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The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

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Make sure your home meets basic electrical safety essentials

We often take electricity for granted. Unless there has been a storm or an accident, electricity is there doing its thing, allowing us to do ours—from running our appliances to powering our electronics and keeping our lights on. How-

ever, one aspect of electricity that we should never take for granted is using it safely.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and your cooperative continues to do all it can to make sure power is delivered to your home safely.

Cotton Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity provides a checklist of basic safety essentials to help you keep your home safe from electrical fire and shock hazards:

- Electrical outlets – Check for loose-fitting plugs, which can be a safety hazard. Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed. If you have children in the home, install tamper resistant outlets, or cover unused outlets.
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) – Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, workshop, basement, and garage as well as on outdoor outlets. Test them monthly to ensure they are working properly.
- Plugs – Do not remove the grounding pin (third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-conductor outlet. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.
- Cords – Make sure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs, or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors, or other objects.
- Extension cords – Use them on a temporary basis only. They are not intended as permanent household wiring.

Make sure they have safety closures to protect children from injuries.

- Light bulbs – Check the wattage to make sure light bulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings than recommended on the fixture. Make sure they are screwed in securely so they do not overheat.
- Circuit breakers/Fuses – Fuses should be properly rated for the circuit they are protecting. If you do not know the correct rating, have an electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size you are removing. Check that circuit breakers are working properly.
- Appliances/Electronics – If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker, or has given you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. Look for cracks or damage in wiring and connectors. Use surge protectors to protect electronics.
- Electrical wiring – Check periodically for loose wall receptacles, loose wires, or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. Immediately shut off and then professionally replace light switches that

are hot to the touch and lights that spark or flicker.

- Planting/Digging - Do not plant shrubs and trees close to green box transformers or other utility equipment. Contact your electric provider with questions about any changes near a padmount transformer to learn what is allowable, and always call OKIE 811 prior to any digging.
 - Service capacity – As you continue to upgrade your home with more lighting, appliances, and electronics, your home’s electrical service capacity may become overburdened. If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. A qualified electrician can determine the appropriate service requirements for your home.
- These are the safety basics that need to be checked in your home. The Consumer Product Safety Commission on www.cpsc.gov has a room-by-room checklist that can help you keep each and every room of your home safe from electrical dangers.
- For more information on electrical safety around the home, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety.

Top 10 Home Electrical Safety Tips



use a qualified electrician for repair work	repair loose outlets; replace cracked, worn electric cords	watch for hot or discolored switch plates, flickering lights, or buzzing sounds.
get regular check-ups for older homes	use bulbs with correct wattage for the fixtures	if children are present install tamper resistant outlets to protect against shock
use extension cords temporarily, not as permanent wiring	unplug electrics if you smell something burning	keep cords out of walkways and high traffic areas
	educate the household on electrical safety	

Oklahoma electric cooperatives participate in media preference online survey

Your cooperative continuously strives to improve our service to our membership. Every fall, Cotton Electric Cooperative sends out a survey to randomly selected members of the co-op, and this spring, we encourage you to continue providing feedback.

Several Oklahoma electric cooperatives, including Cotton Electric Cooperative, are partnering with *Oklahoma Living* and MRI Simmons to conduct an online survey that focuses on members’ media preferences. The survey includes 34 questions related to demographics information and media consumption preferences, including three questions customized to your co-op.

Members who have an email address connected to their account will receive an email from Cotton Electric in the following months inviting them to participate in the online survey. When members participate in the survey, they will have a chance to win one of four \$25 gift cards.

At Cotton Electric, our focus is to serve our members, and that’s why your feedback is important and valuable. For questions or more information, call 580-875-3351.



Members who have an email address connected to their Cotton Electric account will receive an email in the following months inviting them to participate in an online survey. Photo courtesy of Metro Creative.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after May 1, 2024, is \$0.00604 per kilowatt hours (kWh).

On a member’s average bill of 1,300 kWh, this will amount to a charge of \$7.85 on the May bill.

April 2024 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	75	52	64	16	84	56	70
2	62	41	52	17	89	53	71
3	71	39	55	18	77	56	67
4	80	38	59	19	67	48	58
5	84	46	65	20	59	48	54
6	82	53	68	21	66	42	54
7	76	39	58	22	72	37	55
8	77	35	56	23	81	52	67
9	67	50	59	24	77	62	70
10	70	46	58	25	83	69	76
11	71	43	57	26	85	61	73
12	79	39	59	27	80	62	71
13	84	47	66	28	80	60	70
14	90	53	72	29	82	53	68
15	78	65	72	30	88	62	75

Source: srh.noaa.gov/oum/

Average Daily High: 77 Average Daily Low: 50

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed on Monday, May 27, to recognize Memorial Day. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of *The Current* should arrive in mailboxes June 14, 2024.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for *The Current*, or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know. We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Mission Statement
Our mission is to safely deliver reliable and affordable power, provide excellent member service, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

From the CEO

Taking action for reliable power

I recently joined several electric cooperative employees and directors at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the conference is to hear from members of Congress and administration officials and discuss pressing legislative issues affecting electric cooperatives and our members.

Our priority remained educating decision-makers about the importance of prioritizing reliability.

Cotton Electric Cooperative members, families and businesses expect the lights to stay on at a cost we can afford. Our nation's energy policies must meet this expectation, and keeping the lights on is not a partisan issue. As the demand for electricity grows and available supply declines, we must have a serious policy conversation about what is happening, what goals are realistic and what it will take to achieve them. We can't allow bad public policy to undermine decades of work to

keep the lights on.

As we departed D.C., the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its Power Plant Rule, which ignores the current ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach. Here are three major issues with the rule:

Unlawful – The rule asserts vast new authority of major economic and political significance without a clear statement from Congress. It exceeds EPA's authority and disregards Supreme Court rulings.

Unachievable – The rule hinges on the widespread adoption of technology – carbon capture and sequestration – that isn't ready for prime time. Although promising, it has not been "adequately demonstrated" as required by the Clean Air Act.

Unrealistic – The compliance timelines endanger the construction of new natural gas plants and push essential, always-available generating resources off the grid.

Our job is to keep the lights on and provide reliable power. As electricity demand continues to increase, electricity supply is de-



Jennifer Meason, CEO

creasing as the premature retirement of always-available generation continues.

As our fellow Oklahoman Will Rogers once said, "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." It's time to stop digging ourselves into a reliability hole.

I ask that you join me in speaking up and making your voice heard through Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP). VCP is a network of electric co-op members working together to influence the elected officials who are making energy policy decisions that impact our co-ops and, by extension, our way of life. Sign up today for regular updates and find out how you can get involved at www.voicesforcooperativepower.com/epa.

Please join me in taking action and speaking up for the reliable and affordable power we need and deserve.



Cotton Electric CEO Jennifer Meason joined other Oklahoma electric cooperative representatives at the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association Legislative Conference to advocate for the industry and our members. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

TELL CONGRESS: PROTECT US FROM BLACKOUTS

ACT NOW

www.voicesforcooperativepower.com/epa-act-now/

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices.

With smart plugs, you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smart phone app, your home assistant or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy (and money!).

Source: www.energystar.gov

March 2024 Operating Stats		
	2024	2023
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,922,940	\$6,369,222
Cost of Purchased Power	4,010,300	4,182,886
Taxes	118,906	133,550
Total Operating Expense per Mile	1,088	1,117
Average Farm and Residential Bill	130	149
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,020	1,141
Total Meters Billed (Farm, Residential)	19,629	19,375
Miles Energized	5,270	5,256
Density per Mile	3.72	3.69
New Service Connects YTD	94	105
Services Retired	37	34

Upcoming Deadlines for <i>The Current</i>	
June	
Ad Sales	May 31
Classified	May 31
Publish	June 14
July	
Ad Sales	June 28
Classified	June 28
Publish	July 12

The Current

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Jennifer MeasonCEO
Shane Bowers..... Vice President
Zach YoungDirector
Carli Eubank..... Communications Specialist

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Energy Efficiency

Power up your lawn care with electric equipment

The landscape of lawn and garden care is evolving, and electric equipment is at the forefront of this change. While electric lawn tools aren't new, advancements in technology and more options mean prices have become more competitive, making electric equipment an accessible option for many consumers.

