



inside *your* co-op

Published for members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative

■ TOP STORY

Renewables Diversify Generation

CEC power supplier heats up generation mix with solar

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) announced it will expand its solar power resources by purchasing 220 megawatts (MW) of solar power from the Tip Top Solar Energy Center in southeast New Mexico.

“This project will help diversify WFEC’s generation portfolio,” said Phil Schaeffer, WFEC’s principal resource engineer.

Schaeffer explained that adding solar generation provides a stable source of power on summer days when demand for electricity is high and costs for natural gas and coal-fired generation can increase.

“When you have a higher demand during the day, this resource will hopefully be generating its full output,” he said.

“This project will help diversify WFEC’s generation portfolio.”



When the Tip Top solar facility goes live in 2022, it will boost WFEC solar assets from 50 MW today to 270 MW, enough power for more than 42,930 homes when the conditions are right. Renewables provide clean, economical electricity, but must be supplemented with traditional power when the wind isn’t blowing and the sun doesn’t shine. Each generation resource, including coal, gas, and renewables, offer unique advantages that supplement one another to ensure a stable flow of electricity.

WFEC currently contracts for 30 MW of solar-generated power capacity from solar farms in New Mexico. The remainder of capacity comes from smaller scale arrays in Oklahoma.

WFEC became a renewable energy leader in 2003 when it agreed to purchase 74 MW of wind power from the state’s first utility scale wind farm, Blue Canyon. Today, WFEC’s wind resources total 705 MW. In November 2018, wind generation made up more than forty percent of its power mix.

Schaeffer said the price for wind and solar continues to decline, making it competitive in price—and sometimes less expensive—than natural gas or coal. That’s good news for co-op members who like the idea of clean energy, but don’t necessarily want to pay more for it. ☺

MONTHLY GENERATION REPORT

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) is CEC’s wholesale power provider. The figures below represent WFEC’s generation mix in October, 2018, with 43 percent from coming from renewables.



32%
wind



41%
natural gas



16%
coal



9%
hydro



2%
solar

SOURCE: WFEC GENERATION DATA

MANAGER'S REPORT

Guarding The Grid

Southwest Power Pool protects us from price swings

Five years ago, something happened in the electricity business that hardly anyone knew about, much less understood. It turned out to be a good thing for millions of Oklahoma consumers, as well as other ratepayers across fourteen states.

It involves an organization known as the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). The SPP came about in 1941 when power companies in the southwest U.S. pooled their generation resources so a giant Arkansas aluminum plant could supply materials for the war. Today, the SPP is one of ten regional transmission organizations regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Basically, these organizations act as "guardians of the grid," monitoring, controlling, and coordinating the flow of electricity throughout the U.S. It's a huge job. Their oversight and approval of transmission lines, power plants, and generation resources, helps reduce chaos, overloaded lines, blackouts, and ensures more consistent power prices so the U.S. economy can move forward.

In 2014, the SPP's job got even bigger. The government realized the SPP could oversee the buying and selling of electricity in a way that would increase reliability and save a lot of money for everyone, including consumers.

Before the SPP took on the power marketing job, generation and transmission companies such as Western Farmers Electric Co-op (WFEC) generated and delivered its power right here at home. This system didn't allow WFEC and other power plants much flexibility. They

had to fire up their generation units no matter what, even if the price for natural gas or coal was sky high.

Now, thanks to SPP, the electricity generated by power plants goes into the SPP's massive "pool."

I like to picture a big tank full of electricity. Each power plant has a hose with a faucet that pumps power into the tank every day, and another hose that pulls power out. The SPP controls all the faucets on the tank and decides what type of generated power flows into the tank based on reliability and lowest cost. Each type of generation offers its own advantages: Gas plants can stop and start fast, but prices get wild; wind and solar are consistent in price, but unavailable 24/7; coal-fired plants can run forever, but take a long time to start and also suffer big price swings.

At the helm of it all is the SPP. They watch the prices around the clock and adjust the faucets to prevent gluts and other problems. Over the past five years, this market system has saved consumers across 14 states some \$1.25 billion dollars. That's not peanuts. While the change required utilities to make adjustments, it's improving the efficiency and reliability of the grid. That's good for the country and everyone in it. 🇺🇸



BY KOONEY DUNCAN
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OFFICIAL MINUTES OF YOUR CEC BOARD MEETING

Scan this code with your smartphone or tablet to read the monthly minutes of your co-op board meeting. Minutes are also available at any CEC location and online at www.choctawelectric.coop.

To scan the code, install a Bar Code Scanner app, available at the App Store.



■ CO-OP YOUTH

A Camp About Cooperatives

YouthPower Energy Camp offers fun for eighth graders



Jordan Jones, Isaac McNutt, and Ember Gregg attended Energy Camp last year, courtesy of CEC.

