



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Randy Richards
Assistant General Manager

District Offices

McLouth Office
P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS 66054-0070

Topeka Office
1100 SW Auburn Rd
Topeka, KS 66615

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tip of the Month

Got holiday leftovers? When possible, use the microwave to reheat food. Microwaves use as much as 80 percent less energy than a standard oven.

FROM THE CEO

There is Much to be Thankful For



Steve Foss

It's that time of year again, the time for reflection and thankfulness. You may have seen some of our posts on social media.

We give "many

thanks" for the things that make what we do possible, but that's just scratching the surface.

At FreeState we're thankful for the health and well-being of those we love, our friends, co-workers and neighbors.

At FreeState we're thankful for the country we live in and our leaders in Topeka and Washington, and the tough decisions they make. We are grateful for the open dialogue we have with many of them, and the opportunities they provide us to work for each one of our members.

At FreeState we are thankful for the board of trustees you have elected to govern your co-op. They are committed, dedicated, and they are doing the best they can to ensure equity and stability.

At FreeState we give thanks to those who protect our communities. The police officers, firefighters, and first responders who work so hard to keep us safe. We can't forget those serving our country who may not be with family or

loved ones this holiday season.

At FreeState we are thankful for the opportunity to help community organizations in need through the generosity of our members who round-up their bills each month, and those that volunteer their time and talents, and the continued support of our Operation Round-Up® program.

We here at FreeState are thankful for having some of the best jobs out there. Our employees work hard, they are committed to our members, and they have a passion for serving others. We have some of the most talented staff here at FreeState, but we are more than just cooperative employees. We're family members, moms, dads and siblings. We're sons and daughters, and some even grandparents. We work within our communities, we lead 4-H and scouting groups, we teach Sunday school.

At FreeState we are reminded why we do what we do when we interact with members. We appreciate each one of our members, who continually trust us to provide one of the necessities of modern life. We thank you for your patience, your concern, your positive thoughts and your feedback. It makes us strive to be better.

As always, if you have questions about this issue of The Outlet, please call us at 800-794-1989 or email customerservice@freestate.coop.

We Are Safety, Compliance & Resources

We Put Safety First

As a member-owner of FreeState Electric Co-op, your knowledge of and engagement with our co-op is our priority. In addition to helping you understand the services we offer, we believe it's important to also introduce you to those who provide you with safe, reliable and efficient power. To that end, FreeState will be publishing a yearlong monthly series that focuses on our departments and the employees who serve our members. Look for the articles in The Outlet, on our social media channels, and on our website www.freestate.coop, where we will feature exclusive web content. Our goal is to help you put faces and names behind those who work on the other end of the line because we are your neighbors who work for you.

When **JOHN MALONE**, FreeState's supervisor of safety, resources and compliance, divides up his time there is one component of the job that rises to the top—safety.

"Everybody comes home safe, and everybody has a reason to work safe," Malone said. "There is absolutely no room for silly mistakes in this line of work."

Malone, a former journeyman lineman, oversees the cooperative's safety plan

and conducts monthly safety meetings where all employees are required to attend. The topics vary depending on the time of year and requirements for certain certifications. For example, every year line workers must recertify in pole top and bucket rescue, and every two years in CPR and basic first aid.

"I am the safety officer for the co-op," Malone said. "My job is to make sure everyone knows the resources available to work safely, develop and modify safety protocols as the job evolves, lead the safety committee, and investigate any incidents that occur."

Malone leads the investigation team at FreeState. The team was established to investigate any accidents or incidents that may require change in protocol, and they work to improve education and outreach to employees.

The last thing Malone wants is for the safety committee to become a distraction. The primary function of the safety committee is to have an employee driven, safety-first culture where everyone is working toward the common goal of all employees completing each day as safely as possible.

"At FreeState we focus on safety and making sure there are no unsafe acts carried out," Malone said. "The last thing I want to do is investigate an accident,

but if we do fail, I want us to fail safely."

"Safety meetings and sharing information, and of course training, are all a part of that," Malone added.