Benefits of electric equipment

Electric lawnmowers have come a long way since the days of extension cords tethering you to an outlet. Battery-powered mowers offer the same freedom of movement as gas-powered models but with reduced noise and maintenance.

Battery life was once a major drawback to making the switch to electric lawn tools. But today's growing de-

mand for electric equipment has resulted in major advancements for lithium-ion batteries, making them more reliable, cost-effective and efficient. For most consumers, electric lawn tools can get the job done just as well as gas-powered models.

Many electric mowers offer push-button starts, and because they are lighter, they are easier to maneuver around tight turns. Improved batteries provide longer run times to tackle larger spaces. Like their gas-powered counterparts, electric mowers are available in push, self-propelled/walk-behind and riding models. And there's no need to refill gas cans or change oil and air filters, resulting in less hassle and maintenance.

Like mowers, electric blowers, string trimmers and chain saws have fewer

moving parts, require minimal maintenance and are quieter. Because electric tools are generally lighter in weight, they're also more ergonomic and easier to maneuver. This feature is especially handy for projects that require tools like chain saws for precise work.

Choose electric equipment to meet your needs

Electric lawn tools have some limitations, so the size and terrain of your outdoor space are important considerations when purchasing new equipment. When comparing gas-powered and electric mowers, consider the torque rating—this is the driving force behind a blade's rotation. On average, electric lawnmowers generate less torque than gas mowers. If you have



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

a challenging outdoor space that includes overgrown brush, tall grass, or hills and dips, torque is a key factor.

Choosing the right type and size mower is particularly important for spaces larger than half an acre. If you have a large property, consider purchasing an extra battery to ensure uninterrupted workflow.

Many manufacturers offer interchangeable batteries and chargers, providing flexibility and convenience. Choosing a single brand can ensure charging compatibility across your lawn tools and streamline charging.

While both gas and electric lawn tools can get the job done, electric equipment generally requires less maintenance, is less expensive to operate and is kinder to the environment.

Get green for going green

Electric tools are quietly redefining the way we approach lawn care. If you're planning to make the switch to electric lawn equipment, visit our website at www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program to explore available rebates. Our energy advisers are available to share energy-saving advice to help you save money and clear the path to a greener, more energy efficient future.

Source: Consumer Reports

Making the Switch to ELECTRIC LAWN EQUIPMENT

Considering electric equipment to maintain your outdoor space? Check out the benefits of electric and considerations before making the switch.

<h4>Benefits of Electric Equipment</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery-powered equipment produces zero emissions • No hassle and mess from gasoline and oil • Quieter and more reliable than gas-powered equipment • Require less energy to do the same amount of work as gas-powered tools 	<h4>Considerations Before Going Electric</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing from a single brand can streamline charging • Consider the size of your property and battery run time • Backup batteries may be needed for larger properties • Electric equipment is pricier up front
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Heating Degree Day and Cooling Degree Day Calendar

APRIL

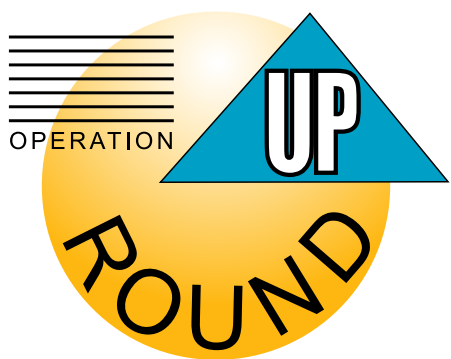
HDD	YEAR	CDD
106	2024	77
172	2023	28
122	2022	98

Degree days measure how cold or warm a location is by comparing the average of the high and low (mean) of the outdoor temperatures recorded in that location to the standard U.S. temperature, which is 65 F. The assumption is that we don't need heating or cooling to be comfortable when this is the outdoor temperature.

LOCALLY OWNED BY OUR MEMBERS

COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation

ORU encourages applicants for the second quarter

Operation Round Up exists because of the generosity of Cotton Electric's members and is designed to provide financial assistance to worthwhile individuals and organizations.

For those interested in seeking funds for local individuals or organizations, below is a portion of the CECF grant application guidelines.

Grant Application Guidelines:

- The Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (the "Foundation") provides funds for Charitable purposes within the service area of Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CEC).
- Grant applications are reviewed quarterly. Applications are to be received in the CEC offices by the close of business 14 days before the quarterly meeting of the Foundation board of directors.
- Grants to any group, organization, charity or similar organization will not exceed \$10,000 and grants to individuals will not exceed \$2,500 annually.

Requirement for school applications

All applications for grants benefiting schools require the signature of the school superintendent.

This includes applications submitted by booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations and other school-related groups, teachers and principals. This requirement was established to ensure coordinated communication on projects that fit a school district's priorities.

Application Instructions:

- Please complete all sections of the application. If an item is not applicable to your organization, please make note in the space provided.
- If you are exempt from income tax, please attach verification such as a

copy of letter 501(c)3 from the Internal Revenue Service or an explanation of why your organization is considered to be exempt.

- Please include a recent financial statement. If your organization completes an annual audit, please attach a copy with your application. If your organization does not complete an annual audit, please attach a copy of your treasurer's report and bank statements to verify your source of funding, funds available, etc.
- Please be specific when describing how the funds will be used if approved and attach price estimates if available.

Categories of Assistance:

1. Communities
 - Programs, projects and organizations that are important components of a community's overall quality of life, with emphasis on public safety, health care, self-sufficiency, and basic human needs.
2. Education and Youth
 - Programs and projects designed to combat critical social problems affecting youth, particularly children and teens at risk.
 - Programs and projects that promote youth wellness.
 - Programs and projects that work to provide supplemental materials and equipment for schools.
 - Programs and projects to enhance school facilities.
3. Seniors
 - Programs and projects to support organizations and the facilities serving senior citizens.
4. Volunteer Fire Departments
 - Programs and projects to enhance volunteer fire department facilities and vehicles.
 - Equipment and gear purchases and upgrades.

5. Individuals
 - An individual or family in need of assistance may request a grant. Examples of need conditions may include the consequences of a disaster, catastrophic illness, or permanent disability.
 - Individual applications must include a letter of referral from a sponsoring group such as a church, civic organization or other group wanting to raise funds for the individual.

The Foundation will not consider requests for general operating funds, capital campaigns or support for salaries. The Foundation prefers requests for program needs.

The Foundation will not consider requests for the benefit of an individual or family unit unless the application includes a letter from a sponsoring group. Grants will be issued to the sponsoring group.

Applicant Eligibility:

Contributions will generally be made only to not-for-profit organizations that have been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service; and to civic-based entities.

1. The organization must contribute to the community's health and/or welfare.
2. The organization's services must be non-discriminatory in nature.
3. Activities affiliated with a religious organization with a secular community designation are eligible for the Foundation's consideration of support. A secular designation is defined as an organization separate from the church or religious organization that provides services to people regardless of their religious beliefs and does not propagate a belief in a specific faith. (Example: A food bank that is a separate 501(c)(3) organization from a

church and provides food and meals to anyone who qualifies for services, regardless of religious belief.)

Evaluation Factors:

1. The following factors will be considered in the evaluation of all funding requests:
 - Potential benefit to residents of the CEC service area and the entire community.
 - Prior contribution level of Foundation or community support for the program or project or the organization requesting the funds.
 - Fiscal and administrative capability of the organization to deliver a quality service or program.
 - Results that are predictable and can be evaluated.
2. The Foundation's Board of Directors shall evaluate all funding requests and determine whether to issue a grant for all or a portion of the funds requested.

Project Timing:

Request for funding should state whether the funds are intended for ongoing operations or for a specific project that will terminate at some point in the future. Whenever possible, requests for funding should be for projects that will be completed within 12 months following the Foundation's approval of the grant application.

For a complete overview of CECF grant application guidelines, please visit www.cottonelectric.com/grant-applications. Applications may be submitted via email to zyoung@cottonelectric.com, online at www.cottonelectric.com/grant-applications or mailed to 226 N. Broadway Walters, OK 73572.

REMINDER | Second quarter CECF grant applications are due **June 7**

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Sharing the cooperative in classrooms and communities

Education, Training and Information is one of the seven cooperative principles that Cotton Electric strives to follow each day. An example of how the cooperative informs our membership and surrounding communities is through educational presentations.

As a free service to the community, Cotton Electric employees can share information on a variety of topics for your next school, organization or other group event.

