March 2026

THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

Stable, Clean and Consistent

Why We Upgrade Our Infrastructure

By: Levi Berndt, *Line Equipment Technician*

Understanding Capacitors and Regulators

To understand how we maintain a reliable grid, it helps to think of electricity like water flowing through pipes. Capacitors act like shock absorbers for the grid. They store a bit of energy and release it instantly to smooth out spikes or dips in the current. This is vital for Power Quality, as it filters out electrical noise and ensures the current stays clean and stable as it travels to your home or business.

Voltage Regulators act like pressure valves. They take the incoming power, which can fluctuate based on distance or load, and step it down or boost it up to a steady, constant level. This ensures that the electricity reaching your equipment is always at the specific voltage it was designed to handle, preventing damage from low or high voltage.

Improving Efficiency at Wheat Belt Public Power

We are currently working on installing new capacitor controllers to make our system run more efficiently. Beyond just smoothing the flow, these controllers improve Power Quality by correcting Power Factor, which is essentially making sure the energy we send down the lines is being used as effectively as possible.

By upgrading to these modern controllers, we can reduce energy waste and ensure a more resilient, high-quality power supply for all Wheat Belt customers.

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Editor - Kelli Chaon

LUCKY DRAWING

Wheat Belt Public Power District is pleased to announce Linda Peterson (Carlson) as our January Lucky Draw winner. Linda was raised on a farm north of Chappell and later spent several years living in Wyoming and Montana before returning to the area.

After coming back home, Linda worked in customer service with Cabela's and later joined the U.S. Postal Service, serving the communities of Sidney and Oshkosh. She is the proud mother of three children (twin boys and a daughter) and a grandmother to three grandsons.

Now retired for 16 years, Linda lives northeast of Chappell and enjoys the quieter pace of country life. While she may not always catch the sunrise, one of her favorite perks of retirement is sleeping in, she never misses the beautiful sunsets that come with living in the country.

Linda received a $50 credit on her account for her 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.

Wheat Belt PPD Employee Feature

Eric Reimers - Engineering Technician

How did you hear about Wheat Belt?
Friends that worked here had let me know a position was available.

Why did you decide to go to work at Wheat Belt?
I didn't know much about the industry, but once I was interviewed and was offered the job, I knew it would be a good fit for myself and my family.

What do you like most about working at Wheat Belt?
The customers, the employees and the challenges it brings. Also safety meeting lunches!

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

Tell us about your family:
My wife Kelly, she's 47 and a ball of fire that keeps me moving. She has what she calls "job ets" three jobs that keep her very busy as well as taking care of three dogs all day!
Mason, he is 22 and quite frankly acts just like me and can't sit still. He went to school to be a power lineman and works for the City of Sidney and also just recently opened his business "Reimers Irrigation LLC", installing and repairing underground sprinklers.
Natalie, she is 20 and just graduated Cosmetology school and has also just signed herself up for CNA classes. She loves to help others.

What do you like to do in your free time?
I love heat, so anything to do with outside, water, beach, boat, fish or just plain ol' sitting in the backyard. I also am a tinker'er and like to work on automotives if it's anything in the range of a 1967-1972!

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.
Well the electrial system isn't just about infrastructure, it's something people depend on 24/7. Wheat Belt is working daily on designing, building new and upgrading the electrical system to make sure our system can handle both todays demands and future challenges.

HAPPY RETIREMENT

We celebrate Mark Cape as he retires after an incredible 40 years of service to Wheat Belt PPD. Mark began his career with us in 1985 as a groundman, worked his way to journeyman lineman, and in 1998 became our maintenance digger truck operator, a role he held for more than two decades. In 2023, Mark transitioned into the office as a staking technician, bringing his field knowledge and experience full circle.

Mark's dedication, hard work, and commitment to Wheat Belt and our customers have left a lasting impact. We are grateful for everything he has contributed over the last 40 years and wish him nothing but the best in this well-earned retirement. Congratulations, Mark, and thank you for a job well done.

The Power Surge

Factors Driving the Rising Demand for Electricity

Across the U.S., the demand for power is climbing at one of the fastest rates in decades. As the economy becomes more reliant on electricity and data centers continue to sprout up in many parts of the country, electric cooperatives are preparing to meet the challenges that skyrocketing demand brings.

The North American Reliability Corporation—the watchdog for the U.S. electric grid—recently released the 2025-2026 winter reliability assessment, which echoed other recent reports, including longer-term outlooks that expect sufficient energy resources during normal conditions but potential supply shortfalls and outages under more intense weather conditions.

Extreme weather coupled with additional factors that are driving increased demand creates challenges for electric utilities, including cooperatives, in their mission to provide reliable power around the clock.

Several key factors are driving increased demand—including economic growth, expanded manufacturing, data center development and increased electrification in transportation. Together, these trends are reshaping how much electricity we consume and how quickly utilities like Wheat Belt Public Power District must adapt to meet future needs.

One of the biggest drivers of rising demand is increased electrification. More homes and businesses are transitioning to electricity for home heating, water heating and transportation. EVs are becoming more common on the road, and many states are offering incentives to help consumers make the switch. Additionally, electric heat pumps are replacing traditional furnaces in many homes due to their efficiency. These transitions mean more energy use and pressure placed on our electric grid.

Data centers are another major contributor to rising demand. As AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing technologies grow, the need for data processing and storage has skyrocketed. Data centers require huge amounts of power to operate servers and cooling systems 24/7. Tech companies are building new facilities nationwide—many of which are in electric cooperative-served areas—and these regions are experiencing multi-year surges in electricity demand as a result.

Economic and manufacturing growth are also contributing to higher electricity use. As businesses expand and new industries take root, especially in rural and suburban areas, the demand for reliable, high-capacity power is increasing. The resurgence of domestic manufacturing has led to major facility construction. These facilities often require substantial energy loads, and many operate continuously to keep production lines running. This growth brings jobs and investment, but it also puts new pressures on the electric grid.

Continued on 3-D

Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough to power more than 30 million homes) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

1. Increased Electrification: Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
2. Data Centers: Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
3. Economic Growth: Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
4. Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring: New, expanding and "onshored/reshored" manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

The Power Surge cont'd from 3-C

Population growth and housing development are also contributing to rising demand in many regions, and everyday life is becoming more energy dependent, too. Smart appliances, connected devices, home offices and entertainment systems are adding to overall consumption, even as efficiency improves.

While increased demand presents new challenges for electric utilities, it also has the potential to create significant opportunities for public power districts and the communities they serve, such as job growth, steady revenue and improved infrastructure. Electric utilities are responding by planning carefully for the future—investing in grid modernization and offering programs and services to help customers conserve energy.

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of today's economy, and its role will only grow stronger. As electrification accelerates, long-term planning becomes more important than ever. Wheat Belt PPD is ready to meet rising demand in our local communities. Through innovation, investment and collaboration, we are preparing for a more reliable and resilient energy future.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
TIP OF THE MONTH

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home. Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system. It's also a great time to replace dirty air filters, which helps your system run more efficiently and improves indoor air quality. As daylight increases, turn off unnecessary lights and rely on natural sunlight when possible. Small seasonal adjustments like these can reduce energy use, lower monthly bills and help keep your home comfortable as winter transitions into spring.

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P 308.254.5871 | **T** 800.261.7114 | **F** 308.254.2384
wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com

Our Mission

Deliver electricity safely, reliably and efficiently.