



FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.

TheOutlet

FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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STAFF

Christopher Parr
CEO

DISTRICT OFFICES

MCLOUTH OFFICE

P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS 66054-0070
Mon.-Thu.: 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

TEMP. TOPEKA OFFICE

7332 S.W. 21st St.
Topeka, KS 66615
Mon.-Thu.: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

NOTICE

Happy New Year!
Free State offices will be
closed New Year's Day,
JAN. 1. We look forward to
serving you in 2026.

FROM THE CEO

Looking Ahead to 2026

FreeState Electric Cooperative is looking ahead to 2026 with the understanding there will be challenges that affect the entire energy industry. We anticipate discussions about the power supply across the region, the continuing rise of electrical demand and the pressures associated with cost and daily business responsibilities. These pressures are real, but our commitment to members is one thing that will not change.

Every decision we make begins with our members.

As we power forward, we know that reliable power and affordable service is what matters most to you.

The staff at FreeState are working behind the scenes to mitigate the impact of power supply issues, growing demand, regulatory requirements, extreme weather events and other variables on our members. Our trustees are working to stay informed as trends in the energy industry shift. These conditions are things your cooperative has been preparing for.

Planning for the future includes strengthening our distribution system and upgrading our infrastructure. We are modernizing equipment and expanding how we use technology. These investments are not just operational, they directly support the dependable service you expect and rely upon.

Managing costs is another focus area

for 2026. As power costs rise across the industry, we continue to seek ways to reduce costs. Through demand-management efforts and responsible financial planning, we work to control costs before they reach your bill. Financial responsibility is a core cooperative value, and it guides how we navigate these challenges.

Communication is a priority for FreeState. We are committed to transparency. As a member-owned distribution cooperative, you deserve timely, honest information about the issues facing our industry and how we are responding. You can expect continued communication as your cooperative works for you.

We know 2026 will bring challenges. It is inevitable. But rest assured that FreeState's focus remains unchanged. We continue to serve our members with reliability, responsibility and openness. We will continue to prepare, adapt and plan for a powerful future together.



Chris Parr

“FreeState’s focus remains unchanged. We continue to serve our members with reliability, responsibility and openness. We will continue to prepare, adapt and plan for a powerful future together.”

When the Lights Go Out, So Do We

Even with the best planning and reliable equipment, power outages still happen — often thanks to storms, accidents or wildlife. While we can't control every cause, we can control our outage response plan. This month, we're answering some of the most common questions members ask when the lights go out.

WHAT CAUSES OUTAGES?

The chart below summarizes the outages we have experienced in the FreeState Electric territory over the last year.

NATURE

This category is the largest because it includes trees, animals and weather. Lightning led among the weather phenomena with 162 outages, followed by wind with 44. Animals and birds added another 253 and trees led the charge with 296. To reduce these risks, we:

- ▶ Trim trees along rights-of-way.
- ▶ Install animal guards and raptor protection.
- ▶ Employ construction methods designed to deter wildlife.

EQUIPMENT FAILURE

A number of outages are actually planned on purpose to safely maintain and upgrade our lines, or build infrastructure to new construction. Less often, the equipment can fail unexpectedly because of material defects or deterioration. Finally, during peak power usage, an overload can take down electric service. This is why we encourage conservation during typical peak hours.

ACCIDENTS

Digging, construction, or car accidents can damage poles or lines. In our rural area, it's quite common to have farm-equipment-

related outages, such as large harvest equipment getting tangled in the wires. 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. Look up and live.

POWER SUPPLY

As a distribution cooperative, we rely on Evergy and Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo) for power supply. If one of these suppliers experiences a problem, we may not have any power to distribute.

WHAT IS THE OUTAGE RESPONSE PLAN?

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 critical services.

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** are the most difficult and time-consuming in the restoration process.

REPAIR TIME ESTIMATES

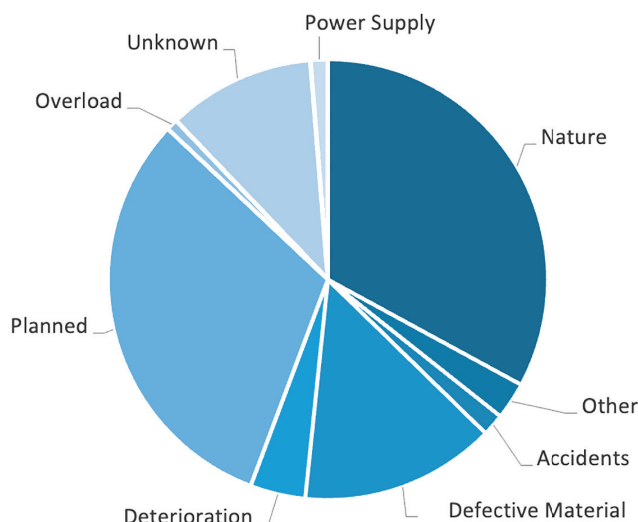
- ▶ A transformer repair typically takes about 45 minutes.
- ▶ Replacing a power pole may take around 4 hours, depending on size and type.

