



## Crews complete Pocahontas to Whittemore line rebuild

Each year Corn Belt Power crews work across the system on improvements and upgrades to enhance reliability and provide for future load growth.

In December the cooperative's transmission crews finished a 24-mile reconductoring project between Pocahontas and Whittemore.

The original line construction was completed in 1950. Corn Belt Power's transmission superintendent Jeremy Stattelmann says it's time for an upgrade.

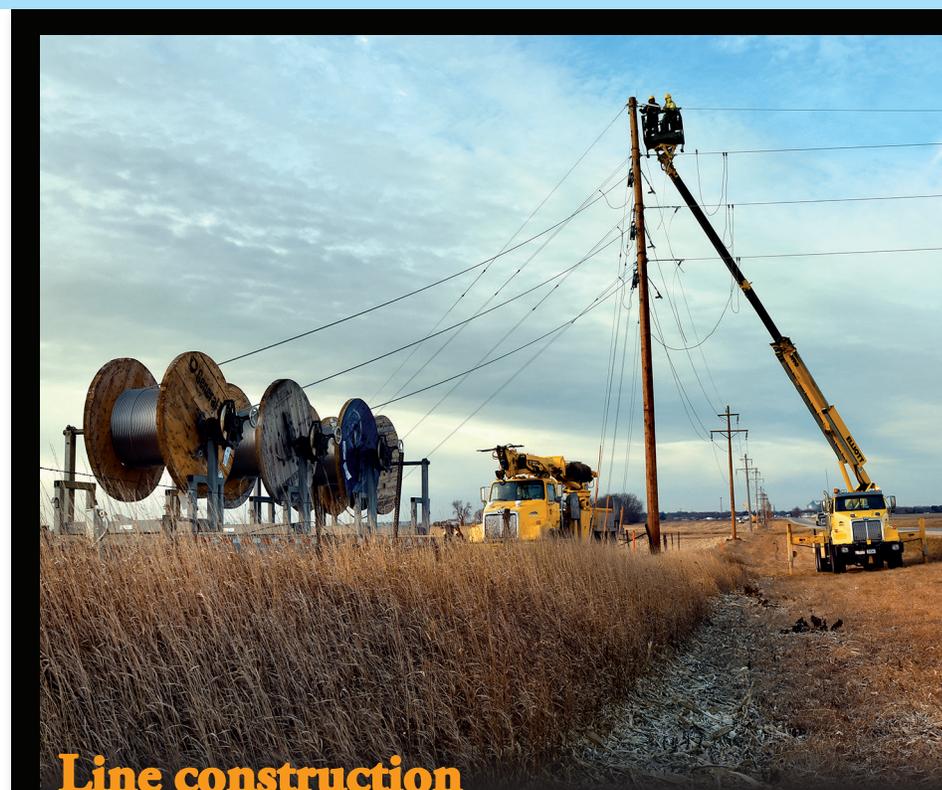
"Given the age of the poles, wire and insulators, this project will increase our reliability to our members," he said. "Replacement of approximately 60-70 percent of the existing poles, insulators, and crossarms is considered a major system upgrade."

In addition to new poles, more robust wire will be strung. The new 336 aluminum conductor steel-reinforced cable (ACSR) will provide more system reliability.

"In general, it comes down to age and condition of the line, load and past outages that would affect our reliability to our members," Stattelmann said. "The ampacity — capacity to carry electricity — of the new line is more than 50 percent greater of that of the old line. It will be able to sustain more electrical load."

Stattelmann says projects like these will serve member load for years to come.

"Keep in mind that when our crews are working on the reconductoring process, we do encounter many problems when removing the old wire. Sometimes there's damage to strands and other small issues," he said. "That said, that wire and infrastructure has served members since



### Line construction

**Above** | In December, Corn Belt Power crews completed a 24-mile reductor project between Pocahontas and Whittemore. The project, which serves Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, is an upgrade to the previous infrastructure.

the 1950s. Projects like these will serve members for decades into the future."

How does Corn Belt Power decide on a project? Stattelmann leaves that to the engineers.

"Our engineering department factors in loads and a lot of other data to make these determinations so we can have a plan on what needs to be done," he said. "Given the process on this construction project for our own transmission crews will take approximately 6-7 months, weather pending, to rebuild and reductor this 24

mile project."

