



Power plant employee Mike Abbey (above) checked one of the city generators. Another is visible behind him. Rod Blake (right) stood in front of the main switching panel that handles the city power grid.

Photos by Jaclyn Hackerott
The Goodland Star-News



Power plant plays key role in lighting city

By Jaclyn Hackerott
The Goodland Star-News

Most folks probably don't pay much attention to the city power plant, tucked away in Steever Park on the southeast edge of Goodland.

Out of sight and out of mind, the plant, built in the 1950s, sits idle much of the time. This summer, though, the plant has been humming, and the crew has been running the big diesel generator sets on a daily basis.

The power plant has had to generate more power this summer than usual, said Ed Wolak, city director of utilities and public works. Last month, the plant provided 976,000 kilowatt hours of electricity. The city purchased 5,042,000 kilowatt hours in July from Sunflower Electric.

The power plant plays a key roll in the production of electricity, but the main energy source is elsewhere. In fact, the city plant has not had to meet the city's electrical needs alone since April 4, 1981.

The city found that, rather than generating power for the whole town, it would be cheaper to buy electricity from outside.

Wolak said buying electricity works much better for many reasons. First, if the power plant carries the city, there is no back-up if the generators fail. With an outside primary provider, the power plant serves as a back-up because, due to the federal Clean Air Act, the generators are required to operate on clean-burning natural gas rather than on diesel fuel, which makes running them pretty expensive.

The city is always shopping for the cheapest electricity, Wolak said. So far, the cheapest they've been able to find is from Sunflower Cooperative Electric. About 96 percent of Goodland's electricity is provided by Sunflower, which has a massive coal-fired generating station in Holcomb and sells power to dozens of cities. The remaining 4 percent is generated by the big engines at the city power plant.

In an emergency, the plant would be capable of generating enough power for the whole town. The plant has eight large, noisy generating units. The largest can generate up to 5,010 kilowatts of power, and the smallest up to 770 kilowatts. The plant should be able to generate about 19,040 kilowatts, but due to the heat this summer, the plant can only provide about 16,500, which is still plenty to cover the town. Wolak said the plant is limited to 18 million kilowatts per year by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In the words of City Manager Ron Pickman, "The plant is pretty fantastic."

The generating units are nothing short of spectacular. Rod Blake, superintendent of electric produc-

tion demonstrated just how loud and noisy these engines are. Wolak said these gigantic machines are extraordinarily durable. The smallest, and first, generator used to help operate the plant was built and installed in 1938, and is in tip-top shape.

All of the generators are relatively old. The newest was constructed in 1978. It's a good thing that all eight still operate, because purchasing a new generator now would be costly for the city. A brand new generator that size would cost \$2.5 million dollars, Wolak said.

The plant not only generates power, it also receives electricity from Sunflower through a power line and disperses the electricity to the residents of Goodland. The power plant is fully staffed, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The staff members may also be dispatched out into the field to make necessary repairs.

The city's power system is fully supported by customers, Wolak said. The customers pay their monthly bills to the city. Then, the city pays the bill to Sunflower. What the city doesn't use to buy power is used to operate the plant and maintain the system. Yearly revenue is about \$4 million. Of this, \$3 million is used for the cost of either buying or generating electricity. The remaining \$1 million is used for operating the plant and paying the employees.

Heat, drought hurts corn, milo, flowers, pastures

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pollination. If it's hot, he said, the corn may not get full pollination.

And that is what gets kernels on the cob, he said.

Corn hasn't been the only crop affected. The dryland milo looks terrible, Mangus said.

Hoelting agreed the milo is suffering, and sunflowers as well. They are drought-tolerant crops, he said, but they still need some moisture. Sunflowers need subsoil moisture, Stephens said, because their roots go deep.

But subsoil moisture hasn't been plentiful, since rain has been short the last three years, especially last year. Victor Stegemiller, intern meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Goodland, said normal precipitation for a year in this area is 19.76 inches.

Sherman County had 9.9 inches last year, he said, 17.1 in 2001, 18.86 in 2000, was ahead with 23.7 in 1999 and had 18.3 in 1998. The area had 14.36 inches as of Aug. 5 this year, he said.

The shortage happened in July, Stegemiller said; precipitation was

above normal before then. But the shortage in subsoil moisture is affected by previous years.

"We didn't get enough moisture to make up for the years before," Stegemiller said.

And then July hit. There were 1.12 inches of rain at the station in July, Stegemiller said, 2.42 inches below normal for the month.

"After a spring that brought promising rains and hope for long-term drought relief," Gov. Sebelius said in here statement, "the month of July has seen the return of hot, dry weather throughout Kansas.

"This, combined with the fact that moisture conditions have been low following last years' drought has caused a rapid depletion of soil moisture and increased stress on pastures and summer crops. And, unfortunately, the weather forecast offers us no significant relief across the state in the near future."

The governor issued a drought warning for counties in western and northern Kansas and a drought watch for the balance of the state. A drought warning indicates the presence of a severe drought; a drought watch, a moderate drought.

As for the future, Stegemiller said, the weather service can only forecast seven days in advance. Beyond that, he said, the service gives outlooks of normal, above or below normal or not sure on temperature and precipitation.

And if the moisture is lacking, it doesn't just affect farmers. Sherman County is short on cattle, Stephens said, because there is no grass.

