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Dodge City, KS 67801  
620-227-2139  
victoryelectric.net  
facebook.com/victoryelectric  
twitter.com/thevictoryelec  
Visit us on YouTube



# Electronews

## THE VICTORY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSN., INC.

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## FROM THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

# Secure Your Sanctuary: Protecting Your Home Network

As an organization responsible for delivering our member-owners the electricity they depend on to power their lives, homes, businesses, entertainment and even their vehicles, Victory Electric understands how important cybersecurity has become. Cybercrimes have grown exponentially over the last few years.

Unfortunately, criminals have learned how to exploit businesses for millions of dollars as they penetrate networks, encrypt data, and then hold the data and business systems hostage until a ransom is paid. But that is not all. Hostile foreign governments are targeting infrastructure assets to wreak havoc and devastation to the American economy.

Victory has many resources at our

disposal to help us maintain a cyber-resilient network and we are constantly looking to make things more secure. But what are YOU doing to protect your data and your home network?

That is the question everyone should be asking themselves — not just during Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but all year. Every household with internet service is at risk of becoming compromised in some way. Users can take several steps to make their network secure and protect themselves against becoming a cyber victim.



Denzil McGill

*Continued on page 12C ▶*

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS  
**MEMBER APPRECIATION**

OCT 18 FRIDAY \* FREE ADMISSION \* GIVEAWAYS \* CIMARRON HOMECOMING

To connect with the communities we serve and express our gratitude to all our members, Victory Electric is hosting Community Appreciation Events throughout our service area. We hope you join the fun as we celebrate Cimarron!

## Victory Electric Seeks Your Input



Victory Electric works all year to provide excellent service to you, our member-owners. Your satisfaction is important and

guides everything we do at the cooperative. We rely on your feedback to help determine where to make improvements to Victory Electric's operations, measure progress and enhance satisfaction.

To evaluate how we're doing and better serve you, Victory Electric will be sending an email survey to cooperative member-owners on Nov. 4. Victory Electric would appreciate your participation. We will use the survey results to help us improve service and make future plans.

As Victory Electric member-owners, you have a voice in the future of your cooperative. Completing this survey is a simple way to share your perspective and offer feedback about your electric service.

Please note that when contacting members by phone or email, Victory Electric employees and our representatives will never ask you to share bank account and credit card details or other personal information. This survey from Victory Electric is a legitimate request for opinions, and you will not be asked to provide private data or payment information.

Contact Victory Electric at 620-227-2139 if you have any questions.

## Celebrate Co-op Month With Victory Electric

Cooperatives of all shapes and sizes participate in National Co-op Month each October. To thank you for being a member-owner, Victory Electric will again be celebrating the cooperative difference this month.

We'll kick off the month-long celebration with a drawing for a \$500 bill credit for our recent SmartHub and AutoPay sign-up giveaway. The fun will continue throughout October:

- ▶ Enter for the chance to win bill credits and other prizes throughout October. Entry forms will be available beginning Oct. 1 on our website and at the Victory Electric office.
- ▶ Watch for pop-up events to be held throughout the month at area businesses near you.
- ▶ Our 2024 customer appreciation events continue with Friday Night Lights in Cimarron on Oct. 18. (See page 12A for more information.)

- ▶ Join us Oct. 26 for Victory Electric's Pumpkin Festival. (See page 12E for more details.)

Cooperatives operate according to the same set of core principles and values. One of the Seven Cooperative Principles is Concern for Community. Co-ops like Victory Electric work for the sustainable development of our communities through policies supported by the membership.

Supporting the communities we serve is important to us as a cooperative. By engaging with people where they live and work and participating in community activities like these, we aim to power meaningful connections and build relationships with those who matter most — you, our member-owners!

Visit [www.victoryelectric.net](http://www.victoryelectric.net) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to learn more about co-op month and pop-up locations as they are announced.



## Secure Your Sanctuary: Protecting Your Home Network Continued from page 12A

The most important feature of a secure network is a strong password to access it. Change passwords regularly and make them strong with complexity and length. A 12-character password with complex symbols usually would take hundreds of years to brute-force crack. Yearly password changes may be inconvenient, but imagine the inconvenience if a hacker broke into your banking or personal computer.

