



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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www.rollinghills.coop

ROLLING HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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Rolling Hills and KEPCo Help School District and Community

A school and a community in need set the stage for Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. and Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (KEPCo) to lend a hand in securing affordable financing for vital school repairs. In 2018, the **OSBORNE USD 392** school board contacted Rolling Hills regarding a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan (REDLG) to address deteriorating and improper functioning of the plumbing system at the Osborne preK-12 school.

The original school building was constructed in 1960, with another building added in 1995. The galvanized plumbing in the original school is at the end of its useful life. Sediment build-up in the pipes is causing a systemic failure throughout the entire plumbing system, resulting in reduced water flow, low water pressure and poor water quality. Each classroom has a sink, but only cold water is available. The 1995 addition never had hot water supplied to the classroom sinks. When water is being used in one portion of the building, water may not be available for any purpose in other parts of the building.

Although the stated need is to bring the plumbing up to date, this project represents much more than mere plumbing. Osborne USD 392 is the core

of the community, both socially and economically. In these uncertain times, it is critical for the school board to ensure the school remains functional and student ready.

Had the school board not addressed this issue and the school fell into further disrepair, the school would not be safe or functional and likely would require closure, resulting in the loss of 86 jobs, which would devastate the community. In addition, the school's operating budget of \$2.7 million would exit the community. It would be difficult for the community to recover from such an economic impact, as the effect would be felt by scores of businesses within the community. A closure would also diminish the students' level of education, since the proximity of many of the students to another school would double in miles, and in a few cases triple, thus impacting learning.

Enter Rolling Hills and KEPCo to aid with securing funding for the needed school repairs. Available through rural electric and telephone cooperatives, the USDA REDLG program was developed in 1989 and is designed to promote economic development and job creation projects in rural communities.

KEPCo wrote and submitted the application to the local USDA office

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Reduce the Dangers of Farming and Ranching

We don't have to remind those who work the land and raise livestock that they have a potentially dangerous occupation. However, due to the nature of the job, and because of long days and tiring work, here are some reminders about electrical dangers on the farm or ranch.

Overhead Power Lines

If you make contact with a power line, guy wire, power pole, electrical box or any other electrical equipment, do not get out of your cab or truck. Stay put and call 911 to dispatch the local utility to de-energize the power. If you must get out due to smoke or fire, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop. Another option (after you make a clean exit) is to shuffle or waddle away while keeping your feet together and on the ground.

Once You are out, Never Try to Re-Enter the Cab or Truck

Remember: If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line or other utility equipment, do not get

out of the cab. Stray power could energize your equipment and the ground. Call 911 and wait for the electric co-op to arrive and cut the power so you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle.

Determine Proper Clearance

Contact us to measure power line heights; do NOT do this yourself. Once you know the heights, you can determine appropriate equipment, implement and extension clearances. Always maintain at least 10 feet between the power line and the tallest height of the equipment that will be transported. Keep in mind that due to wear, age and even weather conditions, power lines can change height. Please contact us with any concerns. It's good to know power line clearance, but always have a spotter.

Call Us Before Moving or Adding a Grain Bin

The National Electrical Safety Code addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with very specific requirements. The requirements are in place to help keep farmers safe: to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with power lines. If you are planning on building a new grain bin or remodeling around an area that already has one, contact Rolling Hills Electric at 785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572. We can help with specific code requirements. The taller a grain bin, the farther it must be placed from a power line.

Always Dig Safely

Whether you are installing new fence posts or using large tillage tools, call 811 before you dig to have underground utilities marked. Even if you think you know where buried gas, power and other lines are, don't rely on your memory. Get all utilities marked so you know for sure. Utility locators dispatched by 811 do not mark private

utility lines such as electrical lines to detached buildings.

Use Standby Generators With Care

If you have a standby generator to provide essential power during an outage, be sure to correctly use the transfer switch. Once you properly engage the switch, it stops your farm's generated power from entering utility lines, aka backfeeding, which can electrocute lineworkers who are working to restore power.

General Safety

- ▶ Check and maintain equipment, especially electric cables and hydraulic hoses that have cracks or show other signs of wear.
- ▶ Always have someone nearby when entering grain bins or other high-risk areas.
- ▶ Check all buildings and grounds for fire hazards and hazardous materials.
- ▶ Assess how any chemicals are stored and make sure children and animals can't access them.
- ▶ Make a list of chemicals for firefighters in case a fire breaks out on your farm or ranch.
- ▶ Establish a safety boundary around gas and fuel tanks.
- ▶ Don't skimp on safety: wear eye and ear protection, gloves, and face masks and respirators when appropriate.
- ▶ Shield all PTO-powered machinery and keep others away.
- ▶ Outfit tractors and trucks with fire extinguishers.
- ▶ Never exit a tractor or truck without placing it in park or engaging the emergency brakes.
- ▶ Discuss safety concerns with children and explain safe operating procedures. You can never start too young, and remember they watch what you do.

General safety tips source: Hobby Farms



The Foundational Cooperative Principle



Reagan Bales

Scientist, inventor, politician, founding father, cooperative owner, co-author of the Declaration of Independence, and famous American hero Benjamin Franklin

once said, “If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

An insurance cooperative owner himself, and one of the most brilliant minds to reside in this great nation, Franklin was never satisfied with the extent of his own wisdom. He was always seeking, always striving to know more, constantly investing in knowledge; and thus engraved his name forever into history.

Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative utilizes seven cooperative principles to guide their overall operation. In my opinion, the fifth cooperative principle, “Education, Training and Information,” is the most crucial of the seven principles.

