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Panhandle Rural Electric Membership Association

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PREMA PITCHES IN

Student, Intern, PowerLine Fellow, Apprentice Lineman, Journeyman Lineman . . . PowerLine Instructor

This May when the WNCC PowerLine School was in need of a temporary instructor, PREMA's Operations Manager, Paul Grosz, quickly offered a solution. He suggested one of his linemen, Cody Childers, would be up for the challenge.

Cody was an individual who just happened to be "uniquely qualified" for this position. He had experienced the lineman's role from five distinct perspectives. That of student, intern, apprentice lineman, intern mentor and journeyman lineman.

Cody's interest in becoming a lineman began when he was a senior in high school. Royce Ammon had come to Leyton High to speak about the opportunities of attending the PowerLine School in Alliance. This resonated with Cody, that, and the fact he would be able to start the program in May, (within two weeks of graduation).

As it turned out, Cody liked quite a lot about the program. He liked being able to order tools during orientation, which allowed him to start climbing poles the very first day of class. He liked the "hands on" approach as he worked with hoists, hand lines, hot sticks, and the industry's "style of work". Cody also liked being associated with "like-minded" individuals who enjoyed working with their hands, working out-of-doors, being physically active and being constantly challenged.

Cody continued to grow and develop his skills and abilities. By the end of the program, he was



Cody watches over his students as they attempt their climbs

asked to become an assistant to the instructor. One year after he started, Cody became the first PowerLine Fellow.

At age 19, Cody faced difficult challenges in this new position. He stated what helped his credibility most in the beginning, was his ability to "out-climb any of them."

Cody experienced yet another kind of challenge. He found the learning curve for his students varied greatly. To be able to "bring them along" as a group, he realized he needed to adjust his approach. Cody quickly found new ways to communicate and connect with his students. This enabled him to train and develop them, yet still allowed them to learn at their own pace.

During college, Cody had worked as an intern. While still working as a "Fellow", during his summer and winter breaks, he took the initiative to work as an apprentice at PREMA. This enabled Cody to relate to, and add to the "base of knowledge" his students were learning.

Cody's own understanding

grew also. As a new "Fellow" he needed to be prepared to answer questions. He quickly developed industry knowledge, especially since he was the one expected to "have the answers".

Cody embraced his new responsibilities. He sincerely wanted his students to be well prepared as they began their careers as Apprentice Linemen.

The timing was such that when Cody's contract came to an end at the PowerLine School, an Apprentice Lineman position became available at PREMA.

During his time at PREMA, he stated he respected and liked the men who trained him, found the atmosphere to be positive and had developed relationships of trust with his co-workers.

In May of 2010, Cody became PREMA's newest Apprentice Lineman. During the next four years he worked diligently. After accomplishing the required 8,000 hours of training, he earned the title of *Journeyman Lineman*. This is the title you receive when you become a "master of your trade".

(Cody cont. on Page 3)



Cody Childers

When assisting another location, teamwork is quickly established. Cody states, "it helps we are all geared the same way, and use the same standards of practice."

Every day, but especially during "Storm Jobs," safety is always an issue. Workers need to work quickly, and efficiently, but still safely to protect themselves and other workers.

"Sometimes jobs go wrong and things you think wouldn't

PowerLine Advisory Committee (PAC)

For some time PREMA's General Manager, Ryan Reiber, had been aware of disturbing trends in the electric industry's workforce.

Several factors had been a concern for him. The national average age of operations employees had a higher average age than the general population of workers. There wasn't a power line school within 300 miles of Alliance (including the Front Range of Colorado). Looking forward, he saw the future workforce being underserved and felt this created an opportunity to serve this market for the training and development of linemen.

Being proactive, he began having conversations with local and regional individuals. Royce Ammon, Dean of the Northern Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) Campus and the President of the College, John Harms heard his message. There was a need!

Many helped to create an advisory committee to make the conception a reality. The PowerLine Advisory Committee consisted of several area rural electric and municipal electric systems. These area providers donated their time, money and equipment, along with the City of Alliance to establish the PowerLine School.

The school opened in 2006 and is now in its 8th successful year.



Commitment . . .



Trust . . .



Devotion . . .



Nebraska Rural Electric Association Mutual Aid

Did you ever wonder who "turns the lights back on" when there are severe weather conditions, freezing rain, wet heavy snow, frigid temperatures, fires, or natural disasters?

There is an agreement between the Nebraska Rural Electric Systems to offer aid and assistance to those areas whose systems, manpower, equipment and other facilities become overtaxed resulting in major interruptions of electric service. This assistance is called Mutual Aid, or sometimes referred to as "Storm Jobs".

PREMA has answered this call on many occasions. Some examples were October of 2013 when the crew went to the La Creek, S.D. area after their severe winter storms. The Alliance and Hyannis crews also assisted after the fires in the Hays Springs area in August of 2012.

