



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Staff

Christopher Parr
Chief Executive Officer

District Offices

McLouth Office
P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS 66054-0070

Topeka Office
1100 SW Auburn Rd.
Topeka, KS 66615

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Notice to Members

In February, members will see a \$1 adjustment to their electric service charge. This is part of the October 2020 vote by the board of trustees to adjust service charges over three years. Find out more at www.freestate.coop/adjustment.

FROM THE CEO

New in 2022: FreeState CEO



Chris Parr

Welcome to 2022! It has been quite an interesting two years since the beginning of the pandemic. Still, here at FreeState, we're gearing up

for transition of leadership and setting our goals internally to make sure we exceed our members' expectations in providing quality member service and reliable power that is safe and affordable. It's what we do and what we will continue to do.

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and assure you that the transition to new leadership is one that we have been working on for months, and things have been going well. For members, it will be business as usual. For staff, we are working toward making a positive impact within the communities we serve.

Leading FreeState is an opportunity I am humbled and grateful to have. I

am thankful for the past nine years of mentorship from retired CEO Steve Foss. I want to thank the board of trustees for putting their trust in my abilities, the management, and staff for continuing to reach for, set, and obtain their goals and providing each member with the service they come to expect and deserve. And last but not least, my family. I'd like to thank my wife and two boys for their support as we make this transition to new responsibilities.

I want members to know that FreeState is not just a power provider but a trusted energy partner. We're here to answer questions, provide information, and power not only your homes and businesses but your communities as well. This would include opportunities for our members looking into renewable options for electric vehicles. I look forward to seeing where 2022 and beyond take this cooperative and how we can continue to rise to meet the challenges of our ever-changing industry. I sincerely look forward to serving you.

We're gearing up for transition of leadership and setting our goals internally to make sure we exceed our members' expectations in providing quality member service and reliable power that is safe and affordable. It's what we do and what we will continue to do.



When the Lights Go Out, So Do We

Despite FreeState's best efforts, sometimes the lights go out, and it is often out of our control. What we can control is our outage response plan. This month we want to answer some of our members' most commonly asked questions.

What happens when an outage occurs?

Members should always report an outage. Members can report outages by calling the office at 800-794-1989 or by using the SmartHub mobile app. Every call helps FreeState know how large the area covers, and it also allows us to begin diagnostic protocols. Outage calls also start the dispatching process of crews to the outage to begin restoring power as quickly and safely as possible.

If an outage occurs during FreeState's regular business hours, your call is routed to our Topeka office first, and one of our member service representatives records your service address into our outage system. Typically, our member services representatives have little information initially about the outage so keep that in mind when making phone calls to the office. FreeState's engineering and line departments are then notified by our outage system that there is an outage and crews are dispatched to the location to begin troubleshooting.

If an outage occurs outside regular FreeState business hours, your calls are routed to our third-party call center and go through the same process.

Linemen are required to rotate being on call. If an outage occurs during that time, they are dispatched from their home to respond to the outage. Keep in mind that after-hours dis-

patching may take longer due to the nature of getting crews to the location. With only two linemen on call after hours and many areas to cover, it may take longer than an outage occurring during the day when all crews are on and can cover a larger area.

If after-hours outages are significant, FreeState may call in our employees to assist with after-hours calls, or dispatch crews to the reported outages.

During storm season (spring and winter) advance notice is often given by weather bureaus. FreeState monitors these conditions to be as proactive as possible. Additional linemen and employees are placed on call to serve members quicker in the event of a significant outage or infrastructure damage caused by a storm. Scout teams can also be assembled to help categorize outages accordingly.

During outages, there are a few things that keep linemen from actively responding like a fire in progress, a gas leak, and lighting. As soon as it is safe to do so, our crews are working to restore power no matter how cold, rainy, or snowy it gets.

Why are my neighbor's lights on, but I'm in the dark?

Your home may be on a different distribution line than your neighbor. To handle the load, neighborhoods, businesses,

towns, and individual residences use different lines, substations, and electric poles to provide power.

Why aren't you coming to my residence first? My problem seems like a simple fix.

When FreeState has an outage, we follow a protocol for restoring power quickly. Relatively small outages or isolated outages are dispatched in the order they are received or the availability of a crew. However, during significant outages, the priority is emergency management, fire stations, and hospitals.

