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Cover:

In recent years, WFEC has strengthened its focus to include more advancements towards renewable energy or zero-carbon energy to provide a diversified portfolio for its member distribution cooperatives.

(Adobe Stock Image)

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WFEC Service Territory



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WFEC provides diverse blend of energy for its member distribution cooperatives

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) is pleased to be a part of the promising new opportunities that lie ahead for its electric cooperative members of tomorrow. With the electric utility industry changing at such a rapid pace, thorough planning, an innovative workforce and strong relationships, will be shaping the future in a way that only cooperatives can do, by working together.

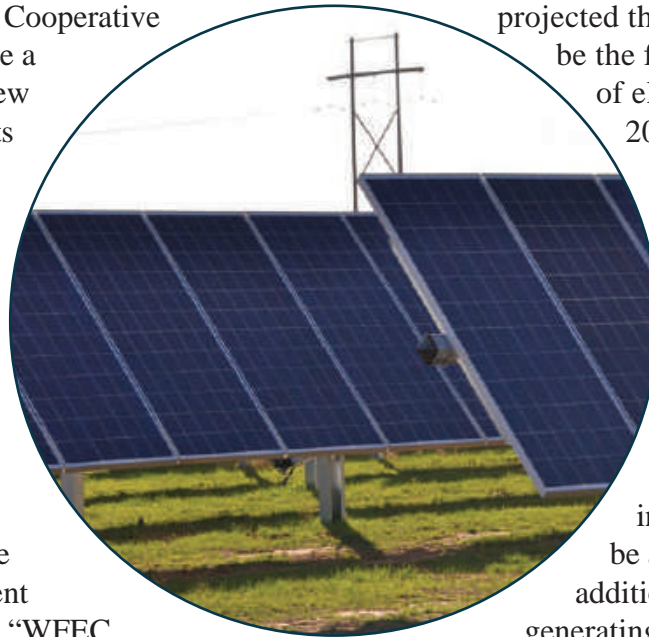
A major component within the industry involves the advancement of renewable energy technology. “WFEC has always worked at having a diverse blend of cost-effective energy in its wholesale power mix,” explained WFEC CEO Gary Roulet.

In recent years, this focus has strengthened to include more advancements towards renewable energy or zero-carbon energy, with development and growth playing essential roles in providing a diversified portfolio. Renewable energy, often referred to as clean energy, comes from natural sources or processes that are constantly replenished. For example, the sun will shine and the wind will blow. Also, most renewable energy sources are carbon-free, which means that they do not emit any carbon dioxide when they generate energy. Solar, wind, and hydroelectric are carbon-free.

With a well-balanced and diversified portfolio of generation resources, WFEC is able to reduce exposure to changing market conditions, which helps to keep rates competitive, Roulet noted. This blend reflects a mix of technologies and fuel types, including owned facilities and capacity, in addition to energy provided through contracts and power purchase agreements (PPAs).

Factors driving renewable prospects

In its latest Short Term Energy Outlook, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)



projected that renewable energy will be the fastest-growing source of electricity generation in 2020. Notably, electricity generation from renewable energy sources is estimated to rise from 17% in 2019 to 21% in 2020.

The projected increase in the share of renewables as a source of electricity generation in the United States can be attributed to expected additions to wind and solar generating capacity. EIA expects the electric power sector to add 23.2 gigawatts (GW) of new wind capacity and 12.6 GW of utility-scale solar capacity in 2020.

WFEC's evolution towards zero carbon energy

Hydro power was the first zero-carbon energy source to be included in WFEC's portfolio. This hydro power generation generally came from the Southwest Power Administration (SWPA) and Corps of Engineer resources in eastern Oklahoma, northeast Arkansas and southwest Missouri. In 2000, outside of these hydro resources, the remainder of the energy provided to WFEC members was from fossil fuel generation, which was a mix of coal and natural gas.

In 2001, WFEC sold approximately 5,425 gigawatt-hours (GWh) to its members at a cost of 4.9 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) delivered to the low side of substation delivery locations.

After the new millennium, WFEC's Board of Trustees began to consider the possibilities of wind energy* as a new power source, and, if adding these resources would lower the wholesale power cost to its members over time.

In 2003, WFEC became the first utility in the state of Oklahoma to sign a long-term PPA with a

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Renewable Energy



WFEC currently has 707 MW of available wind energy* through power purchase agreements with wind farm developers in Oklahoma and New Mexico.

wind farm developer for the development of Phase 1 of the Blue Canyon Wind Farm*, to be located north of Lawton. Through this venture, WFEC added the energy produced by the 74 megawatt (MW) facility to its generation mix.

Since that time, through various wind projects, WFEC has increased its currently available wind generation to 707 MW, with projects in Oklahoma and New Mexico. All of these projects were achieved with the same guidelines of helping lower the overall cost of wholesale power to its members. An additional 250 MW wind project*, which is expected to be in commercial operation by the end of 2020, will boost WFEC's wind energy capability to 957 MW.

In 2016, through a long-term PPA, WFEC added a 25 MW, tilt panel, solar* project to its generation mix. This project, Caprock Solar, is located south of Tucumcari, N.M. Since then, WFEC has added 26 MW of additional solar* energy in New Mexico and Oklahoma on behalf of its member owners. This increase included six commercial-scale solar* facilities, plus 13 community solar sites. Again, the addition of solar* was made with the premise of lowering WFEC's overall cost of wholesale power.

