

# THE CURRENT

For Our Member Systems, Employees and Friends  Fall 2025

## BOOSTING GRID STABILITY

*Sunflower Adds Synchronous Condenser at Fort Dodge Generating Station*



Sunflower Electric Power Corporation recently completed a major upgrade at its Fort Dodge generation station with the installation of a synchronous condenser. This powerful, behind-the-scenes piece of equipment plays a big role in keeping our electric grid stable and reliable, especially as more energy from renewable sources is added to the bulk electric grid.

### WHAT IS A SYNCHRONOUS CONDENSER?

Think of the electric grid like a highway system. Traditional power plants, like coal or natural gas units, are like semi-trucks that not only deliver energy (like freight) but also help keep traffic flowing smoothly. When many of those traditional plants retire or are used less often, we still need something on the “road” to keep things running in sync, even if it’s not delivering a load.

That’s where a synchronous condenser comes into play. It’s like a truck that’s still on the road just to smooth out traffic and prevent pileups. It doesn’t deliver power to your home, but it keeps the system stable, preventing flickering lights and appliance disruptions.

More technically, a synchronous condenser is a large rotating machine that stays synchronized with the grid and can either absorb or supply reactive power, which is a key ingredient in keeping electricity flowing smoothly. Without enough reactive power, even if there is plenty of electricity available, it might not reach your home efficiently or reliably.

The synchronous condenser installed at Fort Dodge Station allows Sunflower to operate the unit in two modes. Originally designed as

a gas-fired steam turbine, the unit can now switch from power generation to synchronous condenser mode, where it spins without generating power. This provides voltage support, grid stability, and reactive power to help balance the system and keep power flowing efficiently. The flexibility to switch from traditional generation to synchronous condenser mode is a smart and efficient use of resources, especially at a time when many older generation units across the country are being retired or used less often.

### BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO EXISTING RESOURCE

Rather than letting Unit 4 sit idle or dismantling it, the addition of the synchronous condenser enables the facility to support the modern grid in a new way. It’s like turning a dependable old truck into a high-tech road safety vehicle—still on the road, still essential, but with a new role.

While renewables like wind and solar bring clean energy, they lack the natural voltage stability traditional rotating machines provide. A synchronous condenser fills that gap, keeping the grid steady even when the wind isn’t blowing or the sun isn’t shining. This is especially valuable in rural Kansas, where fewer transmission connections can make the system more sensitive to fluctuations.

For Sunflower and our members, this project is a strategic investment. It allows us to maximize existing resources, meet regional grid requirements, and continue providing reliable,

affordable electricity while adapting to a rapidly changing energy landscape.

“This project is a great example of how we can adapt existing assets to meet the evolving needs of the electric grid,” said Corey Linville, senior vice president and chief operations officer of generation at Sunflower. “By converting Unit 4 at Fort Dodge into a synchronous condenser, we’re enhancing grid stability and reliability without the cost of building something entirely new. It’s a smart, forward-looking investment that supports both operational flexibility and the long-term strength of our system.”

### DELIVERING VALUE, AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

The project marked one of the earliest conversions of an existing generating unit to a synchronous condenser in our regional transmission network. With engineering, procurement, and construction led by Burns & McDonnell, with support from partners like AZCO and ElectroMechanical Engineering Associates, the project was completed ahead of schedule. This was a testament to careful planning, teamwork, and coordination with the dedicated project team at Sunflower.

“I applaud Sunflower for taking on this innovative project that is among the earliest conversions of existing generating resources in the SPP footprint and will help meet the challenges of the rapidly changing grid,” said Travis Fucich, a vice president in the power group at Burns & McDonnell.

