

FEC® POWER Source

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Harvest Season - Avoid Electrical Dangers

This year, National Farm Safety and Health Week is September 20-26. Tragedy can strike quickly if you become complacent when it comes to operating farm equipment near power lines. Montana teen, Derek Dowson’s story, is a reminder of what can happen, in an instant, when working around high voltage power lines.

Derek, a three sport athlete, was about to start his junior year at Great Falls High School. Unfortunately, Derek never got to suit-up for that first football game. Derek was working on his grandfather’s ranch when the accident occurred. Family members were moving an auger from one grain bin to another when it apparently tipped and touched a nearby power line. Derek was killed instantly.



The rush to harvest can result in agricultural workers and farmers working extra-long days with little sleep, which can impair judgment and allow them to forget necessary precautions. Power lines can pose a major hazard for farmers.

Before working in a field or around shops or grain bins, always take the time to note the location of power lines so that you can make sure to remain a safe distance from them.

To stay safe around overhead power lines, we urge farm operators and workers to:

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the beds of grain

trucks around power lines.

- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines – at all times, in all directions.
 - Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
 - Always remember to lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
 - Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
 - If a power line is sagging or low, call Farmers’ Electric immediately.
- If contact is made with a power line, remember that it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away and call the Farmers’ Electric and/or 911 immediately.

The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, avoiding touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, “bunny hop” away.

If you see someone’s equipment in contact with a power line, the best help you can give is from a safe distance away. Make sure to yell out to, signal, or call the equipment operator to make sure they remain in the vehicle until it is safe to exit. Remember, notify the cooperative immediately.

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Manager's Message...



Lance Adkins, GM

Federal Judge in Texas Rules on LPC

There have been some interesting developments on two issues of keen interest to members of Farmers' Electric (FEC) over the past few weeks. A District Court Judge in North Dakota has granted a preliminary injunction, blocking implementation of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule, set to take affect August 28. On the first of September, a District Court Judge in Texas ruled the decision to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) as a threatened species by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was unlawful, suspending the listing decision. It will take some

time to understand the full impact of these decisions and it is certain these decisions will be appealed by the federal agencies involved, as well as other interested parties.

WOTUS is an attempt by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to clarify which small waterways should be subject to federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act. According to EPA, Corps, and other supporters of the rule, federal jurisdiction is necessary to safeguard drinking water resources across the United States. Before the rule was implemented, these waters were under state jurisdiction and outside federal regulatory oversight. Thirteen states, including New Mexico, filed a request for preliminary injunction after the EPA and Corps failed to respond to a request to delay implementation until active litigation over the rule had been fully resolved. According to the EPA, the preliminary injunction will only apply to the thirteen litigants in this specific case and that the rule is now in effect in all other states.

While concerns over the new rule vary from state to state, litigants were united in that the rulemaking process allowed only minimal involvement from state authorities and other stakeholders impacted by the rule. One specific concern for New Mexico is that the new rule significantly expanded the definition of WOTUS to include small streams and tributaries that are normally dry, but show signs of water flow in the past. According to the EPA, many farming and ranching practices such as plowing and moving livestock would continue to be exempt from regulation. However, the rule could pose additional restrictions and costs for area farmers and ranchers with drainages, arroyos and playa lakes on their land that are normally dry, but flow or hold water after rainfall occurs. Further litigation may support the EPA rule in the end, but for now, New Mexico and twelve other states are exempt from this rule.

In the past, I have reported that several lawsuits were filed following the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) decision to list the LPC as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Two of these suits, one filed in Texas, the other filed in Oklahoma, seek to overturn the listing decision. A suit filed in the District of Columbia (DC) tries to make the case that the listing decision did not go far enough and seeks to have the LPC listed as endangered.

“It will take some time to understand the full impact of these decisions and it is certain these decisions will be appealed by the federal agencies involved, as well as other interested parties.”

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Fall is in the Air - Cold Days Right Around the Corner!

Get your heating system ready for winter, reduce energy costs and improve home comfort. Have you thought about winter readiness? September is the time to start thinking about home heating and indoor air quality, even if the temperatures are still in the 80s. The last thing any homeowner wants is to turn on their home heating system on the first frosty night of the season only to find that it doesn't work.

What should you do in September and October to prepare for chilly nights while also considering your indoor air quality? Farmers' Electric has some HVAC tips and ideas for staying warm while also reducing your monthly utility costs.

Schedule a heating system tune-up. If you don't have a service contract that automates the service aspect of system maintenance, early September is the best time to call



to schedule a tune-up. System maintenance can help identify problems in advance and prevent break downs and expensive, emergency repairs. Routine maintenance can also help improve system performance which translates to lower operating costs.

Replace your filters. Some people time filter replacement to the changing of the clocks (spring and fall). This is not often enough. Lack of regular filter changes not only increases monthly utility costs because the system labors harder to work (thus drawing more energy and increasing cost), but it also leads to system failures and expensive emergency repairs. Change your filter regularly – once a month is not too much to at least check the filter if not replace it.