End of 2019 data

By the end of 2019, hydro, wind* and solar* generation resources provided approximately 33% of the wholesale power WFEC delivered for its member owners.

At the same time, 19 years later, WFEC sold 11,468 GWh to its members at a cost of 5.4 cents per kWh delivered to the low side of substation delivery points.

That is an increased cost of about 12.5% over the 19 years. Over the same period, inflation has increased about 49%. While WFEC's wholesale power cost did not go down, it increased far less than inflation, while sales increased more than double.

Future strategies

With the strategy to keep wholesale power costs low, where is WFEC expected to be by 2024?

“That’s a fairly easy future to predict, as WFEC and our member-owners have PPAs already in place to continue our evolution towards increasing zero carbon energy,” Roulet pointed out. Several new projects will be completed in the 2021 to 2023 time period and set to become commercial at that time.

The major project for this period, has three parts. The first part, a 250 MW Oklahoma wind* project that will deliver over 1,000,000 MWh of energy will be completed in late 2020. The second part involves a 250 MW Oklahoma solar* project, with completion set for 2023, which will add an additional 650,000 MWh of energy.

The third part of this three-part project is a 200 MW battery that can discharge 200 MW continually over a four-hour period to help meet peak load. The battery will be recharged from the solar* project for an initial term. But after that opening period, it can re-charge from the wind* or solar* project, or from the electric grid, utilizing the source that is lowest and available.



Hydro power was the first zero-carbon energy source to be included in WFEC's portfolio.

In addition, WFEC is working to develop additional solar* resources in New Mexico. Interconnection agreements and timing issues for construction has caused WFEC to change directions slightly, however the addition of a solar* project, greater than 100 MW, in the northern portion of a member’s service territory now seems very likely over the coming year or two.

Once these new resources are commercial, by the end of 2024, roughly half of the energy sales to WFEC members will be offset by zero carbon generating resource sales to the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) market.

The majority of these current and future resources are a fixed cost, with no escalators in cost over the next 20 years, which helps keep wholesale power costs low for an extended period of time.

Upcoming potential projects

Slightly after 2025, WFEC may add an additional, modest amount of natural gas generation, in order to keep its generation resources spread out, so as not to “put all our eggs in one basket,” commented Roulet. However, any proposed project has not yet been totally evaluated.

What does all of this mean for the future of wholesale power costs for WFEC’s member owners? Roulet noted that by selecting beneficial locations for high output from wind*, maximum sunshine for solar*, and consideration of positive locations for

price, WFEC will be able to maximize their potential. Also, with these projects, WFEC hopes to continue slightly reducing its wholesale power cost to member owners, with a goal of reaching the 2000 wholesale power cost by 2025.

Carbon-free resources have not been the only factors allowing for a flattening of costs. The region, served by WFEC and our Oklahoma and New Mexico members, is part of the SPP Regional Transmission Organization. This allows for low-cost access to a regional transmission grid, plus the SPP Integrated Market, which offers regional least-cost economic dispatch of regional resources. Both are beneficial to the addition of carbon-free resources, and their operation and lowering costs.

However, the development of carbon-free resources is not a quick process, and it probably does not lend itself to a total use of renewable sources. Fossil fuel sources remain necessary for periods of changing wind, water and solar conditions. The sun doesn’t always shine and the wind doesn’t always blow.

“It also points out the value of cooperatives working together with quality Board of Trustee leadership and direction to provide benefits to the end-use consumer-owners, including distribution cooperative members, and the distribution cooperatives themselves as owners of WFEC,” Roulet noted. “Doing these large projects individually would be very difficult and likely unsuccessful, however, almost anything is possible when cooperatives work together towards a common consumer-benefitting goal,” he added.

With a future full of renewable energy, “the future’s so bright, we gotta wear shades”.

**WFEC purchases or produces energy from various wind & solar resources. However, WFEC has not historically, nor may not in the future, retain or retire all of the renewable energy certificates associated with the energy production from these facilities.*

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WFEC's Pandemic Preparedness Team implemented to update company plan

By Sondra Boykin

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) was quick to activate its Pandemic Preparedness Team, which at the time consisted of some 14 employees from a diverse cross-section within the company. This team began reviewing and updating an existing corporate Pandemic Preparedness Plan that was put in place in November 2014.

This plan, which was originally created to provide structure during emergency situations like pandemics, promptly began to unfold, as WFEC employees and their families were being impacted. This company-wide team grew to include employees from other departments, as additional input pertaining to other areas was needed. Frequent updates were necessary as factors changed, and it soon became evident that the company would be faced with preparing for unforeseen challenges yet to come from the situation.

The overall Pandemic Plan was a significant collaborative effort that included numerous team meetings, most of which were hosted through a “Zoom” format to allow for participation from employees at all of WFEC’s facilities, as well as including those working from their homes.

Transmission & Distribution Services Manager Forrest Brock served as the primary lead for the overall Pandemic Preparedness Plan, arranging meeting times and coordinating topics.

A great deal of the input into the Pandemic Plan involved dealing with the uncertainty of the rapidly developing COVID-19 virus that had gone far beyond anyone’s control. The potential for additional crises coming from exposure became endless. Ideas and advice were solicited from a wide range of employees, with varying job sets, to develop a proactive strategy to face potential possibilities, while at the same time evaluating any potential risks.

