

# HEARTBEAT

## Adjusting to the pandemic

*“Good planning without good working is nothing.”* When I shared this quote by Dwight D. Eisenhower during the Annual Meeting of the Membership of Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative on March 10th, the quote had a completely different meaning than it does today. Coronavirus was a topic that was briefly being discussed and hand sanitizer was around at every turn at the Ellis Family Fine Arts Center in Fort Scott, but I never imagined how things would change over the next few weeks.

If I knew then what I know today, I’d pick a different Eisenhower quote that summarizes the last few weeks a little better – *“Our real problem, then, is not our strength today; it is rather the vital necessity of action today to ensure our strength tomorrow.”*

Over the last few issues of the Heartbeat, I’ve been discussing the need to listen to our consumer-members as changes are on the horizon at Heartland. The electric cooperative industry is continuing to evolve as distributed generation becomes more cost effective for consumer-members to install, and more

### KEEPING YOU INFORMED



**MARK SCHEIBE**  
**HEARTLAND CEO**

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## Co-op 2020 goals discussed

Accomplishments from the past year, and goals and opportunities of the year ahead were highlighted for co-op members as Heartland REC held its Annual Meeting of the Members on Tuesday, March 10 on the campus of Fort Scott Community College.

One new attraction this year was the opportunity for meeting attendees to test drive two Tesla electric cars, which were provided by the local Kansas City dealership.

Board President Ernie Troth welcomed co-op members to the meeting, and emphasized the duties and challenges Heartland has to provide for the needs of those it serves.

“Our rural consumer-members are geographically spread thin. It takes a lot of poles and wire to reach everyone and provide adequate power. That’s a challenge for us as we look at maintaining our infrastructure and replacing poles and wires. Reliability is of the utmost importance,” Said Troth. “Many of our members are financially secure, but we serve plenty of others who are on a fixed income, some who are living paycheck to paycheck. So, we strive to be fair to everyone with our electric rates, and policies. Young and old. Rich and poor. Those who use a lot of electricity and those who use very little.”

Troth said the adoption of new technology offers advantages to co-op members, such as the current meter upgrades that will help Heartland locate and restore outages as quickly as possible.

“Economic development is another challenge that Heartland works hard to address,” said Troth. “While our top

priority has always been to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to all of our consumer-members, equally important to us is our mission to enrich



the lives of the people who we serve.”

Troth said the meaning of “community” is central to Heartland.

“Our focus benefiting the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. We at Heartland know that electricity is a critical need for modern-day life,” said Troth. “It takes more than poles and power lines to make a community, it takes a cooperative who cares about every person in it.”

CEO Mark Scheibe talked about how Heartland adapts to the changing needs and concerns of our members.

“Our directors are locally elected and you see them out and about,” said Scheibe. “They listen to you and your questions and concerns and bring those back to the boardroom.”

Scheibe noted that 2019 brought record rainfall and thunderstorms, but employees and line crews were up to the task to respond to outages across the system. High scores in the co-op’s

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2019 member satisfaction survey also reflect the co-op's ability to meet the expectations of members when storms and lightning roll through Kansas.

Strategic planning for 2020 and the years to come will address safety, the cooperative's aging infrastructure, and promotion of rural Kansas, said Scheibe.

Safety efforts will include demonstrations of Heartland's high-voltage safety trailer, and other communication opportunities. Infrastructure improvements include maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure, as well as investment in new technologies.

"We are adding new technology to help us make smart decisions," said Scheibe.

Heartland is also adapting as more and more members install residential solar arrays.

"The job of the cooperative is to make sure we provide access to energy when you need the energy, regardless of anything else," said Scheibe. "We are here when you need us and it's okay if you want to produce your own energy."

Scheibe said Heartland also sees a future with more electric vehicles.

"We need to continually adapt to our consumer-member's needs," he said. "This paves the way to make better ways to serve the needs here in rural



**Heartland members were able to test drive two Tesla electric cars at the co-op's March 10 Annual Meeting. The vehicles were provided by the Tesla dealership in Kansas City.**

Kansas. If it's good for the members, then it's good for the cooperative."