Monthly meetings in McLouth and Topeka are used to educate all employees on safe work practices. The office staff also participates in select safety recertifications like CPR. In addition to education, these monthly meetings are a chance to discuss issues that have come up, or discuss how to solve problems that arise in the field.

"We talk about everything in those meetings," Malone said. "It's just a good chance for our workers to exchange ideas and experiences. If one guy is having an issue with cutouts, maybe another lineman can offer suggestions, or



John Malone prepares for a safety meeting.



Paul Herring tracks the inventory for the co-op. Herring is responsible for keeping supplies accessible and safety equipment tested and available for employees.

another way to approach the situation that makes it not only safer, but more efficient.”

Efficiency is important to FreeState. That’s where the resources portion of Malone’s job come in. In both offices, fleets of trucks are used on the job, and in each office a mechanical technician is available to maintain and monitor the fleet.

Each month the fleet undergoes rigorous inspections to maintain strict Department of Transportation regulations. These regulations are meant to keep workers safe not only on the roadways, but on the job site.

DEAN LASHER is the maintenance technician in McLouth. He oversees the fleet, as well as the facilities.

“One part of my job is keeping the fleet road worthy, safe and functional,” Lasher said. “We keep oil changed, lights working, and things in shape here in the shop, and out in the field.”

Lasher has been known to make field calls when needed if a tire goes flat, or if something breaks while the line crew is on a job. Lasher’s counterpart in the Topeka office is **SCOTT HALVERSON**, who also helps keep the Topeka fleet ready to go.

“If there is something to tinker with that’s where you’ll find me,” Halverson said.

Another resource to the cooperative is inventory. **PAUL HERRING** handles all the purchasing and inventory for FreeState and works with suppliers and vendors across the country to make certain the crews have exactly what they need, when they need it.

“I look at what we need and I try to find the best product with the best delivery date, and best price,” Herring said. “Once those items come in I work with accounting to make sure things get invoiced out properly, and I also work with our supplier, Border States, who provides most of our daily parts

and supplies.”

When the cooperative is preparing for a crisis Malone’s crew is pivotal to preparedness. Herring is a big part of prepping the co-op with what it will need to carry out the job no matter what the circumstances.

“When we look at forecasts in the spring, see that ice storms are possible, or when it’s the peak of storm season, it’s my job to make sure we have access to things like supplies, fuel, and other resources the line crews or tree crews might need,” said Herring.

Herring isn’t the only one preparing. Lasher and Halverson also make sure trucks are prepared for each season. Winterizing will be the next task on the list to make certain everything fires up without issue no matter what the weather is like outside.

Malone’s team also handles facility maintenance and upkeep. Things like painting, repairs, installations and mowing are all a part of what Lasher and Halverson do daily.

“When something needs fixed we’re typically the guys who get that call,” said Lasher. “There’s never a dull moment, and there is always something to do.”

Malone says his team is instrumental in keeping the facilities functioning smoothly.

“Without Dean and Scott we wouldn’t be able to work efficiently. They keep this place up and they keep things working for us,” added Malone.

“The thing about guys like Dean, for example, he’s been known to change a member’s flat tire in our parking lot,” Malone said. “Guys like him really do it all.”

Malone also oversees FreeState’s safety compliance and works with OSHA, Federated Insurance, and other organizations to make sure the cooperative is up-to-date. This also means working with the State of Kansas and Kansas Department of Transportation on permits, and fleet tags and registrations.

“There are a lot of moving parts each day,” Malone said. “The team I have helps me make it all happen. I’ve got the kind of team that comes in each day ready to work and do whatever it takes to get the job done.”

Getting the job done safely. That’s what it’s all about.



Dean Lasher works in the McLouth shop to maintain order and organization. He also keeps tabs on the facility.



A Unique Partnership Provides Hands-On Learning

KYLE SHARP has a pretty good idea what his future after Oskaloosa High School will look like.

The Oskaloosa senior is taking part in the On the Job Training (OJT) class that allows him to work for FreeState Electric Cooperative throughout the year for credit toward earning his diploma in May.

