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Electronews

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CEO MESSAGE

Defining Degree Days



Shane Laws

Weather can have a major impact on energy bills, and when the outdoor temperatures become extreme, your heating and

cooling equipment works harder to keep you comfortable in your home.

Did you know the energy experts at Victory Electric use degree days to anticipate heating and cooling needs of our members? Never heard of a degree day? Don't worry, you're not alone. Let's take a look at what degree days are and why they're important for electric utilities.

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 we don't need heating or cooling to be comfortable when the outdoor temperature is 65 F.

So, the more extreme the outdoor temperatures, the higher the number of degree days. And the higher the number of degree days, the higher the amount of energy used for heating and cooling your space. Summer is in full swing, so let's look at cooling degree days.

Cooling degree days are a measurement of how hot the temperature was on a given day or during a period of days. As summer temperatures rise, you will likely require more cooling for your home or business, which results in more cooling degree days. Variations in electric bills often follow closely with degree days, which is why electric utilities use this data to anticipate future energy demand.

Degree days are tracked for a variety of reasons. Farmers can better plan the planting of crops and timing for pest control, and weather experts can better assess climate patterns. To view degree days for our area, visit mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/degreedays/ or energystar.gov and search "degree days calculator." Members can also log into their SmartHub account at victoryelectric.smarthub.coop and click on "My Usage" to view and compare degree days with electricity use. Members can view temperatures on a monthly, daily and hourly basis, as well as for different billing periods.

If charts and data are not your forte, no problem. Here are a few tips to help you save on energy bills this summer:

- ▶ Set your thermostat as high as comfortably possible. The smaller the difference between the indoor and outdoor temperatures, the lower

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Victory Celebrates New Journeyman Linemen



Linemen Jeff Martinez, Jake Gier and Tanner Gemeahlich recently joined 18 other journeyman linemen at Victory Electric when they earned their journeyman certificates.

Becoming a journeyman is a goal all linemen strive to achieve, as it is the highest classification linemen can attain. Recently, Victory Electric's operations department recognized linemen **JEFF MARTINEZ**, **JAKE GIER** and **TANNER GEMAEHLICH** for earning their journeyman lineman certificates.

The road to becoming a journeyman lineman is not short. Each lineman earning the classification must have a combination of four years of experience with successfully passing exams covering material in four textbooks. For every textbook, there are nine exams with a final comprehensive exam.

With the addition of Martinez, Gier and Gemeahlich, Victory Electric now has 21 journeyman linemen.

"Becoming a journeyman is a goal for each of our linemen," said Ryan Miller vice president of operations. "Being a journeyman ensures lineworkers are qualified, independent and they can supervise a crew."

Though the requirements to become a journeyman are the same for each lineman, the path to becoming one is different for each person.

Martinez started at Victory Electric in 2006 as an electrician. In 2007, he decided to embark on a new challenge and joined the line crew.

Gemeahlich has worn many hats at the cooperative. He began as a summer intern before being hired as a part-time warehouse clerk. In 2012, he joined the tree trimming crew and transferred to the line crew eight months later.

Gier joined Victory Electric in 2017 after 15 years with local power contractor J&J Powerline.

"I'm glad to finally receive my journeyman certificate and I appreciate the encouragement I've received from the guys on the crew," Gier said. "The people at Victory Electric really want to see you grow in your career, not just show up every day to do the job."

Linemen will tell you that to work on a line crew is a brotherhood and to earn the journeyman title requires a lot of time on the job in addition to textbook study time. Victory Electric is proud of the dedication, leadership and skills journeymen linemen provide, and we congratulate Jeff, Jake and Tanner on their accomplishment.

Outage Management System Provides Advantages

When the power goes out, so do Victory Electric employees! But have you ever wondered how cooperative personnel and linemen know power is out and where to locate the source of the outage?

“In the past, we relied solely on members calling in power outages,” said Rob Henry, vice president of engineering. “If the outage occurred during the night or while the member was on vacation, we would have no idea there was a problem.”

Before the installation of the outage management system (OMS), the process of pinpointing the source of an outage was not streamlined.