During an outage, we begin by determining the source. We assess our generation facilities and determine the source to begin repairs. There is a standard protocol for repairing and restoring during an outage. Our infrastructure is the backbone of delivering power. Transmission lines that carry electricity from generation stations are first on the list, followed by:

- ▶ **SUBSTATIONS** where high-voltage power from a transmission line is reduced for member usage.
 - ▶ **DISTRIBUTION LINES** that carry electricity from substations to each neighborhood, or distribution hubs.
 - ▶ **TAP LINES** that serve direct homes and businesses.
 - ▶ **INDIVIDUAL LINES TO MEMBERS.** These are the most difficult and time-consuming in the restoration process.
- Above all, our crews' safety is our priority.

What causes an outage?

There are common reasons why outages occur. The chart shows that a majority of outages are weather-related events, but there are a few other causes.

Animals and trees making contact with wires can cause an outage. To limit this, we trim trees away from lines and install animal guards on pole-top transformers. We use squirrel guards, raptor protectors, and other construction methods to keep animals out of harm's way, and to keep them from causing an outage.

Other events like digging, construction, or auto accidents can cause damage to power poles or lines. In our area, it is also common to have farm-related outages like equipment getting tangled in the wire. It is essential to be aware of your surroundings while working on the farm. It not only ensures your safety but can limit damage-causing accidents.

Equipment failure can also be a reason for an outage. In rare cases, transformers and other equipment may fail during normal operations. Alternatively, an overload may also cause

failure. We typically see these problems on extremely hot or high peak days during May through September.

Power supplier failure can also cause outages. As a distribution cooperative, we are reliant on Evergy and Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo). If one of those suppliers is experiencing an outage, it may impact our system.

On average it takes about 45 minutes to repair a transformer and four hours to replace power poles depending on the type of pole. Smaller single-phase poles take less time to repair than larger three-phase or transmission poles.

Outages may vary depending on the season and can last a few seconds to a few hours. Power can also be out for days when the situation is severe. Our crews are often out in dangerous weather conditions to restore power, especially when riding out the lines by foot to find the source of an outage.

What do we do to prevent outages?

While we cannot control the weather, we can work to limit outages by maintaining equipment.

Planned outages are a part of upgrading and repairing equipment safely. They are used to limit longer, unplanned outages later. We notify you before a planned outage via phone call and make every effort to limit negative impacts.

Tree trimming is one maintenance practice we can do to help limit tree damage. FreeState has a designated tree crew at each office to work specifically on right-of-way clearance. They can also be called out to remove damage so that linemen can get to an area to begin working safely.

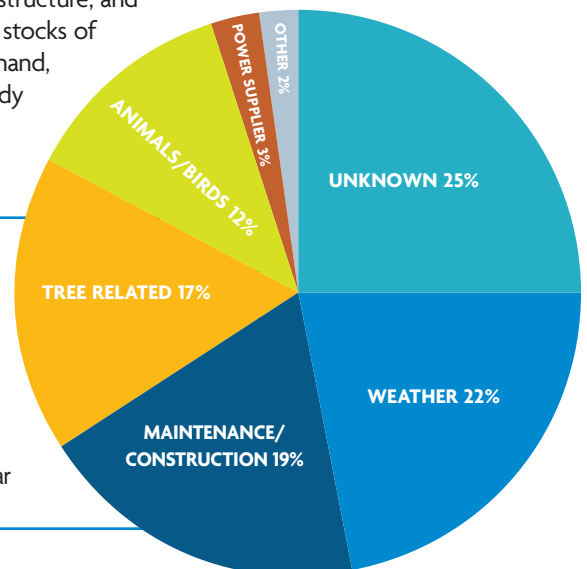
Investing in new equipment and technology is also a way to maintain infrastructure by replacing aging equipment, installing upgrades for efficiency and building infrastructure that keeps up with the increasing demand for power.

Preparing for the worst is what we do. We train our employees to provide the safest, most efficient service to our members. Our member service representatives are trained to respond to your calls quickly, and our crews are trained to react and repair as quickly as possible. We also have backups built into our infrastructure, and we also keep stocks of materials on hand, so we are ready whenever a replacement is needed.

