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country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Weathering the Storm

Recovery From February Polar Vortex Still Underway

In one short week earlier this year, electric utilities across Oklahoma nearly crumbled.

Life threatening, sub-zero temperatures, historically high natural gas prices, and an unprecedented energy demand tested the reliability and resolve of the cooperative system.

“In some ways we performed better than expected,” East Central Electric General Manager Tim Smith said. “In others, we have found opportunities to learn and grow.”

February 12 to 19, 2021, was the ultimate test for member-focused strategies encompassing generation, transmission, and distribution cooperatives. Our grades are in, and what we’ve learned from this examination will better prepare us for the next one.

System Preparedness

Because cooperatives are locally owned and controlled, we operate on a tiered system with other cooperatives to coordinate the generation and transmission of power. The reliability of this system was the first priority when the forecast predicted severe cold.

Well-maintained and winter ready coal and natural gas plants, weatherized to withstand -20° temperatures, were already prepared when the temperature dropped. Our power suppliers, Western

Farmers and KAMO, purchased fuel and power in advance from utilities in other parts of the country, not expecting significant storm impacts. However, demand within Western Farmers system alone increased to an all-time-high peak of 1,761 MW, which is approximately 200 to 300 MW higher than the typical daily winter usage.

Balancing Energy Sources

As cooperatives, our generation and transmission partners work to respond to members’ desires when it comes to building an electrical grid that utilizes

both clean, renewable resources and affordable non-renewables.

“A healthy balance of energy sources became even more critical when accounting for the historically high natural gas prices and layers of ice caking over renewable alternatives,” Smith said.

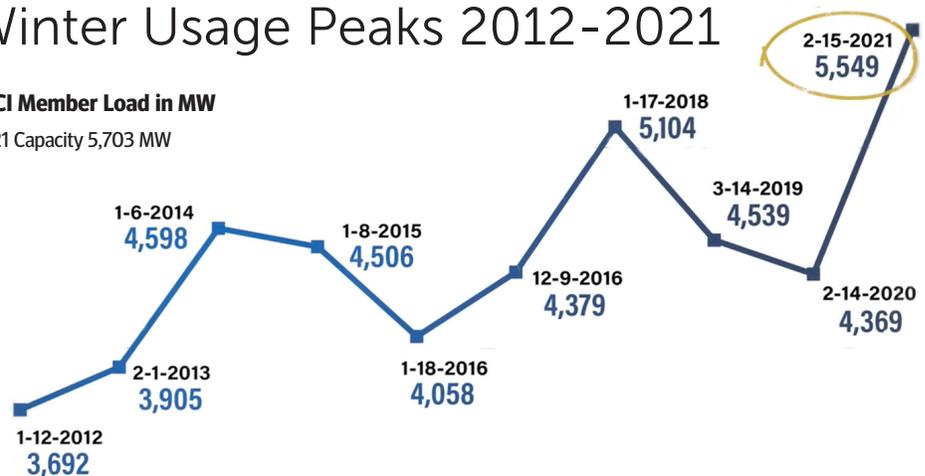
Throughout the event, natural gas served about 1/4th of the generation needed by members. Coal plants ran at near-full capacity producing more than 1/3rd of the demand. Power purchased from unaffected facilities and hydropower also made important contributions to keeping homes heated during the record cold.

Recovery, Continued on Page 2

Winter Usage Peaks 2012-2021

AECI Member Load in MW

2021 Capacity 5,703 MW



Associated Electric Cooperatives, Inc., of which power supplier KAMO is a member, set an all-time winter usage peak record which approached their total electric production capacity of 5,703 MW.

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit ecoec.com. To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

notes from the chair



by Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees

Productivity and Inspiration

I have been getting many positive comments about this article and from those that are connected to our ecoLINK. The ECE board voted unanimously to enter into an agreement with non-members and communities near our footprint to include them in our high speed internet system if they request it.

This non-member buildout is also contingent upon access to additional broadband grants for the underserved and unserved areas in these communities.

We will build to them using additional contractors so the buildout to our members is not impacted. For a change this will enable some 'town kids' to catch up with our 'country folks.' What a change that will be to all who need high speed internet.

Also, that added income should help stabilize our electric rates for days to come.

We also reviewed our budget assumptions, and overall our expenses were 20% below budget. This is a good thing. I commend our staff and crews for their efforts and tireless work to keep the lights on and install the ecoLINK.