As the energy landscape continues to evolve, projects like the Fort Dodge synchronous

**This project is a great example of how we can adapt existing resources to meet the evolving needs of the electric grid.**

**Corey Linville, SVP and COO of Generation**

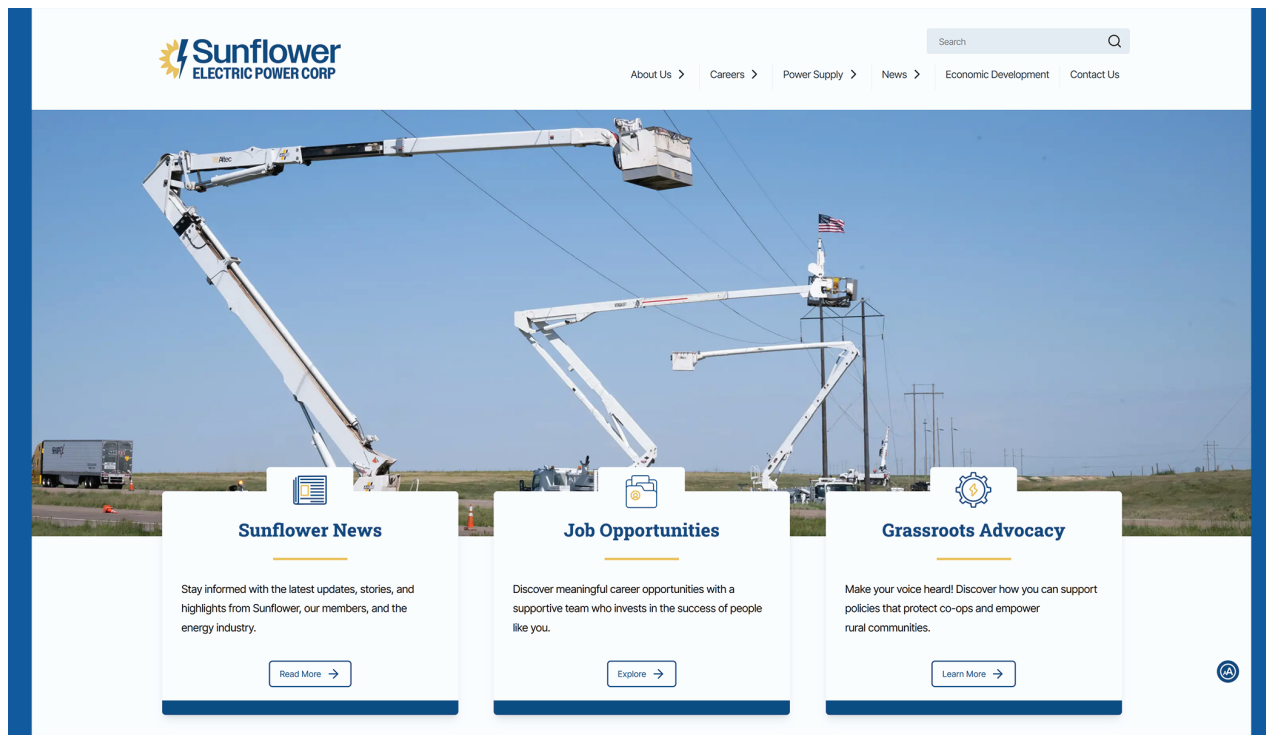
condenser are essential to maintaining a dependable electric grid. By creatively repurposing existing infrastructure, Sunflower maximized the value of Fort Dodge Station and reinforced its commitment to innovation, resilience, and service to our members.

THIS ISSUE

- New Website.....2
- EPA Update .....2
- Tamimi Panelist on National Stage .....2
- Retiree Joins Western Board .....3
- Leadership Camp .....3
- Russell Solar .....4
- Stocked for Success.....4

# New Site, New Energy

## Sunflower Elevates Website with Bold, New Look



After nearly a decade, sunflower.net has a brand-new look, and we couldn't be more excited. Launched Monday, August 18, our redesigned website is an important milestone in Sunflower's brand refresh efforts, continuing the rollout of our new logo and visual identity.

From top to bottom, the site has been completely re-energized with fresh content, updated photos, and new features that make exploring easier and more user-friendly. The streamlined sitemap, and all-new written content and imagery reflect who we are today and where we're headed tomorrow. A joint effort with the Paulsen Agency, the site gives Sunflower staff a more secure, flexible, and user-friendly content management system to operate and maintain.

So what's new? Navigation is smoother than ever, with a simplified structure to help visitors quickly find what they need. The modern design brings our brand to life with clean visuals and engaging layouts. Behind the scenes, we've integrated search engine optimization best practices and Google Analytics tracking to keep our digital presence strong. Plus, with accessibility being a top priority, the new widget features accessibility tools that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance standards.

