



SEDGWICK COUNTY  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

currentnews

**SEDGWICK COUNTY  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

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**FROM THE MANAGER**

**Avoid Fines, Injuries and Power Outages**



**Scott Ayres**

breaking ground. Having utilities marked is free and easy to do; simply call 811 three business days before starting your project. While state laws vary, Kansas utility companies generally have three business days to respond to your request.

Why is it necessary to get buried utilities marked? Underground lines are unyielding, and their path is unpredictable. Digging in an unmarked yard can mean striking an underground utility line, which can cause serious injury. Damaging a utility line can also cause unwanted service disruptions, including a power outage, as well as a hefty fine.

"While it can be tempting to skip the important step of calling before you dig, it can be a costly and dangerous omission," says Erin Hollinshead, executive director of Safe Electricity. "Underground utility lines could be anywhere. They also shift over time and can be found just a few inches from the surface."

Every project, big or small, requires advance notification to 811. To start the underground utility marking process, call

National Safe Digging Day, or 811 Day, is upon us. Easy to remember due to its 8/11 date, the day serves as a good reminder to have underground utilities marked before

811 or visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com). Examples of projects that require utility location include installing a fence, a mailbox post, a deck or patio and planting trees and shrubs, among others. Any project that breaks ground requires that underground utilities be marked.

If a contractor is involved, check with that person to determine who will make the request. Locators do not mark private lines such as service to outbuildings, underground sprinkler systems or a gas lines to grills, for example. Private lines are the homeowner's responsibility.

**BEFORE DIGGING IN, TAKE THESE  
FIVE STEPS TO SAFER DIGGING:**

- ▶ **PRE-MARK THE PROPOSED DIG AREA** with white paint or white flags.
- ▶ **CALL 811 OR SUBMIT YOUR LOCATE REQUEST ONLINE** before you dig. There is no charge for the service.
- ▶ **WAIT THE REQUIRED AMOUNT OF TIME** (typically three business days in Kansas).
- ▶ **RESPECT THE MARKS** and do not move any flags.
- ▶ **DIG WITH CARE.** Avoid digging on top of or within 18-24 inches on all sides of utility marks, which may mean moving your digging project to another part of your yard.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org). For more information about 811, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

# Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative Sponsors Van Voorhis on a Trip to the Nation’s Capital

**EMERIE VAN VOORHIS**, a sophomore from Sedgwick High School, recently represented Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative at the 2025 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., held from June 14-20. During their time in Washington, D.C., students deepened their understanding of America’s electric cooperatives and developed their leadership skills while connecting with peers from across the cooperative network.

Twenty-seven outstanding student representatives from Kansas were selected by their electric co-ops through an application process. They joined nearly 2,000 students across the country, including four from Hawaii who travel with the Kansas delegation each year.

The Youth Tour kicked off in Topeka with a welcome dinner and icebreaker activities, followed by an exclusive night tour of the Kansas State Capitol led by State Treasurer Steven Johnson and Kansas Representative Kyle Hoffman, alumni of the Youth Tour program.

In Washington, D.C., students explored iconic landmarks including the U.S. Capitol, Arlington National Cemetery, and The People’s House — A White House Experience, along with numerous monuments and memorials.



Visits to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Smithsonian museums offered powerful insights into history and culture.

On June 19, during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s (NRECA) National Youth Day, students were inspired by a dynamic lineup of speakers, including NRECA CEO Jim Matheson, Olympic medalist Mike Schlappi, and the 2025 National Youth Leadership Council spokesperson Maggie Martin.

In addition to the Youth Day program, the Kansas and Hawaii delegations joined peers from Colorado and Wyoming for an engaging leadership workshop led by nationally recognized youth leadership expert Craig Hillier.

Students also met with U.S. Senator Roger Marshall to ask questions on a range of topics that mattered to them, gaining firsthand insight into the legislative process and the role of elected officials.

Beyond the educational experiences, students enjoyed unique opportunities to bond with peers from across the country — trading state pins with other state delegations and taking in the sights during a scenic dinner cruise on the Potomac River.



Emerie Van Voorhis recently represented Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative at the 2025 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

During the conference, Dominic Hernandez, sponsored by Midwest Energy, was elected by his peers as the 2026 Kansas representative to the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. Alongside 43 other student leaders from across the country, Hernandez will assist at PowerXchange, NRECA’s Annual Meeting, to be held in Nashville, Tennessee, in March 2026.

Students who participated in the 2025 Youth Tour are also eligible to apply for the NRECA Glenn English Scholarship. For more information about the Youth Tour, please contact Jo Luehrs at 316-542-3131 or by email at [jluehrs@sedgwickcountyelectric.coop](mailto:jluehrs@sedgwickcountyelectric.coop).

**FAR LEFT:** Students explored iconic landmarks like the U.S. Capitol, Arlington Cemetery, and the White House, while also visiting the Holocaust Memorial Museum and Smithsonian museums for a deeper understanding of history and culture.

**LEFT:** Emerie Van Voorhis (left) with a fellow delegate in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

# Co-op Linemen Restore Outages



Thunderstorms with strong straight-line winds caused more than 2,000 outages on June 16.

