



## ROLLING HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS

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On Facebook, search for “Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.” and like our page for continued updates, energy efficiency tips, cooperative news and outage updates.



## A ‘Controlled’ Burn Can Quickly Turn Chaotic

A “controlled burn” can quickly become an uncontrolled one, so take precautions before burning on your land or in a ditch.

If the area you choose to burn is near a utility pole or if it spreads more quickly and farther than you thought it might, your controlled burn could get expensive.

Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. In some cases, the pole can look like it has little damage on the outside, all the while burning from the inside out.

In all cases the result is the same: The utility pole is compromised and will most likely need to be replaced, compliments of the person who started the burn. The fees passed on to the person who caused the burn are substantial—usually in the thousands of dollars.

The damage could also cause a power outage or other serious service issues including energized lines falling near or on the ground, creating a potentially deadly situation.

So what can you do to prevent burn-related damage to a power pole?

- ▶ Plan your burn before you begin.
- ▶ Check the forecast for weather conditions, such as wind direction and speed, as well as humidity. As a general rule, relative humidity should be 40% or higher.
- ▶ If there are power poles in the planned burning area, clear all vegeta-



**Before burning, check the property for electrical equipment and power poles to avoid damage and potential outages.**

tion and weeds at least 4 feet around the base of the pole.

- ▶ Wet the area of vegetation around the pole with water before beginning your burn to prevent burning of the pole base.

If your fire gets out of control, gets too close to a power pole, or if the pole catches on fire, call 911 and Rolling Hills Electric at 785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572. Once a fire breaks out, NEVER spray water near the pole, power lines or any other utility equipment. Electricity and water do not mix and could result in a short circuit that could cause serious injury or death.



## HARVEST SAFETY TIPS FOR FARMWORKERS

- ▶ **Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.**
- ▶ **Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other equipment when doing field work.**
- ▶ **If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, contact us immediately by phone and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab, without touching it at the same time, and hop away to safety.**
- ▶ **Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipe and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.**

Source: Safe Electricity

## Remember Safety This Harvest Season

In 2017, farmers ranked eighth on the list of the most dangerous jobs (civilian jobs with highest fatality rates) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics/U.S. Dept. of Labor. Unfortunately, farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers rank right below other hazardous jobs such as logging, roofing and steel work.

It is no wonder farmers make that list. As agriculturists are well aware, many dangers are present in their long and arduous workdays.

Safe Electricity and Rolling Hills Electric remind farmers that accidents related to power and electricity are possible but, in most cases, can be prevented. Especially during the busy harvest season, take the following steps to decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- ▶ Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance requirements.

- ▶ Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- ▶ Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- ▶ Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines—at all times, in all directions.
- ▶ Always lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- ▶ Never move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- ▶ If a power line is sagging or low, call us right away.
- ▶ If your equipment hits a power line, do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

Although harvest season is a time filled with tight deadlines and heightened work stress, take the time to consider electrical safety. It could save your life or the lives of others.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## What Causes a Transformer to Catch Fire?

Before we talk about what can cause a transformer to catch fire, let's take a step back and consider the transformer itself.

The last time you drove by a substation, you may have wondered what all is in there.

Part of all that metal equipment behind the substation fence includes transformers. In your neighborhood or on your street, transformers are either located in a barrel-type housing high atop a power pole or in the green utility boxes called pad-mounted transformers.

In all cases, the transformer is used to “step down” or decrease voltage from high-powered to lower-powered lines.

Transformers can malfunction and let the world know it with a bang. Transformers explode and catch on fire for two major reasons: a lightning strike or from damaged wires or equipment somewhere else on the electrical pathway.

Although transformers have built-in protective devices, they may not trig-

ger fast enough to prevent an explosion. (Protective circuits are fast—they respond almost immediately—but they are not as fast as lightning.)

The result, especially for the large substation transformers, is often a flash. The event can also interrupt electrical service to any homes or businesses fed by the transformer.

After a transformer catches on fire:

- ▶ Stay away!
- ▶ Please be patient until we can restore service. Our crews must shut down the incoming line first and then repair the destroyed hardware.
- ▶ If a transformer near your home catches on fire, DO NOT try to put out the fire yourself (water and electricity don't mix). Call 911.
- ▶ Power not directly impacted by the transformer fire may need to be shut off during repairs to prevent stress on the electrical system.

For more safety information, contact us at 785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572.