The result is a site that not only looks great, but also works smarter, representing Sunflower and making it easier for our members, partners, and visitors to connect with us.



## Tamimi Brings Sunflower Voice to National Transmission Dialogue

Sunflower's own Al Tamimi, senior vice president and chief operations officer of transmission, hit the national stage as a featured panelist at the ACES Member Conference in Indianapolis, Ind. The session, titled "Getting There... The Past, Present, and Future of Transmission," brought together top voices in the industry to discuss the evolution of the electric grid and what lies ahead.

Moderated by Denver York, the panel also included Matt Lacey of Great River Energy and Bill Pezalla of Old Dominion Electric Cooperative. Together, the group explored the many layers of transmission including current operational challenges and the innovation needed to power the grid of the future.

Tamimi shared insights shaped by decades of experience in transmission planning and operations. He spoke to the complexity of expanding infrastructure in a changing energy landscape and emphasized the importance of collaboration, resilience, and forward-thinking strategy.

# Balancing Policy, Reliability, and Affordability

## Cooperative and Industry Leaders Highlight the Importance of Practical and Achievable Energy Policies

The conversation around power plant regulations continues to evolve at the national level, with significant implications for the reliability and affordability of electricity across the country.

### EPA'S PROPOSED REPEAL

In June, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed repealing the 2024 power plant rules. Specifically, these rules require existing coal-fired plants and new natural gas plants to adopt carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology capable of capturing 90% of carbon emissions or face retirement. The rules also require certain existing coal plants to be 40% co-fired with natural gas by 2030.

Industry leaders, including the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Sunflower, raised concerns that the mandates are based on unproven technology and would force the premature closure of reliable, dispatchable generation at a time when electricity demand is climbing due to new industries, data centers, and everyday consumer use. For rural America in particular, where cooperatives serve as the backbone of electric reliability, these requirements could mean higher costs and greater risks of outages.

### INDUSTRY RESPONSE AND OPPOSITION

In August, NRECA filed comments with the EPA supporting the agency's June proposal to roll back the 2024 power plant rule as well as all previous greenhouse gas standards for fossil fuel power plants.

"Repealing the unlawful power plant rule is an essential step to ensure the reliability of the electric grid and meet skyrocketing energy demands," said NRECA CEO Jim Matheson. "Always-available generation is critical to keeping the lights on at a cost local families and businesses can afford."

Until a repeal is finalized, however, the 2024 rule technically remains in effect, creating uncertainty for utilities as they plan for future generation resources. This regulatory

**The EPA power plant rules are unlawful, unrealistic, and unachievable. And they will jeopardize the reliability of the electric grid for as long as they remain in affect.**

Jim Matheson, CEO of NRECA

limbo complicates decisions about financing, permitting, and adding much-needed new generation to support the growing load. The longer the uncertainty remains, the greater the risk of delayed infrastructure investment that is essential to meet tomorrow's energy needs and ensure grid reliability during periods of extreme weather or peak demand.

Swiftly finalizing the proposed repeal would help alleviate the challenges electric cooperatives continue to encounter as they

attempt to navigate the 2024 rule's compliance requirements while reliably and affordably meeting skyrocketing demand growth. Until that happens, the 2024 rule remains in effect, creating uncertainty for utilities as they plan future generation and work to meet demand growth from new industries, data centers, and everyday consumer use.

### COOPERATIVE PRIORITIES

From Sunflower's perspective, this debate underscores the importance of balanced energy policy; one that allows cooperatives to continue providing reliable, affordable electricity while responsibly managing environmental goals. Practical, achievable regulations are necessary, but the EPA power plant rules and other similar regulations create unnecessary risks for both reliability and affordability. Like electric cooperatives nationwide, Sunflower supports a thoughtful approach that recognizes the vital role dispatchable generation plays in keeping the grid stable while renewable resources expand.

As national discussions continue, Sunflower and our members will remain actively engaged with industry partners and policymakers to ensure our member-utilities and local communities continue to benefit from reliable, affordable power.

"The EPA power plant rules are unlawful, unrealistic, and unachievable," Matheson said. "And they will jeopardize the reliability of the electric grid for as long as they remain in effect."