Outages can last seconds, hours, or — in severe conditions — days. Sometimes crews must walk along the lines during storms to find the exact location of the problem.

Above all, our crews' safety is our priority.

WHAT DOES FREESTATE DO TO PREVENT OUTAGES?

While we cannot control the weather, we can work to limit



outages by investing in our infrastructure and maintaining clearance around our equipment.

SYSTEM UPGRADES & MAINTENANCE

Investing in modern equipment and technology helps us:

- ▶ Replace aging components.
- ▶ Increase system efficiency.
- ▶ Meet growing energy demands.

TREE TRIMMING

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 lineworkers can access an area safely to begin working.

PLANNED OUTAGES

Ironically, sometimes we have to plan an outage to reduce future outages. Planned outages are a part of upgrading and repairing equipment safely. They are used to limit longer, unplanned outages later. We notify members before a planned outage and make every effort to limit negative impacts.

TRAINING & PREPAREDNESS

The most important thing we do to mitigate the impact of

outages is to be trained and ready to respond. Preparing for the worst is what we do. We train our employees to provide the safest, most efficient service to our members, and put extra crews on call during weather events. We also have backups built into our infrastructure, and keep an inventory of materials on hand, so we are ready whenever a replacement is needed.

WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING AN OUTAGE?

We appreciate it when our members call in about blinks or outages at any time of day or night. While advanced metering systems are built to report an outage instantly, they can, in rare instances, fail, and they often don't capture blinks. They also can't distinguish why a meter has stopped. Maybe you saw or heard something that could provide clues to determine the cause of an outage.

After reporting your outage, monitor FreeState's Facebook account for updates, which we strive to provide during outages that are for an extended time or that affect over 100 members. If you don't use social media, the updates can be found at <https://freestate.pub/updates>.

The most important thing you can do regarding outages is to prepare for them ahead of time, especially when a significant weather event has been forecast. Make sure your emergency kit is well-stocked and your electronics are fully charged.

COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.

WEATHER

High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.

CRITTERS

Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.

Scheduled MAINTENANCE

Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.

ACCIDENTS

Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Farm equipment can make contact with overhead lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.

Timely Reminders ...

NO COLD WEATHER RULE



FreeState Electric Cooperative does not participate in the Cold Weather Rule established by the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC), a rule which restricts electric disconnects from Nov. 1 through March 31, when temperature forecasts are 35 degrees or below.

FreeState Electric Cooperative is not mandated by this policy and has been responsible for establishing its own appropriate seasonal rules since 1996. All accounts are subject to disconnection for nonpayment and are not governed by temperature.

If you have any questions about FreeState's seasonal rules or billing options, please call our office at 800-794-1989.

YOUTH PROGRAM APPLICATIONS



Youth programs are all-expenses-paid trips that are truly experiences of a lifetime for those selected. One student will have an opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in June, and one student will experience Steamboat Springs, Colorado, during the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in July.

The two selected high school students will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship. Any high school junior living in the FreeState Electric Cooperative territory whose parent or guardian is a FreeState member is eligible.

**FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY AT
WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH BY FEB. 12, 2026.**

RATE CHANGES

The rate tariffs that were passed by the board in January 2025 included incremental rate adjustments each year through 2028. As a reminder, your January usage will begin calculating at the level planned for 2026 and will be reflected for the first time on the bill that prints in February.

If you would like to review the single-phase rate adjustments planned for each year, they can be found in an easily comparable format at <https://freestate.pub/ResidentialRateOptions>. All rate tariffs are included on our website at <https://freestate.pub/Tariffs>.

SERVING YOUR COOPERATIVE



The 2026 trustee election cycle starts soon! If you are thinking about serving your cooperative, candidates must:

- ▶ Be an individual.
- ▶ Be able to enter legally binding contracts.
- ▶ Not have been previously removed or disqualified as a trustee.
- ▶ While a trustee, not be convicted of, or plead guilty to, a felony.
- ▶ Earn the credentialed cooperative trustee designation, trustee's certificate, or similar designation of certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association within three years of becoming a trustee.
- ▶ Comply with any other reasonable qualifications determined by the board.

Board applications are available at www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting and due by **THURSDAY, JAN. 29, 2026, AT 5:30 P.M.**

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM AUDIT

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc. has contracted Global Mapping Solutions (GMS) to carry out a field audit on its infrastructure and has granted permission for GMS to utilize all easements and right-of-way areas. If you have any questions, please call the office or visit www.freestate.coop/GIS.