Faith Warden, Director of Finance and Accounting, gave the financial report. In 2019, the cooperative had electric revenue of \$25.2 million. From that, \$14.2 million paid for the cost of power. Heartland's operating costs were \$9.6 million. Heartland's margin for the year was just under \$2 million.

Power sales for 2019 was down 2.5 percent compared to 2018, but power sales has been up 5.5 percent over a three year period. Warden noted that Heartland paid \$797,524 in county property taxes last year.

Taylor O'Brien, a senior at St. Paul High School, also spoke at the meeting, and talked about his trip to Washington DC last summer where he represented Heartland during the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

Election results were also announced at the meeting.

Incumbents Larry Stainbrook in District 1, Larry Lindberg in District 2, and Dean Davied in District 3 were unopposed and will retain their seats on the board.

At the conclusion of the meeting, cash and prizes were awarded, and an ice cream social was held.

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families are deciding to move out of Rural Kansas into the cities. After you add into this mix the effects of the coronavirus, it makes the need to listen to our consumer-members even more important.

Heartland's senior leadership team and Board had to quickly adjust our business continuity plan to account for the specifics of a pandemic. We spent significant time working through what the different scenarios could possibly be that would initiate the need to change Heartland's day-to-day operations.

As we worked through the scenarios, there were two main questions that we asked ourselves to guide our decisions. First, what does Heartland need to do to continue to meet our member's needs? Second, what does Heartland need to do to continue to care for our employees?

As I write this article at the end of March, things look different at Heartland today than it did two weeks ago. The Department of Homeland Security has classified electric cooperatives as critical

infrastructure and we know that as our communities "Stay-at-Home", they will need their power on to help keep their food from spoiling, provide entertainment, keep their cellphones charged, etc.

Heartland's consumer-members and employees have been adapting to the operational changes we've had to make in response to the global pandemic to help us "ensure our strength tomorrow."

We have made necessary changes to help ensure that if any employee is impacted by COVID-19 that we minimize the spread to other employees. Heartland has moved most of the inside employees from the office to telework work from home. Thankfully technology allows them to work just like they were at the office, which means even answering the co-op's phones like they were in the office.

Heartland's outside crews are now starting and ending their day at home, and we have shifted their work around to help separate employees as much as possible. This change to their work to help ensure the health and safety of our workers becomes even more important as we move into spring thunderstorm season. Thunderstorms pop up and should your power go out, Heartland is just as focused on restoring power as quickly as possible.

The next few months will be a challenge for the communities we serve. One thing that will not change is Heartland's commitment to providing safe and reliable electricity.

# Attic ridge vent will cut AC costs

*Dear Jim: My house has gable attic vents on each end. Will these provide adequate ventilation? If I need more, what is my best choice for attic venting, how much of it do I need and can I install it myself? - Bob N.*

Dear Bob: Adequate attic ventilation is extremely important to reduce your utility bills and to avoid damage to the roof and attic structure. Having a vent in each side of the gable was the typical attic ventilation configuration in older houses, but today it is considered woefully inadequate for an efficient house.

People often think of attic ventilation as being important only during summer to keep air-conditioning costs under control, which it does. A typical dark shingle roof can easily reach 170 degrees and the air temperature inside the attic can reach 140 degrees without adequate ventilation.

Even with enough insulation on the attic floor, this extreme radiant heat transfers through the insulation to the ceiling below. What makes things worse is all the structural lumber in the attic also reaches 140 degrees by afternoon. With its thermal mass, it can stay hot well into the evening and continually transfer heat into your house.

During winter, the attic can get cold. No matter how well the vapor barriers were installed in your walls and ceiling, indoor air and water vapor get into the attic. If this moisture-laden air is allowed to collect in the attic and, even in relatively mild climates, it can condense on the lumber and drip onto the insulation. The R-value of insulation is much lower when it is damp so more heat is lost through the ceiling.