The objective of OJT is to provide students with fundamental skills they should possess to successfully transition from high school into the workforce and post-secondary education. These skills learned can then be applied to any industry and helps the students further develop personally and professionally.

While participating in the program, students agree to:

- ▶ Carry other high school subjects in addition to the OJT class
- ▶ Spend a predetermined number of hours per week on the job, and be paid a beginning wage.
- ▶ A probationary period to see if the job fits.
- ▶ Complete the course to earn credit toward graduation.

OJT is new to FreeState, but is something the co-op was excited to participate in.

“Any time we can expose someone to what we do here, that’s exciting,” said **JOHN MALONE**, the cooperative’s safety, compliance and resource supervisor and Sharp’s boss. “It’s important to show young people the options out there, and how they can achieve success.”

“It’s our goal here to provide him with the opportunity to learn, be in a professional environment, and develop skills that will stick with him for the rest of his career,” Malone added. “It’s also another way to get his foot in the door.”

Sharp aspires to be a lineman and will attend Manhattan Technical College following graduation. This job has shown him not only how a cooperative works, but allowed him to build relationships he will carry to the next step.

“I’ve enjoyed getting to know the guys, and it’s given me a chance to ask questions,” Sharp said. “I want to do this when I grow up.”

Sharp does have additional requirements as he works

through the year. In addition to his course load and regular extracurricular activities, he is required to reflect on what he has learned and how it is impacting his professional growth and personal development.

“At the end of each week I write about things I’ve learned and how it’s helped me,” added Sharp.

Sharp’s duties at the cooperative are general and include mowing, keeping the warehouse neat and tidy for the safety of employees, maintenance of the building, facilities and fleet management. Sharp does this all with the guidance of **DEAN LASHER**, FreeState’s maintenance technician.

“He’s taught me so much,” Sharp said. “It’s good to have someone to help and teach me, and I can ask him [Lasher] anything. I can ask anybody anything here.”

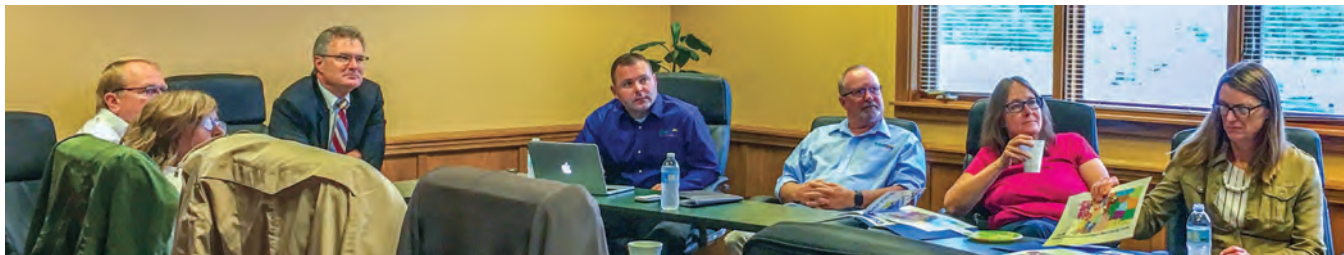
The OJT class varies at different area schools. If you are interested in an OJT class or program, contact your local school counselor.



Above: Oskaloosa High School Senior Kyle Sharp works alongside FreeState’s Dean Lasher to learn about fleet management. Sharp works at the co-op four hours each morning earning credit as part of the OJT class.

Left: Sharp works to keep the shop tidy. He has gained work experience and has built important relationships. Sharp will attend school to be a lineman after graduation.

FreeState Hosts White House Delegation



Representatives from the White House Office of Management and Budget met with a delegation from FreeState, KEC, and Farm Credit of America to discuss government programs and the impact they have on rural communities and utilities.

On Sept. 5, FreeState Electric Cooperative hosted two members of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the Topeka office. The purpose of the trip was to learn more about FreeState operations, how the cooperative interacted with the federal government and how government programs impacted not only FreeState, but co-ops across the state.