Corn Belt Power crews have taken the lead on this project.

"Many other generation and transmission companies would hire contractors to take on projects such as this and outsource the design and staking as well," Stattelmann said. "I am proud that we have the crews, engineering staff, and equipment to do these jobs ourselves. Our crews take pride in knowing they're constructing something that will serve generations of cooperative members." ■



**Above** | John Naber, electrical and control, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, displays the new interface on one of the new HMI computers at Wisdom Station. The computers help to access and troubleshoot the Wisdom Unit 2 control system.

## Wisdom Station technology gets upgrade

With Corn Belt Power's Wisdom Station running more, the need for system upgrades is ever-present.

Crews replaced three human-machine interface computers (HMIs), one data historian computer and other associated network switches in December. Wisdom Station operators use the HMI computers to

monitor and control Wisdom Unit 2.

"Wisdom Station technicians use the HMI computers to access and troubleshoot. Operators use the computers to monitor and control the unit," said Jacob Olberding, vice president, power supply, Corn Belt Power. "The data historian computer compiles and stores operational data for Wisdom Unit 2. This data is used to trend operational data

points, allowing Wisdom Station personnel to keep an eye out for any emerging issues and to troubleshoot existing issues."

Olberding says it's important to make sure the technology on site at Wisdom Station is maintained and upgraded. Without it, Wisdom Station control operator's jobs are more difficult.

"These computers have been operating 24/7 since Wisdom Unit 2 was commissioned in 2004," he said. "That is well beyond their anticipated useful life. The software and hardware associated with the computers is no longer supported and replacement parts are no longer available."

In the end, it comes down to reliability. Wisdom Station needs to be ready when called upon, and making that happen is no small task. Regular maintenance and infrastructure improvements are a must.

"The new computers and network switches will help sustain the availability and reliability of the unit," Olberding said. "By completing this project in a planned, budgeted manner we are reducing the risk associated with a more costly, unplanned outage if the computers were to fail unexpectedly." ■

## SCADA upgrade critical to system performance

Corn Belt Power's supervisory control and data acquisition system (SCADA) received an upgrade in December.

The SCADA system is responsible for all operations network communication across all servers on Corn Belt Power's network. It's used to not only monitor and control system infrastructure, but also gather and analyze real-time data across the transmission system.

Eric Hankey, SCADA technician, Corn Belt Power says the platform upgrade was critical to system performance.

"Our most recent upgrade took place due to what we call an end-of-life vulnerability," said Hankey.

To ensure a seamless transition Corn Belt Power sets up test environments.

"In a test environment, we set the system up according to our provider's specifications," said Hankey. "We then execute what we call a 'cut over.' During that time, we may lose data connection

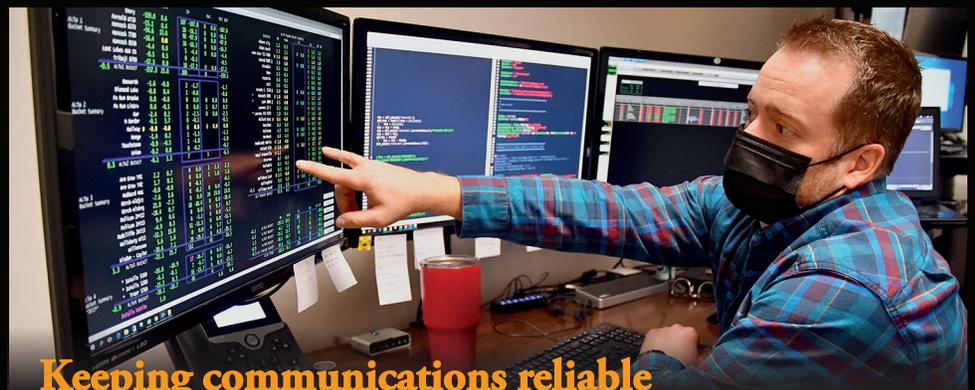
for a short period of time. Once the servers are rebooted, everything runs in the upgraded environment."

Hankey says recent upgrades to the SCADA system have made it more reliable.

"We have increased the number of

servers," he said. "This provides for more redundancies. In theory, we won't have to shut anything down or lose a data connection when upgrading in the future."