Cooperative 101

• Learn about the roots of electric cooperatives with our Cooperative 101 presentation. Employees can explain the cooperative business model, how electricity reaches your residence, what it means to be a member of the cooperative, and how we serve our local communities.

Electrical safety

• Electricity can be very dangerous, and Cotton Electric wants to help keep our communities safe. Co-op em-

ployees can advise your group on how to stay safe around electricity in different situations: indoors, outdoors, on the road, after a storm and more. We also give a glimpse of how our crews stay safe on the job. A popular section of this presentation is the tabletop farm safety demonstration. This live-voltage display shows what happens if someone comes into contact with a live wire and how electricity travels.



Cotton Electric Energy Efficiency Coordinator Heath Morgan shares electrical safety tips to students at Bishop Schools Health and Wellness Day in Lawton. Photo by Carli Eubank.

Cooperative careers

• From member services representatives and accountants to engineering technicians and journeyman linemen, electric cooperatives have various career paths to explore. Employees from different departments can share their experiences and pieces of advice to give a glimpse of what their responsibilities look like working at an electric cooperative.

Energy efficiency

• Hear from Cotton Electric's Energy Efficiency Coordinator and gather different ways to help lower energy cost and offset peak usage. Changes can be as simple or complex as someone wishes, such as adjusting the settings on a thermostat or insulating an attic space. Information about Cotton Electric's rebate programs and home energy efficiency evaluations can be shared, as well.

Cotton Electric Cooperative strives to keep our communities safe, powered and informed. Co-op employees can present to surrounding schools, colleges, career fairs and other community groups upon request.

To schedule a presentation, please contact the Marketing Department at 580-875-3351 or visit our website at www.cottonelectric.com/presentations.



Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration Shane Bowers visits with a student at the Oklahoma State University Career Fair. Photo by Carli Eubank.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
MUST PROTECT
RELIABLE ELECTRICITY**

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Financial freedom: A gift to your family

Here's a sobering statistic: 72% of retirees say one of their biggest fears is becoming a burden on their families, according to a study by Edward Jones and the consulting firm Age Wave. If you are near retirement, how can you prepare yourself to become financially free, so you won't have to depend on grown children or other family members?

Here are a few suggestions to consider:

- Keep adding to retirement savings. Today, with a greater awareness of healthy lifestyles, many people are spending two, or even three, decades in an active retirement. To help pay for those years, then, you'll likely need to build your retirement savings as much as possible. So, while you're still working, try to contribute as much as you can afford to your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. If you are in the later stages of your career, possibly close to your peak earning power,
- you may be able to put in sizable sums every year.
- Choose an appropriate withdrawal rate. While it's obviously important to build your retirement savings, it's just as essential to make the money last. Once you retire, you'll want to establish an appropriate withdrawal rate — that is, the amount you can take out each year from your 401(k) and other investments without running the risk of outliving your money. The amount you can safely withdraw each year will depend on a variety of factors, including your age, your account balances, Social Security benefits,
- inflation, income tax rates and spousal income. In any case, selecting a suitable withdrawal rate can help go a long way toward preserving your financial freedom throughout your retirement.
- Think about downsizing. One possible way to boost your savings and add liquidity is to downsize your living arrangements. This may be an attractive option if your children are grown and your current home feels too large. Of course, downsizing is a highly personal decision — if you've lived in your home for many years, have fond memories of raising a
- family in it and still enjoy the neighborhood, it can certainly be hard to leave. Consequently, you'll need to weigh these emotional factors against the potential financial benefits of moving into a smaller, less expensive space.
- Prepare for long-term care costs. If you were ever to need some type of long-term care, such as an extended stay in a nursing home, you could face some sizable expenses, most of which may not be covered by Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan. And clearly, you would not want to put your grown children in a position where they might
- feel the need to step in financially. To help avoid this possibility, you may want to consult with a financial professional about addressing these costs through strategies that may be appropriate for your needs.

These aren't the only ideas to consider in helping maintain your financial independence and reducing your potential dependence on your family during your retirement years. But taken together, they can give you a good start — so think about putting them to work.

Edward Jones, Member SIPC



Kelsey Avants
1110 N. 10th Street | Duncan, OK 73533 | 580-255-4408
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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

A new preventive maintenance tool proves to be beneficial for co-op and members

By Carli Eubank

The electric industry is one that is continuously evolving with new technology that advances the mission of providing safe and reliable power. For Cotton Electric and other electric co-operatives, we operate daily with this goal in mind with a specialized focus on serving our members. Your cooperative's Meter and Transformer Department has recently been applying a new tool that allows crews to identify and work ahead of potential service interruptions.

During a recent Service Quality Team meeting, Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration Shane Bowers asked if there was a way to see a report of blink counts in our service territory. Meter and Transformer Supervisor Cody Pennington began looking into the reporting possibilities with the current meter data management software (MDMS) and found a plan that would address these issues.

"Our previous metering system recorded blinks, but there wasn't any reporting system available to view the data," Pennington said. "Now, this upgraded software provides data that is more accurate for us to review, increases our read rates and recognizes any meter issues well in advance than what the previous system allowed."

With the updated software, the Meter and Transformer Department is able to review daily meter readings of recorded blinks and voltages. Blinks frequently occur faster than the human eye can see, but the meters are able to pick up on those interruptions even if they're unnoticeable.

If a meter has a high number of blinks or unusual voltage levels, a meter crew is assigned to investigate the issue. If meter crews can't find any issues from the ground to the meter, a service order is generated for a lineman to inspect the entirety of service in that area.

"We always strive to be good stewards of the cooperative and members' time and money," Pennington said. "We can confidently send crews out knowing there is an issue to be fixed because of the MDMS reporting ability and accuracy of the meter data."

Sometimes the issue with a piece of equipment can be as simple as the lid of the meter base is too tight or burnt wires, distressing the equipment and causing it to work incorrectly. Other times, crews find and prevent issues from escalating to potentially much larger service interruptions.

Awhile back, a meter was experiencing service interruptions, and when the meter crew discovered an issue with the transformer, a service order was submitted for a lineworker to inspect the equipment. They discovered the transformer was going bad, and if it had continued to deteriorate, approximately 350 members on that line would have experienced an outage.

"This reporting tool saves a ton of time, money and recourse while increasing our reliability by exponential amounts when a potential issue like failing equipment is found early," Pennington said.

Another benefit of the new MDMS system is how it gives an overview of the loading across the system. With



(pictured left to right) Cotton Electric Apprentice Field Meter Technician Bryan Goode and Cotton Electric Journeyman Field Meter Technician Rex Hiebert inspect a meter box lid. Photo by Zach Young.

several areas throughout our service territory quickly growing, meter crews are able to understand how much load can be added to a new installation without causing disruptions to members who are already in the area.

"The overview of voltage across our system allows us to keep better-balanced loads across our system all the way up to the substation levels," Pennington said.

Reviewing the voltage levels is also helpful for meters in areas that members don't go to every day, such as water wells, electric fences, oil wells and more. Alerts for those meters help crews recognize and fix the issue before members could possibly be on-site to notice.

Once crews believe the issue has been fixed, they continue monitoring the meter to ensure the equipment is working properly again.

Other benefits of the new system include assisting members with high bills by reviewing their usage trends and how they can offset peak hours.

Cotton Electric Meter Data Analyst Josh Belcher explained how issues are frequently caused by an air conditioner or other appliances breaking down that cause lights to blink or dim whenever they turn on, causing a big spike in energy. It also helps members who call in with solar accounts, allowing their reverse usage and production to be reviewed and ensuring correct compensation.

While the new software is providing insightful data, we still need help from you – our members. It's important that members still call in and report service interruptions. Members reporting outages helps your cooperative address and fix the issue more efficiently and safely.

"This [software] has proven to be an extremely valuable tool, and we've just scratched the surface," Pennington said. "We now have something in an easy-to-use format that presents data to help our membership, be more efficient, and improve reliability."

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Local attraction provides unique learning experience

Chisholm Trail Heritage Center
\$1 off admission



When you walk through the door, on the left hanging on the wall are pushpins sprinkled across a world map from everyone who stepped foot into the museum. This representation gives a glimpse of a unique experience tucked away in Stephens County that brings in people from across the world. Many are familiar with the impact of the Chisholm Trail across Southwest Oklahoma, but the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center (CTHC) brings that period of history to life.