After multiple revisions of files and documents, along with review of many sources of federal, state,

local, and industry guidance, a supplemental plan that will continue through the end of 2020 was approved by the Pandemic Team and released to WFEC employees in late-May.

However, at the time of approval, it was noted that revisions would occur as necessary. And, within the plan itself, each department was allowed the



T&D Services Manager Forrest Brock served as the primary lead for the overall Pandemic Preparedness Plan, arranging meeting times and coordinating topics among team members who offered valuable input during frequent Zoom meetings.

flexibility in scheduling to meet the various needs of its employees, as well as the work load and duties required from each department. Ensuring WFEC’s continued ability to carry out its mission to provide reliable energy services to its members was an underlying premise of the overall plan.

The Pandemic Preparedness Team continues to have weekly conference calls to evaluate conditions and discuss various topics, including supply levels, any potential exposures, future plans, and other factors.

A one-page publication, providing updates and tips for dealing with the pandemic, along with other relevant information, is emailed daily to employees.

Exposure Begins

WFEC was faced with an employee exposure in mid-March, just as WFEC’s updated Pandemic

Plan and the plans of other organizations across the country, were being considered, communicated, and implemented due to the widespread advancement of COVID-19.

“We all had a good wake-up call yesterday, when it was determined there had been a possible exposure in the Anadarko Headquarters Office, B and C buildings,” WFEC CEO Gary Roulet pointed out in one of the earliest emails sent to employees, as the situation began to unfold.

“It is very possible not all these areas were exposed, but we cast the net wide enough to be sure,” he pointed out, adding that all employees

working in these areas would be asked to stay home for a designated timeframe. The buildings were then professionally sanitized by an outside organization, with a quarantine period expected to continue until early April.

Approval for WFEC to begin allowing more employees to work from home occurred company-wide at that time. Job sets and duties were taken into consideration, as well as individual circumstances. Travel restrictions were also set, with trips between Anadarko and Moore immediately halted.

Employees were advised to take essential papers

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A personal perspective...

Coronavirus is "real" for many patients

By Sondra Boykin

“I have had this cough for months. It’s just allergies.”

“I have been to the doctor and I tested negative for both A & B strains of the flu.”

These comments were made by someone who ended up battling the coronavirus with 21 days in the hospital Intensive Care Unit, 14 of which were on a ventilator.

That someone is me.

Never, ever, did it cross my mind that I would fight this battle. It only happens to other people – people you don’t even know. But, as I was there in the hospital bed, after finally waking up from the ventilator experience, many thoughts raced through my mind. I thought I should be able to go home since I was awake and I wondered why I kept being told that I would be there for a while.

Little did I realize that I was unable to walk on my own – I couldn’t even stand. I was weaker than I ever had been before, and it was out of my control. Nurses and other hospital staff kept drawing blood, taking chest x-rays and changing out various breathing tubes and machines.

For me, an early morning visit to the Emergency Room in late-March started this downhill slide. As I struggled to even breathe, I was immediately taken to a room, then moved on to have x-rays. After that, I don’t remember anything until I woke up 10 days later, fighting the ventilator. This struggle led to four more days of being heavily sedated, while remaining on a ventilator, as they realized I needed more time to heal.

During those 14 days, I faced many battles that I don’t remember, but my family and friends can recall them well. At one point, I was iced down due to a dangerously high temperature. My heart rate and blood pressure fluctuated during this time as well, in addition to several other concerns. I was finally administered the drug, hydroxychloroquine, which kick-started my recovery.

Once the ventilator was removed, I spent an additional week in ICU, followed by a short stay in the COVID wing of the hospital, and then finally, home. I immediately started twice-a-week physical therapy sessions to regain strength and work on coordination and balance issues that were affected by the coronavirus. This therapy is set to continue through most of July, which will mark over four months of dealing with COVID-19.

Recently, as I watched an online live streaming funeral for a lady I know personally, who was in the hospital at the same time as me, but fought longer (88 days), before losing the COVID-19 battle, I realized how fortunate I am to have survived.

COVID-19 exists and it can certainly affect lives. It can also sneak up on you. While some may never even know they have it, or have mild symptoms, there are others who are instantly stopped in their tracks.

It’s real.

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WFEC employees make adjustments for dealing with COVID-19 pandemic

The spreading coronavirus pandemic has upended many lives and families, affected numerous businesses, negatively impacted the economy and basically changed everyday life as it has been known. It is a crisis that happened with extraordinary speed that quickly became very complicated - requiring a great deal of planning and communicating.

For Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), COVID-19 has brought about numerous operational changes, particularly in work schedules being combined with creating a safe working environment that works for most employees, while continuing to provide reliable energy services for its distribution cooperative members.

While there have been some challenges, as occur with any changes, the majority have been worked through and overcome, without a negative impact on productivity.

“There are employees who believe the COVID-19 pandemic does not exist and is a “hoax”, while there are other employees who greatly fear this pandemic. WFEC’s goal has always been to find a spot somewhere in the middle that does the responsible thing and creates a safe as possible work environment that works for everyone between the two extremes,” WFEC CEO Gary Roulet commented.