## Sunflower Accountant Takes on Leadership Camp Adventure

When Sunflower accountant Karon Cramer agreed to serve as a chaperone for the 48th Annual Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC), she expected a full schedule. But nothing quite prepared her for a whirlwind week of packed schedules, activities, and 6:30 a.m. wake-up calls complete with pots, pans, and a megaphone. Held July 11–17 near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, the camp brought together 77 student leaders from four states for a week of cooperative education, hands-on leadership, personal growth, and plenty of laughter.

Karon and her husband, Craig Cramer, manager of information technology at Western Cooperative Electric, were invited to serve as chaperones on behalf of Western, as Kansas electric cooperatives take turns providing chaperones for the camp.

### LEADERSHIP, LEARNING, AND LAUGHS

Throughout the week, campers formed and operated a mock candy cooperative, complete with elected board members, a general manager, committees, and daily membership meetings. Educational sessions covered everything from electrical safety and the cooperative business model to leadership skills and conflict resolution. Campers also enjoyed a wide variety of activities, including whitewater rafting, a live raptor demonstration, and a tour of Craig Power Generation Station.

The schedule was non-stop. “There was little to no downtime. We were up early and busy late into the evening with presentations, group activities, volleyball tournaments, and talent shows,” she said. “From safety to cooperative careers to how power is generated, this camp touched on it all.”

One especially memorable moment came during the power plant challenge where each small group used craft supplies to build a model electric system. Karon’s group dubbed their creation “Karon’s Co-op” and proudly took first place over Craig’s group, “Craigville,” which came in second. “I wasn’t allowed to help, so the win was all theirs. But I may have bragged just a little,” she laughed.

### A PERSONAL TOUCH

On the first night of camp, Karon was asked to share her career story during the cooperative careers presentation. Though nervous, she spoke candidly about her journey to Sunflower and her role in accounting.

“I told them I don’t speak in front of people often, and I had to pause a few times,” she said. “But I think being real helped me connect with the

students. From that moment on, I wasn’t nervous around them, and they weren’t shy around me either.”

She also saw incredible growth in the campers throughout the week. “They were respectful, supportive, and so thankful to their sponsoring cooperatives. The talent show was a turning point. It brought them all together, and watching them grow into better versions of themselves in just a few days was truly rewarding.”

### LIVING THE COOPERATIVE SPIRIT

Karon used Sunflower’s Community Service Leave (CSL) to attend camp, a benefit that allows non-bargaining employees to take up to 24 paid hours per year to volunteer with community organizations during work hours.

Her week in Colorado was a perfect example of how Sunflower’s community service leave supports employee involvement in meaningful causes. “CYLC gives campers a deeper understanding of how cooperatives work and more importantly, a powerful introduction to the qualities and principles cooperatives embody: teamwork, governance, service, and growth,” she said.



### A LASTING IMPACT

“We were so grateful to have Karon join us as a chaperone at this year’s Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp,” said Shana Read, director of education and training at Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and the Kansas camp director. “Her positive energy, patience, and genuine interest in the students made her an instant favorite among the campers. She was a wonderful ambassador for Sunflower, and we’re thankful she was able to represent both Western and Sunflower.”

Karon’s hope? To return to CYLC. “The kids gain confidence, knowledge, and friendships that will last a lifetime. I was honored to be a part of it and proud I represented both my cooperative family and my actual family.”



## Retired Sunflower Employee Joins Western Board of Trustees

Steve Hausler may have retired from Sunflower in January 2025, but his commitment to the cooperative world continues. Western Cooperative Electric in WaKeeney recently appointed Steve to its Board of Trustees, representing District 2.

Steve, who served as Sunflower’s multimedia specialist for 12 years, brings a unique blend of power supply knowledge and communications

expertise to his new role. His appointment fills the vacancy left by the late Richard Schaus, who dedicated an incredible 50 years to Western’s Board of Trustees. In addition to serving on Western’s board, Steve now also represents Western on the Kansas Electric Cooperatives Board of Directors, helping shape policy and strategy at the statewide level.

Western Board President Nick Zerr shared his excitement about the new addition, stating, “We are pleased to welcome Steve to the board. His experience will be valuable as we continue to navigate the evolving energy landscape.”



