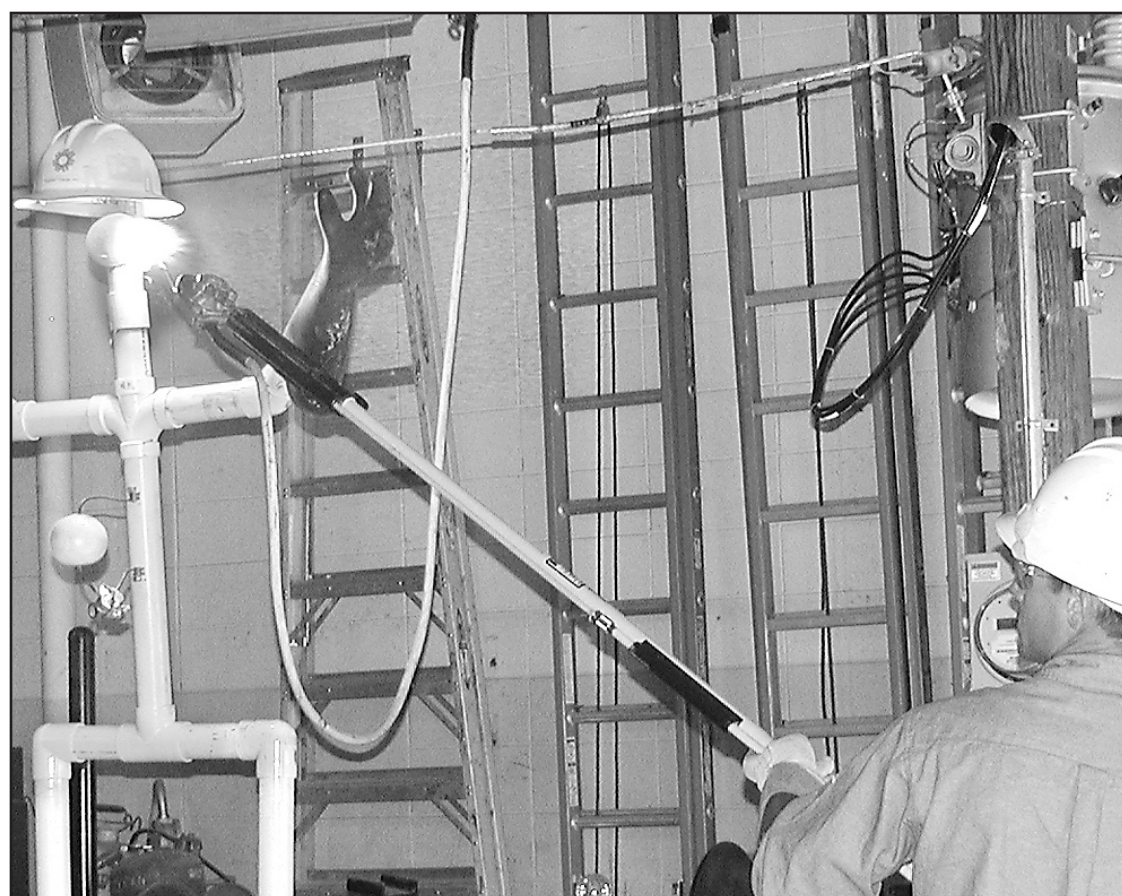




COLBY FREE PRESS



The stick lineman's grapefruit "head" (above) shoots fire when Shane Wentz touches it with a 7,200-volt line. Flying a kite? Here's what happens (right) with a mylar balloon touches an overhead line. The grapefruit represents your brain (below left) and the hot dog your heart on the stick man. At 7,200 volts (below right), the "heart" goes pretty quickly.

Dangers of power line graphic in live demo

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

Touch a live power line, anywhere from 7,200 to 230,000 goes coursing through your body. In seconds, your internal organs can boil and explode.

Les Loker wants you to think about that. He's seen what happens. Nobody likes it.

Loker, an energy analyst and account manager at the Midwest office here, puts on a show with the cooperative's demonstration trailer, teaching kids how to stay safe around power lines.

"We do this for about 10,000 kids a year," he told the Colby Rotary Club during a demonstration Tuesday. "It we keep just one of them from coming to this kind of end, it's worth it."

The danger can be as close as your home. He talks about a co-worker, before he came to Midwest, whose son died because his home didn't have the latest elec-

tronic protection. The boy picked up a hair drier as he stepped out of the shower. A short hit him with 120-volt household current, killing him.

New houses have to have "ground-fault interrupt" breakers on circuits used near water, he said. If you have an older home, you can buy a breaker at the hardware store that plugs into your old two-wire outlets. It works just as well, he said, and whatever you pay is a small price compared to someone's life.

The two linemen working with him, Shane Wentz of Hoxie and Chuck Perkins of Colby, demonstrate how fast a GFI breaker works, dipping a "hot" rod into a pan of water to power a light bulb. The human eye can't see the bulb flash.

Outdoors, people come into contact with power lines after windstorms, traffic accidents, other events that put a wire on the ground. If everything works right,

Loker said, the power should shut down within seconds when a line ground out.

Everything doesn't always work right, though, and the only safe time to be near a downed line is never.