He noted that WFEC has resisted the idea of working from home over the past three or four years leading up to the latest pandemic. “Realizing that this would likely occur, the Pandemic Preparedness Team took steps to make sure it worked better,” he noted, adding that the slowing point was the amount of VPN licenses being expanded from 50 to 150.

Roulet pointed out that WFEC had been moving toward a “working from home schedule” when the first exposure occurred within the company, leading to an earlier implementation of that portion of the plan.

“All in all, it works well for a group of

*Article by Sondra Boykin
Photos by Maria Crowder & Scott Williams*

employees who can work from home, but does not work for everyone,” he commented. “Going forward, it will likely continue, but with the qualification that to work from home, you need to be able to do all parts of your job from home,” Roulet pointed out.

Completing the necessary paperwork from home was an initial challenge for some, however, Roulet noted that expense account and time sheet submission had worked well and would likely continue. He also referred to multiple ways of processing accounts payable being implemented.

“I believe in some ways, we are doing a better job of managing time now than we did before, so it has been successful, and hopefully, what we have learned will continue in the future,” Roulet said.

Scheduling changes and the limiting of visitors within the office areas at WFEC have also led to



Bryan Swanda, facilities maintenance mechanic, checks the supplies at WFEC to ensure there is an adequate stock of necessary items for keeping facilities sanitized.

modifications for monthly Board of Trustee meetings. Roulet noted that one Board of Trustee meeting was hosted entirely with Zoom. However, he pointed out, that particular meeting included a long agenda and took a lot more time than expected, but was successful overall. The latest Board of Trustee meeting, which was followed by the Member's Annual Meeting (delayed from April), was conducted in person at the Moore Office, with another 16 joining in by Zoom.

Roulet suspects that future monthly meetings will allow for the two options to attend – in person or by Zoom. “They (WFEC Board) are adapting, but I suspect they do not like the “tele-meeting” process as well as in person meetings,” he noted.

When asked if he ever thought we would be dealing with such a major impact on the economy, industry or overall business world, Roulet commented: “The oil and gas bust occurred prior to COVID-19, but was magnified by the situation. I never contemplated a quarantine of the entire U.S. as a whole, nor did I imagine the pandemic would move so fast or make such a huge impact. Dealing with the pandemic, day-in and day-out, is a work in progress as neither the quarantine nor the re-start of the economy has been very successful. Until everyone, and that means everyone, is comfortable with returning to some sort of ‘new normal’, and I suspect that will be when there is a vaccine, we will find the world in a version of the movie, ‘Groundhog Day’ for the near future.”

Power Plants

WFEC's Power Plant employees have dealt with scheduling modifications during the COVID-19 crisis, which includes alternating shifts to allow a limited amount of exposure to one another.

“I'm proud to say, the plant managers all developed their own plans to maintain reliability at each location, with plans based on many factors, including employee skills, hours on duty and critical operation,” explained Gary Gilleland, vice president of Generation at WFEC.

He added that generation employees split up (rotating) crews at the plant in order to reduce exposure. “There is a cost to operating in a type of



John McCreight (left), environmental coordinator, checks in for the day at WFEC's Moore Office with Kelby Brown, staff assistant. Brown sends out a list of employees in the building each day, as one of the safety steps to identify who is working in the office.

atmosphere where employees don't make personal contact on occasion,” Gilleland noted.

“Should we ever forsake, the shake of a handshake, the grip of a friendly hug, the eye to eye conversation that is priceless, humanity is lost,” Gilleland commented.

Gilleland also continues to strongly encourage employees to not come to work, if they have symptoms, adding for them to stay home as much as possible and continue to take precautions, especially if they travel.

Mooreland Plant Manager Danny Thomas pointed out that a few adjustments had been made at the Mooreland Plant to accommodate work schedules and special circumstances. Maintenance employees are working a four-day, 10-hour schedule, which leaves half of each department off work on Mondays and Fridays, Thomas noted.

The operations group is working their normal 12-hour schedule, with lab personnel working seven days on - seven days off. He pointed out that one of the lab workers is high risk due to diabetes.

He also pointed out that half of each department has isolated to different areas of the plant facility, which keeps no more than three people together at any given time. The control room is off limits to everyone, except the operators, with lockout/tagouts being performed from outside the control room.

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Office personnel are still coming to the plant to work, however, each has a specific duty location, as well as practicing social distancing from each other. “Of course, everyone tries to comply with social distancing and practicing good hygiene and we have plenty of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizer for everyone,” Thomas pointed out.

He noted that Woodward County has begun to have an uptick in cases, but, added that it is not as bad as other areas of the state. “We are very fortunate in where we live,” Thomas said.

Information Technology

“Going into the work-from-home experience, I had three concerns: cohesion, communication and control,” commented Dawne Massey, manager, Information Technology Operations, who has had past experiences with working from home and knew first-hand some of the complications that might occur. However, through various means, these concerns have been overcome.

Being a part of Information Technology, Massey pointed out some realizations that many WFEC employees have experienced in working from home, including: not printing out nearly as much; realizing that one computer will work, under most circumstances, with even one monitor; and that all of those paper files in their on-site office drawers aren’t necessary.

