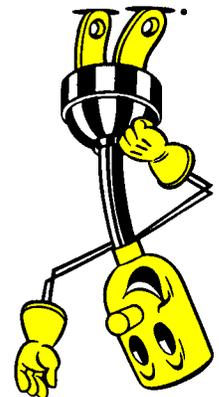
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