Visiting from the White House OMB were **SUSAN LEETMAA** and **RUTH SAUNDERS**. Leetmaa, is an agricultural economist and senior examiner in the OMB Agriculture Branch, where she is responsible for overseeing the budget of the Commodity Credit Corporation. Before coming to OMB in 2002, Leetmaa was an agricultural economist with USDA's Economic Research Service, where she worked on international trade issues and how trade and international policies impacted the environment, and she was an expert on European agricultural policy.

Saunders is the chief of OMB's Agriculture Branch, overseeing USDA's budget, except for the Food and Nutrition Service. She started her career working for the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Agriculture. Most of her career was spent working as a senior examiner for the OMB's Agriculture Branch (working on issues ranging from forestry to international trade and dairy policy) and representing the dairy industry in the private sector.

The trip for the Washington delegation also included three individuals representing Kansas Electric Cooperatives:

Leslie Kaufman, director of government relations and legal counsel; Bruce Graham, CEO; and Tara Mays, manager of government relations, all from Topeka.

James Nygren, legislative officer, Farm Credit Services of America, Omaha, Nebraska, and Janet Bailey, director, industry and legislative engagement from the Manhattan, Kansas, office rounded out the group of visitors.

The delegation met with FreeState's executive management team. Steve Foss, CEO, and Assistant General Managers Chris Parr, and Randy Richards presented information on how the cooperative functions, how it is governed, the contract with Fort Leavenworth, and how capital credits are returned to member-owners. The executive team also presented on the importance of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to all electric cooperatives.

RUS, which is a part of USDA, provides low interest financing allowing cooperatives like FreeState to provide improved infrastructure and improved reliability of service. Continued funding from USDA provides stability to finance investment in the electrical system.

FreeState develops a four-year construction work plan that lines out what improvements will be made over the next four years. This provides engineering support and detailed costs for the construction.

"These construction work plans are really a road map for the cooperative, both operationally and financially," Foss said. "They will not only detail all of the work, but how that work will be paid for."

Foss added that the time it takes for a construction work plan is not a quick process. "It takes anywhere from 10 to 12 months for us to get the funding," Foss said. "It takes time and detailed research, but without this we wouldn't be able to provide the reliability that we do."

The team also discussed the available Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program with the delegation.

"FreeState is committed to looking at rural economic development opportunities," Foss said. "Because we can't serve people who aren't there, and the REDLG loans allow us the ability to assist businesses even if they aren't members."

The USDA program provides funding that allows FreeState to provide zero interest loans for local businesses in rural areas with an irrevocable letter of credit. Any business looking to expand or rebuild, or update could be eligible. Program participants then make loan payments back to FreeState at zero interest over a 10-year period.

"The program creates jobs, and development," Foss said. "Not only for our members, but across the entire FreeState territory."

REDLG loans allow us the ability to assist businesses even if they aren't members.

STEVE FOSS, FREESTATE CEO

Operation Round-Up® Grants \$21,000 in September

The FreeState Volunteer Member Committee met Sept. 16 to review Operation Round-Up® applications. The committee granted \$21,000 to five area organizations. Those receiving funding this quarter were:

▶ **VALLEY FALLS RECREATION COMMITTEE – \$10,000**

The organization asked for assistance to improve and expand the facilities at the ball fields by making them ADA compliant and include a concession stand.

▶ **CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NEK – \$5,000**

CCNEK provides a Stabilization Service program that aids with housing and utilities to prevent eviction, disconnection or restoration of utility services.

▶ **TONGANOXIE PUBLIC LIBRARY – \$3,000**

The Chieftain Café project provides children and teens an opportunity to come to the library after school Monday-Friday, 3:30 to 5 p.m. to choose a healthy snack they might not otherwise be able to acquire. Since

opening in January 2017, the project has had 18,951 visits.

▶ **DELAWARE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY – \$2,000**

The library will be replacing computers that will be accessible to the public.

▶ **DOVER FEDERATED CHURCH FOOD PANTRY – \$1,000**

An outreach program for the Dover community aiding those needing food and toiletries to make it through the month. The Dover Federated Church facilitates the program because they have the necessary space to do so.