The next most important method of securing a network is to enable encryption. WPA3 encryption is available on every home router and should be enabled. If your home router does not have a modern encryption protocol, it may be obsolete. Over time manufacturers stop supporting and releasing updated firmware for older models. If your home router is more than seven years old, it may be time to upgrade to a newer model. Just like Victory does with our critical systems, you should check the operating system of your router routinely to check for updates. If there is a new release, be sure to apply it to your network components.

Here are the primary ways home internet users can safeguard their networks:

- ▶ **USE STRONG PASSWORDS:** Ensure that your Wi-Fi network and router have strong, unique passwords. Never use the default passwords provided by the manufacturer. Hackers are familiar with the default passwords used by every manufacturer and use automated systems to search for networks still using them.
- ▶ **ENABLE NETWORK ENCRYPTION:** Use WPA3 encryption if available, or at least WPA2, to secure your Wi-Fi network. This helps protect the data transmitted over your network.
- ▶ **UPDATE FIRMWARE AND SOFTWARE:** Regularly update your router's firmware and all connected devices' software to protect against known vulnerabilities.
- ▶ **DISABLE REMOTE MANAGEMENT:** Make sure to turn off remote management features on your router to prevent

### October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Let's work together to build a safer digital world. Whether at home, work or school, we can increase our online safety with the following tips:

- 🔒 Recognize and report phishing attempts.
- 🔒 Use strong, unique passwords.
- 🔒 Enable multi-factor authentication.
- 🔒 Update software regularly.

unauthorized access from outside your home network.

If you do need this feature turned on, keep it turned off when you are not actively using it.

- ▶ **USE A GUEST NETWORK:** Set up a separate guest network for visitors to keep your main network more secure. Having a guest Wi-Fi network for your nephew when the extended family is over for Christmas is an effective way to keep your primary network secure.
  - ▶ **ENABLE FIREWALL:** Ensure that your router's firewall is enabled to block unauthorized access attempts. This will prevent many brute-force penetration attempts to crack a password.
  - ▶ **MONITOR CONNECTED DEVICES:** Regularly check the devices connected to your network and remove any that you do not recognize.
  - ▶ **USE ANTIVIRUS AND ANTI-MALWARE SOFTWARE:** Install and maintain antivirus and anti-malware software on all devices connected to your network.
  - ▶ **EDUCATE HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS:** Make sure everyone in your household understands the importance of network security and follows best practices.
- By following these steps, you can significantly reduce the risk of becoming a cybercrime victim and your network being compromised.

## CALLING ALL JUNIORS!

Do you love traveling and connecting with other teens?  
Are you interested in taking the trip of a lifetime for **FREE**?

Start putting together your résumé and polishing your video skills! Applications for the 2025 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., and the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Colorado will open in November at **victoryelectric.net**.

**Don't miss your opportunity to experience places you've never been, make new friends and gain valuable leadership skills.**

SCAN FOR  
MORE INFO



# Straight Earns National Safety Certification

Victory Electric puts a high priority on the safety of its workers, and the continuing education and certification of the cooperatives' safety professionals helps ensure that safe practices are followed. Victory Electric Manager of Safety **JUSTIN STRAIGHT** recently completed the Certified Loss Control Professional (CLCP) Program.

CLCP is a certification program co-sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the National Utility Training and Safety Education Association (NUTSEA). The 2.5-year training program gives safety professionals the tools they need to be effective leaders and gain knowledge about regulations, rules and standards for electrical safety. The program also provides instruction on the design and implementation of safety and loss control policies, procedures and work practices.

As part of his CLCP instruction, Straight attended four seminars, which included small group work, assignments and presentations. He also completed an individual project focused on public safety and took a final exam.

"The experience going through the CLCP program was great," Straight said. "It was a great learning experience, but

the networking experience was even better. I know that I can reach out to others from the class to see how they have adapted or are adapting to new changes in the industry."

