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Enhancing Customer Experience: A Closer Look at Wheat Belt Public Power District's Initiatives

BY: **KELLI CHAON**
Customer Engagement Manager

In an era where customer satisfaction plays a pivotal role in the success of any organization, Wheat Belt Public Power District has taken proactive steps to elevate its customer experience. Recognizing the importance of aligning services with customer expectations, the District recently conducted a comprehensive customer survey. The findings revealed these factors influencing customer satisfaction: rates and fees, social responsibility, and the professionalism and knowledge of employees. Armed with these insights, Wheat Belt is set to embark on a transformative journey to address these crucial elements.



The customer survey conducted by Wheat Belt shed light on the primary concerns and priorities of our customer base. Three key areas emerged as decisive factors influencing customer satisfaction:

1. Rates and Fees: Customers expressed a keen interest in the transparency and fairness of rates and fees associated with their electric service. The survey identified a need for clear communication about pricing structures and an understanding of how rates are determined. We recognize the significance of this aspect and are committed to implementing changes that ensure customers feel informed and confident about the financial aspects of their service.

2. Social Responsibility: Customers are looking for
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LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Harold and Sandra Fraizer, our February "Lucky Draw Winner"!

Harold and Sandra have three children and seven grandchildren. In 2004, the Fraizers decided to buy a house in the Big Springs area that was built in 1907, but had been sitting empty for 45 years. They remodeled the house and signed up as Wheat Belt customers for the first time that year. Prior to getting power there, the home was only ran off of a generator.

Harold is a retired carpenter and Sandra does upholstery for furniture. In their spare time, Harold enjoys building radio controlled boats and planes, while Sandra enjoys knitting and sewing.

Harold and Sandra 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 wheatbelt.com, and select the Customer Engagement page for more information.

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Wheat Belt's Commitment to a Safer and More Reliable Electrical System

BY: MARK CAPE, *Field Engineer*



With a rich history dating back to the late 40s and early 50s, Wheat Belt service area boasts a legacy infrastructure that has powered communities for decades. However, in the face of evolving technological and safety standards, the Wheat Belt team recognizes the need for continuous improvement to meet the growing demands of the modern era.

Wheat Belt's commitment to providing safe and reliable electricity is manifested through a four-year work plan that sets the stage for upgrades and improvements across the electrical system. Collaborating closely with an electrical engineering firm, Wheat Belt undertakes a comprehensive analysis to identify priority projects that target crucial components of the aging infrastructure.

One of the significant challenges faced by Wheat Belt is the presence of original poles and wires from the late 40s and early 50s. Recognizing the need for a proactive approach, Wheat Belt in consultation with their engineering partners designates lines and transformers for strategic upgrades. These upgrades are imperative to mitigate risks associated with outages, inadequate voltage, and other potential factors that may compromise the reliability of the electrical system. To execute the identified priority projects, Wheat Belt has enlisted the support of experienced contractors specializing in electrical infrastructure upgrades. Currently, in the

Chappell area, major construction upgrades are underway, focusing on the reconductoring and rebuilding of transmission lines that have historically been the source of major outages.

Looking ahead to 2024, Wheat Belt has outlined an ambitious set of projects aimed at modernizing and fortifying the electrical system. Some key initiatives include:

1. Greenwood Substation Upgrades: Replacement of two miles of conductor and poles to enhance the overall capacity and efficiency of the Greenwood substation.

2. Recloser Replacement: Phasing out aging and outdated reclosers in substations to improve reliability and response times during disruptions.

3. Votech Substation Upgrades: Replacement of six miles of transmission/distribution line to improve reliability.

4. Capacitor Bank Relocation: Strategic relocation of capacitor banks to optimize line voltage and enhance system efficiency.

5. Copper Line Replacement: Commitment to replacing five miles of aging copper line and poles annually, ensuring a steady progression towards a more robust electrical infrastructure.