Those getting assistance do not have to be affiliated with the church.

The FreeState Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization set up to represent the members of FreeState and the funds collected through Operation Round-Up® for charitable purposes. The mission of the foundation is to distribute money raised to worthwhile, charitable and educational projects or programs that will improve lives and respond to immediate needs within the counties where the cooperative provides electric service.

The average annual donation is \$6 per member, but the most any account can give each month is 99 cents – or a maximum of \$11.88 per year. The monthly billing statement will indicate donations, and members will get an annual total, as contributions are tax deductible. To opt in or out of the program call the office at 800-794-1989.

The committee meets quarterly (March, June, September, December) to distribute funding collected from the Operation Round-Up® program. If you are interested in serving the committee, please contact the co-op for details.

Following each committee meeting, a summary is available on the website at www.freestate.coop/ORUawards.

If you know of an organization that may benefit from an Operation Round-Up® grant, visit www.freestate.coop to find application materials and more information on the application process. Members can opt out (or in) of the Operation Round-Up® program by calling FreeState Electric Cooperative at 800-794-1989 or visiting www.freestate.coop/operationroundup.

Be Aware of Third-Party Payment Sites and App Risks

Each day we are inundated with offers to “go green” or “go digital,” and many choose third-party payment processors through online access or mobile apps to save time when paying monthly bills. However, problems can be lurking, especially when these sites fail to make your payments on time.

A third-party processor is any non-bank entity that takes your payments and then forwards them on your behalf to your debtors. Examples of these sites are Doxo.com, Western Union, Mint.com, QuickBooks and others. These platforms allow payments electronically and often charge a flat fee or percentage-based fee for use of the service.

Most payments do not experience a glitch or problems, but there could be a problem if these sites fail to post a payment promptly. Consequences could be past due balances or late fees with further risk of service interruption or disconnection.

JENNIFER PING, FreeState’s member relations manager, says members who choose to utilize third-party sites do so at their own risk.

“FreeState offers online payment through the SmartHub portal, as well as the option to automatically make payments through bank draft and pay by phone. When making payments electronically through those

options on time, we can guarantee payments are going to post on time without additional fees.” Ping added, “members who choose to utilize third-party sites can do so, but they also need to be aware of any risks associated with those sites.”

Ping encourages members to always read the fine print and be aware of the timing for these sites to post payments on your behalf.

The safest way to guarantee your monthly bill payment posts on time, and without fees, is to pay directly to FreeState. Any payments made to FreeState are processed using bank encryption to create secure, timely payments.

Members have multiple payment options as mentioned above, but can also send a payment in the mail, or stop by one of our offices in Topeka or McLouth to make a face-to-face payment and receive a receipt.

Members of FreeState have choices when it comes to paying monthly electric bills, and different options fit different needs. FreeState wants to make you aware of the options the co-op provides and risks associated with paying through third-party sites.

If you have any questions about your payment options, please call us at 800-794-1989 or email customerservice@freestate.coop.

10th Annual Health Fair & Member Appreciation

FreeState Electric Cooperative hosted their 10th Annual Health Fair and Member Appreciation Day Oct. 2. The event included a soap drive to assist area food pantries with gathering personal care items.

The fair featured local vendors that provided information on physical, mental and financial health to attendees.

"This is just one way we hope to help our members, and the communities we serve," said Steve Foss, general manager. "Events like these not only provide valuable information to our members, but serve the community by getting organizations together to bring awareness to several services, programs and opportunities the area provides."



Above: Dave Taylor (right) talks with Sam's Club representative Carrie Milton.

Below: Tami Sterling (left) with Kansas Foundation for Medical Care visits with member Jan Shirey about services available to Kansans.



Thank You Vendors!

