



FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

The Outlet

FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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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

Give Crews Room to Work

When storms roll through or work is underway in your area, it's natural to be curious about what's happening. At FreeState, we understand that. But I want to take a moment to emphasize something critically important.

Please give lineworkers, contractors and first responders the space they need to do their jobs.

Our line and right-of-way crews, and the professionals who support them, often work in high-risk environments. Downed lines, energized equipment and changing conditions can create serious hazards. What may look routine is often anything but.

This also includes any time you may see contractors, such as our GIS auditors (Global Mapping Solutions) working in your area or even on your property. These individuals are there for a reason. They are helping us maintain accurate records of our system and ensure our infrastructure is properly mapped, inspected and maintained. This work is part of the cooperative's right-of-way responsibilities and is essential to providing safe, reliable service.

If they are there, they are supposed to be.

Give them space, be respectful and allow them to complete their work without interruption. This helps them do their job accurately and efficiently before they move on to the next service.

The same applies during outages or emergency response. Vehicles, equipment and personnel need room to operate safely. Getting too close can delay restoration and increase the risk of injury.

I also encourage you to remind children to stay away from work zones and never approach utility equipment.

At the end of the day, our goal is simple. Restore power and stay safe.

Your awareness and cooperation make all the difference.



Chris Parr

“Please give lineworkers, contractors and first responders the space they need to do their jobs.”



CHECK YOUR JULY BILL

The board of trustees voted to retire \$1.1 million in capital credits this year, which will be returned to our active members as a bill credit. Inactive and prepay members will receive a separate check in the mail. Always keep your contact information current.

Powering Progress, Protecting Reliability

Why access matters for every FreeState member

For most of us, electricity is something we don't think about until the lights flicker or the power goes out. Behind that everyday reliability is a complex network of poles, lines, and equipment that must be carefully maintained across thousands of miles, often stretching across private property.

At FreeState Electric Cooperative, ensuring that system runs safely and reliably is not just a job. It's a shared responsibility between the cooperative and its members.

One of the most important — and sometimes misunderstood — parts of that relationship is access to member property.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Unlike investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives are member-owned. That means every FreeState member has a stake in the system and a role in supporting it.

Part of that role includes providing the cooperative with the ability to access property when necessary to build, maintain and protect electrical infrastructure.

Under FreeState's Rules and Regulations, members agree to provide rights-of-way and allow access for activities such as constructing lines, trimming trees, inspecting equipment, reading meters and making repairs.

Chris Parr, CEO of FreeState Electric Cooperative, says this is fundamental to how the cooperative serves its members:

"Reliable service doesn't happen by accident, said Parr. "It requires ongoing maintenance and the ability for our crews to safely reach the equipment that powers our communities. Access is a critical part of that."

WHY ACCESS IS ESSENTIAL

Electric systems are interconnected, and a single issue in one location can quickly affect many others. A tree growing too close to a line, a damaged pole or a malfunctioning piece of equipment can disrupt service far beyond one property.

That's why FreeState must be able to act quickly, and sometimes with little notice, when maintenance or repairs are needed.

Members are required to provide full and free access to cooperative employees and authorized contractors for any work related to electric service. This ensures crews can respond efficiently, especially during emergencies.

"When there's an outage or a safety concern, every minute counts," explained Zach Sterling, FreeState's chief operations officer, "If our crews can't get to the problem quickly, it can

KEY POINTS

- ▶ The utility has the right to install, operate and maintain electrical lines within the easement.
- ▶ Structures, trees and other obstructions may be limited or prohibited to ensure safe operation.
- ▶ The landowner retains ownership of the property and can use the land for other purposes not inconsistent with the easement.
- ▶ The utility must access the easement for maintenance, repairs, upgrades and in emergencies.
- ▶ Easements are typically recorded with the property deed and run with the land.