Disappointing crops don't just put producers in the pinch, Hoelting said, but affect all the businesses who depend on farmer dollars, including the trucking industry, railroads, elevators, fertilizer suppliers and eventually, downtown merchants.

Another problem, he said, is having sufficient soil moisture to plant winter wheat. June brought up the profile in subsoil, he said, but now it has fallen.

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts is also concerned about the effects on future crops.

"Although the harvest is pretty good this year," he said, "let us not forget last year when over 1.5 million acres of Kansas wheat was

abandoned prior to harvest.

"These conditions did not occur overnight. We need to better prepare ourselves because it is possible that the next drought is right around the corner."

Sen. Roberts co-sponsored the National Drought Preparedness Act, a bill that enhances the local, state and the federal government's ability to monitor and predict droughts.

"This legislation takes the steps toward longer-term policy that addresses the problems associated with drought before and as it occurs," Sen. Roberts said. "It improves existing programs and works toward preparedness, mitigation and response efforts, and not regulation."

Besides the effects from the lack of moisture, the yields this year may affect what farmer plant next year. Stephens said having a poor crop especially affects those who rotate crops.

"If you don't get a crop this year," he said, "you don't have what your soil needs for next year."

Production agriculture is a game of averages, Hoelting said, and pro-

ducers compare kinds of crops and how they performed.

It's kind of a guessing game, he said.

Several things are considered in deciding what to plant, he said, such as whether the producer already owns the equipment to plant and harvest a particular crop, the structure of the soil it will be planted in and the price of fertilizer.

And in this area, he said, government programs often determine

what is planted. Farmers would prefer a good crop and no subsidy, he said, but that doesn't always happen.

The subsidies are not a handout, he added; they are a program to keep the price of food low for consumers. That benefits farmers, he said, since the weather through harvest can't be predicted before the crops are planted. They have to make decisions early, Hoelting said, and they need that cushion.

corrections

A story about the new Kanorado ambulance on Page 9 of the Aug. 1 edition of *The Goodland Star-News* listed the wrong phone number for Bruce Gleason, head of the county ambulance service. The correct number is 899-3625. This was an error in information given to the newspaper.

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There was an error in a name in the City/County Recreation thank you ad on Page 3 of the July 25 edition. The name should have been Amanda Jolly. This also was due to incorrect information provided to the newspaper.

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The caption for a photo in the Goodland Regional Medical Center ad on Page 11 of the Working Women's section June 27 listed Angilia Anderson. It should have read Angelina Adamson.

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The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunder-

standing in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Levant man tries to kill himself

A Levant man tries to kill himself Wednesday night, shooting himself in the head with a 9 mm pistol. Thomas County Undersheriff Mike Baughn said his department received a call about a shooting at 6:48 p.m. The sheriff's department, along with the KBI, investigated.

Baughn said 33-year-old Dusty Nudson of Levant was found in the back yard of an unoccupied residence on Main Street. He was taken to the Colby hospital, then flown out.

City budget adopted, airport project approved

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type of project before. The job is expected to begin in March.

Lutters made the motion to approve the low bid, pending FAA review. The motion passed 4-0.

Pickman reported that the state Department of Health and Environment had received an anonymous complaint that the city was using an

open pit behind the city's recycling containers at 18th and Arcade for dumping old oil filters, waste paint and water from washing of trash trucks.

A report from Karen S. Schmidt of the department's Waste Management Division said she met with Pickman on July 17 and they went to the site. Schmidt's report said while there is a pit behind the recy-

cling containers, it did not contain any waste.

Schmidt concluded her report saying, "Based on the information, the complaint could not be substantiated."

Pickman said he was glad there was nothing to the complaint, but he

said it was the duty of the state to investigate all such reports, anonymous or not.

The next city commission meeting will be 5 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 18 second floor of the City Administration Building, 204 W. 11th.

SIGCO is again cleaning seed wheat at Edson. We have made many improvements to the facility, including a Gravity Cleaner!

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SIGCO Sun Products
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Goodland, KS 67735



New Listing



Just picture your family here! Bring your horses, kids and settle into this 3 bedroom, 2 bath home on 15.5 acres just 10 minutes from Goodland and enjoy your own little ranch. Also included double car garage, barn and 40x60' quonset all located on oil. Bonus is a one bedroom rental house for extra income. Call Charlene to view this wonderful property today!

Other listings:

W. 8th Street (lots)	1224 Main (mixed use)	1608 Main (commercial)
2810 Commerce Rd #2	1625 Wyoming	724 Main
1516-1518 Center	415 W. 2nd	221 Cottonwood
321 Broadway	1016 E. 10th	1519-21 Montana
209 E. 15th	6610 Rd 10	2157 Caldwell
402 Grand	1008 Main (commercial)	2892 Rd 64

We have rentals available! Find our listings on www.goodlandksmls.com for further details

Cole Real Estate

Charlene Cole, Broker Diana Spinney, Salesperson
Roger Kisner, Auctioneer
112 West 13th
785-899-2683 Goodland, KS 67735



The Community is invited to
The Sherman County Relay for Life
American Cancer Society
August 22
Opening ceremony and Survivor Lap 7 p.m.
Luminaria Service 9 p.m.
Entertainment throughout the evening.
Kiwanis Club will be serving 6 - 10:30 p.m.
Public is Invited.