As Wheat Belt progresses into the future, the dedication to maintaining and updating the electrical system remains unwavering. The ongoing collaboration with an electrical engineering firm and the strategic execution of priority projects underscore Wheat Belt's commitment to providing customers with safe, reliable, and efficient electricity. By embracing innovation and proactively addressing the challenges of an aging infrastructure, Wheat Belt is ensuring the lights stay on for generations to come.





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Wheat Belt PPD Employee Feature

TRAVIS SECREST - Linecrew Foreman



How did you hear about Wheat Belt?

I was born and raised in Sidney and was working for an excavating company that did work for Wheat Belt.

Why did you decide to go to work at Wheat Belt?

To be honest, Wheat Belt had better pay and benefits with less hours, unless storms came through.

What do you like most about working at Wheat Belt?

The camaraderie with the crews and getting the lights back on after a storm!

Is there any special training or education needed for your job/career?

I was hired off the street, so I had to learn to climb on the job and not at a school. I then had to complete four years of bookwork with the Merchants Course and log roughly 8,000 hours of on-the-job training to become a journeyman.

Do you need to have continuing education for your type of work/career?

Yes, we go to hotline and underground schools. With the advances in technology, we also go to trainings for transformers, breakers, regulators and capacitors.

Tell us about your family:

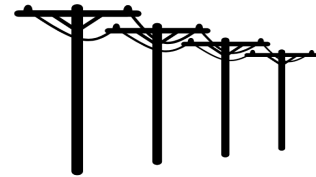
I am married to my wife Michelle and have three daughters and a son.


What do you like to do in your free time?

Chase cows, camp and 4-wheel in the mountains, shoot guns and spend time with family.

In your position you deal with the reliability of our electric system. Tell us your thoughts about reliability and how Wheat Belt is working to a more reliable system.

Wheat Belt tests a certain number of poles for rot every year. We then either replace the poles or if there is enough bad ones in a stretch, we will rebuild that whole section. In the last couple of years, Wheat Belt has hired an outside contractor to come in and rebuild or re-conductor troubled areas that have been identified. I think Wheat Belt does a good job of trying to make our system as reliable and efficient as possible.





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Enhancing Customer Experience cont'd from 12-A

communication from Wheat Belt. Whether it's in regard to outages, rates and overall operations of the District. Social responsibility also reflects how Wheat Belt is involved and supports our local communities.

3. Professional and Knowledgeable Employees: The human touch remains an integral part of customer satisfaction. Customers appreciate dealing with professionals who not only understand their needs but also possess the knowledge to address issues effectively. Recognizing this, Wheat Belt is investing in employee training programs to ensure that its workforce is equipped with the expertise needed to provide top-notch service.

Wheat Belt has identified three key initiatives based on the survey findings:

1. Time-of-Use Rate Communications: Wheat Belt understands the importance of adapting to the evolving needs of its customers. The implementation of time-of-use rates (commercial and irrigation rates) a few years back provides customers with flexibility and cost-saving opportunities. We will focus on clear and comprehensive communication strategies. This includes educational materials, customer meetings and easy to understand materials to help customers understand and maximize the benefits of time-of-use rates.

2. Customer-Friendly Payment Options Online: Recognizing the convenience that online services bring to modern consumers, Wheat Belt is committed to enhancing its online payment options. This initiative aims to provide customers with a seamless and user-friendly experience when managing their accounts and making payments online. By investing in cutting-edge technology, Wheat Belt aims to meet the expectations of its digitally savvy customer base.

3. Communication Strategy for 2024: Wheat Belt acknowledges the importance of effective communication in building strong relationships with its customers. The District will be developing a comprehensive communication strategy for 2024, focusing on transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness.

Wheat Belt Public Power District's customer experience initiative reflects a commitment to understanding and meeting the evolving needs of our customer base. By leveraging the insights gained from the recent survey, we are poised to enhance rates and fees transparency, elevate social responsibility initiatives, and ensure employees are equipped with the knowledge and professionalism required for stellar customer service. With the implementation of time-of-use rates, customer-friendly online payment options, and a robust communication strategy, Wheat Belt is not only addressing current customer concerns but also positioning itself as a forward-thinking and customer-centric electric provider in 2024.

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