Vice President of Safety and Key Accounts Kyndell Penick said, "The CLCP certification is a great asset for Justin and Victory Electric to hold. This national certification ensures Justin is at the forefront of the industry and that Victory and our employees are aware of all safety regulations. With our ever-changing industry, Justin will be able to keep Victory focused on the safety of our members and employees."

Straight joined Victory Electric in December 2007 as a fourth-class lineman and was promoted to manager of safety in February 2022. He coordinates regular safety trainings and meetings with Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., makes sure the line crews have proper clothing and protective equipment, and promotes safe work practices inside and outside the Victory Electric office.

The CLCP certification will advance the cooperative's commitment to safety. "I have applied my knowledge to Victory by knowing more of the



**Victory Electric Manager of Safety Justin Straight recently completed the Certified Loss Control Professional (CLCP) Program, which provides safety professionals the tools they need to be effective leaders and gain knowledge about regulations, rules and standards for electrical safety.**

industry standards and how to apply them to our cooperative," Straight said. "The industry is ever changing, and knowing the standards and where to find them is instrumental."

**CONGRATULATIONS, JUSTIN!**

## ALERT

Our Pay by Phone number has changed.

Victory Electric's Pay by Phone number has changed to **844-961-2565**. Our main office phone number remains the same — 620-227-2139.

**HOURS OF OPERATION**  
Monday-Friday  
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

**3230 N. 14th AVE.**  
**P.O. BOX 1335**  
**DODGE CITY, KS 67801**

**620-227-2139** or  
**800-279-7915**  
Pay by Phone  
**844-961-2565**



**Victory Electric**  
Pay By Phone  
**844-961-2565**



# Victory Welcomes New Warehouse Clerk

**LUIS DEL REAL** recently joined Victory Electric as the new warehouse clerk.

He has lived in Dodge City for 24 years. Before joining Victory Electric, Del Real operated his own handyman business and previously worked for an excavation company.

“I have friends around here at Victory, and it sounds like a good place to work,” he said.

Del Real’s tasks will include overseeing all maintenance and maintenance projects. He will also take care of the yard, surrounding substations and other facilities. “I’m already glad to have him, that’s for sure,” said Victory Electric Manager of Warehouse and Facilities Jason Guillen. “He goes after it and gets it.”



Luis Del Real

Del Real looks forward to learning more about Victory Electric’s operation and facilities and serving as a clerk for the warehouse to track materials and inventory.

“At a new place to work, there will always be something to learn — and new people,” Del Real said.

Del Real is married and has two daughters, ages 18 and 7, and a son, age 13. He enjoys spending time with his family and watching professional soccer as well as his son’s soccer and football teams.

**WELCOME TO VICTORY, LUIS!**

# Pumpkin Festival

## Festival de la Calabaza

**VICTORY ELECTRIC COOP**  
9-11 A.M. | 3230 N. 14 AVE.

**PUMPKIN PAINTING | GAMES  
COSTUMES | FACE PAINTING  
PINTAR CALABAZAS | JUEGOS  
TRAJES | PINTURA DE LA CARA**



Wear a costume and join us for fall family fun! One free pumpkin per child, ages 12 and under (500 available). All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Ponte tu disfraz para celebrar con nosotros en la diversión de otoño para toda la familia. Se proporcionará una calabaza gratis por niño de 12 años o menos (500 disponibles). Todos los niños deben ir acompañados de un adulto.

# IT'S BEEN A *Pleasure*

## Stecklein retires after 17 years at Victory

**STEVE STECKLEIN** said he enjoyed his 17 years of working at Victory Electric and that “it’s been a pleasure.” Victory Electric celebrated his service to the cooperative at a retirement reception Sept. 3.



Steve Stecklein recently retired from Victory Electric after 17 years.



Steve Stecklein (left) and Mike Clark give away prizes at the annual meeting.

“I’ve enjoyed the people I work with,” Stecklein said.

He joined Victory Electric in November 2007 as a plant accountant and was promoted to manager of plant accounting in 2014. He previously worked in a similar role as a manager in the plant accounting department at FairPoint Communications in Dodge City.