CTHC Executive Director Leah Mulkey came into her new position at the beginning of this year, but her dedication to the museum goes back many years ago when she began as a teacher in the education program. The thought of retiring has entered her mind, but the visitors are what she loves about her job.

“Each day is a new day here filled with new students and visitors from all over the world,” Mulkey said. “You never see the same people two days in a row.”

When Cotton Electric members show their Co-op Connections card, they can receive \$1 off admission when they visit CTHC.

CTHC hosts different events and activities throughout the year, and they are currently in a busy season of hosting schools on their field trips in person and virtually. The virtual option was introduced during COVID when schools weren't allowed to travel and has since opened the door for more schools across the county to “visit” CTHC.

“Teachers love our programs because we cover the required academic standards, and we also try to work with the teacher to find out the age groups and what their goals are for the visit to help us prepare,” Mulkey said.

The theme of field trips rotates each quarter of the year, beginning in September with a session about the Abernathy boys with a focus on geography. The next session is Holidays on the Trail with Lizzie Johnson, the first woman in Texas to have her own herd

of cattle travel the Chisholm Trail. The Oklahoma History session begins in January with Pearl Carter Scott, the first Native American woman pilot from Marlow. The last session is Oklahoma Land Giveaways, and students hear from historical interpreter Kentucky Daisy who explains how she got her free land. Additional field trip programs and activities include Diversity on the Trail, Animals on the Trail, outdoor activities, an art scavenger hunt and much more.

Other attractions and programs hosted by CTHC include their 4D theatre, art gallery with rotating featured artists, Free Family Art sessions every Monday in June from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. for all ages, Let's Talk About It book club, and their most popular event, National Day of the Cowboy. The newest addition to CTHC is a life-size horse sculpture donated by a family in Rush Springs for visitors to sit on and have their picture taken in front of the recently updated mural of the Oklahoma plains by the Marlow High School art teacher, Arlyn Brantley.

“The community helps us in many ways, especially when they visit and sign up for memberships,” Mulkey said.

“Memberships help us with our education programs and provide a great learning experiences for those who visit.”

CTHC holds plenty of significant history and stories of Southwest Oklahoma along the well-known Chisholm Trail so that each time someone visits, they are most likely to learn something new.

“A lot of people visit CTHC to learn about the cowboy and their lifestyle on the Chisholm Trail,” Mulkey said. “If it's been awhile since someone has visited, I encourage them to come back because we are always adding

new activities.”

For more information about CTHC, visit www.on-thechisholmtrail.com or their Facebook page or stop by in person.

Co-op Connections cards are available to all members and can be downloaded in the app, printed online, or picked up at Cotton Electric offices in Walters or Duncan. You can also visit www.connections.coop.com or www.cottonelectric.com under the Member Services tab to discover how you can be part of this free, money-saving opportunity.



A visitor tries his luck at roping a longhorn in the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center's interactive area. Photo courtesy of Leah Mulkey.

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Terry Stuart Forst named 2024 Agriculture Hall of Fame Inductee



Terry Stuart Forst

OKLAHOMA CITY — Terry Stuart Forst, a fifth generation Oklahoman who owns and manages the state's oldest and most continuous family-operated ranch, has been named the 2024 recipient of Governor Stitt's Outstanding Achievement in Agriculture Award. Forst is the

27th inductee into the Oklahoma Agriculture Hall of Fame and becomes the first woman to earn the state's most prestigious agricultural honor.

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for Terry Stuart Forst as a rancher, a leader and an Oklahoman," said Sec. of Agriculture Blayne Arthur. "Having had the chance to visit her operation and watch Terry and her family work side-by-side to build and continue the success of their business, I know first-hand how deserving she is of this award. Terry is incredibly accomplished and has already received several accolades, so it's very fitting that she is the latest inductee into the Oklahoma Agriculture Hall of Fame."

Forst's leadership of the 7S Stuart Ranch has left a profound impact on the agriculture industry in Oklahoma. The 45,000-acre cattle and horse operation represents a model of best management practices and has become one

of the most elite ranches in the Southwest.

Forst strives to improve all facets of her ranch while maintaining practices designed to conserve resources and shares learned experiences with the community. Forst continually devotes her talent and time by consulting on beef production methods and volunteering her own assets for workshops and demonstrations.

A lifelong learner, her dedication to research and excellence has led to improvements in every aspect of the operation, from pasture and rangeland health to livestock efficiency and longevity and overall business profitability.

Forst adds this honor to a long list of accomplishments that include induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame. She also received the Oklahoma State University Distinguished

Alumni Award. She served as a president of the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, is a recipient of the Cattlemen of the Year Award and received many other recognitions for her leadership in sustainability and ranch management.

Forst will be formally honored at an event this summer. The details will be announced on a later date.

Source: Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Cotton Electric member Terry Stuart Forst owns and operates the 7S Stuart Ranch, one of Oklahoma's most historic ranches, that resides on co-op lines near Waurika. Congratulations to Terry Stuart Forst!

If you have a member spotlight, submissions can be sent to TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com.

Congratulations!






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I hit a power pole or other electrical equipment: Now what?

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Drivers veer off the road and run into a power pole. Farmers sometimes make contact with a power line while driving tractors or other machinery. Dump or feed truck drivers raise or lower their bed and snag a power line.

People can become dangerously close or enter electricity's path. Knowing what to do in that situation can save your life. Incidents with power lines or other utility equipment break the electrical current's usual path. This can make the ground, vehicles and other equipment electrified.

If you hit a power pole, pad-mounted transformer ("green box") or other electrical equipment, do not get out of the vehicle or cab. Instead, call 9-1-1 and wait for utility crews to come and de-energize power. Here are some examples; in all instances, call 9-1-1:

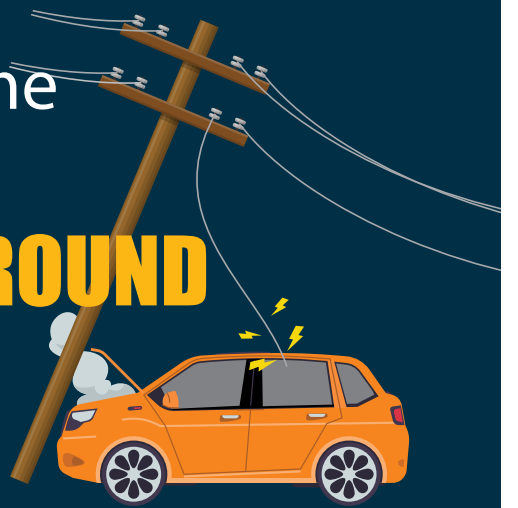
- Your tractor or car strikes a guy wire (guy wires are the wires staked into the ground that stabilize utility poles). Under normal conditions, the guy wire is neutral, but if the wire is weakened, pulled out of the ground or otherwise damaged, it could become energized.
- You hit a patch of ice and go off the road and hit a utility pole, or you are in a car accident and one of the vehicles strikes a power pole. Only get out of the car if there is smoke or a fire; otherwise, stay put. If there is a fire, make a clean jump or hop from your car or truck (without touching it), and hop with your feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground at

least 30 feet to safety. Think of the downed line sending electrical current across the ground in a ripple-like effect. Each ring of the ripple represents a different voltage. If you step from one ring to another, this is called step potential and it can electrocute you.

- You see an accident that involves a downed power line. DO NOT approach the scene.
 - You hit a pad-mounted transformer or other type of electrical box.
 - Your vehicle hits a substation.
 - You ran off the road, hit a pole and it's dark out, but you don't know if lines are down.
- Other situations
- You get something stuck in power lines (drone or remote-control device): Do not try to retrieve it.
 - You see kids climbing or sitting on pad-mounted transformers: Tell them not to sit or play on it.
 - You are carrying a tall ladder or pole: Look up for power line locations and keep at least a 10-foot clearance at all times.
 - You see kids climb trees that have power lines above: Warn them not to climb trees near power lines.
 - You are using a portable generator: Never plug it into a wall outlet. This can cause backfeeding into the line and kill a lineworker or neighbor.

For questions about any of these scenarios, contact your cooperative at 580-875-3351. For more information about electrical safety, visit www.cot-tonelectric.com/safety or www.safe-electricity.org.