“Previously, we would get a phone call and physically write down the location of the outage,” said Ryan Miller, vice president of operations. “From there, we would start trying to track down where the outage could be stemming from. Whereas, with the OMS technology we now get an overall picture of the situation from a computer screen.”

Today, OMS alerts Victory Electric to outages, often before members know they are out of power. OMS gives Victory Electric the capability to boost outage response and service restoration times, improve communications, safety with both crews and members, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

“Having an OMS system with two-way communication and real-time data is critical because it allows us to report and track pertinent information required to restore power quickly and efficiently during any power outage situation—large or small,” Henry said.

OMS integrates Victory Electric’s various technology systems, including our new automated digital meters, GPS equipment tracking software, and substation automation equipment. GPS units on each truck allow the operations department to track each crew and dispatch the crew located closest to the source of the outage.

OMS combines the information

collected to isolate the specific area affected and display a map showing the likely outage origin to Victory Electric personnel. This allows crews to drive directly to the area to find and repair the outage.

Victory personnel can quickly gauge the situation using the color-coded map showing which lines are energized, de-energized or recently restored. While in the field making repairs, linemen make notes on the map that immediately shows progress to the operations department and other crews working. They can also mark locations needing further repairs. This interactive map is accessible from a computer, cell phone or tablet to both employees in the office and crews in the field.

Once repairs are complete, the flow of power is restored remotely from the office. This eliminates the need for the line crew to drive to the substation to flip the breaker, reducing overall outage times.

Although OMS alerts the cooperative of outages, your calls are not a thing of the past. While we like to think technology is foolproof, occasionally a single meter outage communication is missed. Your call is important. When you call, your outage is entered into the OMS system, which collects the

call data and populates the interactive mapping system.

The integration of OMS with the SmartHub online portal means you can avoid a phone call, possibly even a busy signal, and report an outage with your mobile device or computer.

We are also working to implement a text message option, where members sign up to receive a text message alerting them of a power outage and another message informing them when power is restored.

The introduction of our OMS system helped Victory Electric to create a safer, more efficient work environment for our employees, significantly shorten outage restoration times, and ultimately, better serve our members.

LEFT IN THE DARK?
Use SmartHub to report an outage.

STEP 1:
Login or open your SmartHub mobile app to the home screen where you will click the “Service Status” icon.

STEP 2:
To report an outage through the app, click “My Power is Out.”

STEP 3:
Click submit. You also have the option of adding comments (i.e. a pole or power line is down).

Leadership Dodge Graduate Garcia Gains Confidence and Skills

Victory Electric advocates for education and concern for community as two of the seven principles shared among cooperatives nationwide. **JESSICA GARCIA**, Victory Electric accountant, saw firsthand these principles put into action during the Leadership Dodge training program.

Garcia completed Leadership Dodge in June. Organized by the Dodge City Area Chamber of Commerce, the six-month program is dedicated to bringing people of various backgrounds together to make decisions for the good of the Dodge City community. Leadership Dodge strives to inform, challenge, and engage participants about the opportunities and community needs in and around Dodge City and in Ford County; develop interpersonal relationships and build networking among the participants; and encourage diverse dialogue among the participants, community leaders, businesses, and facilitators.

“I wanted to participate in Leadership Dodge to learn about the opportunities and needs in and around Dodge City and Ford County,” Garcia said. “I was interested in learning more about tourism and economic development, the Dodge City workforce, law enforcement, and faith and social services.”

Garcia found the program helpful and she would recommend it to those interested in getting involved in the community. Since starting the program, she’s applied the skills and concepts learned in Leadership Dodge to her role as secretary of the Victory Electric safety committee.

“It helped give me a voice and the confidence to speak up about my ideas and participate more in my workplace,” she said.

In the program’s 32-year history, more than 300 alumni have completed the course. “I enjoyed seeing how other local businesses and program graduates are using the leadership concepts taught in Leadership Dodge and how they individually apply them in their workplaces,” Garcia said. “Leadership Dodge also gave me the opportunity

Anyone can lead anytime and anywhere. It means you don’t have to wait for a role in management to be a leader.