2021 Outage Summary

Unknown outages are the largest piece of the pie. These are classified unknown when a direct cause cannot be determined by our linemen.

It may also mean there were multiple factors involved, and not one could be concluded as the root cause. Other outages are caused by weather, animals or birds, and accidents. Power supplier outages also account for a small percentage of outages, which are out of the co-op's control. Trees are a larger part of the outage summary, but has decreased over the years due to the implementation of in-house tree crews, who work to keep right-of-ways clear of vegetation.



Trustee Election

Co-op Prepares for Important Step in Governance

Trustees are an integral part of our co-op as they have a fiduciary duty to shareholders and set policies. Each year, members elect new trustees and it is time to again begin the election process.

FreeState trustees work diligently with the best interests of all members in mind. The board recognizes the importance of a fair, balanced and transparent election process to ensure adequate representation for all.

FreeState members who are interested in serving on the board of trustees can submit their names to be nominated for the election to the board. Trustees are elected to a three-year term. The following trustees are up for re-election at the annual meeting on April 26, 2022.

- ▶ West District – **MARK WULFKUHLE**
- ▶ East District – **OPEN POSITION**
- ▶ East District – **RALPH PHILLIPS**

The nominating committee, made of members appointed by each of the trustees, will meet in early February. This committee will review the names submitted and present a slate of nominees to the membership at the FreeState annual meeting. You'll see more information about this process as we near the annual meeting in April.

What makes a good FreeState trustee?

We seek those who have a sincere interest in preserving the strength of FreeState's operations and maintaining a productive relationship with our members. We look for our trustees to maintain open lines of communication with the districts and members they serve. Trustees work together to ensure equitable treatment to all members across the system and strive to be knowledgeable about trends and circumstances that may affect the members and communities in FreeState's service territory.

Trustees are responsible for attending one monthly meeting, occurring on the fourth Wednesday of each month, typically held in Lawrence.

Potential Trustees Must:

- ▶ Be a FreeState member.
- ▶ Have a bona fide residence in the district with an opening.

Potential Trustees Cannot:

- ▶ Be employed by or have a financial interest in an enterprise selling electric energy or services.
- ▶ Be employed by or have a financial interest in a business that sells services or supplies to FreeState.
- ▶ Be a current FreeState employee or have been an employee within the past three years.
- ▶ Be a close relative of a current FreeState trustee or employee.
- ▶ Have entered a plea of guilty or no contest or have been adjudged as guilty of a felony crime.

If you are interested in seeking a position on the board, please contact 800-794-1989 or visit [FREESTATE.COOP/ANNUALMEETING](https://www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting) to download an application. **APPLICATIONS ARE DUE ON FRIDAY, FEB. 4, AT 4 P.M.**

YOUTH PROGRAMS

BUILD the Best Youth

FreeState Electric Cooperative invests in our youth through opportunities designed to provide dynamic, personal interactions with fellow youth, cooperative employees, industry professionals and legislators among others.

These experiences guide students to develop leadership and communication skills important to becoming employable adults. Youth programs are all-expenses-paid and will truly be experiences of a lifetime for area youth.

One student will experience Steamboat Springs, Colorado, at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in July. Another student will experience the KEY Leadership Conference in Topeka in June.

Any high school junior living in the FreeState Electric Cooperative territory, whose parent or guardian is a member of the cooperative is eligible.

KEY Leadership Conference

Out of concern for the safety and well-being of our students, the decision has been made to forego a trip to Washington, D.C., and instead hold an in-person week-long leadership conference in Topeka — the KEY Leadership Conference.

This trip will include an all-expense-paid registration to a week spent in Topeka touring our state capitol, state landmarks, and learning about our state government while developing leadership skills and exploring personal development and social skills.

Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

At the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp, campers create a candy cooperative and participate in daily membership meetings where they establish committees and elect a general manager and board of directors. Youth learn about the workings of electric cooperatives through a variety of activities.

How to Apply

Applications received by the **DEADLINE OF FEB. 11, 2022**, will be reviewed and scored.

Students who are interested in applying can find all application materials and instructions to apply online at [FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH](https://www.freestate.coop/youth).