Consider a Generator. One never knows when a big ice

storm will hit and cause widespread outages. Wouldn't it be nice to know that you could at least have lights during such times? If your generator is large enough, you could even run some electric heating. Generators have increased in popularity and for good reasons; the prices on generators won't break the bank, and they are fairly easy to operate. There are a variety of options from large to small, and homeowners should prioritize the things that must be operational vs. the things that would be nice to have during an outage.



Generator maintenance. If you have a generator, it's important to have it maintained just as you would with any other major home system (heat pump, furnace, etc.). Schedule a routine maintenance inspection to ensure that your system will be operational when you need it most. And make sure you have enough fuel (such as propane, diesel, or gasoline to keep it up and running for a specific length of time).

Maintain the area around your heat pump. If you have an outdoor unit it is important to keep the area clear of debris such as limbs, leaves and excess dirt. Did you know that the sides of a heat pump require up to 18 inches of clearance for proper performance? Any foliage – even grass clippings – that are too close to the unit may interfere with performance and cause the system to work harder (thus drawing more energy) or break down entirely.

Add insulation to your attic. Due to rising fuel costs, the current DOE [Department of Energy] recommended attic insulation for our region is R-49 [17" of blown-in insulation]. This is a significant increase from the R-38 standard of just a few years ago.

Be A Responsible Sportsman

It's bird season, and deer season is right around the corner. It's during this time of year that electric cooperatives experience a higher rate of outages which are caused by careless people shooting at power equipment such as line insulators, utility poles, power lines, transmission towers, and transformers.

We realize that the majority of hunters and shooting enthusiasts proceed cautiously when enjoying their sport and at the same time respect the property of others. But there is a small minority that don't understand that shooting at power facilities and related equipment is vandalism – a crime punishable by fines and/or jail.

This type of vandalism is very dangerous. Not only can someone be injured by a stray bullet, but the resulting power outages present risks to electric co-op personnel who must repair the damage and to the customers who may depend on the power for life-support equipment.

So please, check your target area carefully and respect the property of others. If there's anything but your game or your target in the sights, don't pull the trigger. If you are hunting or shooting on private land, *always ask the landowner first.*



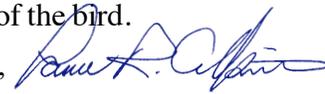
LPC from PAGE 2

In a nutshell, the judge in this case determined the USFWS failed to fully follow the formal process used to make a listing decision. While the USFWS endorsed the Range Wide Conservation Plan (Plan) developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), USFWS did not evaluate the likelihood of success the Plan could achieve when fully implemented.



Unlike the decision in the WOTUS rule, which limits the preliminary injunction to only the states involved, the decision to set aside the listing of LPC has effect in all five states identified as the historic range of the LPC. No doubt this decision will have some impact on the other two cases under way in Oklahoma and DC.

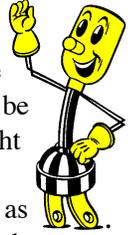
For the many corporations, small businesses (including FEC), governmental agencies, and individuals who signed on in support of the Range Wide Plan for conservation of the LPC, those commitments to conservation will continue. After all, it is the likelihood of success of the conservation plan that was a key point in the judge's decision to set the listing aside. In addition, survey results from this spring show the LPC population has increased significantly over the past two seasons. While some of the credit for this increase is given to conservation efforts, it is thought the most significant factor in recent recovery is related to increased rainfall throughout the historic range of the bird.

Until Next Month, 

Ask Willie!

Q. Willie, I have been in my house 15 years now. When I moved in, I bought all new appliances. We have had to do a few things to repair our refrigerator and washer/dryer set lately. Is it time I reinvested in new appliances?

A. That's a tough one! I would hate to encourage you to buy new when your older appliances seem to be working fine. But, read on and some of this might help make that decision a little easier.



If your home is full of appliances that qualify as "relics," you're beating the odds – but you might not be as lucky as you think.

The National Association of Home Builders estimates that the average life span of your major household appliances is 10 years.

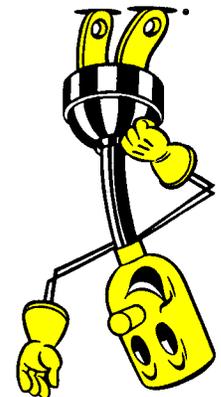
That's not as long as they used to last. For example, new clothes dryers and refrigerators 20 years ago were expected to last 13 years. But trash compactors back then were only supposed to last for only six years, and microwaves and dishwashers, for nine years. Unfortunately, the more you use an appliance, of course, the quicker it can wear out.

Most homeowners replace their appliances before a decade has passed. The older an appliance gets, the less energy efficient it becomes, as seals wear out and motor parts wear down. At some point, you might find that it's cheaper to replace an appliance than to continually repair it. Plus, newer versions of those appliances are more energy efficient, so they use less energy – which should lower your monthly power bill. A brand-new refrigerator, for example, could save you up to \$100 a year, compared with a 20-year-old appliance, even if it is still running well.

Hope that helps!

Send questions to: Ask Willie
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