Jessica Garcia, accountant, displays her certificate after completing the Leadership Dodge training program. Leadership Dodge sessions cover key community concerns in the areas of quality of life, government, crime, business and economic development, community services, education and healthcare.

to get out of my comfort zone and network with people I’ve never met—even though I’m originally from Dodge City.”

For their leadership class project, the group was tasked with engaging a diverse population and teaching them leadership skills. The class chose to engage with Dodge City Community College students where they taught a lesson on leadership and ended with a networking event.

Garcia encourages taking the initiative to step into leadership roles, “Anyone can lead anytime and anywhere. It means you don’t have to wait for a role in management to be a leader. You just need the right mindset, communication, and passion to make a difference. I learned through Leadership Dodge that you have the power to make any situation better through the power of positive influence.”

If you are interested in applying for Leadership Dodge visit dodgechamber.com/leadership-dodge.

Cultivating Seeds of Safety

Harvest season is one the busiest times of the year for farmers in southwest Kansas—and among the most dangerous. It often means putting in long hours, making it difficult to stay alert and on the lookout for potential hazards. Before taking to the fields, Victory Electric urges farm workers to be cautious and aware of potential electrical hazards and to take safety precautions to avoid tragedy.

Be prepared for potential emergencies before the rush of harvest season begins. The Kansas Department of Health & Environment lists agriculture as one of the most hazardous industries in Kansas. More than 700 farmers and ranchers die in work-related accidents each year across the country. Another 120,000 agricultural workers suffer disabling injuries from work-related accidents. It is also estimated 104 children are killed annually in farm accidents.

Take the time to look up and look out for electrical lines. Always be aware of where they are in relation to your equipment. In equipment with auto-guidance systems, less focus is needed on steering, which may lead some drivers to think they do not need to be as aware of navigation issues. Yet, even while using a GPS with auto-steer, farm workers must keep safety in mind and stay focused on their surroundings. Recognize when you need to take breaks so you can be active and engaged in farm work.

Always be cautious when around electrical power lines, especially if there are low hanging wires. Set equipment and extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads to prevent contact with overhead lines. Remember to look up and use care when moving any equipment such as extending augers or raising the bed of grain trucks around power lines. Do not try to move power lines or raise them for clearance—contact Victory Electric if you need a power line moved.

If machinery does come in contact

with a power line while you are operating it, stay on the equipment. If you can safely drive out from under the power line or away from the source of electricity, do so. It is advised to travel at least the length of three tractors, which is about 50 feet, before stopping.

If you are unable to drive the machinery away immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for utility crews to cut the power. If you absolutely must get out, do not touch the machinery and the ground at the same time with any part of your body or clothing. With the door open, prepare to jump by standing up, tuck in your elbows into your stomach and hold your hands close to your chest. You prevent the chance of becoming a human circuit by doing this. Jump out and away from the machinery, leading with your feet touching together. If feet are apart you could create a bridge which may allow electricity to run through you. You will then want to hop away with your feet touching and do not stop until you are 50 feet away from the machinery.

Electrical work around the farm can also pose hazards. Periodically check the grounding rods and wires around buildings and power poles. These rods and wires can become damaged and broken. If damaged, the overall system will not provide adequate grounding protection. Since electricity follows the easiest path to ground, these grounding rods and wires are the major source of providing that easy path. Always use qualified electricians to work on any farm electrical systems. You can contact Victory Electric

for a list of electricians if you are unsure who to call.

From the farm shop to the field, follow these farm safety tips to keep yourself, employees, and your family safe. As a farmer, it's important you're aware of all the risks on your farm in order to promote and practice the best safety measures with family and workers. Maybe some of these tips were a refresher for practices you already put in place on your farm or maybe you learned a tip that will help you prevent serious injuries. Either way, at Victory Electric, we always want to make sure you protect what matters most.

DOWNED AND DANGEROUS

If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **50 ft.** away – so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify the local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed power line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a non-conductive item – this will not prevent injury or death!

