

Country News



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Touchstone Energy®

Wind, Wind and More Wind

BY JOHN HUPPERT, GENERAL MANAGER

March is traditionally one of the windiest months of the year here on the eastern plains. While scientists and power generation companies are looking at ways to harness wind, those of us in the transmission and distribution business do what we can to negate the effects of high wind and repair the damage when nature overrides our man-made efforts.



John Huppert

Every year, thousands of dollars of damage occurs from high winds. The most obvious damage to the power grid is broken poles and trees blown down on the power lines. Perhaps less obvious is the long-term damage to lines as they whip back and forth and occasionally touch, which causes arcing. Each storm takes a toll on the system, and occasionally a line will break months after the windstorm because of accumulated wear.

Not only does wind damage require linemen to work overtime during outages, it also requires hours of inspection of lines, poles and associated equipment to try to find and fix a problem before a failure occurs.

To minimize the effect of wind on its lines, K.C. Electric Association takes a variety of preventative measures. For instance, each year K.C. contracts with a company to come to the area and remove tree branches that could become a hazard to its lines. This program is set up to cover all of K.C.'s lines in a three-year period and then begin again. This is clearly a major expense, but it pays big dividends by preventing a problem before it happens.

K.C. Electric also contracts with a company to check poles for soundness. This program is set up to inspect 10 per-

cent of the poles every year. This isn't always possible, but if we are delayed one year, the next year the intensity will increase to ensure that all poles are inspected every 10 years. The inspection consists of a visual inspection and boring a tiny hole into the base of the pole to check for soundness

and moisture content. The hole is then sealed so that the integrity of the pole is not affected.

Meters are also checked on a regular inspection cycle. You may notice that occasionally your meter has been removed and a new one installed. That is so your old meter can be taken into the shop and bench tested for accuracy. Commercial meters are taken to the shop every three years and residential meters are checked every six years. (Karen Padilla, 449000010)

A variety of other measures are taken to preclude problems. We have monthly substation inspections and routine line inspections, and meters are checked for integrity every time they are read. Every lineman looks at line and other facilities every time they go on a call. All in all, our reliability is extremely high despite the wind. That reliability is not a coincidence. It is due to hard work and professionalism. We know that in March we will see more wind. We know from experience that it will equal the winds we have had for the past two months, but with some luck and continued vigilance we will continue to bring you affordable and reliable power.

IRRIGATION METER READINGS

Meters will be read on the following dates:

March 30-31

CLAIM YOUR CREDIT OR WIN A PRIZE

Each month, K.C. Electric offers consumers a chance to earn a \$10 credit on their next electric bills or to win a prize. If you recognize your name and account number, call 719-743-2431 to claim your credit or prize. It couldn't be easier.

Read *Colorado Country Life*, find your name and give us a call. You must call during the month in which your name appears in the magazine (check the date on the front cover). In January, Jeremy Franz, Stratton; Phyllis Fox, Seibert; and Ramon Bencomo, Cheyenne Wells, called to claim their \$10 credit.

Your Neighbor's Kitchen

Cheese and Egg Casserole

- 12 slices bread
- Butter
- 12 slices ham
- 1 16-ounce package cheese slices
- 1 large onion, sliced thin
- 1 large green pepper, diced fine
- 10 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- Salt and pepper to taste



Trim crusts from bread and butter both sides. Layer bread to cover bottom of 9- by 12-inch baking dish. Layer ham, cheese, onion and green pepper on top.

Beat eggs well. Add milk, salt and pepper. Pour over layers. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Uncover and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees.

LILA TAYLOR
STRATTON

Cowboy Poetry

BY BEN ORRELL, MEMBER SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE

If you aren't familiar with cowboy poetry, you may well be missing something that you would really enjoy. Many of us can read a poem, but the magic isn't there until it is read by the man or woman who wrote it. Much of cowboy poetry is that way for me. I have read Baxter Black and Red Steagall, but it is only when I hear them read it that they come alive.

