

# THE CURRENT



**SUNFLOWER ELECTRIC  
POWER CORPORATION**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

... energy done right



**Mid-Kansas  
ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC**

neighbors serving neighbors

For Our Member Systems, Employees and Friends

Two utilities move forward with long-held plans

## Sunflower, Mid-Kansas plan to merge in 2020

Sunflower and Mid-Kansas will jointly submit regulatory filings to the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) this summer for the merger of Mid-Kansas and Sunflower in early 2020.

"When Mid-Kansas began operating in 2007, the intent was to capitalize on the synergies of both Sunflower and Mid-Kansas by merging the two into one larger, cooperatively owned and operated utility," said Stuart Lowry, president and CEO of Sunflower and Mid-Kansas. "There are many reasons that the Sunflower and Mid-Kansas leadership considers this the right time to move forward with a merger of the two systems."

Although the two systems have been jointly planned and operated since 2007, a merger, which will not require staffing changes, allows for an even greater

level of integration. Merging will remove regulatory and operational duplication, such as replicate forms and reports, and a combined, larger utility can access lower-cost debt and better absorb a fluctuating load that occurs due to industry and economic pressures.

The wholesale electric rates for each utility are comparable, thus making now a good time for a merger. In fact, due to reasons unrelated to the merger, the average rate will likely decrease for both companies in 2019 with another possible decrease in 2020.

"When the Sunflower Board decided to form Mid-Kansas to bid on the sale of Aquila's Kansas Electric Network assets, the decision was made only after careful consideration and certainty that the endeavor would benefit both Sunflower and those served by Mid-Kansas," Lowry said. "Likewise, the

decision to merge the two companies entailed the same level of

analysis, which is in the best interest of our Members and those they serve."



Hays Sunflower employees watch as Megan Ball, HR and benefits administrator, gets ready to "cream" Clare Gustin (front right), vice president of member services and external affairs. Stuart Lowry (center), Sunflower president and CEO, and Al Tamimi (left), vice president of transmission planning and policy, also volunteered for the activity to spur donations for the Red Nose Campaign.

### Employees have fun helping kids

Sunflower employees raised approximately \$750 for the Red Nose Campaign, a charity established to help disadvantaged children around the world.

Red Nose Day is a fundraising campaign run by the non-profit organization Comic Relief, Inc., a registered U.S. 501 (c)(3) public charity. Red Nose Day (May 24), launched in the United States in 2015, is dedicated to ending child poverty across the world. It has raised more than \$1 billion since its 1988 start in the United Kingdom.

Employees across the Sunflower system purchased red noses for \$1 and gave donations for the cause.

"It was fun to take a break from work to have a bit of fun while raising money for kids who need our help the most," said Megan Ball, human resources and benefits administrator. "We know there are kids who struggle economically in every community. Every little bit helps."

To celebrate the campaign's result, employees gathered to witness the highest Sunflower contributors (or alternates) "cream" Sunflower executives at several work locations.

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Campaign aims to boost voting numbers, engage candidates and members, promote co-ops . . . . 2

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## Pledge to become a co-op voter



# boosts voter turnout

You are among millions of Americans who have a fundamental choice to make this August and November: not the choice between candidates or opposing political parties, but the choice to get out the door to vote.

Elections of governing officials should matter to everyone. That's why electric cooperatives across the nation have launched Co-ops Vote, a non-partisan program with one important goal—to boost voter turnout. The campaign also focuses on enhancing the political strength of electric cooperatives through educating and engaging candidates and voters on important cooperative issues and providing information where elections will be held.

Launched in 2016, Co-ops Vote was designed to reverse a troubling trend: In the 2012 general election, voter turnout in rural areas declined by 18 percent—twice the voter drop-off seen nationally. The good news is that rural voter turnout in 2016 increased by more than a half-million Americans. Together, we grew our political influence and encouraged lawmakers to

pay more attention to the issues affecting rural Americans.

Co-ops Vote does not endorse or recommend candidates for election. Co-ops Vote does help us understand what's at stake and provides opportunities to let our voices be heard.

"Participation in the electoral process is foundational to our representative form of government," noted Leslie Kaufman, Kansas Electric Cooperatives' director of government relations and legal counsel. "The ballot-box is the ultimate 'check and balance' under the Constitution, but it depends on individuals showing up at the polls to vote."

So make the choice to get out the door to vote. Visit the Co-ops Vote

website at [www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop) to pledge to become a Co-op voter. By doing so, you'll be joining co-op members across the country in sending a powerful message: America's electric cooperatives are voting in 2018 and expect elected leaders to address the issues important to co-ops and rural communities.

### AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

- ✓ **833** distribution and **62** G&T cooperatives, a total of **905** co-op members.
- ✓ Serve a total of **42 million** people in **47 states**.
- ✓ Generate **5%** of the total electricity in the United States.
- ✓ Own and maintain **2.6 million miles** or **42%** of the nation's electric distribution lines, covering **56%** of the U.S. landmass.
- ✓ Serve **19 million** businesses, homes, schools, churches, farms, irrigation systems and other establishments in **88%** of U.S. counties.

### Rural America at a glance (18 years and older)



Average age: 51

Married: 61.9%

Lives alone: 11.6%

Lives in state of birth: 65.4%

Bachelor's degree or higher: 19.5%

Poverty rate: 11.7%

Uninsured rate: 13.6%

Median household income: \$52,386

Median home value: \$151,300

Homeownership rate: 81.1%

Single family homes: 78.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates: 2015 American Community Survey. [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/).

## Sunflower, Member summer promotion celebrates cooperative difference

Electric cooperatives are getting into the swing of summer with Royals baseball ticket giveaways. Each month, those interested in winning two tickets can enter on [www.hayspost.com](http://www.hayspost.com).

From March through August, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation and its member-owners are taking turns appearing in 3-5 minute Facebook Live presentations, during which time a name is drawn from contest entries to receive two tickets to a Kansas City Royals home baseball game.

The promotion is designed to spread the word about the cooperative difference: cooperatives are member-owned, not for profit, community-focused organizations with the mission to deliver reliable energy at the lowest possible cost.

Member sponsors include Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative, Dighton; Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Ulysses; The Victory Electric Cooperative Association, Dodge City; Western Cooperative Electric Association, WaKeeney; and Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Scott City.



As Hays employees cheer in the background, Stuart Lowry (front left), Sunflower president and CEO, and Mike Koerner (front right), Eagle Communications representative, prepare to draw the name of a winner of two Royals ballgame tickets during a Facebook Live presentation. The purpose of the summer-long promotion, in which several Sunflower member co-ops are participating, is to celebrate electric cooperatives.



# SUNFLOWER ELECTRIC POWER CORPORATION

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# Staff complete mandatory training

## Critical infrastructure protection drills foster readiness

A cyberattack on the electric grid, widespread misinformation on social media, isolated blackouts, communications failures, attacks on facilities and active shooters—is it ever too early to plan for the barrage of emergencies that could threaten an electric cooperative?

The answer is a resounding “No.”

Last fall, Sunflower staff from several departments participated in 2017 GridEx IV, a two-day training exercise coordinated through the North

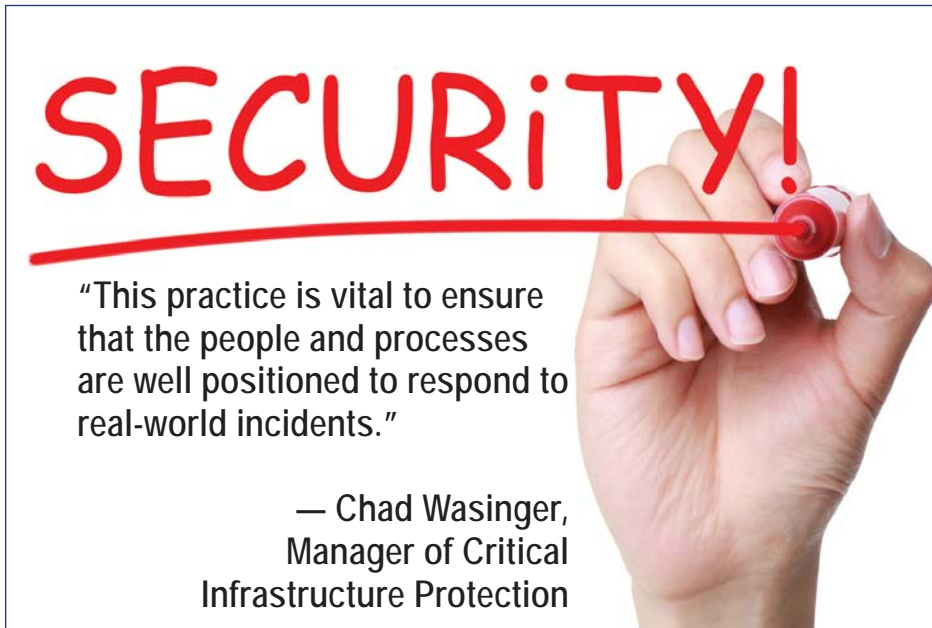
American Electric Reliability Corporation’s Electric Information Sharing and Analysis Center and the SPP Regional Transmission Organization.

