

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



A Lineworker's Timeline

Written by Brandon Keese, SEMO Electric Cooperative

“How long is it going to take?” It’s a phrase I’ve been asked thousands of times in my career. It’s the first thing people think when the lights go out. It doesn’t take long sitting in the dark to realize how dependent we are on electricity.

As a lineworker, it’s always a good feeling to help people get those lights back on. But what does it take to get it done? Why does it sometimes take so long? Hopefully after reading this, you will have a better understanding of the work that East Central Electric line crews are doing to restore your power.

The Outage Begins:

6:35 p.m.: Your local lineworker gets a phone call.

When I answer the phone, I’m told that we have an outage. My first question is, “Is this an individual or a line outage?” A line outage will be a large section of line and several people, versus a single transformer or pole. If it’s a line outage, my next question is, “What’s the lowest pole number?” This is why it’s important to report your outage. It verifies the outage and helps me decide where to go.

7 p.m. The drive

An after-hours outage requires your lineworker to respond from home. Depending on where the

outage is, the drive alone can sometimes take an hour.

7:45 p.m. Arrival and line inspection

I often see people outside when their power is off, sitting on their porch or working in the yard. Sometimes I drive by several times. The first time you see me, I’m most likely driving to the breaker to verify that it’s open. The second time you see me drive by, I’m visually checking the line for what may have caused the outage. It’s one of the more time-consuming steps we take, but also one of the most important. The outage could be a line down in someone’s yard, or it could have been caused by equipment failure. Re-energizing the line under those two examples would be very dangerous to the public and could extend the outage longer.

A few examples of things I’m looking for are fallen trees, tree limbs, old line repairs that have failed, car accidents, lightning, animals and equipment failure. Another factor that can add time to inspecting the line is terrain. If the line is not along the roadside, it must be checked on foot. If it’s dark that can make this job even more difficult and time consuming.

8:30 p.m. Outage cause located, but first safety.

Once we find the cause of the outage, there are safety steps that must be

taken before we can start the work. These safety procedures add time, but they are vital. It’s how we survive in a dangerous job. It’s how we ensure everyone goes home to their families.

The most important thing we have to do is isolate and ground the line. We install grounds as close to the work location as we can on both sides of the work. Then we have the safety briefing. During the safety briefing, the job plan is discussed and explained, hazards are identified, and everyone is made aware of the grounds, their location and the location of the breaker.

9 p.m. All safety procedures are in place. We can begin the work.

Let’s say for this outage it was a tree. A 50-foot-tall oak tree fell through the line. It’s off the road, but we got lucky—it broke a crossarm, but the pole is good. The wire isn’t broken either but is currently under the oak tree. We’ve got to chop the tree and free the wire. This will take some time. Anyone who has cut up a downed tree will understand the danger. Downed trees can shift, and roll while being cut. And here you also have power lines under tension, pinned down by the tree, adding an extra layer of danger. While we work to clear the tree from the line, new material is on the way. We are going to need a crossarm,

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notes from the chair

The Dance

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

The Oklahoma Association of Electric Co-ops recently hosted Oklahoma's legislators to an evening of visiting and supper at the OAEC. Guests included approximately 137 legislators, state and federal officials, and about an equal number of co-op personnel. Soon we will travel to the Capital to visit them on their turf. We have developed a successful rapport with them. They seem to accept the fact that the co-op world shoots straight with them and fairly represents our members needs.

There is a large sum of money designated to build broadband internet to the unserved and underserved residents of Oklahoma, particularly lacking in rural areas and small towns. These funds have become wadded up in the political fight for their funds. After several resubmissions of our ability to serve some of these, we were awarded several areas in our footprint to provide high speed internet to citizens other than our electric co-op members. This will greatly improve the lives of many more families, and I am proud to be a part of it.

We meet in April for our annual strategic planning session where we develop far reaching plans. We are always on the hunt for new and better ways to keep cost low and still keep the lights on. You might pray for us as we strive to plan well.

Also it's time to think about our district meetings in June. Jay Emerson from district 5 (Southeast area) and I from district 2 (Northeast area) are up for reelection this year. We have both committed to seek reelection.

An item will be presented for your approval at the annual meeting. I urge you to review the proposed bylaw change and ask questions if you feel the need. This bylaw change will appear in this magazine and on our website. The change is intended to clarify the intent of the bylaw and make it easier to understand. We hope you approve it.

When I was 27 years old, I was hired by a former OSU classmate to manage a (soon to be built) bulk blend fertilizer plant in Haskell, my hometown. It was the first facility that Kerr-McGee would build from the ground up. They were just entering the retail fertilizer and chemical business and had already bought a few existing businesses. These were managed by older men, so I was the 'kid' to them.