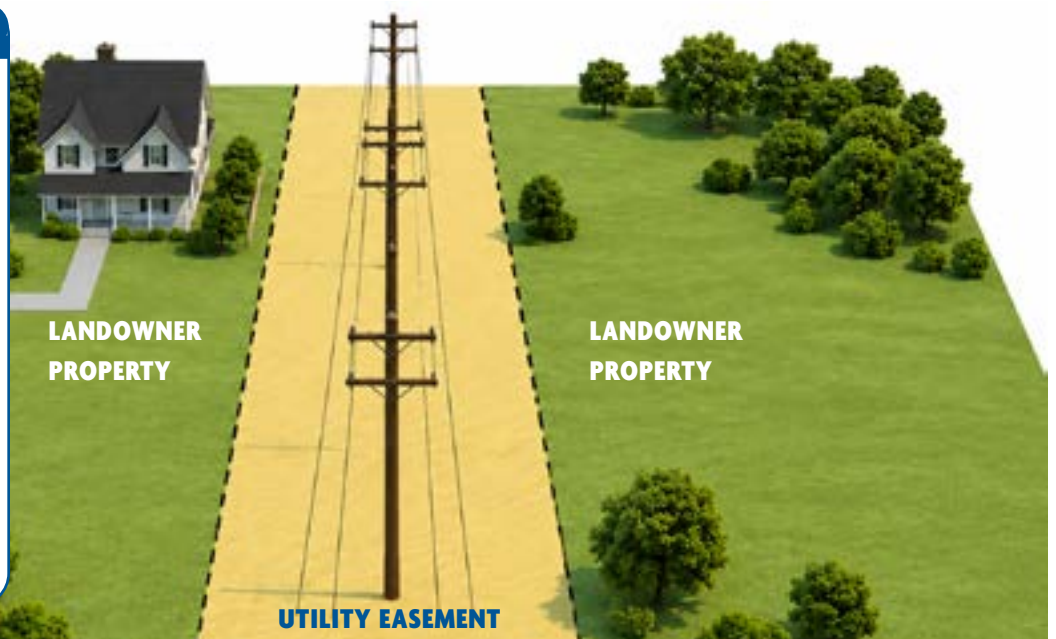


IMAGE GENERATED USING AI.

extend outages or create additional risks. Access allows us to do our jobs safely and restore power as quickly as possible.”

THE ROLE OF EASEMENTS AND KANSAS LAW

The cooperative’s right to access property is supported not only by member agreements, but also by Kansas law.

Under state statute, if electric lines have been continuously maintained on a property for more than two years, legal challenges to their presence are barred. This helps ensure long-term stability for the electric system and prevents disruptions that could impact entire communities.

For members, this means that infrastructure you see on or near your property is often part of a longstanding, legally recognized system designed to serve many homes and businesses.

“These laws are in place to protect the reliability of the grid,” Parr noted. “They ensure that infrastructure serving entire neighborhoods can continue to operate without interruption.”

WHAT MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW

While the cooperative maintains its equipment, members have important responsibilities as well.

FreeState’s Rules and Regulations outline several key expectations:

- ▶ Members must not interfere with cooperative equipment or attach anything to poles or lines without permission.
- ▶ Personal electrical installations must meet safety codes and be properly maintained.
- ▶ Members should avoid building or placing objects too close to electric facilities.
- ▶ Any hazards, damage or unusual conditions should be reported immediately.

Members are also responsible for protecting cooperative property located on their premises. Damage caused by tampering, misuse or accidents may result in repair costs being billed to the responsible party.

These rules are not just administrative. They are critical for the safety of our employees and the general public.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

Electric infrastructure is powerful and potentially dangerous. Maintaining safe conditions around electrical equipment protects not only cooperative crews but also members, their families and their property.

Obstructed access, unauthorized modifications or unsafe installations can create serious hazards. In some cases, the cooperative may suspend service if conditions are deemed dangerous to people or the system.

Sterling emphasizes the importance of prevention: “We’d much rather prevent a problem than respond to one,” he said. “Clear access and safe conditions help us identify issues early and keep everyone out of harm’s way.”

STAYING CONNECTED — HOW FREESTATE COMMUNICATES WITH YOU

Clear communication is a priority at FreeState, especially when work requires access to member property.

The cooperative uses multiple channels to notify members about planned work or necessary access, including:

- ▶ Email notifications.
- ▶ Facebook.
- ▶ Phone calls.
- ▶ In-person from time to time; a member of FreeState’s staff will always identify themselves.
- ▶ Website.