Cowboy poetry, like much of country music, tells a story, but unlike today's music these stories are about the working cowboy. Topics like cow dogs, good horses, wild cows, pulling calves, blizzards, prayers, cowboy wives, cowboy pride and cowboy philosophy are common, but nothing is off limits. None of it has foul language, and it is something that any family can enjoy together.

Cowboy poetry is not something new. It was a way for the old-time cowboys to entertain themselves as they sat around the campfire. What is new is the resurgence of this art form. If you search the Internet using Google, you will find numerous sites that tout cowboy poetry, and there are poetry readings and competitions all over America. Perhaps the most famous of all is the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada. It is so popular that tickets are already on



Cowboy poet Dennie Flock works the ring at a cattle sale.

sale for the January 24-31 performances in 2010.

Eastern Colorado, and specifically K.C. Electric country, is not without its own poets. Some are shy and unwilling to be interviewed, but one in particular was gracious enough to talk to me and even share a poem.

Dennie Flock is the manager of the Burlington Livestock Exchange. He became interested in poetry at an early age. Something

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YOUR NEIGHBOR'S ENERGY TIP

Plug the Chimney When Not in Use

Fireplaces are not an energy-efficient way to heat a home. For the most part, more heat goes up the chimney than goes out into the house. If you choose to not use your fireplace, there is a device available that can be used to seal the chimney temporarily and effectively. One device is called Enviro Fireplace Plug and sells for around \$49.99 on the web. This plug is inserted into the chimney and inflated to create a tight seal. There are probably other brands available. If you are interested, check the Internet or your local hardware store. (Richard Lambert, 939100007)

GALEN TRAVIS, BURLINGTON



K.C. Electric Association, Inc., now accepts MasterCard, Visa and phone checks for payments of bills.





Cowboy Poetry From a Local Cowboy

[continued from page 8] about the meter and rhyme fascinated him. He liked music and conventional poetry and most assuredly cowboy poetry. He didn't really attempt any poetry of his own until he was 18 years old. In those days he was on horseback for many hours a day and needed something to occupy his mind, and poetry became that medium. He said that looking back, those were not the poems that make him proud, but they were a start. He didn't write down his poems for the first 15 years of his poetic life but remembers each and every one.

Dennie said that to create good poetry he needs to have some quiet time. That does not mean sitting at a desk but more than likely means being on horseback, hunting with his favorite bird dog or rid-

ing in his pickup en route to an appointment.

When asked about his favorite cowboy poets, Dennie didn't hesitate: Waddie Mitchell, Gary McMahon and Robert Service. Red Steagall is another favorite. He said you can't talk about cowboy poetry without talking about Baxter Black, who is a great entertainer as well as a poet. (WIN Carl Blackwell, 1108880000)

When asked about the cowboy gathering in Elko, Nevada, Dennie said that he had received an invitation and had in fact gone once, but that his life is just too busy to go back now. Someday, maybe.

When asked about his favorite topics, Dennie said that actual experiences make the best poetry. Oh, some of them may be embellished, but they actually happened

while working with livestock or hunting. In every poem, there needs to be entertainment, truth and wisdom.

An obvious question seems to be, is this a learned thing, and if so, how do you learn to be a cowboy poet? The answer came quickly. First, add to and improve your vocabulary. Second, you must understand rhyme and meter, and third, you must understand how to entertain. Timing and delivery are key. Think of all the early cowboys songs, Dennie said. They were all poems, and that is the fabric that held them together.

As agreed, Dennie shared his latest poem with the readers. It is entitled O'L Ratchet. As you read this, let your mind go, visualize what is happening and imagine you are there watching. Enjoy.

O'L RATCHET

The old man had a far away look in his eye,
As he fondly stroked the pup.
This Ratchet's a good ol' 'goodun', said he,
As he swirled the dregs in his cup.

If you got a minute we'll show ya,
There's a handful of steers in the barn.
Well I really need to get going.
Good, he said, this won't take long.

So I followed this crippled old codger,
Out thru' the mud in the yard.
I'd always enjoyed these visits,
It's the getting away that was hard.

As we rounded the end of the weathered old
barn,
The ears on the steers perked up.
A subtle hint, say's I,
And I figured they knew the pup.

