



OCTOBER 2020

# THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

## NEBRASKA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION (NREA) JOB TRAINING AND SAFETY



Wheat Belt hosted the annual NREA Workshops at our Don Winkelman Training Field located north of Sidney. Hotline School, also known

as Rubber Gloving, was held September 1-3 and Underground School was held September 9-10. The school is open to linemen from municipal and rural utility providers.

NREA provides a comprehensive Job Training and Safety Education Program to member-system employees. The training enables our employees to work safely and productively. Larry Oetken, of Norfolk, is the JT&S Coordinator.

Thirty-two linemen attended Hotline School which was conducted by experienced linemen from various utility companies. Groups were divided into three levels, Beginner, Intermediate, Experienced, and rotated to different hands-on stations. Time spent at each station varied with the different levels.

Twenty-four linemen attended Underground School which was conducted by manufacturing representatives and vendors of NREA. Groups were assigned and rotated to five different stations. Each session was 1 1/2 hours long.

In order to maintain a healthy environment, a health check was performed at the start of each day for everyone. Face masks were worn while inside the buildings and outside, if a six foot distance could not be maintained (e.g. while working in a bucket truck). All

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Editor - Yolanda Hruska

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## DRAWING WINNER

Congratulations to Tyler and Bobbi Burkholder, our August "Lucky Winners"! The Burkholders have received a \$50 credit on their account.

Tyler, a District Manager for 21st Century Equipment, and Bobbi, a stay-at-home mom, recently finished a complete remodel of their farm home located north of Julesburg. They, along with 12-year-old twin boys, enjoy life on the farm. The family makes time for hunting, sporting events, 4-H events, and all outdoor activities. They also look after their animals which include chickens, turkeys, dogs, and cattle.

If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid the \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 15th of the month.

For your convenience, we offer several payment options. Please give us a call or visit [wheatbelt.com](http://wheatbelt.com), and select the Customer Engagement menu.

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## PREPARING FOR THE BIG HUNT: CONSIDER ELECTRICAL SAFETY, TOO

As you prepare for hunting season, keep in mind that along with general hunting safety, electrical safety should also be at the top of the list.

You might be preoccupied and excited about the big hunt, but be sure to look up and out for power lines. Never place a tree stand near a power line. Contact with the power line, utility pole, or related equipment can alter the path to ground, sending electricity through anyone or anything that comes too close or in direct contact with the power source. (Even coming within 10 feet can cause an arc, transferring energy from the power line/source to an object or person.)

In addition, do not shoot near or toward power lines, utility poles, transformers or substations. Stray bullets or pellets could damage equipment, possibly interrupting electric service. Even more concerning, they could drop a power line to the ground, causing a hazardous scenario: those who get within 50 feet of the downed line could be shocked or electrocuted.

Wheat Belt and Safe Electricity remind hunting enthusiasts of these electrical safety tips:

- Familiarize yourself with the area before heading out to hunt. Take note of power lines and equipment, especially when hunting in densely wooded areas.
- Observe all signs or postings that advise electrical safety, especially when scouting out a location for your tree stand.
- Do not use power poles to support a tree stand.
- Do not locate a tree stand near a power line or pole.
- Be in the habit of looking up and out for power lines and do not come within 10 feet of an overhead line or pole when setting up or taking down a stand.

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*NREA continued from Page 12-A*

equipment was disinfected prior to being used by each person.

Both schools provided different challenging scenarios that could occur, encouraging group input and focusing on methods to avoid risk and how to safely complete the job.



*Photos by Larry Oetken*




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Timothy Lindahl  
General Manager/CEO

Tim's Tidbits

## RURAL BROADBAND UPDATE



The State of Nebraska created a Rural Broadband Taskforce, <https://ruralbroadband.nebraska.gov>, to identify challenges in getting affordable broadband to our rural communities. The taskforce submitted a report to the Unicameral late in 2019. Legislation was introduced, LB992, which addressed some of the roadblocks that were identified in the report. LB992 passed and was signed into law in July of this year.

This new law removes some of the barriers to broadband expansion. The law also strongly encourages the development of partnerships and coordination of infrastructure, so that this service can be brought to all rural communities in the most efficient and economical way. It also encourages electric utilities to play a role, where it makes sense, through a change in how public utilities can lease excess fiber capacity back to a telecommunications provider.

We stay involved in determining how we may facilitate expansion of solid and affordable broadband service. As we continue to evaluate our communication needs and address our aging infrastructure, we will work with others to make sure that if we can help, we will, as long as it does not negatively impact our electric rates, our reliability, or our safety.

## POLE TOP AND BUCKET RESCUE



On August 14, 2020, Wheat Belt PPD linemen participated in our monthly Safety Meeting focusing on Pole Top and Bucket Rescue.

Our fully geared lineman are required to climb a pole and rescue an injured "lineman". Our training uses a 160 lb. mannequin, plus approximately 20 lbs. of additional gear. They must secure the mannequin and safely lower it from the pole top to the ground. Our distribution poles range from 30 to 55 feet and rescue must be done within four minutes.



Linemen also trained rescuing an injured lineman from a bucket truck.

The training was conducted by NREA Job Training & Safety Instructor Joel Duffield.





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**PREPARING FOR THE BIG HUNT** continued from Page 12-B

- Never climb a utility pole.

Please report any damage to a line or other related equipment to us so that we can address it. Although we perform routine maintenance, damage may not be noticed for weeks or months unless an outage occurs due to the vast number of lines that cover our service area.

Of course, always take the time to observe general hunting safety measures as well. Stay safe out there!

For more information about safety around power lines and other sources of electricity, go to [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

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