“This pandemic has created opportunities in collaboration and automation technology for our employees,” she noted, pointing out that IT Operations staff is hoping to leverage some of the positive momentum and be the “champion of change” by



Jayden Redden, apprentice IV station maintenance mechanic (above), places bottles of water on the Break Room table at the Anadarko Headquarters for employees. The water fountains and ice machines are not in use during this time as a safety precaution.

modernizing some of WFEC’s business processes.

Microsoft Teams is one particular example of a technology that is being shared by the IT Operations group. “It is our substitute for walking to someone’s office to touch base, for any meetings or just impromptu discussions. It has provided us with limitless collaboration opportunities,” Massey said.

She feels that daily meetings (via Microsoft Teams) has helped everyone in the department to have some exposure to areas they have not had in the past. “It’s promoted more collaboration and more cohesion than we have seen in the past,” she pointed out. “Before the pandemic, we usually met mostly in small groups, which at times created silos. But, this new daily meeting format has been very helpful to alleviate that issue,” Massey commented.

Marketing, Member Relations & Communication

For the Marketing, Member Relations and Communication group, the shift from being in the office to working from home was a more natural transition. “The marketers are the horse soldiers of the group – we are used to working ‘on the road or being on the phone’ with our members,” said Mark Faulkenberry, vice president, Marketing and Member Relations.

“We adapted and overcame some of the natural challenges involved with working from home.”

Duties were also adjusted to accommodate additional work load within the department. Faulkenberry also noted that this group has become more proficient with Zoom meetings as a way to keep in touch with member cooperatives.

One difficulty faced during the pandemic involved a delay in starting time for a newly hired employee. Faulkenberry noted that finding a time to train this employee was complicated due to work schedules and employees working from both home and in the office.

The Marketing and Communication group was already basically divided, he explained, with half of

the staff working in Anadarko and the other half in Moore. So, when June 1 (the date set for departmental plans to be in place) rolled around, the department was divided into two teams, with half working in the office for two weeks and the other half working out of their homes. Then, the following two weeks, these teams would alternate.

This schedule allowed for half of the team to be in the office and present, Faulkenberry explained, also noting that a two-week period involves a 14-day interval (a quarantine timeframe, if it became necessary). He pointed out that one adjustment directly related to the coronavirus pandemic has been adapting to the daily tracking of temperature, plus logging who you come in contact with for the day.

For the Communication staff, frequent contact is made through Zoom meetings, in order for updates on projects. One particularly large project that is in the works for this group is planning a “virtual” Emerging Technology Conference (ETC) for WFEC members and customers. This year’s virtual event will include several speakers (video segments) in a Whova (online event management software) meeting format for a half-day event.

T&D Operations

Chance Myers, manager, Transmission and Distribution Operations, explained that operators had utilized the Stockton Canyon backup control area as the main control area since mid-March. As of June 1, both the Anadarko and Stockton Canyon control areas are both being utilized, however, Stockton is still being utilized as the main 24-hour control center.

Myers noted that the T&D Operations staff was split into two groups, so that all employees were not in the same area at the same time.

Due to COVID-19, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) cancelled System Operator Conferences, which were a large part of the Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) that operators are required to have in order to maintain certifications. Myers noted that the training coordinator has been working closely with SPP for new training opportunities to earn CEHs.

WFEC’s annual switch certification classes for its member distribution cooperatives, as well as WFEC personnel, were also cancelled, Myers pointed out. “We have been looking for new ways to certify personnel, including the formatting of an electronic version of the switching re-certification classes for cooperatives and WFEC personnel,” he added.



Jason Pennel, facilities maintenance mechanic, wipes down tables in the Break Room at the Anadarko Headquarters. In the beginning stages of the coronavirus pandemic, while employees were still working at WFEC facilities, maintenance staff had the daily task of wiping down, tables, cabinets, desks, door knobs and other equipment.

Station Maintenance

A major challenge facing Brett Moser, station maintenance supervisor, and Paul Fuller, lead station maintenance mechanic, during the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic involved locating the necessary cleaning supplies, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer needed for all of WFEC’s facilities being utilized.

Maintenance staff, plus employees from other departments, spent many hours simply trying to locate supplies, as stocks from major suppliers continued to dwindle due to the quickly spreading virus.

As COVID-19 began, maintenance crews were tasked with the daily responsibility of wiping down surfaces, such as door handles and knobs, desks, tables and cabinets, to name a few. Then, as possible exposures were reported, including one employee and later, one contractor, employees were sent to work from home, while Station Maintenance personnel oversaw the staff who was hired to sanitize the entire Anadarko complex.

Schedules were also modified within this group to allow for minimal contact. Some are working from home, while others are working in separate on-site facilities, but still maintaining distance.

As employees started returning to the office, other sanitizing duties were also added to daily routines.

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Plus, this department is in charge of restocking supplies for the contract janitorial staff, who cleans the facilities after working hours. These crews are assigned to specific areas and remain in those areas, never crossing with other janitorial contractors while on site.

Building “maps” were released prior to employees returning to work, which have specific areas designated for each department, including which door to use for entering and exiting, as well as which restroom, and other areas, to utilize. Water fountains and ice machines are turned off throughout WFEC’s facilities to also help minimize potential exposures among employees.

T&D Services

Operational adjustments have also been required for the Transmission and Distribution (T&D) Services group during the COVID-19 pandemic. This group includes transmission line and substation crews, plus operations personnel and system operators.

