



FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

The Outlet

FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Larry Butel
Overbrook

Bill Conley
Delia

Karol Lohman
Leavenworth

Don Montgomery
Burlingame

Jeanine Murphy
Leavenworth

Ralph Phillips
Mayetta

Rob Sage
Maple Hill

Matthew Turecek
Valley Falls

Mark Wulfkuhle
Lawrence

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

As our GIS Audit continues, you may see people walking or riding ATVs along the right-of-way or easement areas to take pictures of our infrastructure.

FROM THE CEO

Why Wildfire Mitigation is Non-Negotiable

At FreeState, our responsibility goes beyond keeping the lights on. We are focused on protecting the people, homes and communities we serve every day.

Here in northeast Kansas along the Flint Hills, prescribed burns have always been part of our landscape. But in recent years, conditions have changed. Stronger winds, drier seasons and more unpredictable weather mean wildfire risk is something we must actively manage.

That's why wildfire mitigation planning is not optional for FreeState. It is essential.

As a member-owned cooperative, we answer to you. That means making decisions that prioritize safety, even when they require significant planning. Our Wildfire Mitigation Plan is a proactive approach designed to reduce risk, strengthen our system and ensure we are prepared when conditions become dangerous.

Much of this work happens behind the scenes.

It's crews trimming trees along miles of power lines. It's replacing aging equipment before it fails. It's investing in technology that helps us detect issues earlier and respond faster. And it's our team monitoring weather conditions and coordinating closely with local emergency responders.

All these efforts focus on one goal. Prevention.

When wildfire risk is high, we must be ready to act quickly and responsibly.

You trust us to provide reliable electricity and to care for the system that serves your home, farm or business. Wildfire mitigation is one of the ways we honor that trust.

It's not a one-time effort; it's an ongoing commitment. Because protecting our communities isn't just part of our job. It's one of the reasons we exist.

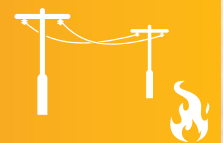


Chris Parr

Stronger winds, drier seasons and more unpredictable weather mean wildfire risk is something we must actively manage.

SAFETY TIP

When planning a controlled burn, stay far away from power poles and overhead lines. Never burn during high winds or when wildfire warnings are in effect.



WILDFIRE ALERTS AND WARNINGS AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Understanding alerts can help you know when to prepare and when conditions may become dangerous.

FIRE WEATHER ALERTS

RED FLAG WARNING:

Critical fire weather conditions are happening or about to happen.

FIRE WEATHER WATCH:

Conditions are dry, favorable for critical fire weather and could become dangerous.

NATIONAL WILDFIRE RISK LEVELS



LOW (GREEN): Fire starts are unlikely.

MODERATE (BLUE): Some wildfires may occur.

HIGH (YELLOW): Wildfires are likely.

VERY HIGH (ORANGE): Fires start easily and spread quickly, and are difficult to control.

EXTREME (RED): Fires start and spread rapidly. No outdoor burning should take place.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

Powering Prevention

How FreeState is taking a proactive stand against wildfire risk

Across northeast Kansas, the prairie stretches for miles. It's beautiful, resilient and historically shaped by fire. But in recent years, wildfire risk has taken on new urgency. Stronger winds, drier conditions and changing land use patterns have created an environment where fires can spread faster and farther than in the past.

For FreeState, this has prompted a critical question. How do we protect both people and power in an increasingly unpredictable environment?

The answer is a comprehensive Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP). This is a forward-thinking safety and operational strategy focused on prevention, preparedness and continuous improvement.

Nolan Lewis, safety manager, has led the efforts to develop the plan and says that fire mitigation is not just about responding to fires, it's working together to prevent them before they even ignite.

"Resilience starts with design," said Lewis. "We are collaborating internally with multiple departments to make sure we are building a system that can withstand conditions that are surrounding it. That includes planning and training for wildfire mitigation and response."

Lewis added, "It's about safety and our ongoing commitment to members."

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

FreeState serves more than 16,000 members across nine counties and maintains over 3,500 miles of power lines. That system runs through a region where wildfire conditions can peak quickly, especially in late winter and early spring when dry grasses and high winds align.

Wildfire risk isn't driven by one factor alone. It's the result of a combination of

variables that play a different role and require diverse strategic responses.

BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT SYSTEM

At the core of FreeState's WMP is a commitment to making the distribution system stronger. Infrastructure upgrades are designed to mitigate fire by using fiberglass crossarms, replacing aging equipment and making strategic improvements to improve resiliency under conditions ripe for wildfires. Enhanced construction standards also play a role, as well as shorter pole spans and stronger materials. These all help reduce mechanical strain during high winds and lower the chance of equipment failure.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Innovation is another key piece of the plan. Advanced metering systems now allow crews to detect issues in real time, such as overheating equipment or unusual line behavior. This allows monitoring that can mitigate escalation to larger problems. These tools provide faster insight and response, helping crews act before risk can turn into reality. With the ability to identify potential issues, crews can handle potential hazards earlier and more safely than ever before.

MANAGING WHAT GROWS

While tech plays a major role, some of the most important work happens through active vegetation management. It's one of the most effective ways to reduce risks. FreeState's in-house right-of-way crews maintain thousands of miles of right-of-way by trimming trees, clearing brush and managing growth to keep power lines safely separated from flammable materials. This ongoing effort not only reduces the risk of

fire but also improves reliability for members by preventing outages caused by vegetation contact.

