

CURRENT FLASHES

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From the Desk of the Manager

Growth Plus Strategy Adds Up to Building Addition and Remodel

In 2020, Cedar-Knox Public Power hosted a strategic planning session amongst directors and staff that identified a need for additional space for equipment and staffing. One of the strategic goals produced was to analyze options and develop a long-term comprehensive facilities plan to appropriately facilitate optimal customer service, positive working environment/space, improved internal communications, increased security, and equipment storage for the future. From this we began to build a thorough plan to accomplish these needs to meet our goals now and into the future. This consisted of evaluating multiple options from very simple plans to highly extensive plans. We have seen a lot of growth in the 20 years since our current office was built in 2002 and we wanted to be very conscious of cost while continuing to provide the same reliable low-cost power we have been known for.

Earlier in the year the board approved keeping rates steady and again returning a PCA to our customers for this year. Historically, we have had some of the lowest rates across the state and we work very hard to maintain those low rates. Although rates someday are likely to increase, we have been able to hold rates steady with no rate increases the last 7 years and only a 1.5% increase in the last 10 years. We have also been able to pass on a return of a Production Credit Adjustment from NPPD the last 4 years in a row. Our wholesale power cost is about 67% of our total cost and looks promising to stay flat the next 2-3 years. Our directors and staff are very proud of the low rates we offer and will continue to strive for that in the years to come.

As you may remember, back in 2000 through the realignment with NPPD we took over 7 of the area towns (Wynot, Fordyce, Crofton, Wausa, Magnet, Belden, and Coleridge), which was part of the need for building the current office then. Since that time, we have continued to see growth with an additional 1100+ meters,

over 160 more miles of line, and 3 additional employees. Fleet and equipment continue to increase in size, creating issues fitting in the current facilities. This is equipment that improves the efficiency and safety of our line crews. We have added 3 large trucks and another pickup since that time, along with a multitude of other equipment like two skid loaders, mini-backhoe, vacuum excavator machine, and UTV's to name a few. Material lead times and issues receiving products when needed has caused our inventory to more than double compared to pre-covid levels. This equipment and material are mainly things that needs to be housed indoors, especially in winter when we need it readily available so we can uphold reliability in power service. We are continuously looking at ways to use the current space more efficiently and with an additional overhead door on the storage building, will help gain access to more usable space.

As we further assessed the outlook of this project, we wanted to continue to address the goals we needed to achieve. As technology has shifted some of the manual labor in the field to more office duties that use and maintain this automation for efficiencies gained, it created several office positions. These positions sustain these new technologies in operations. The office goal has a need for a couple additional offices currently and will include some extra office space for future positions, if needed. With the evolution of new technology in things like net-metering, EV's, charging stations, solar, wind, batteries, and power quality, we see expansions in these areas as they evolve. We are also looking to add some additional meeting space that we have lost to office conversions over the years. The additional staff has also created some break room and all employee meeting room challenges in regards to space.

Due to the many needs and goals recognized, we developed a final plan to add a taller additional 80' x 80' garage space to the existing office facility, coupled with a partial remodel and upgrade of additional office spaces within the current facility and the addition

of an overhead door to the storage building. We have delayed this project while waiting for prices to come down from the Covid inflation spike increases and have heard current predictions of up to 4% in trends on material and labor expected in the future. These factors all aided in the board's approval decision to move forward with the projected \$2.8M addition and remodel to the facility at a special board meeting on April 18th. On that day, we had the presentation of bids collected by Radek Construction and plans from Schemmer Engineering that were accepted and approved. We are hopeful to begin dirt work and construction in the May/June time frame and the project is expected to be completed in about 15 months or about July/Aug of 2024. The Directors and I have not taken this decision lightly and need our facility to provide an environment that fosters accomplishments of our strategic and operational goals. We are prideful in the facilities and equipment we have here and want to retain the great employees we have, in a climate of labor shortage workforce challenging the nation.

This addition and remodel will not only attain our current needs and goals but also prepares us for the future. We plan to continue to strive to provide the same safe, affordable, and reliable service we always have and this project will enhance all three of those pillars well into the future.



Mike Lammers



SAFETY FIRST!

DANGER

May is National Electrical Safety Month

Farming is among one of the more dangerous occupations. Every year an average of 62 men and women working on farms are electrocuted when farm machines touch overhead power lines. We urge farm managers to share these safety tips with their farm workers to keep everyone safe.



SAFETY FIRST

Discuss hazards with anyone working on your farm, including family members and seasonal workers. Know and review where the power lines are, the clearance required and the proper position of extensions as they are transported.

WAIT TO UNFOLD

Remind workers to fold or unfold extensions well into the field, not close to the field's edge where power lines are typically located.

USE A SPOTTER

When working in the vicinity of power lines, always have a spotter on the ground, who can direct you away from power lines or poles if you are getting too close.

DO NOT EXIT YOUR CAB

If your machine or truck makes contact with a power line, pole, or guy wire, you could become electricity's path to ground and become electrocuted if you step out of the cab.

CALL 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 to have your electric utility dispatched to de-energize the power source. Only exit the cab if your equipment is on fire. If that happens, make a solid jump out and hop away with feet together as far as you can.

Congratulations

Reggie 30 Years

Reggie Hochstein has achieved the 30-year milestone as a Cedar-Knox PPD employee. He began as an Apprentice Lineman, became a Journeyman Lineman, then moved to Director of Maintenance, and is currently our Electrical Systems Engineer. In this role, he evaluates, conducts maintenance, and oversees all substation equipment. He also is responsible for maintaining our stock of transformers, regulators, and sectionizing equipment. Reggie is instrumental in creating our work plans and prioritizing our construction projects.



Reggie and his wife, Mandy, have one daughter, Hazel. Reggie is an avid hunter around the area and in other states. We would like to congratulate Reggie on his dedication and expertise!

Jared 5 Years

Jared Wiebelhaus is celebrating his five-year service anniversary! Jared completed the Northeast Community College Utility Line Program. He then began working at Cedar-Knox Public Power as an Apprentice Lineman. Jared then completed the requirements of the Lineworker Certification Program, becoming a Journeyman Lineman. Congratulations, Jared!



Office Closing Notice/Summer Hours

The Cedar-Knox Public Power office will be closed on Monday, May 29th in observance of Memorial Day.

CKPPD will begin summer hours on May 30th. Our crew will work 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Office will be staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Pole Inspections to Begin Soon

Soon poles will be inspected in Cedar County, which will involve over 3,000 poles. The map (right) shows the approximate area that will be included in this year's inspection. Cedar-Knox PPD contracts with a company to perform evaluations of our poles each year. When we can proactively identify poles that pose a potential issue, we can replace them before they fail and possibly cause an outage.

Global Utility Services will be doing the inspections this year. Please keep in mind this is a contracted company, so they will be driving their own equipment, utilizing white trucks and/or four-wheelers. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this, please give our office a call at (402) 254-6291.