While FreeState makes every effort to communicate in advance, there are situations, such as urgent maintenance or outage response, where advance notice may not be possible.

Sarah Farlee, communications manager, says the cooperative is intentional about reaching members in multiple ways: “We plan as much as possible and use a variety of communication channels to reach our members,” said Farlee. “We take pride in being transparent and making sure members understand what’s happening and why.”

Members also play an important role in that communication process. Keeping contact information up to date and paying attention to cooperative messages can help ensure important notices aren’t missed.

If you think you’re not receiving updates, FreeState encourages you to call the office. Staff can verify and update your contact information to make sure you stay informed when it matters most.

A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

At its core, the relationship between FreeState and its members is a partnership. The cooperative provides reliable electric service, and members support that mission by allowing access and maintaining safe conditions on their property.

This partnership is what allows FreeState to respond to storms, maintain infrastructure and plan for future growth, all while keeping costs reasonable and service dependable.

“Everything we do is about serving our members,” Parr concluded. “When members understand why access is important, it strengthens the entire cooperative and helps us deliver on our promise of reliable power.”

Access to member property is not about overreach or creating problems with property owners. It’s about reliability, safety and service to the entire distribution system.

By working together the system stays strong, and the cooperative continues to serve generations to come.

If you have questions about easements, access or your responsibilities as a member, FreeState encourages you to reach out. Understanding how the system works is one of the best ways to support the grid, as well as your neighbors who depend on it every day.

FreeState's GIS Audit Continues

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc., has contracted with Global Mapping Solutions (GMS) to carry out field audit on the cooperative's infrastructure. This work is referred to as a geographic information system (GIS) audit.

GMS began the GIS audit on Aug. 29, 2025, and is expected to continue working through May 2027.

Please be aware that FreeState has granted permission for GMS to utilize all easements and right-of-way areas pertinent to FreeState service territory to complete this project. Contractors may be seen in pickups and/or ATVs with magnets marked "Contracted by FreeState Electric."

WHAT EXACTLY IS A GIS AUDIT?

A GIS audit locates and inventories each and every piece of equipment used in the infrastructure of the distribution system. GMS will upload photographs of the system and note the exact GPS location.

WHY IS A GIS AUDIT NEEDED?

A GIS audit is considered an essential service for electric cooperatives. The audit verifies or improves the accuracy of the mapping system, and this is critical for systems such

as FreeState's Metering Infrastructure, Outage Management Systems and workforce management.

The goal of the project is accuracy, reliability and the use of best practices. Overall, the audit ensures that FreeState can maximize the benefits derived from our GIS, leading to both immediate and long-term advantages.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR MEMBERS?

A GIS audit improves electric service in the following ways:

- ▶ **COST SAVINGS:** More accurate data reduces operational costs, as evidenced by fewer one-call requests (underground line locating), more efficient staking and improved workforce management.
- ▶ **ENHANCED EFFICIENCY:** GIS can be used for better planning of projects and should result in fewer field visits.
- ▶ **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:** Accurate location data means faster response times and improved infrastructure management.
- ▶ **REGULATORY COMPLIANCE:** FEMA assistance requires specific and accurate locations of infrastructure damage. Should you have any further questions or need more information, please call the office or visit <https://freestate.pub/GIS>.

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK

THE BIG IDEA

Because an electric cooperative is owned by its members, money left after operating costs is assigned back to members as capital credits.

Once the yearly financials are complete, the cooperative calculates each member's portion of the margins (if any) to be allocated. However, this amount doesn't become cash until it's retired. When the board considers the financial health of the cooperative to be adequate, they will retire a portion of capital credits to return to the member-owners.

WHY THE DELAY?

Retaining capital for a time helps the cooperative build, repair and finance the electric system before money is returned to the members.



A member's share of each year's margins are allocated based upon their electricity purchases throughout that year.

ALLOCATION

RECORDED VALUE

- ▶ Your portion of that year's margins.
- ▶ Held in account for several years.
- ▶ A promise of ownership — not spendable cash.

RETIREMENT

RETURNED VALUE

- ▶ Board-approved.
- ▶ Based upon financial strength and policies.
- ▶ Returned as a bill credit or paper check.