As thunderstorms with strong straight-line winds approached our area, it didn’t take long for the power outage calls to begin on June 16. Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative had approximately 2,000 members without power. Crews worked throughout Tuesday to restore power before a second storm on Tuesday night, which brought significant rain, extremely high winds, as well as tornado and flood warnings.

The storms on Tuesday resulted in more broken poles, trees and wire down through our service area. Sedgwick crews worked to restore power to the Clearwater, Colwich, Goddard, Maize and Wichita areas. As of 7 a.m. on June 18, we had 780 Members without power.

In addition to Sedgwick County crews, mutual-aid assistance from Ninnescan Electric Co-op and 4 Rivers Electric Co-op brought in more crews to help with restoration.

Power was restored to our members by Wednesday evening. We would like to thank our members for their patience as our crews worked long days to restore power.

# Co-op Sponsors Pedal Tractor Pull



Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative hosted our 34th Annual Pedal Tractor Pull at the Sedgwick County Fair on July 12. Children ages four to 12 participated with the top three finishers advancing to the tractor pull event at the State Fair in Hutchinson on Sept. 7, 2025. Look for the winners in the September issue of *Kansas Country Living*.

## DORM ROOM

### ELECTRICAL SAFETY: Tips for a Safe Semester

Be smart and stay safe. Share these tips with your campus-bound students.

**DON'T OVERLOAD OUTLETS**  
Too much power draw = fire risk.

**TIP: PLUG DORM ROOM FRIDGE DIRECTLY INTO WALL OUTLET.**

**DECORATE SAFELY**  
Don't use nails or tacks to secure cords or light strands.

**TIP: USE PLASTIC HOOKS TO HANG STRING LIGHTS.**

**NEVER USE DAMAGED CORDS**  
Frayed or cracked cords can spark a fire.

**TIP: IF A CORD LOOKS WORN, REPLACE IT — DON'T TAPE IT!**

**REPORT ELECTRICAL ISSUES FAST**  
Flickering lights? Warm outlets?

**TIP: TELL CAMPUS MAINTENANCE ASAP; DON'T WAIT.**

**UNPLUG WHEN NOT IN USE**  
Even when off, devices can still draw power or overheat.

**TIP: UNPLUG FANS, CHARGERS AND APPLIANCES WHEN YOU'RE OUT.**

**NEVER CHARGE A PHONE UNDER PILLOWS OR BEDDING**  
It could overheat or catch fire.

**TIP: CREATE A DEDICATED CHARGING STATION IN YOUR ROOM.**

**KEEP CORDS COOL & CLEAR**  
Don't run cords under rugs, beds or doorways.

**TIP: KEEP CORDS VISIBLE TO AVOID OVERHEATING.**





## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS

School buses are among the safest vehicles on the road — but the greatest risk comes when children are getting on or off the bus. Whether you're a driver, parent or student, knowing these safety tips will help keep everyone safe.

### FOR DRIVERS

- ▶ **SLOW DOWN:** Reduce speed in school zones and near bus stops.
- ▶ **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE:** Stay back at least 10 feet from a school bus — this is the most dangerous area for children.
- ▶ **STAY ALERT:** Watch for kids who may unexpectedly enter the road, especially near bus stops.
- ▶ **RESPECT THE ZONE:** When flashers are blinking in a school zone, stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and take extra care to look for children near playgrounds, parks and residential areas.

### KNOW THE SIGNALS:

- ▶ **YELLOW FLASHING LIGHTS:** Bus is preparing to stop. Slow down.
- ▶ **RED FLASHING LIGHTS AND STOP ARM:** Bus is loading/unloading — stop and wait until the bus moves again.
- ▶ **NEVER PASS A STOPPED BUS ON AN UNDIVIDED ROAD:** It's illegal in most states.

### FOR PARENTS

Teach your child to arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes early, and how to play it **SAFE:**

- ▶ Stay back at least 10 feet, or five giant steps, from the curb.
- ▶ Always wait for the bus to stop and the driver to signal before boarding.
- ▶ Face forward and buckle up if seat belts are available.
- ▶ Exit carefully, look both ways and cross in front of the bus — never behind. Make eye contact with the driver before crossing.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

## 3 Smart Home Technologies to Help You Save Energy

Smart technologies make our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient. By connecting your home Wi-Fi network, smart devices automate everyday tasks, like lighting, heating, cooling and home security, and they can even communicate with other smart devices within the home.

While not all smart home products are specifically designed with energy savings in mind, there are several smart technologies that can help you lower your home energy use. Here are the top three smart home devices to help you save.

### 1 SMART THERMOSTATS

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats enable you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats feature learning capabilities, which allow them to adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce annual heating and cooling bills by more than 8%. With models as low as \$65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

### 2 SMART LIGHTING

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smartphone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes, brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart light-



ing, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range from \$70 to \$300-plus, depending on how many bulbs you need.

### 3 SMART PLUGS

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when turned off (known as "phantom load"), which can impact your energy bills. An estimated 5% to 15% of household energy use is attributed to phantom loads. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use and a set of four can be purchased for as little as \$25.

If you're looking for new ways to save energy, consider these budget-friendly and convenient smart home technologies.