Energy Camp teaches students about cooperatives by helping them form their own soda pop and candy co-op. By electing trustees, holding an annual meeting, and returning cooperative profits to their members, campers begin to understand the democratic principles that make cooperatives unique in the business world. Of course, there is plenty of time for other fun activities such as volleyball, swimming, and other games.

Choctaw Electric pays all expenses associated with attending camp and provides round trip transportation.

To be considered, students are asked to submit a brief 150 to 200-word essay on the type of electric car they would like to own and why. The essay deadline is Friday, March 1.

To learn more about Energy Camp, please visit www.choctawelectric.coop, or call 800-780-6486.

 **REMINDER:** Youth Tour essays due February 15th!

Three students, 150 words, and an opinion about electric cars. Those are the important details that could win your eighth grader a free trip to summer camp, all expenses paid.

Choctaw Electric will select three students to attend YouthPower Energy Camp this year. The camp is scheduled for May 28-31 at Canyon Camp near Hinton, Okla.



THE HOME

Energy DETECTIVE

By Brad Kendrick, CEC Energy Use Specialist

Even with a new home and new heat pump, problems happen. This month, we discovered a thermostat that was wired wrong. This caused the HVAC unit to pull more power on the normal heat setting than it would if it were set on Emergency Heat!

It's not uncommon to find crossed wires that cause the heat strips to run, even when they shouldn't. Having your unit serviced once a year can help detect signs of potential malfunction—and prevent unpleasant surprises when you open your bill!

Do you have questions for CEC's energy sleuth? Please call Brad Kendrick, CEC energy use specialist, at 800-780-6486 or email questions to: bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop.

Get Your Credit. When a co-op member dies, their share CEC profits goes to their estate. Often these capital credits go unclaimed because family members aren't aware of them. To claim estate credits, a family member or estate executor must fill out an estate capital credit application. These forms are available at www.choctawelectric.coop. It's an easy process to apply and requires very little time.



WARNING:

Thieves Are Posing As Co-op Employees

Don't let them inside your home!

Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) is warning members about would-be thieves who disguise themselves as utility employees in order to gain entrance into the home. The men approach homeowners and claim there is a serious electrical problem that requires them to enter the home. Don't let them in! Once inside the home, they steal wallets, jewelry, and other items of value.

Please remember, CEC's service stops at the electric meter. Our repairmen have no reason to enter your home. Any problems beyond the meter should be handled by a licensed electrician.

It's also worth knowing your CEC employees wear clothing with the cooperative logo visible so they can be easily identified. Cooperative vehicles are also clearly marked with the CEC logo on the doors.

If you are approached by someone claiming to be from any utility company who asks to enter your home, please contact your law enforcement immediately, and then call us at 800-780-6486. Notifying CEC allows us to warn other members through social media site and our newsletter. Thank you, and stay safe!

■ SUPER SERVICES

Bye Bye, High Bills!



CEC's budget billing plan helps level out seasonal extremes

Hot summers and cold winters can cause your energy usage to rise. With Choctaw Electric's budget billing plan you can balance those seasonal high bills and avoid unpleasant surprises.

Budget billing works by averaging your usage over a period of eleven months. The result is a more consistent monthly bill that makes it easier to anticipate your monthly energy spending.

For added convenience, be sure to ask about CEC's automatic payment plan. With this option, your monthly payment is automatically withdrawn from your checking, savings or credit card account, saving you time and trouble.

For details about these and other payment options, please call **800-780-6486** or visit **www.choctawelectric.coop**.

RECIPES



Sirloin Tips With Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ½ pounds beef sirloin
- 1 (16 oz) can mushrooms, with liquid
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauces
- freshly ground pepper, to taste
- ¾ cup red wine

DIRECTIONS

Cut beef into cubes. In a large skillet over medium/high heat, heat the olive oil and brown beef cubes with the garlic.

Add mushrooms with liquid, tomato sauce, salt, pepper and red wine. Cook for 30 minutes or until beef cubes are tender. Add a little more wine while cooking if desired.

Source: allrecipes.com

GENERATOR *Safety*

CEC Choctaw Electric
Cooperative

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO ENSURE EVERYONE'S SAFETY:

- Make sure there is **nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on**. Use a **heavy-duty** extension cord to connect appliances to the outlets on the generator.
- Always operate the generator on a stable, dry surface **outside the home**—and well away from garage, doors, windows, and vents leading into your home. Generators produce **deadly** carbon monoxide.
- **Never** connect your portable generator to the home directly. This **can result in potentially deadly backfeed**, which happens when electricity is fed back through the electrical system onto power lines, creating a serious hazard for line workers and others.



Learn more at