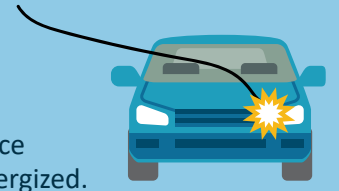
Don't Become Electricity's PATH TO GROUND



When electric utility equipment becomes damaged, the ground and objects can become energized.

If you are in a situation where there could be downed power lines or a damaged pole, guy wire or padmount transformer (green box), know what to do to save your life and the lives of others:

CAR ACCIDENT



Stay inside your vehicle or cab since the ground or objects could be energized.

Call 9-1-1 and report that there are downed or damaged power lines or a dislodged green box.

Wait for the utility crew to arrive to deenergize the power.

Do not exit until someone from the utility says it is safe to do so.

ONLY EXIT IF THE VEHICLE IS ON FIRE

Cross your arms over your chest and make a clean jump out.

Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

Make solid hops with your feet together as far away as you can.

Do not return to the vehicle.



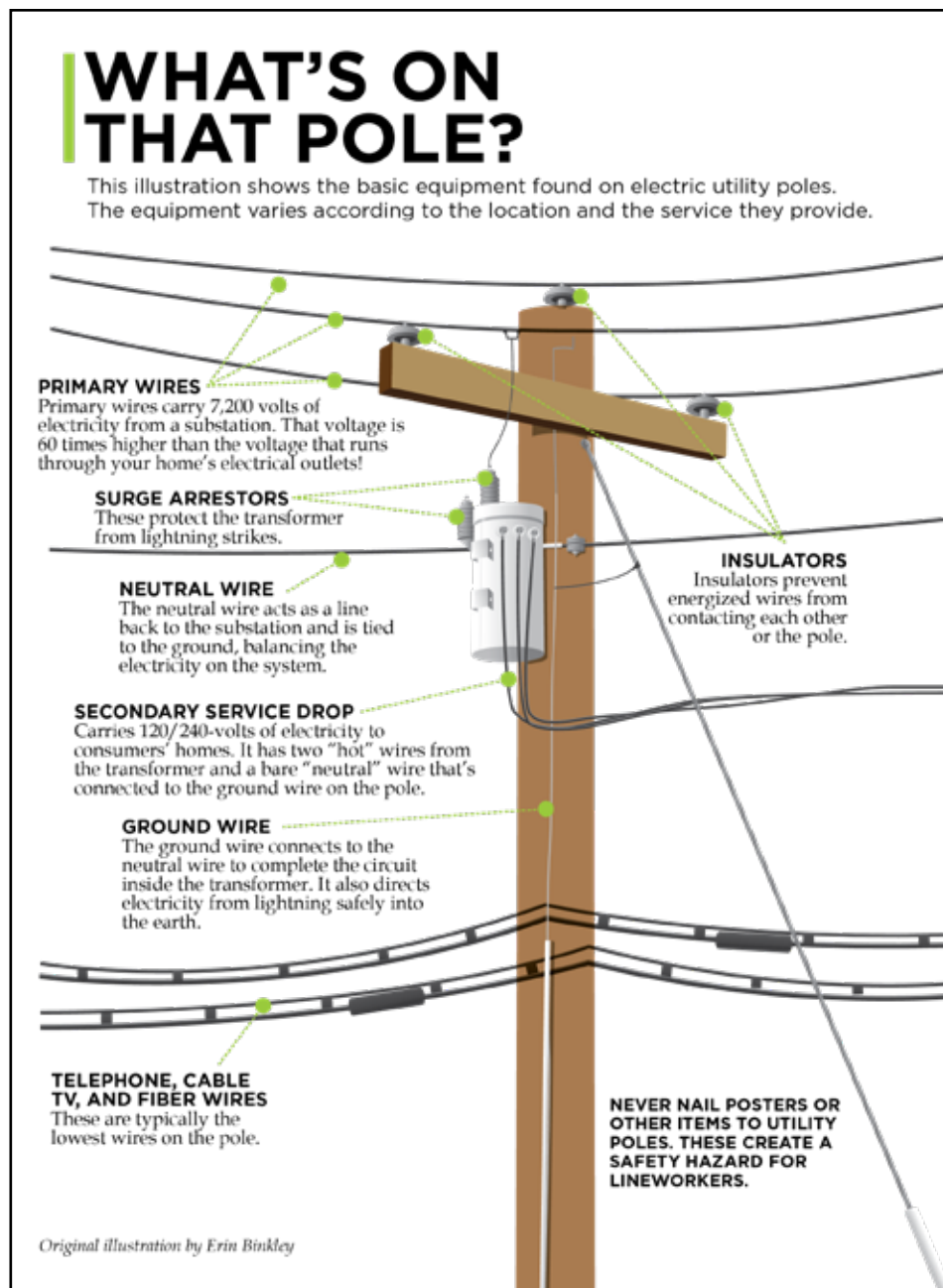
IF YOU ARE A BYSTANDER

Do not approach the scene to try and help.

Stay at least 50 feet away and do not lean on or touch anything, including fences or guardrails.



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Co-op Life

Safety remains our focus and mission

By Carli Eubank

Safety is a core guide of everything we do at Cotton Electric Cooperative that supports our mission to provide our members with safe and reliable power. May is National Electrical Safety Month, but our constant focus on safety is a priority that is followed every day across all departments at the cooperative to ensure safety while serving our members and keeping our communities secure.

Lineworkers are exposed to many potential dangers every day, so it's important they follow every precaution and safety guideline while completing assignments or restoring outages. Our crews always travel and work in pairs, and before taking any action, they will pause to complete a job briefing. During this time, crews describe the location, lines, potential hazards, purpose of the job and other conditions to help them prepare and focus on the task ahead. Then, they ground and stabilize the bucket truck before putting on personal protective equipment (PPE) and starting the job.

Crews rely on their trainings, experience and PPE to keep them safe on the job, and the cooperative's subsidiary company, Cotton Electric Services Inc. (CESI) works to ensure their PPE is meeting safety standards. CESI employees test more than 20 rubber goods products, including primary protection, such as gloves and sleeves, and secondary protection, like linehoses, blankets, crossarm covers and much more.

When gloves and other equipment arrive, employees give an initial visual inspection to identify any cuts or other abnormalities. The equipment is then washed before going through an electrical test that applies the appropriate voltage. An alert will sound if the machine detects any failed equipment. After the electrical test, employees will do another inspection of the equipment to catch any defects that might not have been noticed previously.

CESI follows the guidelines set by the American Society for Testing and Materials, Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program and the North American Independent Laboratories for Protective Equipment Testing. More information about CESI can be found on their website at www.cottonservices.com.

Cotton Electric crews gather once a month to refresh important safety procedures. Some safety meeting topics include grounding practices, hot-line tools care and maintenance, hazard recognitions and pole-top rescue. The annual pole-top rescue is a drill that helps build muscle memory for crews completing a mayday procedure and rescuing a colleague from a bucket or pole. Crews may also attend safety education sessions provided by Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Office employees are required to complete safety trainings, as well. Employees work through online monthly courses that expound on a variety of safety topics and must pass a quiz to receive that month's certification.

Safety has a ripple effect that starts with Cotton Electric and reaches out to our membership. At your cooperative, we make our health and safety a priority so we can serve you – our members – to the best of our ability and keep our communities safe and powered.



Cotton Electric crews go over a job briefing before starting a job. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric Services Inc. Lab Technician Ryan Noland marks a rubber blanket that failed during electric testing. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric employees gather for an all-employee safety meeting. Photo by Zach Young.

A LINEWORKER'S SAFETY EQUIPMENT



- **Hard Hat:** protects lineworkers from fallen debris
- **Safety Glasses:** block hazardous glare, particularly when working on energized lines
- **Rubber Gloves and Sleeves:** tested for protection from electrical contact
- **Rubber Glove Protectors:** worn over insulated rubber gloves to protect them from tearing or being punctured
- **Safety Harness:** protects when working in elevated positions that attaches to the boom on truck
- **Fire Retardant Shirt:** protects lineworkers from burns in event of contact



COTTON
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Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the June issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351, or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by May 31. Only events occurring after June 14 will be published in the next issue.

Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.