Stay Back and Stay Safe

Working with electricity can be a dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. In fact, USA Today lists line repairers and installers among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. That's why for Victory Electric, safety is the No. 1 priority. This is not empty talk. Over time, we have created a culture of putting our crews' safety and that of the community above all else.

Our mission is to provide you with safe, reliable and affordable energy. Yes, we strive to always deliver on that mission, but equally important, we want our employees to return home safely to their loved ones. This requires ongoing focus, dedication, vigilance—and your help!

Distractions can be deadly.

While we appreciate your kindness and interest in the work of our crews, we ask that you stay back and let them focus on their task at hand. Even routine work has the potential to be dangerous, and it takes their full attention and that of their colleagues, who are also responsible for the team's safety. Distractions can have deadly consequences. If a lineworker is on or near your property during a power outage, for vegetation management or for routine maintenance, please allow them ample room to work. These small accommodations help protect our crews—and you.

If you have a dog, try to keep it indoors while lineworkers are on or near your property. While most dogs are friendly, some are defensive of their territory and can't distinguish between a burglar and a utility worker. Our crews work best without a pet "supervising" the job.

For your family's safety, we know you want to make sure only authorized workers are on or near your property. You will recognize Victory Electric employees by our logo on their uniforms and the service trucks marked with our name and logo. You may also recognize our lineworkers because they live right here in our local community. Also, always feel free to call our office and we can verify the location(s) of our crews.

Slow down and move over.

In addition to giving lineworkers some space while they are near your property, we also ask that you move over and slow down when approaching a utility vehicle on the side of the road. This is an extra barrier of safety to help those who help all of us.

Downed and Dangerous

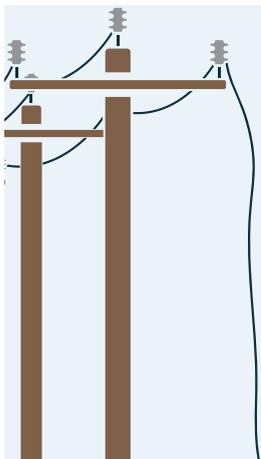
Your safety is just as important as our crews. Overhead power lines carry fatal amounts of electricity. Always assume all power lines are energized and dangerous. Touching one of the lines can provide a path for electricity to the ground and hurt or kill you. While downed power lines can sometimes reveal they are live by arcing, sparking, humming or dancing with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs that they are live, but they are just as lethal. Stay away from anything touching the line, such as a tree, fence, vehicle, etc.

A common myth is power lines are insulated like a power cord. What may look like insulation is actually weatherproofing material, which offers no insulation.

Always assume a downed power line is energized. If you see one:

- ▶ Call for help. Notify Victory Electric or local law enforcement immediately.
- ▶ Stay at least 50 feet away.
- ▶ Never drive over a downed line or through water touching a downed power line.
- ▶ Never try to move a downed line.
- ▶ Keep in mind that power lines you think are dead could become energized during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators.

If you unknowingly get close to a downed power line, move away from it by shuffling your feet close together keeping them on the ground. When a live wire touches the ground, electricity travels through the ground in all directions. Voltage decreases as the distance from the wire touching the ground increases. If you run or take large steps, you could conduct electricity from one leg at one voltage to another leg at another voltage, which increases the potential for severe injury or death. Shuffling is the safest way to move away from the downed power line.



KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE A DOWNED POWER LINE

When power lines go down, take these precautions to stay safe:

- ▶ Call 911 to report fallen or downed power lines.
- ▶ Know that power lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live.
- ▶ Stay at least 10 feet away from the line.
- ▶ If the line is down because a vehicle has struck it, remain in the vehicle until emergency crews say it is safe to exit.
- ▶ If there is a fire or you smell gasoline, hop out without touching the vehicle — DO NOT WALK, but hop to safety at least 50 feet away.

Always treat a downed power line as live and never touch any wire that is down.

Defining Degree Days Continued from page 16A ▶

your cooling costs will be. The Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat to 78 F when you are home and a higher setting for when you are away.