Time efficiency is constantly on my mind. Wasting your own time is one thing, but delaying others is not good.

Good managers plan so employees' time is productive. This makes for better attitudes at work and at home.

When one is in a happy frame of mind, it makes for a better life.

I read once to greet your family and friends much like your dog greets you when you come home. No matter how sour you were when you left him, he is always happy to greet you upon your return. We can learn a lot from a dog!

My Dad's oldest sister married a man named Ralph, so that would only make him my uncle by marriage. He was hard to like at best. He was fond of himself.

He could accomplish more than anyone and in half the time. He was a legend in his own mind and his own best friend. While supposedly working on an oil drilling rig and piddling around on the upper deck, the

boss called to him. "Ralph, you're fired. Come down here and I'll pay you off!"

Ralph continued his slowness for a while, and the boss called out to him again. "Ralph, wait there, I'll come up and pay you off and you can come down on your own time."

Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District #2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at 918-695-5289.

“For a change this will enable some ‘town kids’ to catch up with our ‘country folks.’ What a change that will be to all who need high speed internet.”

- LOWELL HOBBS

Recovery

Continued from Cover

Operational Teamwork

Ensuring the rural Oklahomans in our service area have the power they need to survive winter storms is a team effort that requires constant communication from the top down and bottom up. Throughout the storm, East Central worked closely with Western Farmers and KAMO to keep the lights on as much as possible.

East Central also worked with members to find ways to voluntarily reduce consumption and minimize impact. While other utilities in the area managed rolling blackouts, East Central only sustained one load-related power outage, lasting just two hours and 20 minutes.

Financial Impact

Reliably serving members' energy needs when prices for natural gas and power purchases spiked for prolonged periods was expensive. While the long-term cost impacts are not fully known, the cooperative system's strength and flexibility means we did not need to implement immediate and dramatic power supply cost increases like many utilities were forced to in the aftermath of the storm.

The East Central Electric Board of Directors is in the process of reviewing ways to lessen the financial impact of the polar vortex on our members.

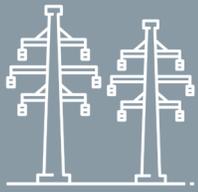
Moving Forward

“For all the unpredictability of major weather events, we know for a fact that they will eventually happen, and we have to be prepared for them,” Smith said.

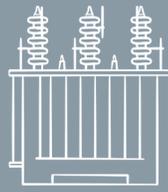
Alongside East Central's continued efforts with Western Farmers and KAMO to communicate with members about the importance of load management, we are preparing our grid to weather the storms life throws our way.

For years we have been periodically updating our electrical infrastructure, and with the introduction of fiber technology, we are more prepared than ever to respond quickly to major weather events.

Steps to Restoration:



1: Transmission Lines



2: Substations



3: Distribution Lines



4: Individual Homes

Emergency Response Beyond the Co-op

Southwest Power Pool acts as a balancing authority for a 14-state region, meaning they balance electricity production and use for that entire area.

SPP ensures there is sufficient generation to meet the demand for electricity. This is why energy conservation in North Dakota, for example, can have a meaningful impact on electric reliability in the Oklahoma panhandle.