The telecommunications and electric utility industries use different equipment and materials. But Stecklein said his work at FairPoint prepared him for working for an electric utility and handling different types of reports and construction work orders.

“The thing I like about the job is it involves a lot of different departments, so we have to work pretty closely with engineering, operations, and the warehouse,” Stecklein said. “I enjoy working with all of the different departments, and I feel like I got along with everybody I worked with here.”

Plant Manager Mike Clark was Stecklein’s first supervisor at Victory Electric. “He was very easy to train because he already knew how to do a lot,” Clark said. He said he also appreciated that the two shared common interests. “I’m going to miss

just sitting down with Steve and talking about sports.”

When Stecklein began working at Victory, much of the work was done manually, with written copies of work orders and staking sheets. The company made the transition to digital systems over time. Technology improvements in the electrical infrastructure also affected his work on the financial side of the cooperative.

“Steve was an integral part of the project to set up our advanced metering infrastructure,” said Chief Financial Officer Angela Unruh, who also worked with Stecklein at FairPoint Communications before joining Victory Electric. “I’ve been very fortunate to work with Steve for many years throughout our careers. He has been a valuable resource to us at Victory Electric.”

Several major ice storms stand out in his memory as especially challenging for the cooperative. The different departments each had a role to play. While the crews worked to get the lights back on, accounting had additional paperwork to coordinate and report to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other

“The thing I like about the job is it involves a lot of different departments, so we have to work pretty closely with engineering, operations, and the warehouse. I enjoy working with all of the different departments, and I feel like I got along with everybody I worked with here.”



Steve Stecklein served as manager of plant accounting at Victory Electric.

agencies. “We’ve gotten better over the years at how to handle it,” he said.

As he looks ahead to retirement, Stecklein said he wants to travel more. He has a trip to Cancun planned, and he added, “I hope to play a little more golf.”

He and his wife, Kelly, plan to relocate to the Kansas City area in the near future as well. He looks forward to spending more time with his daughters, Jami and Jessi.

“I’ll probably spend a lot of time at Royals games and hopefully Chiefs games,” he said.

Plant Accountant Brendan Wenzl joined Victory Electric’s accounting team in December 2023 and trained with Stecklein. “Steve has been a great mentor, passing on his knowledge he gained over many years of experience,” Wenzl said. “His presence will be missed, and I wish him all the best in his retirement.”

Unruh echoed that sentiment. “I wish him nothing but the best in his retirement and hope he enjoys cheering on both the Chiefs and the Royals,” she said.

Thank you for your years of dedicated service, Steve! We wish you a happy retirement.



Steve Stecklein passes a bottle of hand cleanser to a community member in 2020.



Steve Stecklein (back row, second from right) poses with Victory Electric’s accounting team.

# Don't Let an Electrical Mishap Be Your Halloween Trick

As you ready your yard and porch for Halloween, make sure the decorations you plug in do not become hazardous. To avoid a Halloween scare, take these safety precautions:

- ▶ Discard decorations with cracked or frayed cords or damaged plugs.
- ▶ Do not put decorations on power poles, pad-mounted transformers or other electrical equipment.
- ▶ Use decorations endorsed by a reputable testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- ▶ If you are using extension cords outdoors, make sure they are rated for outdoor use.
- ▶ Secure all cords so they do not become tripping hazards.
- ▶ Plug all cords into circuits protected by GFCIs to prevent electrical shock.
- ▶ Do not use nails or tacks to hang lights or other electrical decor.
- ▶ Keep decorations away from flammable items like bales of hay or cornstalks.

**HAVE A SAFE AND FESTIVE HALLOWEEN COMPLETE WITH SAFE TRICKS AND TASTY TREATS.**

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

**WE MUST CONTINUE PROVIDING**

**STABLE &  
RELIABLE**

*Electricity*



**COOPERATIVELY WORKING TO  
PROTECT YOUR ENERGY FUTURE**

The EPA announced final rules aimed at existing coal and new natural gas power plants. These rules jeopardize reliable power in Kansas and across the country.

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OUT  
MORE**