PREPARED FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Even with strong prevention measures, preparation is still essential. The WMP outlines detailed operational practices for high-risk conditions. Staff monitor weather patterns, track Red Flag Warnings and stay in close contact with local emergency management professionals. It's an important partnership when it comes to keeping the system and our members safe.

In extreme situations, the cooperative may be asked by emergency management to take additional steps to protect public safety. When emergencies occur, a structured response plan ensures clear communication with members, first responders and public agencies.

A PLAN THAT EVOLVES

What sets FreeState's approach apart is the commitment to

“It's about safety and our ongoing commitment to members.”

NOLAN LEWIS, SAFETY MANAGER

continuous improvement. The WMP is designed to be a living document that is regularly reviewed, updated with new data and refined as conditions change. Performance metrics, cross-department collaboration and ongoing training will ensure that the plan stays effective over time.

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST

For FreeState, wildfire mitigation is about more than infrastructure. It's about people.

By investing staff time into prevention, embracing new technology and strengthening our everyday practices, your cooperative is working to safeguard those it serves and ensure reliable service for years to come.

ANNUAL MEETING MOMENTS



FreeState CEO Chris Parr spoke to the members about the growth of the cooperative, important projects and a vision for the future.



Trustee Ralph Phillips was truly surprised by his family coming to watch him be honored for his 40 years of service to the board of trustees.



The roles and responsibilities of the many players in the electric industry were outlined by Kevin Noblet, CEO for Kansas Electric Power Cooperative.



Member Service Representatives Christina Mitchell (left) and Beth Miller invited members to fill a bag with a variety of gifts from over the years.

How to Protect Your Home From a Wildfire

Wildfires move fast, but research shows that most homes don't ignite from an unstoppable wall of flames. They ignite from embers — tiny burning pieces of wood or vegetation that can travel over a mile in the wind and land on or near your home. The good news? There are steps you can take to help your home withstand nearby flames.

The most important area to focus on is your Home Ignition Zone — your house and its 200-foot perimeter. Think of it in three layers: closest, middle and outer. Let's walk through what to do in each.

THE IMMEDIATE ZONE (0-5 FEET FROM YOUR HOME)

This is the most important zone. Start here. Your goal: create a clean, non-combustible buffer.

- ▶ Clear leaves, pine needles, and debris from roofs and gutters.
- ▶ Repair missing or loose shingles and roof tiles.
- ▶ Screen vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh to block embers.
- ▶ Repair damaged window screens and replace broken windows.
- ▶ Remove mulch, firewood, plants, leaves and anything that can burn from around the house.
- ▶ Don't store anything under decks or porches; screen openings to prevent debris buildup.
- ▶ Keep the 5 feet closest to buildings, structures, and decks clear of flammable materials. Swap mulch for gravel or crushed stone.

THE INTERMEDIATE ZONE (5-30 FEET)

This is your landscaping safety zone. The goal is to slow and reduce fire.

- ▶ Keep grass trimmed to 4 inches or shorter.
- ▶ Trim limbs off tree trunks to at least 10 feet above the ground.
- ▶ Space tree canopies at least 18 feet apart (more if on a slope).
- ▶ Make sure mature trees are 10-20 feet away from the home.
- ▶ Remove shrubs and low branches below trees to prevent fire from climbing.
- ▶ Clear plants and grass around propane tanks.
- ▶ Create fuel breaks with walkways, gravel paths, patios or driveways.

THE EXTENDED ZONE (30-200 FEET)

The goal here is to interrupt the fire's path and keep flames small and on the ground.

- ▶ Remove piles of leaves, fallen branches and dead plants.
- ▶ Remove small conifer trees growing between larger mature trees.
- ▶ Clear vegetation around sheds and outbuildings.
- ▶ Leave at least 12 feet between canopy tops for trees 30 to 60 feet from the home.*
- ▶ Leave at least 6 feet between canopy tops for trees 60 to 100 feet from the home.*

ACCESS AND EMERGENCY PREP

When every minute counts, make it easy to get help.

- ▶ Clearly mark your home address with numbers visible from the road.
- ▶ Know two ways out of your neighborhood.
- ▶ Have a predetermined meeting place.
- ▶ Make a wildfire evacuation plan; include your pets and livestock.
- ▶ Leave early if you feel unsafe — don't wait to be told.

You don't need to fireproof your entire property to make a difference. The small details closest to your home could determine whether it withstands a wildfire. One weekend of cleanup and some thoughtful upgrades can dramatically shift the odds in your favor and bring peace of mind for seasons to come.

HOME HARDENING CHECKLIST

Small upgrades can make a big difference when embers fly.

ROOF AND VENTS:

- ▶ Choose a Class A fire-rated roof (e.g., metal, composite shingles, tile or concrete).
- ▶ Cover attic and roof vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh.

SIDING AND WINDOWS:

- ▶ Use fire-resistant materials like brick, fiber-cement, stucco or treated wood.
- ▶ Install dual-pane tempered glass windows to resist cracking from heat.

*DISTANCES SUGGESTED ARE BASED ON NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (NFPA) GUIDELINES. HOWEVER, THE SPACING REQUIRED COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER DUE TO SLOPE, TREE SPECIES AND OTHER SITE-SPECIFIC CONDITIONS.

SOURCES: NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (NFPA), SMOKEYBEAR.COM

WILDFIRE GO BAG CHECKLIST

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▶ Cellphone & Charger | ▶ First Aid | ▶ Important Documents & Photos |
| ▶ Clothing & Toiletries | ▶ Flashlight & Batteries | ▶ Medications |
| ▶ Face Masks | ▶ Food & Water | ▶ Pet Essentials |