GridEx IV involved a large-scale coordination of entities, including about 6,500 individuals and 450 organizations across industry, law enforcement and government agencies to practice procedures for an appropriate and effective response in the event of a nationwide attack on the electric power and other key critical infrastructure sectors. The drill included both physical and cyberattacks intended to destabilize or disable the electric grid, including cyber system outages, disabled telecommunications systems, theft of equipment, and physical incursions at key Sunflower assets.

Using Sunflower’s documented incident response procedures and industry knowledge, Sunflower’s GridEx IV team exercised each scenario and addressed lessons learned to further fortify the system.

“Having the opportunity to apply existing incident response procedures against simulated security

incident scenarios allows us to continually improve our security program at Sunflower. This practice is vital to ensure that the people and processes are well positioned to respond to real-world incidents,” said Chad Wasinger, manager of critical infrastructure protection.



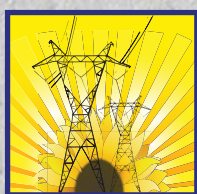
To further practice established protocols to handle extreme emergencies, Sunflower staff completed a mandatory Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) compliance requirement in Garden City on June 5 to test Sunflower’s Incident Reporting and Response Plan.

The tabletop exercise—which included Sunflower staff from technology services, communications, system operations and four local law enforcement officers—focused on coordinated physical attacks on a transmission facility and control center. Law enforcement’s participation resulted in valuable information that will improve Sunflower’s emergency response protocols. Sunflower’s new emergency response mass communication alerting capabilities were also tested during the exercise.

Lessons learned in GridEx IV and Sunflower’s annual CIP exercise will be beneficial during the GridEx V training exercise slated for November 13-14, 2019.

Cash Cathy. “GridEx Gives Co-ops Chance to Flex Cybersecurity Muscles.” [www.cooperative.com](http://www.cooperative.com). 24 Apr. 2018.

*Our Mission: To provide reliable, long-term power supply and transmission services to our member-owners and the people they serve at the lowest possible cost consistent with sound business and cooperative principles.*



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## Spotlight on members’ employees



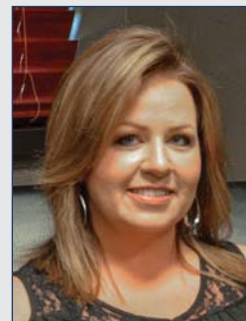
“I enjoy working at **Victory Electric** each day because of the challenge to provide something different for our members. In the technical field, it is fun to make material relatable.”

**Kennedy St. George**  
Communications Specialist



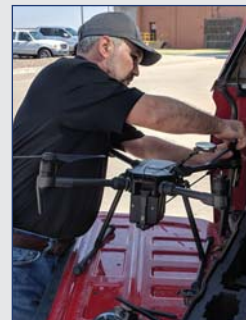
“At **Southern Pioneer**, we encounter a lot of obstacles... but we unite and operate by maintaining the integrity of the company and the well-being of our customers.”

**Kiffany Stevenson**  
Operations Coordinator



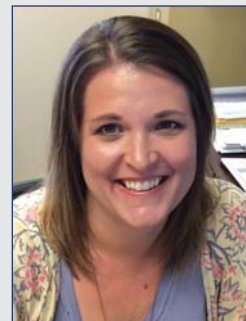
“I am proud to work for **Pioneer Electric** because they truly live by their core values. The people here are remarkable and treat one another exceptionally well.”

**Michelle Brungardt**  
Executive Assistant



“I am proud to work for **Wheatland Electric** because the cooperative is always trying to improve its facilities, technologies and processes to be more reliable, efficient and productive for our members.”

**Mark Dinkel**  
GIS/OMS Administrator



“I am proud to be part of a company that is proactive in keeping up with the ever-changing technology to make our processes and responses more efficient.”

“Also, **Prairie Land** provides a family atmosphere and works very hard to keep the lights on for its members.”

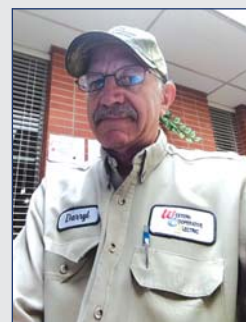
**Monica Kats**  
Accountant



“Working for a family-oriented company that cares about others is a great feeling.”