Summer Swim enrollment open

Enrollment for the 2024 Summer Swim Program sponsored by Duncan Chisholm Trail Kiwanis Club is now open. Most lessons run Monday through Thursday for two weeks at the Fuqua Pool in Duncan. Fees are \$15 per child per session and \$30 per family per session. Two one-week prelessons for 3-to-5-year-olds are \$10 per child per session. The first session is June 17-27, and the second session is July 8-18. Enrollment for the swim program is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 11 at the Chisholm Mall. Teachers and volunteers are also welcome to enroll. For more information, visit the Duncan Chisholm Trail Kiwanis Facebook page.

Annual Summer in the Streets

The Cache Area Chamber invites everyone to a family-friendly party atmosphere with fun for all ages at Summer in the Streets. There will be food, a petting zoo, pop-up vendors and more fun activities. Attendees can also watch artists compete in the annual live mural competition. The event is set to begin at 11 a.m., May 18 at the downtown business district, 5th and C Ave., Cache. For more information or to become a vendor, visit www.cacheareachamber.com.

Indian Taco lunch fundraiser

Support a great cause and get lunch at the same time! Come out to the Central High Community Center at 166141 7 Mile Rd, Marlow on May 19 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and enjoy an Indian taco, dessert and drink for just \$10. The meat is graciously being donated by Rancher's Market in Elgin. Maddie White is raising money for the Duncan Noon Lions Club to buy glasses and pay for vision services for those who need them. Maddie will also have raffle chances and rodeo tickets available for the Duncan Noon Lions F - F Rodeo to be held June 27-29. Advance rodeo tickets are available for \$9/adult, \$4/kids and 3 and under

are free. If you wish to donate rodeo tickets, Maddie will give those tickets to the foster care families in Stephens County, so they can enjoy a fun night at the rodeo. Indian taco tickets are also available for advance purchase, making it easy for you to give them as a gift! Call/text 580-860-2896 and check out Maddie's Facebook page @Maddie White for 2024 Duncan Noon Lions Rodeo Queen.

Music festival in Medicine Park

Join family and friends at The Roots Ball music event for three days of live Americana/Roots music, food and fun. Hear top local talent while exploring the quaint landscape of historic Medicine Park. The event is May 24-26 at Town Center Mainstage in Medicine Park. For more information, call 580-529-2825 or visit www.medicinpark.com/festivals/.

Annual Meers VFD Fundraiser

The annual Tour de Meers bike ride is one of the region's oldest and most successful bike rides in the small rural community of Meers, located just north of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. This event is an annual fundraiser for the Meers Volunteer Fire Department. Day-of registration begins at 6 a.m., and the ride starts at 7:30 a.m. on May 25 at the Meers Volunteer Fire Department. To register or for more information, visit their Facebook page, Tour de Meers Bicycle Ride.

Food pantry open once monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street. Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification and proof of Cotton County residency. Monetary donations may be sent to Food Pantry, c/o Paul Metcalfe, 211 E. Colorado St., Walters, OK 73572. For questions or more information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

Blessings Boutique open monthly

Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Four-year-old Cotton Electric member Lennox caught his first fish near Fletcher and has been "hooked" ever since.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for June is Waving Wheat! Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize.



Bowie's Second Monday
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SECOND MONDAY TRADE DAYS
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Familiarizing yourself with the newest member of the allergen family



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

In 2023, sesame was added as the ninth major food allergen in the United States. This is the first allergen added since 2004 when the Food Allergen Label-

ing and Consumer Protection Act was passed into law. The original eight major food allergens are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, peanut, wheat, and soybeans.

Foods that may contain sesame include tahini (an ingredient in hummus and other Mediterranean dishes and sauces), crackers, breads, breadsticks, burger buns, salads, cereal bars or foods from the Middle East or Asia containing sesame oil.

Approximately 1 million Americans have a sesame allergy. Sesame has been difficult to identify on a food label and can also be found in cosmetics, medications, nutritional supplements, and perfumes. The labeling law currently only applies to food. Allergic reac-

tions range from mild (skin rash) to severe anaphylaxis.

Because the new labeling law went into effect recently, individuals with a sesame allergy must pay attention to ingredient labels as foods produced before Jan. 1, 2023, do not have to declare a sesame allergen might be present. Foods produced after Jan. 1, 2023, must clearly list sesame as an ingredient or declare that the product "Contains Sesame."

As of 2021, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America esti-

mated that 20 million people in the U.S. have food allergies. If you frequently host gatherings, are a home parent, or are in the restaurant industry, it is important to familiarize yourself with the

newest member of the allergen family and familiarize yourself with the foods that contain the allergen in case you need to alter a recipe to accommodate or work with a patron with a sesame allergy.

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Cameron University is offering several pieces of surplus equipment from its agricultural operation in Lawton. The following items will be sold by sealed bid:

Items with reserve bids:

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- 1 Oklahoma Trailer Mfg. 20' gooseneck trailer
- 1 Sunflower 12-tooth chisel
- 1 Cattleguard 10'x16'
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No reserve:

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- 6 Unknown brand 10' feed bunks
- 1 New Idea 3615 manure spreader






Bids will be received until 2 p.m. on Thursday, May 30, 2024. Information, instructions and bid forms may be obtained by contacting:


Cameron University
Purchasing Department
2800 W. Gore Blvd, Administration 101
Lawton, OK 73505

Office hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, or call 580-581-5502. For more information about these items, including specifications, or to schedule a viewing of equipment, please call Tom Arnold at 580-678-2176.

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- Over 3 years of County Government experience, serving as American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Grant Administrator and as County Clerk since June of 2022.
- Transparency, integrity and respect are key values I strive for in serving our County citizens
- My passion is to work with all County Officers to promote the economic and general well-being of all County citizens through the service of the County Clerk office.
- Implemented Technology improvements for enhanced management and service of County Land Records, Purchasing and Financial activities.
- I respectfully ask for and will appreciate your vote and support in the June 18th Primary election, with early voting on June 13th through 15th.

Thank you for your consideration

Joe Schappert Cotton County Clerk

Paid for by Joe Schappert

Celebrate spring with brunch favorites

(Family Features) Few things go together quite like fresh spring air, warm sunshine and a menu made up of delicious brunch bites. Whether you're hosting a crowd or simply gathering your loved ones around the family table for quality time together, a menu of morning favorites can appease appetites of all kinds.

From sweet to savory and back again, you can turn your mid-morning meal into a full-blown feast with a menu made up of pleasing dishes such as this French Toast Casserole, which can serve as a make-ahead twist on the breakfast classic; customizable Breakfast Burritos that pack a protein punch; and a bite-sized treat like Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins for a sweet finishing touch to any brunch occasion.

Find more recipes to inspire your next brunch menu at [Culinary.net](https://www.culinary.net).

Warm up with a fresh casserole

An exciting twist on a breakfast classic, it's hard to beat this French Toast Casserole when putting together your brunch spread. Crisp on top while soft and moist in the middle, it comes fresh out of the oven with the aroma of maple syrup and pecans that will have the whole house eager for a bite. It's easy enough to make fresh in the morning but can also be prepared the night before so all you have to do is add the topping and pop it in the oven.

French Toast Casserole

1 loaf French bread (about 1 1/2 pounds), cut into 1-inch cubes
5 large eggs
1 1/2 cups unsweetened milk
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
maple syrup, for serving

Topping:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter or coconut oil, melted
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1/2 cup chopped pecans
1 cup frozen strawberries
1 cup frozen blueberries
confectioners' sugar, for dusting



Grease 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Place bread cubes in baking dish. In large bowl, whisk eggs, milk, brown sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Pour mixture evenly over bread cubes.

If making casserole ahead, cover baking dish and refrigerate overnight. If baking immediately, let stand 30 minutes at room temperature to allow bread to soak up egg mixture.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

To make topping: Drizzle casserole with melted butter and sprinkle with brown sugar and pecans. Top with strawberries and blueberries.

Cover and bake 35 minutes then uncover and bake 10-20 minutes, or until topping is browned and egg mixture has mostly set.

Remove from oven, cover loosely with foil and let stand 10 minutes. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve with maple syrup.



Brunch with a powerful punch

When you're craving something hearty and rich, switch up your brunch habits with wholesome and filling Breakfast Burritos. With protein to keep you full, veggies for a touch of added nutrition and hot sauce to pack a powerful punch of flavor in every bite, this hearty recipe will keep you full and bursting with energy until your next meal. Plus, they're easy to make in a matter of minutes and totally customizable to accommodate every palate.