# Lawson Retires After 28 ½ Years

**ALAN LAWSON** grew up just east of Agenda, Kansas. After high school, he joined the United States Navy and served aboard the USS Midway aircraft carrier until 1977. After his service in the military, he was a farrier prior to working for PDM building water towers.

NCK Electric Cooperative, Belleville, was fortunate to hire Lawson on Jan. 14, 1991. He has served as journeyman lineman for the past 28 ½ years, retiring on July 5, 2019. A luncheon was held in his honor during the monthly safety meeting on June 20. In addition to linemen and staff, Lawson was joined by his wife, Celise.

Manager Doug Jackson thanked Lawson for his years of dedication and service to NCK and Rolling Hills. Not only was Lawson an employee, he and his wife, Celise, were good friends of the Jacksons. Jackson shared a memory of a prank orchestrated by his wife, Dawn Jackson, and Celise. On behalf of Rolling Hills Electric, Lawson was presented an engraved meter lamp and received well wishes from Jackson for many years of happy retirement.

Lawson shared several stories, with the linemen who worked around him joining in on the good, bad and ugly times. During his tenure with NCK and Rolling Hills Electric, technology has come the furthest with cell phones, turtle meters (soon to be replaced with AMI meters), computer programs, electronic mapping and the use of tablets in the field.

What will Lawson be doing in retirement? Lawson and Celise have two children: Holly lives in Monticello, Minnesota, with her husband and three daughters. Spencer lives in Ault, Colorado, with his wife and son. They are expecting a new baby due in November.

Other than visiting family more often, Lawson will be tending his cow herd, putting up hay and feed, plus catching up on a lot of fence building. Of course, Celise may have a “honey do” list for him also. Al’s hobbies include working with metal, forges and

collecting blacksmithing tools. Another hobby or sport he hopes to revisit is team roping now that there is a little more time to practice and perfect.

What advice does Lawson have for the younger generation? “Work hard, do what you’re told and leave your phone in the truck!”

It was a nice farewell for Lawson although his knowledge, wit and dedication will be greatly missed by his Rolling Hills Electric family. All of us wish Lawson many years of a happy and healthy retirement.



Al Lawson, journeyman lineman, retired from Rolling Hills Electric after 28 1/2 years of dedicated service.

## CO-OPS VOTE

A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

- ✓ Pledge to be a co-op voter
- ✓ Find key election information
- ✓ Learn about the issues
- ✓ Register to vote



VOTE.COOP

## HAPPY LABOR DAY

Hats off to our staff! In observance of Labor Day,  
our office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 2.



## PREPARING YOUR EMERGENCY KIT



MAKE A PLAN

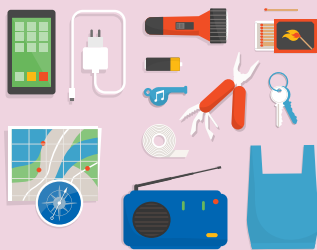


BUILD A KIT



BE INFORMED

### TOOLS AND ELECTRONICS



### FOOD AND BEVERAGE



### MEDICINE AND HYGIENE



ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### BABIES



### PETS



## Don't Wait. Be Prepared Before the Storm.

It's your worst-case scenario. A major storm was predicted and this time, the predictions were right. Many power lines are down, and your electricity may be out for several days. You are low on everything—food, pet supplies, toilet paper, batteries, diapers and your medication.

Imagine how you would feel in this situation. While you can't predict which weather forecast will come true, you can plan ahead so when a severe weather event strikes, you have the tools and resources to effectively weather the storm. The Department of Homeland Security offers several resources to help you prepare for major weather events and natural disasters. Visit [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan).

### Preparedness Actions and Items

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location.

### With Advance Warning

If a severe storm is expected with high winds and sustained rain, you may need to take extra steps to safeguard your home. Shutter windows or close blinds and drapes and securely close exterior doors. Fully charge all cell phones, laptops and devices so you have maximum power in the event of a

**Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates or check Rolling Hills Electric's Facebook page for restoration updates.**

power outage. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions for operating it safely.

### During a Prolonged Outage

In the event of an outage, turn off appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you are using a small household generator, consider LED holiday lights to illuminate a living area. A strand of 100 white lights draws little energy yet produces considerable light. Solar lights also work, if they can receive some sunlight during the day for charging.

During thunderstorms, the American Red Cross recommends avoiding electrical equipment and land-based telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead. Keep away from windows and anything that's plugged into the wall or connected to an outside wire that could become energized. Even plumbing is vulnerable to a lightning strike. Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates or check Rolling Hills Electric's Facebook page for restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs—including on your property.