- ▶ Assured Title
- ▶ Edward Jones – Neil Mullikan
- ▶ F.W. Huston Medical Center
- ▶ First State Bank and Trust
- ▶ God's Storehouse
- ▶ Holland Eye Clinic
- ▶ Integrated Behavioral Technologies
- ▶ Jefferson County Humane Society
- ▶ Jefferson County Economic Development
- ▶ Jefferson County Friends of Hospice
- ▶ Jefferson County Health Department
- ▶ Jefferson County Sheriff
- ▶ Kansas Foundation for Medical Care
- ▶ Lions Club
- ▶ Mary Kay – Rashell Will
- ▶ McLouth Fire Department and EMS
- ▶ McLouth Library
- ▶ Midland Care
- ▶ Midwest Chiropractic Center
- ▶ Primerica
- ▶ Sam's Club – Legends
- ▶ STACARE
- ▶ Taylor Insurance
- ▶ The Medicine Store
- ▶ Therapy Works
- ▶ Town and Country Real Estate & Auction
- ▶ Willow Center for Domestic Violence

Cooperative Briefs

NOW AVAILABLE!

2019 Youth Program Applications

FreeState invests in our youth with opportunities designed to reflect the realities of our society and its preference for dynamic, personal interactions. In today's professional world, employers and thought leaders want to see presenters who make a connection with the audience while communicating a message. Youth Tour and Youth Leadership Camp experiences are all-expense-paid and will truly be experiences of a lifetime for area youth.

Any high school junior living in the FreeState territory with a parent or guardian who is a member of the cooperative is eligible. **DEADLINE FOR THE 2019 PROGRAM ARE MONDAY, FEB. 11, 2019.**

For more information and to download an application packet visit **WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH** or call the office at 800-794-1989.

Cold Weather Rule Reminder

FreeState Electric Cooperative does not participate in the Cold Weather Rule established by the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC), a rule which restricts electric disconnects from Nov. 1 through March 31, when temperature forecasts are 35 degrees or below. FreeState Electric Cooperative is not mandated by this policy and has been responsible for establishing its own appropriate seasonal rules since 1996.

All accounts are subject to disconnection for non payment and are not governed by temperature.

If you have any questions about FreeState's seasonal rules or billing options, please call our office at 785-478-3444.

Reminder: Office Closed

The FreeState offices will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 22, and Friday, Nov. 23, for the Thanksgiving holiday. We wish all our members a Happy Thanksgiving!

Raines Recognized for Service



Mark Raines, engineering operations technician, received a plaque for 20 years of service to the co-op on Sept. 1. Pictured are Raines (left) and engineering manager Matt Magill.

The Co-op Connection Corner

Each month we highlight a few local businesses where the Co-op Connections card provides a discount. This month we're also featuring a national retail store and yogurt chain.

If you have questions about the card feel free to contact the office at 800-794-1989. If you'd like more information or instructions on downloading the mobile app visit our website at

WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/CONNECTIONS.

- ▶ **BOGARD BODY AND WELDING**
17734 K16 Highway, McLouth, KS 66054
- ▶ **COMPLETE HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING, LLC**
18985 178th St., Tonganoxie, KS 66086
- ▶ **HOBBY LOBBY**
1900 S.W. Wanamaker Road, Topeka, KS 66604
1801 W. 23rd St., Lawrence, KS 66046
- ▶ **JEFFERSON HILL VINEYARDS AND GUEST HOUSE**
12381 Washington Road, McLouth, KS 66054
- ▶ **ORANGE LEAF FROZEN YOGURT**
1570 SW Wanamaker Road, Ste. 230, Topeka, KS 66604
- ▶ **PERRY CARPET SHACK**
107 Elm St., Perry, KS 66073
- ▶ **TONGANOXIE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM**
201 W. Washington, Tonganoxie, KS 66086
- ▶ **TOWN AND COUNTRY REAL ESTATE AND AUCTION**
313 Jefferson, Oskaloosa, KS 66066
- ▶ **WINCHESTER HARDWARE**
12804 Wellman Road, Winchester, KS 66097
- ▶ **WORTHINGTON HARDWARE AND AUTO PARTS**
313 E. Front St., Perry, KS 66073

THINK
LOCAL
FIRST