Breakfast Burritos | Servings: 4

2 teaspoons canola oil
1 small red onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
salt, to taste
pepper, to taste
4 eggs
4 egg whites

1/2 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
nonstick cooking spray
4 flour tortillas
1/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup salsa
1 large tomato, seeded and diced
1 avocado, sliced
hot sauce (optional)

In large skillet, heat canola oil over medium heat. Add red onion and red bell pepper; cook 8 minutes. Add black beans and red pepper flakes; cook 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to dish.

In medium bowl, whisk eggs and egg whites. Stir in cheese until combined. Heat large skillet over low heat, add egg mixture and scramble 3 minutes, or until cooked through.

Spread sour cream over tortilla. Spread salsa over sour cream. Spoon 1/4 bean mixture over salsa. Spoon 1/4 scrambled eggs over bean mixture. Top with diced tomatoes and avocado. Drizzle with hot sauce, if desired. Roll-up burrito. Repeat three times with remaining ingredients and serve.

Bite-sized chocolate delights

Flavorful French toast, filling breakfast burritos and favorite fruits make a feast to look forward to, but no brunch spread is complete without a chocolatey bite to cap off the meal. In fact, make it a double.

These Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins offer a combination of two kinds of rich chocolate complemented by the caramel notes of C&H Light Brown Sugar for an irresistible dessert in bite-sized form. Tiny, tasty treats are a perfect way to send guests off with one sweet final bite.

Visit [chsugar.com](https://www.chsugar.com) to find more delectable dessert recipes.

Double chocolate chip mini muffins

Muffin Batter:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 package (10 ounces) mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 large eggs
1/2 cup C&H Light Brown Sugar, packed

1/2 cup C&H Granulated Sugar
3/4 cup sour cream
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup whole milk
1/2 teaspoon instant espresso (optional)
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 tablespoons flaked sea salt (optional)



Preheat oven to 350 F. Line mini muffin pan with mini cupcake liners.

In large mixing bowl, use whisk to combine flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Add chocolate chips and stir to ensure chocolate chips are coated in flour mixture.

In separate large mixing bowl, use wire whisk to whisk eggs and sugars until ingredients are combined and sugars are dissolved. Add sour cream, oil and milk. Whisk again to combine. If using espresso powder, add to vanilla then add to wet ingredients. Whisk vanilla espresso mixture into other liquid ingredients.

Pour liquid ingredients on top of dry ingredients. Using rubber spatula, mix until just combined, being careful to not overmix. Batter should be thick and shiny.

Using tablespoon or two spoons, spoon muffin batter into liners. Batter should be filled almost to top of each liner. Top each muffin with flaked sea salt before baking, if desired.

Bake muffins on center rack 6 minutes. Rotate pan and bake 6 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in muffin comes out clean. Once muffins finish baking, place muffin pan on cooling rack to cool completely.

Caring for fresh flowers

(Family Features) The beauty of having a garden is buds continually blooming on one plant or another throughout most of the year. While this provides lovely views from your windows, it can also be nice to bring some beauty indoors.

Don't be afraid to snip off a few blossoms each week. Many plants thrive after trimming and may reward you with even more flowers. Once you've gathered a bouquet from your garden, consider these tips to help keep fresh flowers at their best for a week or more:

- Bacteria can quickly destroy fresh flowers, which is why it's important to use a clean vase. Any floral foam, wires or frogs used in your arrangement must also be washed in warm, soapy water.
- Remove any lower leaves that may come in contact with water inside the vase.
- Carefully trim each flower stem at a 90-degree angle. It may also be helpful to cut flowers while they are underwater to keep moisture flowing into the stems.
- Keep your arrangement out of direct sunlight. The darker and cooler the room, the longer your blossoms will bloom.
- Adding a crushed aspirin, bleach, vinegar, sugar or penny to the vase are age-old tricks. However, you can keep bacteria at bay and help flowers thrive by adding a packet of flower food to the water. It can be found at your local florist or home improvement store.

Flowers are living things that still require water, food and care after they are cut. Every 2-3 days, be sure to change the water, replenish the flower food and recut the stems for additional days of glorious color.

Find more ideas for freshening up your indoor spaces at eLivingtoday.com.



Photo courtesy of Unsplash



Consider these popular seed types and the common backyard birds they attract:

Sunflower – Black sunflower seeds attract blue jays, goldfinches, woodpeckers, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches. Striped sunflower seeds appeal to chickadees, doves, grosbeaks, northern cardinals, nuthatches, titmice and woodpeckers. Sunflower hearts (also known as “hulled sunflower” and “sunflower chips”) attract chickadees, common redpolls, juncos, doves, finches, goldfinches, grosbeaks, nuthatches, pine siskins, titmice and woodpeckers.

Nyjer – These lightweight, tiny seeds are a favorite of goldfinches. Put nyjer seeds in a hanging feeder with tiny holes so the small seeds won't get blown away. Nyjer also attracts redpolls, juncos, doves, indigo bunting and pine siskin.

Safflower – These white seeds are slightly smaller than black sunflower seeds. Because they are bitter, grackles, blue jays, starlings – and squirrels – don't like them. However, they do attract doves, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers.

White millet – Good for scattering on the ground, white millet attracts ground feeders such as juncos, sparrows, indigo buntings, towhees and mourning doves.

Cracked corn – Popular with ground feeders, cracked corn appeals to doves, crows, jays, sparrows, juncos and towhees. Avoid getting finely cracked corn as it's vulnerable to rot and can quickly turn to mush.

When choosing a bird seed mix, pay attention to the ingredients list on the package. Bird seed is required by law to list ingredients in order of content. Some cheaper mixes have filler seeds such as wheat, red milo, red millet or “assorted grain products.” Most backyard birds won't eat those, and your seed mix could end up wasted on the ground.

Learn more about making your backyard an oasis for birds of all kinds at eLivingtoday.com.

Attract backyard birds with the right seeds

(Family Features) While almost all bird seed may look pretty much the same to you, it doesn't to the birds you're feeding. Knowing what kinds of seeds different birds like can help you attract a variety of fine feathered friends to your feeders.

Photo courtesy of Unsplash

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 Most lessons run Monday through Thursday for 2 weeks
 \$15 per child/per session; \$30 per family/per session
 Two 1 week 3-5 YO Pre-Lesson \$10 per child/per session

Session 1 – June 17th – June 27th

Morning Classes:
 9:45am – 10:30 am Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4
 10:45 am – 11:30 am Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4, 5/6

Evening Classes:
 6:30 pm – 7:15 pm Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4, 5/6
 7:30 pm – 8:15 pm Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4, 5/6

Session 2 – July 8th – July 18th

Morning Classes:
 9:45am – 10:30 am Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4
 10:45 am – 11:30 am Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4

Evening Classes:
 6:30 pm – 7:00 pm 3-5 YO Pre-Lesson (Limit 25)
 (Week 1 - July 10-13; Week 2 July 17-20)
 7:15 pm – 8:00 pm Levels 1, 2, 3s, 3d, 4, 5/6

Enrollment Dates and Times:

12:30 pm to 4 pm	Thursday, May 2 nd	Duncan Public Library
12:30 pm to 4 pm	Thursday, May 9 th	Duncan Public Library
10:00 am to 2 pm	Saturday, May 4 th	Chisholm Mall
10:00 am to 2 pm	Saturday, May 11 th	Chisholm Mall

See Duncan Chisholm Trail Kiwanis on FaceBook to learn more and for printable enrollment forms to fill out.

We are looking for teachers and volunteers for our swim program. If you love the water and enjoy kids, let us know and we will get you trained!!

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Does your home have any of these symptoms?

<input type="checkbox"/> Rooms that get too hot or too cold?	<input type="checkbox"/> Dust buildup within 2 days of dusting?
<input type="checkbox"/> High utility bills?	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems with your system since it's been installed?
<input type="checkbox"/> Thermostat wars with your spouse?	<input type="checkbox"/> Anyone with allergies or asthma?
<input type="checkbox"/> High humidity in summer?	<input type="checkbox"/> AC starts and stops frequently or runs all the time, and house is still not cool?
<input type="checkbox"/> House just never seems comfortable?	
<input type="checkbox"/> There doesn't seem to be enough airflow?	

Have been told by other contractors that the problem cannot be fixed?