The upgrade took place over three weeks in December. ■



### Keeping communications reliable

**Above** | Eric Hankey, SCADA technician, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, compares database numbers for energy accounting in the upgraded Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. Corn Belt Power completed the upgrade in December. Hankey managed the upgrade brought on by an end-of-life software vulnerability.

## Past and present LEAD groups meet in December

Any leader knows that leadership training and sharpening skills is an ongoing endeavor.

Corn Belt Power employees who took part in 2019's LEAD program met in an alumni session on Tuesday, December 15.

LEAD is a program to help develop leadership skills in existing employees. It stands for Leadership Exploration and Development. The program was created in conjunction with Kathy Peterson of PeopleWorks, Inc.

Alumni reported on takeaways from the leadership book, "The Culture," and heard from guest speaker Lyndsey Fennelly, wife of Iowa State assistant women's basketball coach Billy Fennelly. Fennelly, a mental health advocate, shared her story about healing and health.

Kathy Peterson shared the following four tips with alumni in her Leading Through Uncertainty session:

- **Develop a clear plan forward**
- **Provide employees tools to do their work**
- **Keep team members informed**
- **Show genuine care for employee well-being**

The alumni group also reported on accomplishments since graduating Corn Belt Power's first-ever LEAD class and shared future leadership goals.

Also in December, Corn Belt Power's newest LEAD group met for their fifth session. This year's participants are: **Connor Almond, Courtney Christensen, Eric Hankey, Jim Mertz, John Naber, Jon Myer and Rod Stephas.**

The December session focused on generational training.

"We learned about the differences in the workplace between generations, how to relate and how to recognize those differences," said Courtney Christensen, administrative assistant, Corn Belt Power. "We went over the "I" portion of Corn Belt Power's iACT values (Integrity, Accountability, Cooperation and Teamwork)."

Christensen says LEAD has been helpful to not only her development but in her day-to-day job at Corn Belt Power.

"I love LEAD," said Courtney Christensen. "I think it's very important. I am a big supporter of doing things to improve yourself and help improve others. I think LEAD plays a big role in that." ■



### Trust

**Above |** Courtney Christensen, administrative assistant, navigates through a mousetrap maze with her eyes closed and shoes off as part of a LEAD training exercise Dec. 14 that dealt with trust, communication and listening.



### LEAD Alums reunite

**Above |** Decked in festive wear, 2019 LEAD alum gather to learn about Leading Through Uncertainty.



### New co-op leadership

## Geerdes named Grundy County REC manager

Mike Geerdes has accepted the position of general manager following the retirement of Vicki Daily on January 8, 2021.

Mike has worked for Grundy County REC since 2011 in a member services role and brings years of member relations, utility, and cooperative experience to the position of general manager. He resides in Grundy Center with his wife, Amanda, and their two children. Geerdes coaches youth athletics, farms and is an active member in his church.

"Mike has been an important part of the Grundy Co-op for nearly 10 years. With his cooperative knowledge, strong work ethic and commitment to our member-consumers, this board is confident he will lead Grundy County REC far into the future. The hard-work, dedication and loyalty Mike has demonstrated has been greatly appreciated," says Board President Larry Rohach.

Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, says he's excited to work with Geerdes.

"Mike has been an asset to Grundy County REC for many years," Kuyper said. "We're excited to welcome him to the managers group and look forward to working with him. We will certainly miss Vicki and her contributions."

For his part, Geerdes says he's looking to improve and grow Grundy County REC.

"I am very excited for the opportunity of becoming Grundy County REC's next general manager," said Mike Geerdes. "This Cooperative is a great organization to work for and has a talented group of employees onboard. I look forward to continuing to enhance and grow Grundy County REC into the future." ■



# 2020 Service Awards



**December Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Steve Loken**, operations services coordinator, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, donated his \$100 prize drawing to First Lutheran Church of Milford.



**Norb Boyle**

## The power of human connections

**N**orb Boyle, right, director, Grundy County REC, demonstrates the Touchstone Energy value of commitment to community by volunteering as a firefighter at the Ackley Fire Department. Boyle presents a \$100 check for winning the Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge to Nan Bartling at the Ackley Food Pantry.



**Christmas donation**

**Above** | Sarah Dornath, administrative assistant, and Scott Greene, custodian/groundskeeper, organize donations from Corn Belt Power employees that will be given to people in need this holiday season.

## Corn Belt Power Cooperative **Watts Watt**

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