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WESTAR ENERGY USES HELICOPTERS TO REPAIR TRANSMISSION STRUCTURES

Linemen take to the air to prevent outages.

TOPEKA, Kan., November 12, 2010 — Westar Energy, Inc. (NYSE:WR) is replacing braces on structures carrying power from the Wolf Creek nuclear power generating plant. Working with AIR 2, LLC, a helicopter-assisted power transmission line contractor based out of Maryland, the repairs are part of a project to improve reliability not only for Wolf Creek but also for the overall electric power grid. All 345 kV wood “H-frame” lines in the Westar system were constructed with a fiberglass tension brace supporting the cross-arms. “The fiberglass braces were “state of the art” when the lines were originally constructed, but now we know of a better, more reliable design,” said Jerry Lorimer, manager, transmission inspection-maintenance for Westar Energy. Some of these cross-arms have had problems with moisture penetrating the connection hardware, causing the fiberglass to break down and the brace to fail. Lorimer said, “Moisture gets into the end-fitting connection and causes a reaction that destroys strands in the fiberglass brace. Eventually, enough of the fiberglass is damaged, and the weight of the conductors breaks the remaining fiberglass. The wood cross-arm does not have enough strength to support the wires’ weight, so the conductor falls to the ground locking the line out of service.”

Westar's system has only had two failures of this type in more than 1,000 miles of this type of structures. These failures were on one of the lines that carry power from Wolf Creek. Since other utilities report higher incidences of this type of failure, Westar anticipated the incidences of failure would increase as the lines age. To eliminate the problem, a steel brace was designed to replace the fiberglass.

To eliminate the need to interrupt service during this repair work, safety procedures were developed to allow repairs without shutting down the transmission lines. Air2's linemen are delivered to the top of the structures via the MD 500 helicopter. The crews place a temporary brace on the supports and remove the fiberglass brace while the pilot picks up the steel replacement brace and delivers it to the crew. As the crew secures the new brace to the structure, the pilot removes the old fiberglass brace and returns it to the crew's staging area.

When both braces are replaced, the crews step onto the skid of the helicopter and are transported to the next structure to repeat the process. All of the braces should be replaced by mid-November. Crews are currently working east of Wolf Creek and will continue until they reach La Cygne power plant.

A streaming video of the helicopter repairs can be seen at:

http://www.westarenergy.com/wcm.nsf/content/345kv_helicopter

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Westar Energy, Inc. (NYSE: WR) is the largest electric utility in Kansas, providing electric service to about 685,000 customers in the state. Westar Energy has about 6,800 megawatts of electric generation capacity and operates and coordinates more than 35,000 miles of electric distribution and transmission lines.

For more information about Westar Energy, visit us on the Internet at <http://www.WestarEnergy.com>.