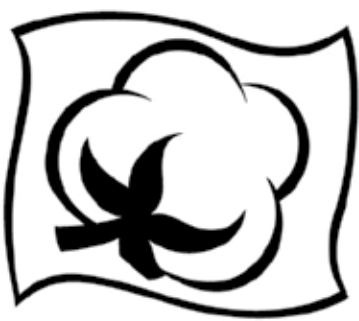
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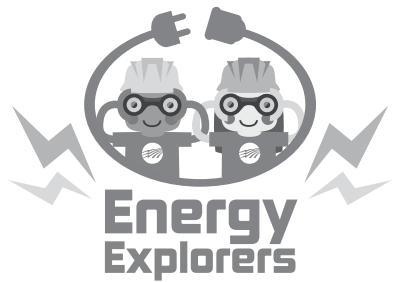
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Practicing safety near electricity can save lives, and we want you to spread the important message of safety. With the help of an adult, complete the checklist below then cut out the badge to show you care about electrical safety.

TASK	COMPLETED
Electrical outlets are not overloaded with multiple power strips and devices.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electrical cords are not causing a trip hazard or placed under rugs or carpet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoke alarms are working.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoke alarms are installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the house.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All light switches are working properly.	<input type="checkbox"/>

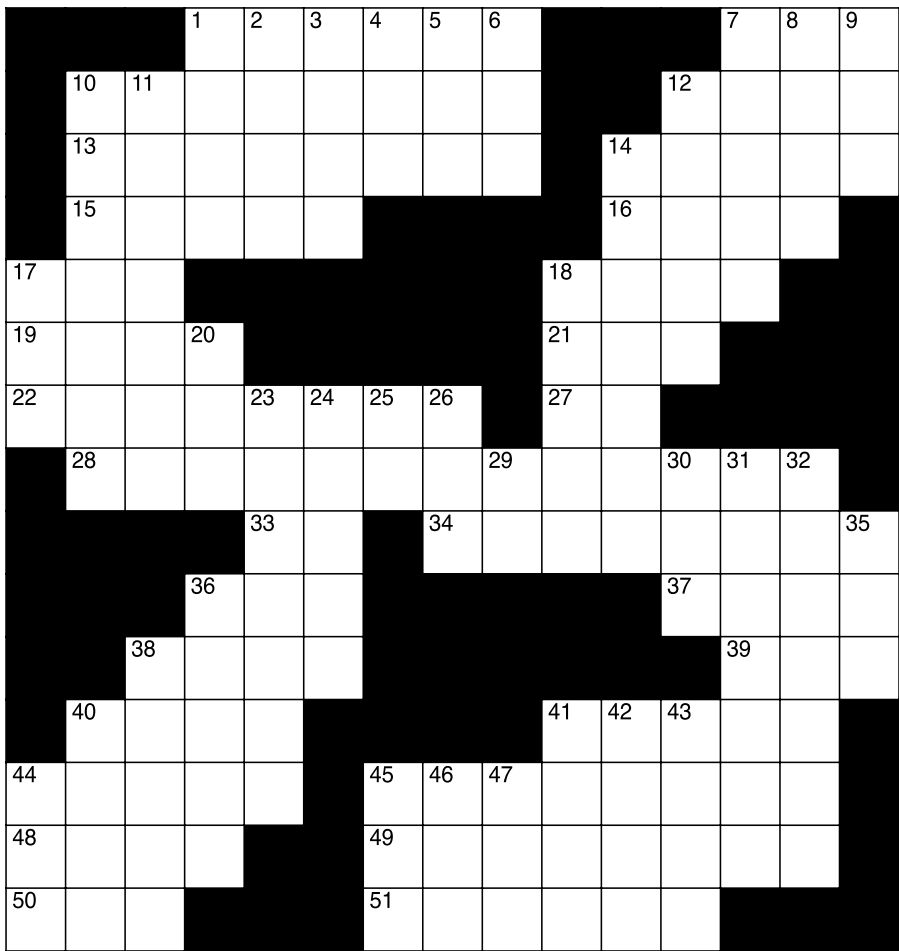
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 Saturday, May 18, 2024
 10:00 A.M.
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 Velma, Oklahoma
Gary Criswell Auction Service & Real Estate, Inc. has been commissioned by the Estate of Harley Files and Myrna Files to offer at Public Auction their Personal Property situated at 177535 North 3000 Road, Velma, Oklahoma.
Household Furnishings: A Markor International Sofa Sectional (3-Piece), AICO Cortina 6-Piece Wall Entertainment Center (Honey Walnut), Ashley Furniture Love Seat, Ethan Allen Wood Dining Table with 8 Chairs, Arm Chair (Animal Print), HAINING DELI Sofa/Recliner, Jeff Zimmerman Arm Chair with Ottoman, Lamp Table, Kincaid Highboy Dresser, Queen Size Bed with Canopy Post, Home Entertainment Center, Fire Place Mantel (White with Mirror), Queen Anne Bed with Sofa Bench, Wardrobe, Bar Stools (6) and MAYTAG Washer and MAYTAG Dryer.
Antique and Collectibles: Mantel with Mirrors and Wood Columns, Bassett-French Italian Mirror with Figurines, Dumbwaiter Table (ornate), Globe Company Lawyers-Stack Book Cases (2), Lamp Table-Marble Top, Lamp Table with 2 Side Chairs, Shakespeare-Land Fire Screen, Secretary-Book Shelf, Gate Leg Table-Drop Leaf (Oak), Side Table with Checker-Board Inlaid, Magazine Table with Harp Ends, Secretary Small (Tiger Oak), Kidney Table Mahogany with Serving Tray, Vitrine Curio Table with Tray and Queen Anne Dresser with Wing Back.
Glassware and Collectibles: Large Variety of Blue Willow Glassware (Very Nice), Variety of Hand Made Quilts (12), Willow Ware by Royal China, Variety of Area Rugs and a Treadle Base with Metal Top.
FORD Mustang: 1966 FORD Mustang with a 289 cu in Engine, Automatic Transmission, Leather Seats, Air Condition with Dual Exhaust (Mileage 63,645).
CHEVROLET Pickup: 2007 SILVERADO Z-71 4x4, Quad Cab, Leather Seats, All Power, Color White, Motor has been Overhauled - Mileage 230,103.
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ACROSS

- 1. Lunatic
- 7. Doctor of Education
- 10. Able to make amends
- 12. Tight-knit group
- 13. Gland
- 14. Intestinal pouches
- 15. Fungal spores
- 16. Erstwhile
- 17. Engine additive
- 18. Nasal mucus
- 19. Fit a horse with footwear
- 21. Consumed
- 22. Settle
- 27. Larry and Curly's pal



- 28. Basketball's GOAT
- 33. Exclamation of surprise
- 34. Made tight
- 36. Before
- 37. Actor Nicolas
- 38. Not hot
- 39. Talk
- 40. Pledge
- 41. Abandon a mission
- 44. Trims by cutting
- 45. Aspects of one's character
- 48. Boxing GOAT's former surname
- 49. Holy places

- 50. Body art center of a polygon (slang)
 - 51. Attributes
- DOWN**
- 1. How one feels
 - 2. American Nat'l Standards Institute
 - 3. Information
 - 4. Licensed for Wall Street
 - 5. Keyboard key
 - 6. Born of
 - 7. Choose to resent
 - 8. Small European freshwater fish
 - 9. Everyone has their own
 - 10. Line from the
 - 11. Lebanese city
 - 12. Type of watercraft
 - 14. A way to twist
 - 17. Soviet Socialist Republic
 - 18. Greek island
 - 20. Medical practitioner
 - 23. ___ DeGaulle, French President
 - 24. Partner to "oo-hed"
 - 25. Atomic #52
 - 26. Santa's helper
 - 29. Rapper ___ Rule
 - 30. Month
 - 31. Word formed by rearranging letters
 - 32. Nullifies
 - 35. Young woman ready to enter society
 - 36. Unemployment
 - 38. Weight unit
 - 40. Formal party
 - 41. Computer language
 - 42. Residue formula in math
 - 43. Duty or responsibility
 - 44. Part of (abbr.)
 - 45. Time zone
 - 46. Body part
 - 47. Nucleic acid

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Parting Shot



Cotton Electric member Shelly Conley captured this photo of her grandchildren fishing near Rush Springs. Photo courtesy of Shelly Conley.



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