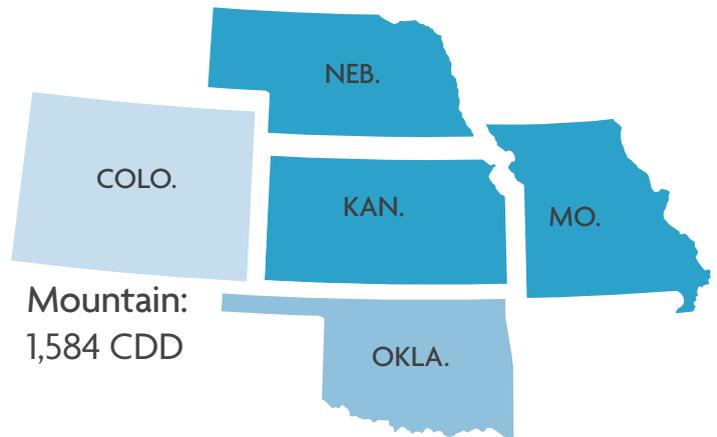
- ▶ Turn off ceiling fans when you leave a room. Fans cool people, not rooms.
- ▶ Close window coverings, like curtains and blinds, during the day to block sunlight and heat.
- ▶ Use caulk and weather stripping to seal air leaks around doors and windows.

While Victory Electric cannot physically change your thermostat, we are always here as a resource to help you save money and energy by connecting you with energy-saving programs and information.

In addition to providing you with energy savings information, we also work behind the scenes to advocate on a local, state and national level to ensure we continue to provide you with affordable electric rates. While prices seem to be on the rise for many other utilities, Victory Electric is extremely proud to pass on a wholesale rate decrease to our members. We hope it is a welcome relief that offers some light at the end of the tunnel for our members, and ultimately helps keep our communities economically viable and strong.

On average, in the first four months of 2019, electric bills for Victory Electric members decreased by 7%. In May, members saw an average 5% decrease. The decrease came in the form of a credit on the energy charge adjustment (ECA). The reduction is a direct result of our efforts to decrease the cost of wholesale power, which is approximately 70% of your total electric bill. To put it into perspective, the average residential electric bill is \$116.50, which means an approximate

West North Central: 1,132 CDD



West South Central: 2,859 CDD

COOLING DEGREE DAYS measure how hot the outdoor temperature was on a given day or during a period of days. The map below shows measurements of U.S. cooling degree days in 2018 by census region. Extreme outdoor temperatures bring a higher number of degree days, which results in higher energy use.

*CDD represents cooling degree days
Source: Energy Information Administration

total savings of \$38 for 2019 (\$8 per month January through April and \$6 for May).

Always know Victory Electric will continue to fight for affordable rates and keep the best interests of our members at heart, and we are always here to help. If you have questions about your energy use or want to learn more ways to save, give us a call or stop by our office.

Thanks, Shane



CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

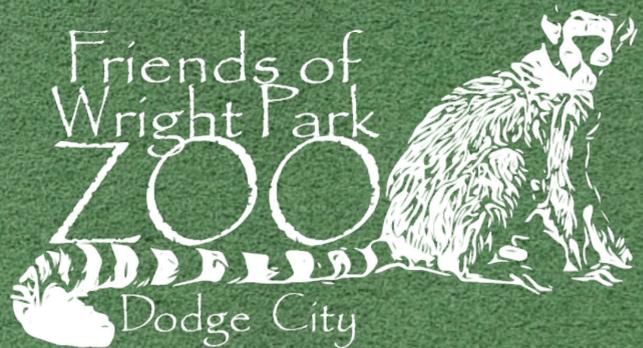
The Golf Club at Southwind

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 13

9 a.m. SHOTGUN START

4-MAN SCRAMBLE/ \$100 PER PLAYER

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFITING



Wheatland's Cram the Van Food Drive and Friends of the Wright Park Zoo in Dodge City



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



TO REGISTER CALL 620-275-4080 OR EMAIL NNUMRICH@WECI.NET