One modification for this group involved dispatching employees from home when work sites were within driving distance. “This strategy has, in some cases, increased productivity and decreased mileage with routine maintenance activities and outage response, as employees are traveling directly to the work location without reporting to Anadarko first,” commented Forrest Brock, T&D Services manager.

Overnight stays have also been limited to only those necessary to perform mission-critical work, plus only staying at hotels that have been approved after providing documentation of their enhanced cleaning and sanitization efforts to meet or exceed CDC guidelines.

Brock noted that other efforts have involved keeping crews with the same people, within a department, in order to minimize contact and the number of employees who would potentially be quarantined, if an exposure were to occur. Also, these groups or crews do not interact with other groups or meet at the same location, as part of the departmental plan.

Individual crews have also been isolated from each other, except when necessary to respond to outages. “Although crews are able to complete everyday tasks, some non-emergency maintenance work that would require larger crew numbers have been postponed to minimize potential exposures,” Brock pointed out.

Staggered scheduling of crews from different departments has also been implemented, when and if projects require multiple disciplines to complete the work necessary at a specific job site. Through implementing these modified work schedules, when applicable, the reporting times and days of crews are offset to minimize close contact of employees reporting out of the Anadarko Headquarters or retrieving equipment, materials and supplies required for scheduled work.

Brock also pointed out that supervisors are gathering supplies/materials and delivering to outposts and remote workers, as they are needed, which helps keep potential exposures down by not having crew members come to the Anadarko Headquarters. WFEC’s shop mechanics now work individually on vehicles and other equipment, plus, do any necessary computer work at different times to avoid close contact with one another.

Also, crew-specific weekly safety meetings are now being conducted mostly by phone, while other bi-annual meetings have been postponed and/or cancelled.

The T&D group has faced some technological challenges, but have come a long way as it is quickly becoming the new normal. These include paperless processes for completing P-Card reconciliation, time sheets, and expense reporting.

Brock reported that most office personnel within T&D Services have been working remotely, with the biggest challenge being not having the everyday office tools readily available, such as a printer, copier, scanner, files and a reliable internet. “Over time, we have made adjustments and found new ways to effectively accomplish the same task from home as we could at the office. Some tasks seem to get easier with repetition, but then new challenges also arise that keep us adjusting and learning as we go,” he explained.

He noted that the majority of the changes that have been implemented have proven, overall, to be very successful. “Some work has shown an improvement in productivity, as well as having a positive impact on employee morale. Employees have accepted these challenges and committed themselves to finding ways to work through them. It is this ‘buy in’ that has led to our success,” Brock commented.

Electric vehicle charging network to be expanded through VW funds

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) recently announced that \$4.6 million will be awarded across 43 projects throughout the state from the Volkswagen Settlement (VW) fund. This round of settlement funding was available for projects involving electric vehicles (EV), alternate-fueled vehicles, and light-duty zero emission vehicle (LDZEV) supply equipment.

By Sondra Boykin

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative's (WFEC) member distribution cooperatives in New Mexico will reap the benefits of this funding, as it will allow for the installation of EV chargers across portions of their service territories.

"The majority of the chargers will be in rural areas of New Mexico, making it a good statewide network, just as was recently installed in Oklahoma," commented Jason Lindsey, manager, commercial and industrial marketing at WFEC.

He noted that a number of the chargers will be in southeast New Mexico, where WFEC serves, adding that presently, there is not a Level 3 fast charger in that part of the state. "That being said, no one living in southeast New Mexico would be able to own an electric vehicle and use it for anything other than a commuter car, since there is no charging locations in the region," he pointed out.

Once the EV chargers are installed, and a network established, residents of this region of the state, as well as other parts of New Mexico, will have greater EV traveling opportunities available, with chargers located in closer proximity to one another.

WFEC's four member distribution electric cooperatives in New Mexico will have several of the new chargers installed within their service areas. "This doesn't mean that they will all be served by these cooperatives, some will and some won't," Lindsey noted, adding that it just means they sit within the footprint of their cooperatives.

Francis Energy applied for funding for 19 locations across the state, explained Eric Austin, vice president of utility relations for Francis Energy. This funding from the VW settlement will help to expand the EV charging network in New Mexico, with some chargers to be located in higher density populated areas or along major highways, while others will be in rural areas.

All of the chargers in New Mexico that will be installed by Francis Solar are 50 kilowatt (or above) DC fast chargers, with a minimum of two chargers being installed at each location.

Installation locations include:

- Farmer's Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Clovis, will have chargers installed at their office, as well as at two other locations in their service territory, including Ft. Sumner and Tucumcari.
- In Roosevelt Electric Cooperative's area, chargers will be installed in Elida.
- Lea County Electric Cooperative's service area will include charger installations in Tatum and Hobbs.
- Central Valley Electric Cooperative's service area will include chargers in Roswell, Artesia and Carlsbad.

Late last year, during WFEC's "Plug in to Win" event, David Jankowsky, Francis Energy founder and CEO, unveiled a proposed comprehensive EV charging network for the state of Oklahoma, which is set to be completed in 2020. "When all is said and done, we will have some 225 to 250 fast chargers in the state, spread out over 110 strategically located sites – literally every 50 miles, Oklahomans will have access to a fast-speed charger," Jankowsky commented at the event.



Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives providing support for agriculture, rural issues program

On behalf of Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) is currently providing underwriting support for a Harvest Reporter Program for radio station, KOSU. This yearly sponsorship not only promotes the program, but also captures publicity for Oklahoma cooperatives through digital advertising and promotional spots.

KOSU, a radio station licensed to Oklahoma State University, is a member station of National Public Radio. Its programming can be heard by more than 91,000 on-air listeners every week in central, northern and northeastern Oklahoma, parts of Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas and worldwide at kosu.org.

With this sponsorship from Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives, KOSU is able to have a dedicated reporter to cover agriculture and rural issues. It also allows them to join the Harvest Public Media regional agriculture and rural issues reporting hub.

Harvest Public Media reports on food systems, agriculture and rural issues through a collaborative network of reporters and partner stations throughout the Midwest and Plains. Their goal is to provide in-depth and unbiased reporting on complex issues for a broad, diverse audience, often connecting the Heartland to the rest of the country. Primary topics of coverage include but are not limited to agribusiness, biofuels, climate change, farming and ranching, food safety, rural life and public policy.

KOSU staff noted that the sponsorship will also give voice to issues facing rural Oklahomans to better facilitate discussions happening at the state capitol and provide better information to rural Oklahomans about programs that could affect their lives.

At a time when local journalism is reeling from years of newsroom cuts and unforeseen challenges

brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, rural Oklahoma continues to be robbed of trusted sources of local information and has a smaller voice in statewide issues, as explained by KOSU staff. Because of its nonprofit news model, KOSU continues to step into that gap and is expanding its newsroom to be of better service to Oklahoma communities.

"This sponsorship is a perfect fit, since KOSU has a large coverage area that includes many of our cooperative members," commented Scott Williams, manager, Government Relations and Communication, noting the importance of local rural and agriculture on-air and digital reports that will be provided for listeners.

The reporter hired to focus on agriculture and rural issues, Seth Bodine, comes to KOSU as a corps member for Report for America, a national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities. He joined KOSU in June 2020.

"The urban-rural divide is real. It's important to tell the stories that are happening in rural towns to make sure they get their stories told just like everyone else," Bodine said.

Report for America leverages a unique funding match model, paying half of a corps member's salary, while encouraging and supporting its local news partners to raise money for the other half, which is where the support from Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives come into play.

"At a time when so many people are looking for accurate information about where their food comes from, we are excited to be able to provide this service with the help of The Groundtruth Project and matching dollars from Oklahoma," said Rachel Hubbard, executive director of KOSU.

"This is a leap of faith at a time when advertising dollars are shrinking for traditional media outlets, forcing them to furlough reporters," Hubbard said.

"However, we feel compelled to build the bridge between Oklahoma's rural communities and food producers and the people who consume it. We believe providing this information is part of the land grant mission of Oklahoma State University," Hubbard pointed out.

This sponsorship is a perfect fit, since KOSU has a large coverage area that includes many of our cooperative members.

**--Scott Williams--
Manager, Government Relations
& Communication at WFEC**

wfec

WFEC Board of Trustees authorize 2020 capital credit retirement for members

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative's (WFEC) Board of Trustees recently voted to authorize a 2020 capital credit retirement for cooperative members. This marks the sixth consecutive year that this action has been taken, which is governed by WFEC bylaws and Board-approved guidelines for capital credit retirements.

During its May 20 meeting, the Board authorized a capital credit retirement of approximately \$6,574,627.47, representing 1992 to 1995 patronage. The retirement will be distributed on a first-in first-out (FIFO) basis consistent with the bylaws.

Retirement of capital credits is a component of WFEC's equity management plan to maintain an equity/asset level between 20% and 30%, with a long-term 20% equity goal after planned capacity expansion.

The guidelines for capital credit retirement include: that any such retirement be consistent with WFEC bylaw provisions, all indenture mortgage requirements, and outstanding loan covenants. The prior year audited financials must also meet Board financial goals. Retirements of patronage, generally limited to 2% of total assigned patronage as of Dec. 31 of the prior year, are subject to annual review and approval by the Board.

WFEC was incorporated in 1941, with the first patronage allocation issued in 1956. Capital credit retirements were considered in past years, but stronger financial goals established by the Board and consistent performance have created an environment to make these retirements possible.

Since 2015, WFEC has returned a little over \$39.7 million in cash payments to its member-owner distribution cooperatives as a return of their investment in the G&T for the years 1956 through 1995.

wfec

How COVID-19 is impacting energy use

If you want to make the best use of your efforts to save money on your energy bill, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) can show you where to start.

Nearly half of the electricity Americans use in their homes, 43%, goes to heating and cooling air and water. Nearly a third of our electric use, 31%, goes to running our heating and air conditioning systems. Another 12% powers our water heaters.

With the recent disruptions to daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic, the advice to focus on heating and cooling to save energy holds up. EIA has started revising its energy use predictions for 2020, and because of business closures and social distancing, they project that electricity sales to commercial and industrial customers will decline 6.5%.

With more people staying home, you might expect residential sales to increase, and they will, but not enough to overcome the weather.

Even with more people staying home and using more heating and air conditioning, the weather is expected to be mild enough that EIA projects a 1.3% decline in residential electric sales this year. However, those predictions could well be adjusted depending on how quickly businesses reopen, and whether they adopt new ways of operating.