Kerr-McGee Farm Center in Haskell became very popular with the farmers because my crew and I were relentless in serving everyone's needs. We were the leaders in sales among Kerr-McGee's other locations. Our district included Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas.

The facility built in Haskell was designed on a gravity flow system. With our high humidity, gravity was not very successful causing us to have to climb to the top of the holding bins and force the fertilizer manually down the small gravity chutes.

I petitioned the higher ups for a ground level plant. That would let us store the bulk fertilizer in flat storage and move it to scales via front load skidsteer. The higher ups promised to

grant my wish if I could make enough profit to pay for the new facility. I got a phone call from Mr. George Cobb from Three Forks Ranch at Okay, OK, asking if I could come over on Sunday afternoon to discuss business with him. George Cobb was Chief Financial Officer and second only to Dean McGee, cofounder and chairman of the board of Kerr-McGee Corporation. While there I told about our poor facility, the promise of a new one, and the conditions for it.

Within a few months, Mr. Cobb and I were good friends, and he requested me to come to his office at the headquarters when I was in Oklahoma City. I started making the most of his friendship by calling his secretary from a phone bank downstairs where all my peers could hear me call and ask for "George." I had told Mr. Cobb that I would refer to him as George when my peers could hear the phone call if it was ok with him. It worked wonders with my fellow equals and even the higher ups.

Mr. Cobb was Chief Financial Officer for Kerr-McGee Corporation and promised me if I could get the plans for the new facility to him, he would approve it. I knew that he meant it had to clear all the preliminary hurdles, but in my statements to my bosses I skipped that language to "George said" he would approve my facility. Days later in a heated debate with the regional manager, he looked me straight in the eye, pointed his finger in my face, and exclaimed....."And, Lowell, I don't give a damn what George Cobb says!"

I calmly replied "Oooh? I'll tell him you said so!" He immediately changed,

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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.

Timeline

Continued from Cover

crossarm braces, new insulators, bolts and ties to tie in the wire.

10:30 p.m. The tree has been cleared and the material has arrived.

The pole is off the road, so that means we can't get a bucket truck to it. We will have to climb the pole. One of our lineworkers will put on his belt and hooks. He'll bring all the tools he'll need with him as well as a handline. It's a rope and pulley that's long enough to go from the top of the pole to the ground in a loop. This will be used to lift material to the lineworker that were too heavy or awkward to

take up in his belt. Once he gets to the top of the pole, he will get to work. He'll start by removing all the broken material. Once he has it cleaned up, we will start sending up material on the handline. After completing all the work in the air, the lineworker will send down the handline and climb down. Once down, he'll remove his belt and hooks and pack them away. We'll all carry the tools that we used back to the truck and get them packed. Lastly, we will remove our grounds.

11:45 p.m. Repairs complete

Now if you still happen to be on your porch, you will see me drive by a third time. This is good news because you are about to get your power restored.

I'm heading for the breaker. Once I get there, I'll call dispatch and get clearance to re-energize. I'll let them know who is with me and if they are in the clear. I will close the breaker and your power will be restored.

12:05 a.m. Power restored.

Keep in mind this is just one scenario; not every outage is the same. This example took around five and a half hours to restore. If the tree had broken a pole, it would have been even longer.

1 a.m. Home, safe and sound.

We work for you, our neighbors. Just know that your co-op line crews are doing their best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible.

Meet Our Next Level Team: Linemen





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.

TOTAL GRANTED
\$2,528,820.11

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,477

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
1,055

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$327,500

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢



Bacon Wrapped Asparagus

INGREDIENTS

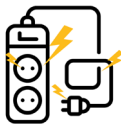
- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 bunch of asparagus | 1 T. soy sauce |
| 12 oz. bacon | 1/2 tsp. garlic salt |
| 1 stick butter | 1/4 tsp. black pepper |
| 1/2 C. brown sugar | |

DIRECTIONS

Divide asparagus into bundles of 3-4 spears each. Wrap each in one or two slices of bacon. In a saucepan, melt the butter, brown sugar, soy sauce, garlic salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil. Pour mixture over the bundles that are lining a 9x13 inch baking dish. Bake until bacon is done. This can take 45 to 50 minutes if the sauce is rather deep. At the end, turn the bundles and crisp a little under the broiler.

SOURCE: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

SOURCE: ECE 85TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Do not use yard tools with electrical cords when the ground is damp. If you have cordless tools that run on battery power, be sure to charge the batteries safely, and follow all manufacturer's instructions. Store yard tools out of children's reach.



We envision a positive change for communities in our service area and are dedicated to bridging the digital gap.



East Central
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 1178
2001 S. Wood Drive
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447-1178
(918) 756-0833
www.ecoec.com



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