There are a lot of myths about power lines, Loker says. People think you can move one safely with a tree branch or a broom handle, he said, but a quick demonstration with the 7,200-volt trailer proves that false.

"Maybe if it was a completely dry piece of wood," he says. "Maybe."

On the trailer, wood, a piece of rubber tire, a hunk of plastic, all sizzle and burn under 7,200 volts. Loker holds a line insulator used on a power pole, and made of plastic.

"There's that god-awful stink again," he says as Wentz sticks a chunk of rope into the gap.

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STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Nebraska native joins paper

Marian Ballard has joined the *Colby Free Press* staff as a copy editor and proof reader, working with stories, making up pages and doing administrative work for the newsroom.

She was born in Chadron, Neb., and lived in that area as a youth, attending Chadron State College after graduating from Chadron High School. She received a bachelor's degree in music in 1979, and became a ranch wife near Pine Ridge, S.D.

In 1984, she returned to school, graduating with a master's degree in counseling in 1987. She then moved south a ways, living in Alliance Neb., and working for Lutheran Family Services until 1990, when she moved to Kansas City, Kansas, to attend semi-



M. Ballard

nary. She graduated from Central Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master's of Divinity degree in 1993 and worked in the Kansas City area.

She moved to Gem in 1995 to pastor the Baptist church there, a position which she held until the church closed in 2001.

Since that time, she has lived several places in Kansas and Nebraska, pastoring churches and working in other positions. She moved back to Colby earlier this year to be near her grandchildren.

Working at the *Free Press*, she said, fulfills some old ambitions for her, providing an opportunity to do some writing. She began her duties Oct. 29.

City cites house violations

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Rick Dickman, Colby city code inspector, told the City Council during Tuesday's meeting that Jacques Horner's property at 165 E. Cherry St. is still in violation of the city's environmental code.

He told the council that Horner is a "repeat offender" who had been contacted in 2006 and 2007 about the state of her property.

She had made no improvements to the house, he said, and a car that's not properly licensed, as required by the code, remains in her

yard.

Horner will be given 14 days to request a hearing before the council, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong. If she does not appeal, she has 30 days to clean up the yard and 60 days to fix the structural defects, the manager said.

If Horner doesn't make the necessary changes to put her property back in compliance with the codes, the city could go in and fix it, and charge the costs to Horner's property-tax bill, Armstrong said.

Reached at home Wednesday, Horner said she did not want to comment on the situation.

"It's not so much a matter of

costs, it's a matter of taking care of her property," Armstrong said later.

She said Horner needs to buy tags for her car and put new pickets on her fence. Armstrong didn't know how much it would cost Horner to get her back in compliance with the environmental code.

Dickman said Horner has overgrown trees in the easement behind her house and weeds in her yard are over 12 inches tall. Lumber is scattered throughout the yard.

"If cars get registered and the easement gets cleared, then this would be a non-issue," he said.

Briefly

Hospital plans open meeting

Catholic Medical Center plans a public meeting at 7 p.m. tonight at the Colby High School auditorium to discuss current operations, the hospital's strengths and successes and plans for the future. Everyone is invited. For questions, call (785) 475-7511.

Clinic has lab, lots of kittens

Colby Animal Clinic has a half-grown, long-haired kitten and several 6-month-old kittens ready for adoption. They also have a stray adult male black lab that needs a home. For questions, call 460-8621.

Classes selling goodies for trip

The juniors and seniors of Heartland Christian School will hold a bake sale Saturday to raise money for a trip to Washington. They will be selling homemade

pies, cakes and cookies from 9 a.m. to noon at Walmart.

Church youth making dinner

The senior high youth of the Colby United Methodist Church will be serving a traditional Thanksgiving dinner from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday at the church. Donations will be accepted for mission and ministry work. For information, call the church office at 460-6521

Outdoor water to get expensive

Colby water meters were read Thursday. All water used between then and Feb. 20 will be used to figure indoor use for next year's sewer bill. This means any outdoor use during the winter, such as lawn

watering or washing a car, might drive up your sewer bill for the entire year. For questions, call 460-4400.

City crew trimming trees

The Colby city crew is trimming trees over streets and sidewalks as the weather allows. Trees will be trimmed to 13 feet, 6 inches above streets and trimmed to 8 feet above sidewalks, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong. For questions, call the city office at 460-4410.

Genesis needs food, money

Genesis-Thomas County is looking for nonperishable food and money to buy items to put in Christmas baskets, which will be distributed to those in need of help during the holidays. Donations can be left at Genesis from 10 a.m. to noon or 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays, or at LeRoy's Printing or Sacred Heart

Catholic, First Presbyterian, Colby United Methodist or Trinity Lutheran churches. Send checks to Genesis-Thomas County at Box 214, Colby, Kan. 67701. For information, call (785) 460-7930.

Emergency class coming up

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services will be offering an emergency medical technician B class starting in January. Classes will run for five to six months and financial assistance is available. For information, call training coordinator Dawnelle Umberger at (785) 460-4585 or 443-0176.

Center offers lunch for seniors

The Thomas County Nutrition Center is open to those 60 and older and their guests to have lunch at noon Monday through Friday at the Senior Progress Center in Fike Park. The cost is \$2.75 for those 60 or older and \$4.75 for others. Meals can be delivered.