With so many unknowns in 2020 patterns of energy use, EIA's forecast tried to imagine what's going on inside our homes in order to make their projections for the year. Their May 2020 Short Term Energy Outlook says that as a result of the actions to control the spread of COVID-19, use of household electronic equipment will increase, and other uses of electricity, such as cooking or water heating, may also increase. Residential air conditioning use during summer months is also likely to increase.

Source: NRECA (www.cooperative.com)

Skeleton Creek Wind project construction underway; completion set for year's-end

Construction on the Skeleton Creek Wind project, which will add 250 megawatt (MW) of wind energy to Western Farmers Electric Cooperative's (WFEC) fuel portfolio, is currently underway across Garfield, Alfalfa and Major counties in Oklahoma. WFEC negotiated a Renewable Energy Purchase Agreement (REPA) for the purchase of energy produced by this facility in November 2018. The estimated annual output is projected to be approximately 1,190,000 megawatt hours (MWh).

Once commercial, this 250 MW facility will boost WFEC's wind energy capability to 957 MW. Currently, WFEC purchases wind energy from 13 wind farm locations in Oklahoma (615 MW) and New Mexico (92 MW), for a total of 707 MW. Typically, wind energy purchases from these facilities represents around 25 percent of WFEC's fuel mix.

The Skeleton Creek wind farm project, initially planned to be up and running by the end of 2019, was pushed back by a year while NextEra Energy Resources, the wind farm developer, Vance Air Force Base, and several other federal agencies worked out siting the turbines to minimize the impacts to the air

space near the air base. Several other considerations also contributed to the revised timetable.

As for the Skeleton Creek Wind project, land acquisition for the transmission line right-of-way is now 100% complete, with the associated engineering complete as well, according to Phillip Schaeffer, principal resource planning engineer at WFEC. This also includes the substation and ancillary parcels related to construction, which is now underway.

Permits for the Road Use and Maintenance Agreements (RUA) with Alfalfa, Major, and Garfield Counties are in place, which allows for use of the county roads for heavy equipment transportation. All environmental surveys and federal and non-federal microwave beam path surveys are also complete, Schaeffer noted.

Construction of the turbine foundations is also underway, with turbine deliveries set to begin in mid-August, followed by turbine erection starting in early September. Interconnection backfeed is expected to occur in October, with commissioning expected to begin in mid-November, which will allow for the site to be commercial in mid-December of this year.

In July 2019, WFEC announced that it entered into a power purchase agreement with a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, for a combined wind, solar and energy storage project at this same location.

The Skeleton Creek Solar Project (250 MW of solar energy) and Skeleton Creek Storage (an 800 MWh or 200 MW, 4-hour battery energy storage project) are expected to begin operations by the end of 2023.

DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately 15 percent of the nation's electricity is generated from renewable energy sources, like hydro, wind and solar power. That percentage may seem low, but renewable energy generation is gaining momentum and continues to play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



6.5%
generated by
hydropower.



5.6%
generated by
wind.



0.9%
generated by
solar.

*Additional sources, like geothermal and biomass, contribute to the 15 percent of renewable energy generation.

Source: Energy Information Administration

WFEC Board of Trustees re-elect officers at recent annual meeting

The incumbent officers for the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) Board of Trustees were all returned to their respective roles for the upcoming year, during an Organizational Meeting, hosted on June 17 at the cooperative's Moore Office. The nominations for Board trustees and alternate trustees were also approved during the June session that followed the Annual Meeting of Members. This meeting was postponed from the usual April timeframe, due to COVID-19.

These meetings followed the regular monthly Board meeting, at which WFEC staff and distribution cooperative personnel discussed business operations and various projects with Board members.

Other Board members, listed with their respective cooperative, include: Greg Goetz, Alfalfa Electric Cooperative; Gary Crain, Canadian Valley Electric Cooperative; Charles Wagner, Central Valley Electric Cooperative (N.M.); Kooney Duncan, Choctaw Electric Cooperative; Gene Peters, Cimarron Electric Cooperative; Clint Pack, CKenergy Electric Cooperative; Charles Spencer, Cotton Electric Cooperative; Max Shoemaker, East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative; Jean Pence, Harmon Electric



Officers re-elected for the upcoming year (standing, from left), include: Mike Lebeda, a trustee from Kay Electric Cooperative in Blackwell, who was re-elected as vice president; King Martin, a trustee from Red River Valley Rural Electric Association in Marietta, who was named as secretary-treasurer for another term; Donnie Bidegain, who serves on the Board of Farmers' Electric Cooperative in Clovis, N.M., who was re-elected as assistant secretary-treasurer; and Charles Hickey (seated), who serves on the Board of Northfork Electric Cooperative in Sayre, was re-elected as WFEC Board President.

Association; David Ray, Kiamichi Electric Cooperative; John Graham, Lea County Electric Cooperative (N.M.); Ray O. Smith, Northwestern Electric Cooperative; Rusty Grissom, Oklahoma Electric Cooperative; Antonio Sanchez Jr., Roosevelt County Electric Cooperative (N.M.); Gary Jones, Rural Electric Cooperative; Jeff Willingham, Southeastern Electric Cooperative; Don Ellis, Southwest Rural Electric Association; and Heath Sirmons, Altus Air Force Base (non-voting member).