



December 2024



Wheat Belt Announces No Rate Change for 2025 Despite April Ice Storm Challenges



LACEY GULBRANSON
General Manager/CEO

The Wheat Belt Board of Directors and management are pleased to announce that there will be no rate changes for 2025. This news may come as a surprise to many, especially in light of the significant damage caused by the April ice storm. Several factors contribute to this decision:

Tri-State Generation & Transmission: Their anticipated rate increase for 2024 took effect in August instead of the expected March date.

Investment Performance: Interest rates on investments have been higher in recent years.

Prior Planning: Effective rate management in previous years has yielded positive results.

Restoration efforts following the storm in April and May cost the District just over \$4.5 million, equivalent to roughly two years' worth of electric plant improvements. We are actively collaborating with FEMA to recover as much of these expenses as possible. The disaster has been approved for a 75% cost recovery from FEMA, along with an additional 12.5% recovery from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. While we do not have a definitive timeline for when we will receive these

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LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Dwight and Connie Schreinert our October "Lucky Draw Winner"!

Dwight and Connie farmed northwest of Dalton on the family homestead and are now retired. The farm has been a Wheat Belt customer for over 70 years. They have four kids and fifteen grandchildren.

The Schreinerts 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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funds, similar situations have indicated that reimbursements can take 18 months to two years from the date of the disaster.

If you see Kurt Cleveland, Wheat Belt Engineering Technician, or Valerie Richards, Wheat Belt Accounting Specialist, please take a moment to thank them for their hard work in providing essential data to FEMA.

Additionally, Wheat Belt holds an annual budget hearing prior to approving the previous year's budget. This year's budget hearing will take place at Wheat Belt Headquarters (11306 Rd 32, Sidney) on Friday, November 22nd, at 8:30 AM, and is open to the public. We invite you to join us.



- Budget assumptions and the large item budget were reviewed for the upcoming budget hearing in November. Discussions focused on efforts to minimize rate increases, with the goal of keeping them at or near zero for 2025.
- Legal Counsel, Kendra Strommen, gave an update on Conflict of Interest. A conflict-of-interest form needs to be completed by board members and employees earning \$150,000 or more per year if a conflict arises. This is regarding the updated State Statue 49-1499.03.
- Lacey Gulbranson presented information around the Demand Response Programs that have been in discussions at Tri-State G & T. Discussion was held on how we could implement this at Wheat Belt and what the benefits to our customers would be.
- April storm damage costs were reviewed. Lacey Gulbranson talked about the projected financial impact to the District along with the projected FEMA reimbursements. Expenses for the storm are reported at \$4.67M. Gulbranson stated our staff is working closely with FEMA officials to get the maximum reimbursement possible.
- Policy E-1, Line Extension, was reviewed by the board. Suggested changes to the Allowable Investment Limit (AIL) were discussed and how it would affect the margins for the District. It was the consensus of the Board to change the AIL to a maximum of three years of margins, rather than capping it at \$1M.

Working With Local Legislators

BY: KELLI CHAON *Customer Engagement Manager*

“All politics is local.” This observation by the late Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill, Jr., former Speaker of the House of Representatives, means that even national politics have a local impact, and people care most about issues that directly affect them. Indirectly, this famous adage underscores the importance and value of local politics.

At Wheat Belt PPD we think it’s critical to develop and cultivate relationships with local legislators because they craft, introduce and vote on legislation that impacts the local business climate, the environment and quality of life for our community. That’s why we work closely with our local elected officials. Afterall, our main purpose is to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy, but our other purpose is to help our community thrive.

Providing industry guidance and expertise

As a practical matter, we recognize that most legislators are “generalists,” yet they vote on a wide range of issues. Their expertise may not include the changing energy industry, which is why Wheat Belt provides guidance and expertise from subject matter experts who’ve been in the energy industry for many years.

Today’s energy landscape is an increasingly complex topic covering not only the traditional engineering and vegeta-



tion management aspects of the industry, but also encompasses technology, cybersecurity, the electrification of the transportation sector and more.

Our experts provide briefings and backgrounders to legislators, committees and staff, and we offer expert testimony for hearings and other legislative or regulatory meetings or gatherings. And because we’re involved in economic development and we know local community leaders, we can provide insight on how issues and policies under discussion might impact our region.

Representing your best interests

We strive to be a trusted resource on energy issues. Because

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Wheat Belt PPD Employee Feature

Shelley Peterson - Customer Engagement Specialist



How did you hear about Wheat Belt?

A friend who was retiring from Wheat Belt gave my name to the office manager and she contacted me to see if I was interested in the job that was open at that time.

Why did you decide to go to work at Wheat Belt? Wheat Belt was a very reputable company to work for and I knew it had good hours, good wages and the benefit package was very good. Wheat Belt is also a family friendly organization and that was important to me also. I also enjoy working with the public and I would be able to do that daily.

What do you like most about working at Wheat Belt? I enjoy the variety of work and conversations. Every day is a little different. I enjoy helping our customers learn and understand their bills, providing energy efficiency tips to help keep their monthly electrical usage down and providing some safety tips for the home and in the field.

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

You must have strong customer service skills and be a good listener. There is always room for growth and learning by attending conferences, taking on-line courses and training that are pertinent to my career.

Do you need to have continuing education for your type of work/career? In a way, yes. Staying up to date with the latest developments can help you sharpen your skills, expand your knowledge, and keep up with industry trends.

Tell us about your family:

I have two children and three grandkids.

What do you like to do in your free time? I love to be outdoors so really anything that I can do to enjoy the sunshine, and fresh air is where I'll be. I do really enjoy walking. It just lets my mind wander, and the sounds and smells reenergize my body. Watching Nebraska volleyball is a favorite of mine too.

In your position you deal with marketing and community involvement. Tell us your thoughts about the importance of community involvement and/or marketing in our industry.

Public visibility helps foster stronger relationships with our customers which leads to having more trust in Wheat Belt. It is also important to be involved with our youth. Helping them understand the industry and what kind of careers are available is important. Also, participating in safety fairs for the youth is extremely important. The kids need to realize how dangerous electricity is. It is fun and rewarding to work with all types of people young and old.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Wheat Belt Public Power District
• One - \$2,000 Lineman Scholarship or
• Two - \$500 Vocational/Technical Scholarships
Basin Electric Power Cooperative
• One - \$1,000 Scholarship
Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assoc.
• Two - \$500 Scholarships
Arbor Wealth Management, Inc.
• One - \$500 Scholarship

wheatbelt.com/youth-info

 for further information and qualifications.



Working With Local Legislators cont'd from 12-B

of our deep roots in the community, we have a firm understanding of local issues and needs. We will continue looking after the long-term interests of our consumers. This means we are able to cultivate and foster positive, productive relationships with legislators who know and trust us, because we're advocating on behalf of the community we serve.

We're proud to power your life and bring good things to the community. We hope you'll continue to advise Wheat Belt on matters of importance so we can continue to advocate on your behalf and improve the quality of life for all.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you're planning to purchase electronic gifts this holiday season, look for the ENERGY STAR® label, which indicates higher energy efficiency performance. Electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating are up to 25% more efficient than standard products. This holiday season, give the gift of energy savings with ENERGY STAR®-rated electronics and equipment.

Source: energystar.gov



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Kelli Chaon

OFFICE HOURS:

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Our Mission

Deliver electricity safely, reliably and
efficiently.