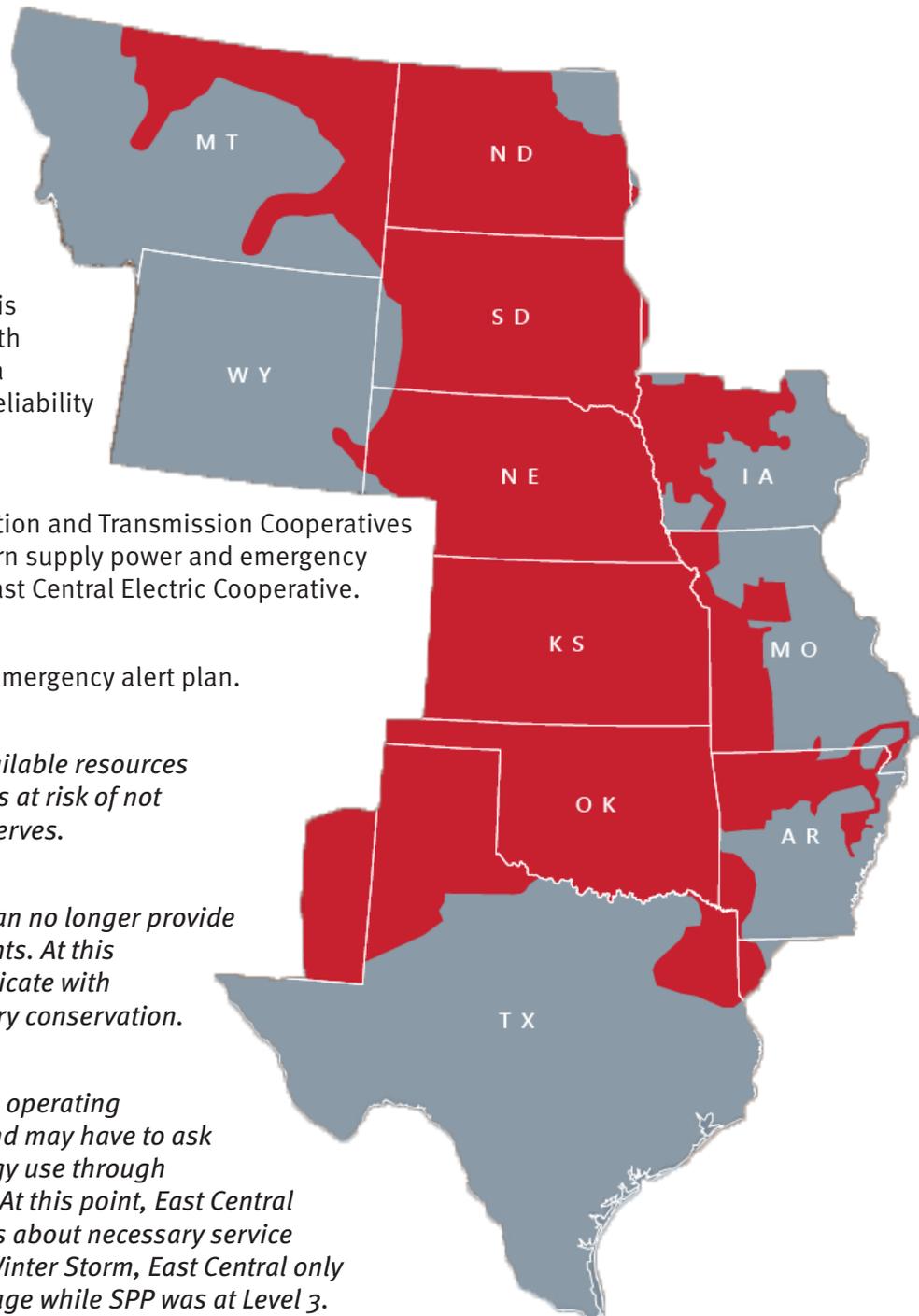
SPP communicates to Generation and Transmission Cooperatives like Western Farmers, who in turn supply power and emergency response communications to East Central Electric Cooperative.

SPP has a three level energy emergency alert plan.

Level 1: Declared when all available resources have been committed and SPP is at risk of not meeting required operating reserves.

Level 2: Declared when SPP can no longer provide the expected energy requirements. At this point, East Central will communicate with members, encouraging voluntary conservation.

Level 3: Declared when SPP is operating below the required minimum and may have to ask member utilities to curtail energy use through controlled service interruptions. At this point, East Central will communicate with members about necessary service interruptions. During the 2021 Winter Storm, East Central only sustained one load-related outage while SPP was at Level 3.



Operation Roundup

MONTHLY UPDATE



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at www.ecoec.com.

Applications reviewed	1,235
Applications granted	852
Applications denied	367
Applications tabled	14
Scholarships awarded	\$284,500
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Total Disbursements	\$2,052,187.68
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Average member contribution	48¢

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Safely store warm weather tools like lawnmowers and trimmers. Check cold weather tools, such as leaf and snow blowers, along with their power cords, for unusual wear and tear.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

RECIPES



White Chili

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 2 lb. great northern beans | 1 tsp. ground cayenne |
| 4 cans chicken broth | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 1 onion, chopped | 1/2 tsp. pepper |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 4 chicken breasts, cooked and chopped, |
| 1 T. dried oregano | 16 oz. sour cream |
| 1 1/2 T. ground cumin | 1 lb. Monterey Jack Cheese |

DIRECTIONS

Soak beans overnight. Cook and drain. Combine beans, chicken broth, onion, garlic, and spices and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in chicken and sour cream. Simmer covered for 30 more minutes. Before serving, stir in cheese until melted.

SOURCE: ECE 80TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



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