These are challenging and dangerous situations. Often times crews are working in environments that make it impossible to access their vehicles or equipment.

The crews work long days in hazardous conditions. The mobility issues aren't just limited to equipment. There are times when snow, wind, intense temperatures, soot, mud or difficult terrain make a lineman's everyday job so physically challenging, that what normally might take an hour to accomplish takes three to four times as long.

After the recent severe weather in Nebraska it's nice to know the dedicated electric companies are there, working together, to get the job done.

(Cody cont. from Cover)

Cody accomplished this by experiencing the full gamut of training categories in Poles, Towers, Line Hardware, Equipment, Overhead Conductors, Hot Stick/Rubber Gloving, Tools & Equipment, Transformers, Oil Circuit Breakers, Regulators Capacitors, Metering, Electric Systems, Mechanical Equipment, Records, Safety, Troubleshooting, and Underground Systems, just to name some of his required learning.

Cody participated in situations which he stated “greatly increased his confidence and ability”. These experiences included the Mutual Aid given to surrounding communities. (See Mutual Aid article on page 2.)

When asked, Cody did accept his most recent challenge, by agreeing to become a temporary instructor for Alliance’s PowerLine School. Currently he is teaching the outdoor labs. He states he has enjoyed each stage of his development and stresses, “I haven’t done it alone. I have had many great mentors and experienced linemen to learn from, to get me to this point”. He summarized this support by stating, “It has helped me see additional opportunities to “fill in the gaps” to give a better depth of understanding to my students.”

PREMA believes in supporting the community. Ryan Reiber, General Manager, being a strong advocate of the PowerLine School, (as are rural and municipal electric systems) quickly “pitched in” by agreeing to share Cody with the PowerLine School.

We applaud PREMA’s and Cody’s contributions to the community, and are proud of all our “everyday heroes” who work night and day to “keep your lights on”.

Cody Childers demonstrates the heavy load of a lineman in full gear (approx 45 lbs).

Hard Hat provides insulated protection from electrical hazards and protects the head from falling objects or blows to the head.

Safety Glasses protect eyes from flying debris or injury.

Insulated rubber gloves tested at 30,000 volts, provide protection against electric shock and burns. They are worn inside leather gloves, or gauntlets, that protect the rubber against cuts, tears or punctures.

Equipment Belt with clips, loops and D rings. The belt allows a lineman to carry every tool they need, including wrenches, hammer and electrical tape.

Secure Strap is the secondary or positional strap that loops around a pole. The ends are attached to D rings on the equipment belt. This allows linemen to safely work with both hands free.



Fall Protection Belt is the primary OSHA belt mandatory by April 2015. With its cinch lock, this belt cinches over the top of an object to be the main fall protection, securing a lineman at all times.

Hand Line is heavy rope complete with steel hook, snap and pulley block. When attached to a pole it is strong enough to hoist equipment, materials and has served on life-saving missions.

Four-Pocket Tool Holder along with the ditty bag and equipment belt, carries additional tools; side cutters, pump pliers, folding ruler, screwdriver, folding knife, kliens, and channel locks.

Ditty Bag hangs from the back of the equipment belt and carries a variety of items such as lock nuts, staples, nails and connectors that linemen need for a number of jobs.

Hooks are contoured leg shanks made of aluminum and hold gaffs in place on a lineman’s boots. Hooks are strapped just below the knee and around the ankle to provide support.

Gaffs are razor-sharp steel points attached to the hooks. The tips dig into the pole, helping the lineman climb safely and efficiently. When not in use, protective guards are placed over the gaffs.

Operations Update

Have a safe Labor Day



S & L Pole Testing will begin testing poles in August. They will be in the South, and Northwest of Arthur. These crews test our power poles for weather damage, rodent damage, and rot or decay. This testing is used as a preventive measure to make sure we “change out” any poles no longer up to standard. This also helps to minimize outages due to weakened or broken poles.

PREMA has received calls this year from farmers who have accidentally damaged one of our power poles. In order to maintain our poles and wires, PREMA truly appreciates, and needs to be immediately alerted to any of these incidents. This enables our crews to quickly accomplish any necessary repairs. It also saves our customers from possible outages or if there is an outage, helps to shorten the length of time.

We remind all our farmers and ranchers to watch out for the high voltage wires. These wires are potentially lethal, and can cause serious injury or death to anyone who comes into contact with them. If your vehicle or implement does become entangled in a powerline, be sure to stay inside the vehicle, or on your equipment, and warn others to stay back until our crews can arrive to safely de-energize the line.

To maintain safety, we ask all customers to be respectful of the high voltage lines and poles by not parking under them, or storing equipment or materials near them.

HAVE A SAFE AND BOUNTIFUL HARVEST SEASON!!!!

Notes From Load Management

With the cool and wet conditions, PREMA was in active control only one day in the month of June. For the months of July and August there will be no control days. Load control will be active once again in September. Control periods can be expected the first part of the month.



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