In cold climates where the temperature often drops below freezing at night, it is even more important to ventilate the attic to keep the roof cold. If warm air from the ceiling below stagnates near the roof peak, it can melt snow on the roof. This water runs down the roof to a cooler area and refreezes causing an ice dam. Over time this dam causes water to back up under the shingles and leak into the attic and destroy the lumber. Its weight can also damage the gutters.

The ideal ventilation flow is coming in low over the insulation keeping it dry and cool. Some of it should flow up under the roof sheathing to keep it cooler and then exhaust out near the peak of the roof. This



**A mesh low-profile ridge vent is barely perceptible from the ground. The mesh vent is rolled out, laid smooth, and cut to length. After it is attached with a nail gun or hammer, wide shingles are tacked over the top.**

air flow out the roof peak keeps it cooler during summer and much colder during winter to minimize condensation and ice dam formation.

There are various attic venting options and all of them are better than your gable vents. A combination of a ridge vent and soffit vents is most effective and not difficult to install yourself. Once you install proper new attic ventilation, you should block off the gable vents because they will interfere with the desired air flow. I stapled extra attic foil over my gable vents to block them.

The ridge vent is located the roof peak where the hot attic air is least dense so it naturally flow up and out. In addition to this, breezes over the top of the ridge vent cover create a low pressure area to draw even more air through the attic. The cool air is drawn in the soffit vents. This can be as effective as power vents which consume electricity.

Before you run out and buy vents, first calculate how much ventilation you need. This is measured by the net free vent area of the particular vent product you select. The net free vent area is marked on the packaging. It is always less than the actual area of the vent because of screening and other obstructions to the air flow inside the vent.

Measure the area of the attic floor. A typical rule of thumb is one square foot of net free vent area of each 150 square feet

of attic floor area is needed. This amount of vent area should be divided evenly between the ridge vent and the inlet soffit vents. I installed multiple 4x16-inch soffit vents. Check inside the attic to be sure the insulation is not blocking the soffit vents. If necessary, attach small baffles to keep the insulation from blocking them.

For example, if your attic floor area is 30 by 50 feet, you would need five square feet of net free vent area in the ridge vent and the same amount in the soffit vents. If you choose to run the ridge vent all the way across the roof because it looks better, even if it is more ventilation than you actually need, match it with the proper amount of inlet soffit vents.

Depending upon how much inlet soffit vent area you need and the depth of your soffits, you may find it easiest to install continuous lengths of under-eave soffit vent. This is less time consuming than sawing many small rectangular holes and installing individual soffit vents.

To install the ridge vent, saw a slot along the roof ridge with a circular saw. Based upon how much free vent area is needed, determine the vent length needed. A typical one-foot-wide ridge vent provides 18 square inches of net free vent area per lineal foot.

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# Heartland Propane is growing

2020 looks to be a year of significant growth for Heartland Propane.

Public demand for reliable propane and top-notch customer service have led Heartland propane to expand its coverage territory.

On the north end, Heartland has expanded the territory served by crews based in Osawatomie.

The expanded area includes areas south and west of I-49 near Harrisonville, Belton, and Grandview in Missouri, and then westward past Lenexa and Eudora toward Lawrence.

Heartland Propane has also been approved to serve customers in northeast Oklahoma. Towns included in this area include Miami, Wyandotte, Afton, and Welch. On the Missouri side, Heartland's southern customers include residents of Joplin and Neosho.

Heartland propane has also improved service to customers by adding several new people to

the office crew answering phones. Employees of Heartland Electric and Heartland Propane are all cross-trained to handle issues from callers of both services. This means shorter wait times

to get an employee on the phone to answer any delivery or billing questions you might have.

A new feature coming in the next few weeks is an automated telephone payment system.

Heartland Propane customers will have a dedicated phone line that they can use to quickly

and easily make payments on their account.

This new option is safe and secure, and will be available 24-7.

And customers can always access an account by going online at [www.heartlandpropane.com](http://www.heartlandpropane.com) as well. Customers can see account balances, invoices, past transactions, and current contracted gallons. Payment options online include Visa, MasterCard, or Discover, as well as checking and savings accounts.

