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WESTAR ENERGY EXPANDS RELIABILITREE INTO LAWRENCE

Program will improve reliability, support safety initiatives.

TOPEKA, Kan., Jan. 16, 2012 — Keeping the lights on and improving safety for Lawrence customers are the goals of Westar Energy’s ReliabiliTree program. ReliabiliTree will improve electric service reliability by mitigating a leading cause of power outages – trees near power lines – and following this up with inspecting and repairing equipment along the power distribution system. The program puts vegetation management – the clearing and pruning of trees – on a four- to five-year cycle as well as boosts Westar’s customer education regarding power line clearance and tree planting.

“Tree pruning prevents power outages and improves safety by reducing the risk of accidental contact with power lines. Our top priority is to provide our customers with the highest quality, safest electric service,” said Jeff Martin, director, reliability and resource scheduling. “As we’ve witnessed during the program’s pilot in Wichita, ReliabiliTree significantly improves electric reliability and customer satisfaction.”

Lawrence is the second community within Westar’s service territory to be included in ReliabiliTree. The pilot program began in 2010 in Wichita and in areas cleared by ReliabiliTree, the program has successfully reduced the number of tree related outages by nearly 45 percent.

Ten vegetation management crews will be dedicated to ReliabiliTree in Lawrence. The area has been divided into quadrants and work has already begun in the areas identified as having the highest number of tree-related outages. Under the program, crews will revisit areas for pruning every four to five years. Following pruning, customers may see additional crews in their neighborhoods assisting with clean up and maintenance.

Customer education is an important component of the ReliabiliTree program. Westar will provide customers an informational packet prior to work being done, as it currently does with any vegetation management work. The packet includes information about the ReliabiliTree program and pruning practices, as well as a tree planting guide to help customers in selecting the right tree. Westar will also use other avenues for customer education including presenting at community meetings and mass media.

Westar will periodically report the progress and results of the program to the Kansas Corporation Commission and will share progress reports on its website, www.WestarEnergy.com/tree.

Westar contractors use national standards to carry out their tree pruning work, including those from the International Society of Arboriculture and the Tree Care Industry Association. Tree species determine the amount of pruning. After pruning, the tree may look somewhat “stark,” but over time the tree will fill out. Some trees may have to be removed.

ReliabiliTree in Summary:

- When trees come into contact with power lines, electric service is hampered and, more importantly, a dangerous situation is created for both the public and employees in charge of keeping the lights on. The goal of ReliabiliTree is to balance safe, reliable service with preserving the health and appearance of trees.

- Vegetation management – clearing and pruning of trees – will be performed on a standard time cycle rather than based on reliability of service.
- Line crews will follow the tree crews inspecting lines and equipment, and identifying potential problems.
- Westar is increasing its education regarding the importance of keeping trees clear of the electric lines.
- For more information about ReliabiliTree, visit www.WestarEnergy.com/tree.

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Westar Energy, Inc. (NYSE: WR) is the largest electric utility in Kansas, providing electric service to about 687,000 customers in the state. Westar Energy has about 7,100 megawatts of electric generation capacity and operates and coordinates more than 35,000 miles of electric distribution and transmission lines.

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