## Construction Complete at Sunflower's New Solar Facility Near Russell

Sunflower is pleased to announce the construction of its newest renewable energy resource, the Sunflower Electric Solar @ Russell facility, is complete. The commissioning process and initial synchronization to the electric grid are now underway, marking a significant step forward in Sunflower's commitment to supplying reliable, cost-effective energy to its member utilities.

Commissioning a solar facility is a critical phase of the project. It ensures the solar photovoltaic (PV) system is installed correctly, safe, and ready for reliable operation. This process involves rigorous testing and inspections to confirm the system's readiness to synchronize with the electric grid.

Located on 143 acres three miles east of Russell, Kan., the \$36 million project was designed and constructed by DEPCOM Power. The facility features 44,408 solar panels equipped with single-axis tracking technology designed to rotate throughout the day and continually face the sun for maximum efficiency and production. Once fully operational, the facility is expected to generate nearly 50,000 megawatt hours annually, which accounts for about 1% of Sunflower's total energy needs.

"Solar resources produce energy during the hottest days of the year when our system experiences its highest demand," said Corey Linville, senior vice president and chief operations officer of generation at Sunflower. "Having generation resources that complement weather patterns boosts both reliability and affordability."

The Sunflower Electric Solar @ Russell facility not only capitalizes on the abundant solar resources in the region but also provides strategic benefits to Sunflower and its members. By interconnecting to the bulk electric grid

near Russell, the facility reduces loading on a nearby transmission line nearing capacity, saving costs for Sunflower's members by eliminating the need for expensive infrastructure upgrades. Additionally, the project provides a fixed-price hedge against market energy prices.

Ken Webre, director of project delivery, at DEPCOM Power, shared his thoughts on the project: "DEPCOM Power is proud to partner with Sunflower on the development and construction of this state-of-the-art solar facility. The success of this project is a testament to our shared commitment to advancing energy solutions that are both efficient and cost-effective. We're excited to see this facility begin delivering renewable energy to Kansas communities."

The Russell solar project was developed by Sunflower in partnership with National Renewables Cooperative Organization (NRCO). They were also involved in the development of Sunflower's first solar facility, the Johnson Corner Solar Project near Johnson City, Kan. Johnson Corner Solar is comparable in size to the Russell facility and has been operational since April 2020. The combined 40 megawatts (AC) of clean electricity produced by the two facilities is enough to power more than 8,400 homes across Sunflower's service territory.

"Sunflower is a cooperatively operated wholesale generation and transmission utility serving our seven member distribution utilities with a fuel-diverse electric generating mix that includes traditional and renewable resources," said Steve Epperson, president and CEO of Sunflower. "The Sunflower Electric Solar @ Russell project adds yet another renewable fuel source to our diversified generation portfolio, which is designed to protect both the affordability and reliability of the energy we provide to our members."



## Stocked for Success

### Great Bend Schools Benefit from Teacher Supply Drive

As the new school year kicked off, Sunflower's Great Bend Employee Activity Committee (EAC) and Wheatland Electric Cooperative partnered together to make sure local classrooms were stocked with the tools teachers need to inspire students. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, the 2025 Teacher Supply Drive was a resounding success! Bags brimming with notebooks, pencils, markers, and other classroom necessities were delivered to area schools on Tuesday, August 12.

The schools benefiting from the drive included five USD 428 public schools—Lincoln Elementary, Riley Elementary, Park Elementary, Eisenhower Elementary, and Jefferson Elementary—and two private institutions, Holy Family and Central Kansas Christian Academy. Each school received a share of the supplies, ensuring classrooms across the Great Bend community were well-equipped to welcome students back for the 2025-2026 school year.

Held July 7–11 outside the Great Bend Walmart, the Teacher Supply Drive was powered by the generosity of donors who gave both in person and online. From backpacks to markers, every contribution helped put essential tools into the hands of local teachers and students. The smiles on teachers' faces as supplies were delivered said it all. Together, we made an impact that will be felt all year long.

### Our Members



The Current is published two times per year for the member systems, friends and employees of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation.

Sunflower Communications  
 corporatecommunications@sunflower.net  
 P.O. Box 1020  
 Hays, KS 67601