

The Wheat Belt Connection



AUGUST 2026



Safety is our top priority at Wheat Belt PPD including safety for our employees, customers, and surrounding communities. To reinforce our commitment to safety, employees participate in monthly safety meetings that combine discussion with hands-on training. Pictured above, Patrick Hansen (Apprentice Lineman) and Xander Burns (Apprentice Lineman), perform hot work procedures as part of a training exercise focused on maintaining safe work practices in the field.

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Utility Pole Inspections in Progress

As part of Wheat Belt PPD's ongoing commitment to providing safe, reliable electric service, planned utility pole inspections have begun throughout our service territory in partnership with Zeitview. Routine inspections are important in maintaining a reliable electric system and help us identify potential issues before they become larger problems.

Who is Zeitview?

Zeitview is an expert utility inspections company committed to safety and energy reliability. Zeitview professionals have official IDs and wear branded Personal Protective Equipment.

What is Zeitview doing in the area?

Zeitview ground crews and vehicles are in your neighborhood, working together with Wheat Belt to conduct planned inspections of utility poles and wires. Wheat Belt is conducting utility pole inspections as part of its ongoing electric system resiliency efforts.

Continued on 3-D

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

By: Safe Electricity

National Safe Digging Day, or 811 Day, is upon us. Easy to remember because of its 8/11 date, the day is a good reminder to get underground utilities marked prior to breaking ground. Having utilities marked is free and easy to do; simply call 811 two to three business days prior to starting your project. While state laws vary, utility companies generally have two to three days to respond to your request.

Why is it necessary to get buried utilities marked? Underground lines are unyielding, and their path is unpredictable. Digging in an unmarked yard can mean striking an underground utility line, which can cause serious injury. Damaging a utility line can also cause unwanted service disruptions, including a power outage, as well as a hefty fine.

Every project, big or small, requires advance notification to 811. To start the underground utility marking process, call 811 or visit call811.com. Examples of projects that require utility location include putting up a fence, installing a mailbox post, building a deck or patio, and planting trees and shrubs, among others. Any project that breaks ground requires that underground utilities be marked.

If a contractor is involved, check with that person to determine who will make the request. Locators do not mark private lines such as service to outbuildings, underground sprinkler systems or a gas line to a grill, for example. Private lines are the responsibility of the homeowner.

“While it can be tempting to skip the important step of calling before you dig, it can be a costly and dangerous omission. Underground utility lines could be anywhere. They also shift over time and can be found just a few inches from the surface.”

-Erin Hollinshead
Executive Director of Safe Electricity

Before digging in, take these five steps to safer digging:

1. Pre-mark the proposed dig area with white paint or white flags.
2. Call 811 or go online to submit your locate request before you dig. There is no charge for the service.
3. Wait the required amount of time (typically two to three business days).
4. Respect the marks and do not move any flags.
5. Dig with care. Avoid digging on top of or within 18–24 inches on all sides of utility marks, which may mean moving your digging project to another part of your yard.

For more information about electrical safety, visit safeelectricity.org. For more information about 811, visit call811.com.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Wesley Christensen! Wheat Belt Public Power District is proud to congratulate Wesley Christensen on achieving his Journeyman Lineman certification! Wesley joined Wheat Belt in 2021 and is based out of our Sidney office. Please join us in congratulating Wesley on this well-deserved milestone and thanking him for his hard work, dedication, and commitment to serving our communities. Wesley was presented with his certificate on Friday, June 26th, by Wheat Belt Manager of Operations and Safety Director Rollie Waite and Board President Brian Zimmerman.



PEOPLE BEHIND THE POWER

Levi Berndt- Line Equipment Technician



What is your role at the district, and what does a typical day look like?

I have been a Line Equipment Technician at Wheat Belt for three years. My role is varied; I perform the daily duties of an apprentice lineman while maintaining critical equipment like transformers, regulators, capacitors and reclosers.

What drew you to the electric utility industry?

My interest in the utility industry began early, influenced by my grandfather, who served on our local cooperative's board. His advocacy for the industry inspired my career path, leading me to earn an associate degree in powerline construction and maintenance from WNCC.

What do you enjoy most about working in public power?

At Wheat Belt, I enjoy combining physical field operations with the challenge of managing complex electrical systems. While the work is demanding, restoring power during storms when our customers need us most is deeply rewarding.

How does your role contribute to improving system reliability or operational efficiency?

Operational efficiency is the cornerstone of public power. Because costs are passed directly to our customers, we

have a responsibility to operate as effectively as possible. My role bridges infrastructure and technology, focusing on automating equipment to improve power quality and upgrading aging systems to minimize the frequency and duration of outages.

What is one efficiency improvement you have been part of that made you proud?

We have made significant progress in minimizing the frequency and duration of outages. Real-time outage tracking through our metering system allows us to identify issues and plan our response before leaving the service center. Additionally, smart data management systems help us address potential problems before they escalate. By implementing automatic switching for system capacitors, we have improved power quality while optimizing our crews' time.

What upcoming innovation do you think will redefine efficiency in our industry?

Looking ahead, I am eager to see how the industry evolves. As we integrate advanced analytics and new grid technologies, our ability to prevent disruptions will only improve. I am proud to leverage these tools to keep Wheat Belt a model of reliability, ensuring our customers receive the consistent, high-quality power they depend on every day.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Growing up on a ranch, I developed an appreciation for the outdoors that carries over into my free time, where I enjoy backpacking and camping.

80th

Customer Appreciation Event

 **September 19, 2026**
7:00 AM - 10:30 AM

 **11306 RD 32, Sidney, NE**
Wheat Belt Headquarters

 Join us for breakfast and meet our employees!



Utility Pole Inspections in Progress cont'd from 3-A

What are the crews doing? Why are they flying a drone?

Zeitview workers may use drones and specialized inspection equipment to safely evaluate utility poles and identify maintenance needs before they cause outages or safety issues.

During an inspection, a drone will hover near each pole for less than two minutes. Drones are operated by certified pilots and will follow the path of utility lines. They will be flown high above the area to keep an appropriate distance from homes and property.

A knock on your door for permission to enter your yard will be rare and only made when needed to safely complete an inspection. You may see Zeitview employees out in your neighborhood while they inspect poles or utility boxes. As a precaution, please keep all pets indoors or leashed when going for walks.

How do drone inspections benefit customers?

Using innovative technology for inspections reduces interruptions for you and provides more detailed information than traditional inspections. This helps Wheat Belt improve electric reliability, resiliency, and strengthens the grid against future challenges.

If you have any questions or need more information about planned inspections, please contact our office. Regular updates will be posted on our Facebook page, as well as our website. For more information about Zeitview, please visit Zeitview.com. We appreciate your understanding and support as we continue to maintain and improve system reliability.

MAIN HEADQUARTERS:

P.O. Box 177
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OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Thursday
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LUCKY DRAWING

Wheat Belt Public Power District is pleased to announce Chaco Energy Company as our June Lucky Draw winners. Chaco Energy Company is a small, family-owned oil and gas production company that has been operating numerous electrified oil wells in Cheyenne County for about three years. The company operates in seven states and often says Nebraska is the best place to do business because of its friendly, reliable people and supportive regulatory environment.

Chaco Energy Company received a \$50 credit on their account for their prompt payment. If you would like to be included in our next drawing and avoid a \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 16th of the month. For your convenience, we offer several payment options. Please give us a call at 308-254-5871, or visit the Customer Engagement page on our website for more information.

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OUR MISSION

Deliver electricity safely, reliably
and efficiently.