Come by 'em O'l Ratchet, the gentle man said,
In a voice that was happy as rain.
Commencing a wreck that would rival,
The derailing of a passenger train.

O'l Ratchet left like a rocket,
Straight into the fracas he flew.
Like a hair trigger gun when you cock it,
And the old man was movin out too.

Away, away you flea bitten hound,
Git back, lay down, to the side.
O'l Ratchet was do'in his best at top speed,
To sort out the meat from the hide.

Now the old man's fences weren't fancy,
Fact is that's being polite.
On about the third revolution,
Them steers sprouted wings and took flight.

The baldy left through the barn window,
The redneck by way of the tank.
The others just seemed to evaporate,
As the old man's demeanor grew rank.

Get back you bag eyed bucket of spit,
Get away, you know what I'll do.
He said this almost never happens round here,
I remember just a time or two.

Then came the alarm from the garden,
This sounded bad right away.
The old man was pickin up speed now,
Know'in there would be hell to pay.

Ma had one hung in the clothesline,
Another in the taters and peas.
She fired one shot to warn Ratchet,
Then held 'tween his neck and his knees.

Ma, I'm comin don't shoot him,
I've got the whole thing figured out.
He was a might fresh when we started,
But I'm thinking he's bout petered out.

Daggonit, you give me that shotgun,
I'll clean up this mess in the yard.
You go back to your gardening Honey,
We'll put the calves in the barn.

Well after most of an hour we had penned 'em,
With Ratchet locked safe in the car.
I said goodbye's and was leavin,
As we made our way back through the yard.

Well thanks again for stopping, he said,
Least wise nobody got hurt.
Say, did I ever
show ya my
good horse?
Maybe next time
you can watch
him work.

Dennie Flock
April 18, 2003



Planting Season Can Bring Electrical Hazards

Many farm workers are killed each year when their farm equipment makes contact with overhead power lines. These tragic accidents are preventable. As workers head back into the fields, Safe Electricity, an organization dedicated to safety, urges them to review farm activities and work practices that take place around power lines.

Make sure everyone who works on the farm knows the location of power lines and keeps farm equipment at least 10 feet away from them. The minimum 10-foot distance is a 360-degree rule — below, to the side and above lines.

It may take a little more time, but ensuring proper clearance can save lives.

Many farm electrical accidents that involve power line contact happen when loading or preparing to transport equipment to fields or while performing maintenance or repairs on farm machinery near power lines. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. A spotter or someone with a broader view can help. (Ted Schaal, 1102960000)

Today's larger farms require transporting tractors and equipment to fields several miles away. Before transit, avoid raising the arms of planters, cultivators or truck beds near power lines.

Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting larger modern tractors. Also, many tractors are now equipped with radios and communications systems and have antennas extending from the cab to 15 feet above the ground that could make contact with power lines.

Here are some other equipment safety considerations:

- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level — under 14 feet — before moving or transporting, and use care when raising them.
- When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter or someone to help make certain that contact is not made with a line.



Many tractors are now equipped with communication systems that have antennas that could make contact with power lines.

- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

As in any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods, into power lines. Remember, nonmetallic materials, such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay, will conduct electricity depending on dampness or dust and dirt contamination. Do not try to clear storm-damage debris and limbs near or touching power lines or near fallen lines.

Contact with overhead electric wires isn't the only electrical contact that can result in a serious incident. Pole guy wires are grounded to the neutral; but when one of the guy wires is broken, it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires anything but harmless. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Don't do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.

It's also important for operators of farm equipment or vehicles to know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line. It's almost always best to stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives

to make sure power to the line is cut off.

If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path, and electrocution is the result. Even if a power line has landed on the ground, there is still the potential for the area nearby to be energized. Stay inside the vehicle unless there is fire or imminent risk of fire. In that case, the proper action is to jump — not step — with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Continue to shuffle or hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Many electrocutions occur when the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment. (Harms Grain CO, 1204800000)

Farmers may want to consider moving or burying power lines around buildings or busy pathways where many farm activities take place. If you are planning a new outbuilding or farm structure, contact your power supplier for information on minimum safe clearances from overhead and underground power lines.