“**Lane-Scott** takes pride in evolving with technology by offering electronic services that allow our members to conduct business with us on their schedule instead of limiting them to the business hours of 8-5.”

**Carrie Borell**  
IT/Compliance



“**Western’s** linemen are proud to be part of a team that strives to make the electric distribution system safer, more reliable and more efficient for our members-owners, using safe work practices in any and all conditions.”

**Darryl Steckline**  
Line Superintendent



# THE CURRENT

The Current is published three times per year for the member systems, friends and employees of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation and Mid-Kansas Electric Company.

If you have a story idea or would like to subscribe, please send an email to [chertel@sunflower.net](mailto:chertel@sunflower.net) or write to The Current News, PO Box 1020, Hays, KS 67601; (785) 259-4822.



## Know how to respond to electric utility fraud

When the phone rings, and a caller threatens to cut off your electric service unless you pay some form of money immediately, it gets your attention. That high-pressure tactic is scary, and it might compel you to act without thinking.

The effectiveness of that fear is what drives callers to impersonate utility employees. Also, because the callers demand untraceable forms of payment—such as a wire transfer, debit card or gift card—“catching a scammer is easier said than done,” said Drew Waechter, Pioneer Electric communications specialist.

“A utility scam often follows the same pattern,” according to Jerri Imgarten, Victory Electric’s vice president of communications. “A member receives a phone call from a scammer, usually posing as a representative of Victory (or another utility), saying the member’s payment had been denied or was never received. Then the scammer threatens to shut off power if immediate payment is not made. Scammers are very convincing, too. They are known for spoofing telephone numbers so that callers’ IDs appear to be calls from their electric cooperatives.”

For families and businesses, the costs of utility scams are significant: the median loss for a utility scam victim is \$500, according to the Better Business Bureau’s 2017 Scam Tracker report.

Although Sunflower’s members don’t deal with scams regularly, they take steps to increase awareness that scams can happen to anyone. Primarily, the members rely on various media channels to alert their consumer-owners about scams in their service territories; they post tips on how to prevent scams on their Facebook pages and on their websites, and they provide public service announcements on local radio stations and in area newspapers.

Rebecca Campbell, Lane-Scott billing clerk/member communications, has witnessed the effectiveness of public campaigns to educate members about utility scams.

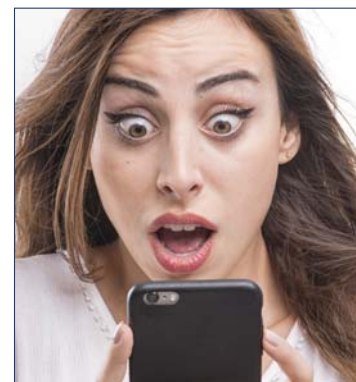
“Some members who received scam phone calls had written checks or purchased money cards in response but decided to check with the cooperative’s office to verify the situation. The result was no money was lost,” Campbell said.

Because utility scams continue to be difficult to predict or stop, “They will always require teamwork between a cooperative and its members to ensure no one falls for scammers’ tricks,” Waechter said.

### Don't fall for it!

It is good to know the process co-ops follow before they terminate electric service:

- Disconnection procedures (usually a letter and phone call) occur PRIOR to the disconnect. In most cases, a disconnection occurs remotely during business hours.
- A co-op does not dictate how a member’s bill is paid. The method of payment is up to the member.
- Co-ops advise owners to avoid giving credit card numbers or other personal information during unsolicited phone calls or through emails.
- Those who get suspicious emails or phone calls about their accounts should contact local authorities and their local co-op’s office.
- Members should contact their cooperative if they have questions regarding their accounts.



## Western Co-op names new general manager

Tom Ruth, newly appointed general manager for Western Cooperative Electric Association, began work on April 30.

Ruth was selected from a pool of 30 candidates following a national search utilizing the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association search team.

Ruth’s cooperative experience is extensive. It includes field operations

and communications, engineering, metering, relay testing and maintenance, systems operation center, operations technology and vegetation management. Prior to joining Western, Ruth served as vice president of distribution for South Central Indiana Rural Electric Cooperative.

Western’s general manager position is a good fit for Ruth.

“Since growing up in rural Missouri, I enjoy the culture of the Midwest, including the people, and look forward to being a consensus builder and mentor for the Western Cooperative Electric family,” Ruth said.

Ruth’s family includes his wife Christine and four step-children.

## OUR MEMBER-OWNERS