Cooperatives supply their members, managers and employees with education, training and information. This is the investment that Franklin was speaking of, and this is the solid foundation upon which a successful cooperative is built.

Information and education are vital

ingredients in the framework of the Rolling Hills business model. Members of a cooperative have a vote in the election of the board of trustees, who will be responsible for leading the cooperative over the course of their next term. The trustees have the task of creating cooperative policies, hiring managers, and making many other important decisions.

For example, the board developed a strategic plan called “Building for the Future” that helped address financial and physical issues. Imagine if the board was unequipped to make these complex decisions? Training and education is vital for understanding the correct procedures to take, the statistics that need to be considered, current research and trends that apply to the situation, and the risk and cost of implementing these decisions.

Groups of untrained, uneducated and uninformed men and women could never make the decisions necessary to provide power to over 43 million citizens in the United States. The mission of Rolling Hills is to improve the quality of life for their members by providing safe and reliable energy solutions.

How are they to provide safe and reliable energy solutions, if they have not properly been educated, trained, and supplied with the correct information on these significant topics? In fact, I believe that the fifth cooperative principle is foundational to the other six.

Education, Training, and Information reflect many of Rolling Hills’ core values.

Preparing one’s mind demonstrates commitment. The hard-working members of Rolling Hills do the necessary preparation out of their dedication to the members. Before they need the information, it is encoded into their minds; ready to be applied at a moment’s notice.

The fifth principle fuels efficiency. A study from the Economic Policy Institute was entitled, “A Well-Educated Workforce Is Key to State Prosperity.” This study revealed the direct correlation between an educated workforce and a productive, successful one. This is very telling and reinforces the effect of the fifth principle on efficiency, and optimal use of finances.

Finally, the fifth principle demonstrates, above all else, stewardship. Managers of cooperatives are entrusted with many responsibilities. When they take the time to educate themselves (in fact — when Rolling Hills mandates it) then there is a guarantee that the manager will responsibly do his/her duty to the best of their abilities, and be a good steward for their company.

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.” Ever since the first electric cooperative moved into Kansas in 1938, rural electrification has been paying dividends. This is all made possible by individuals who took the time to read, listen and learn.

LEAVE IT TO THE PROFESSIONALS
OSHA WARNING: Trimming trees within 10 feet of a power line can be fatal. It's the law; only OSHA-certified line clearance workers are authorized to trim near power lines.



Rolling Hills Welcomes Casey Smith



Casey Smith

CASEY SMITH joined the Beloit linemen crew in March. Smith resides in Jewell, his hometown. He attended Beloit High School, where he was active in football, basketball and baseball. Post high

school, Smith's course of study was electric power and distribution at Manhattan Area Technical College. Upon completion, Smith joined J and J Powerline Contractors, where he achieved his journeyman lineman status. Being employed by a contractor, Smith never worked in one area for long and was usually working a distance from his home.

Smith's parents are Robie and Linda Smith of Jewell. His siblings are Josh, Nash, Bailie, Hannah, Gabriel, Noah, Hudson, Haddassah, Sharayah and Karlene. Returning to the Jewell area and being closer to his family after seven years of being away was of great importance to Smith.

Rolling Hills Electric is pleased to welcome Smith and his dedication and work experience to the Rolling Hills Electric family.

Bylaws Ballots Tallied

Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. is pleased to announce that the proposal to amend and fully restate the cooperative's bylaws overwhelmingly passed. The official ballot tally was 419 YES votes and 34 NO votes. We are pleased by our consumer-members taking the time to cast ballots and show an interest in their electric cooperative. Had we been able to commence with our annual meeting, the results would have been presented during the meeting. Since the annual meeting had to be canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions

that followed, tallying the ballots had to be postponed.

A tally committee consisting of a member from each district met at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, to open and tally the verified ballots.

Assisting in the verification, opening and counting of the ballots were: **TERRY KUESER** of Ellsworth - District 1; **JERI DUBBERT** of Beloit - District 2; and **MONICA PAYEUR**, of Clyde - District 3; Attorney **JOHN SHERMAN**, and Rolling Hills employees, **SHIRLEY BECKER**, **TANYA BUSER** and **LINNEA BEEBE**.

Once again, we thank you!

Rolling Hills and KEPCo Help School *Continued from page 16A*

in Kansas, where it was scored using evaluation criteria such as project description, business and financial plans, nature of the project, project cost, legal documentation, environmental requirements, and socioeconomic data, among others. The application was then sent to USDA in Washington, D.C., where it was placed into a nationwide, quarterly selection process.

Osborne's application was approved in its first round of eligibility. Osborne USD 392 bonded their capital outlay fund and Rolling Hills purchased the bonds with the funds from USDA at a 0% interest rate, which provides significant value to the district.

"The 0% interest rate will allow the district to keep cash on hand in case of an immediate need. Increasing taxes was not an option, as the farm economy is depressed and the school board did not want to burden the local patrons

with a tax increase," said Troy Langdon, Osborne USD 392 superintendent.

Rolling Hills' and KEPCo's involvement in this project is an example of one of the seven cooperative principles — concern for community.

"Rolling Hills has been active in the USDA REDLG program for many years," said Doug Jackson, Rolling Hills' general manager. "Not often does the opportunity come along to not only help one entity, but an entire community and 270 students as well. I was delighted to be involved and work on this project and I am grateful to everyone that helped in getting this application across the finish line."

Work will begin on the school early this summer and will be completed before classes resume in August, welcoming students back to a campus without plumbing and water quality issues for decades to come.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Home cooling makes up a large portion of your energy bills. Try to keep the difference between the temperature of your thermostat setting and the outside temperature to a minimum. The smaller the difference the more energy you will save. **Source: energy.gov**

