

K.C. ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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Our mission is to provide our members with safe, reliable service at the lowest cost, while maintaining an environmentally responsible, accountable and sustainable operation now and in the future.

STAY SAFE AROUND ELECTRICITY ON THE FARM

BY DAVID CHURCHWELL GM

Electrocution injuries can be quick and often deadly. According to the National Agricultural Safety Database, approximately 62 farmers die every year after being electrocuted. Others suffer burns and disturbances to heart rhythm that may result in heart failure.

As the farming season is in full swing, K.C. Electric Association reminds hard-working farmers and ranchers to stay safe. Overhead power lines are necessary to deliver electricity, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect. While you need to focus on the field and your machinery, I urge you to also watch for electric hazards around your farm or ranch.

BE AWARE:

- Farmers and their equipment should always be 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Practice extreme caution and use a spotter to make sure you stay far away from power lines when you use tall equipment.
- If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year to year.
- Power lines also may sag over the years due to the extreme weather conditions we experience. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact K.C. Electric to inspect the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.
- Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Guy wires used to stabilize utility poles are



DAVID CHURCHWELL, GM

grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call us to fix it; don't try to fix it yourself.

- Underground power lines also pose electrocution risk, as well as defective service wiring, extension cords and internal wiring in farm buildings.

WHAT IF YOU CONTACT A POWER LINE?

- Imagine that you are driving a tractor to the field when things come to a screeching halt. You look back to see what's stopping you, only to discover that you're tangled in an overhead power line. What do you do? First, DON'T climb out. If your equipment does contact a power line, stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others to stay away and wait until K.C. Electric crews arrive.
- Do not let your body become a direct link between the power line and the ground. If you must leave the tractor due to immediate danger (such as a fire), jump as far away as you can, making sure that no part of your body touches the tractor and the ground at the same time. Land with both feet together and shuffle with your feet a few inches at a time, making sure to never break contact with the ground or cause separation between your feet.
- Once you're off the tractor, do not go back until K.C. Electric crews arrive to assess the situation.

Electricity can't be seen or heard and moves near the speed of light, so please treat it with respect.

The Mullen Guitar Company

BY CALEB F. BRENT

Country fans out there— did you know we have a legend in our midst? Del Mullen, who lives northeast of Flagler, has played with Reba McEntire, and supplied steel guitars to Jason Aldean, Rascal Flatts and Garth Brooks to name a few. Just northeast of Flagler, you'll discover the Mullen Guitar Company. It is a worldwide company on the eastern plains. It definitely seems out of place, until you hear the story of Del and his wife, Dixie, the founders of the company.

Mullen Guitar Company is a world leader in the production of steel guitars. The complete production from raw material to finished guitar is done at the factory, that originally built farm equipment. It only takes five full-time employees to run the company. Current employees are the general manager and CEO Mike Mantey Jr., Jeannette Harbaugh, John Wilson, Dustin Huckeba and Josh Hall. John, the factory manager, said, "If we have to, we can make one guitar per day."

Each employee has a designated station. John does the finish work and assembles the guitars; Jeannette assembles the smaller pieces and is head of customer service; Dustin creates all the aluminum parts on mills, lathes and a large CNC machine; and Josh polishes the aluminum parts.

"We work together as a team, and our instruments are known worldwide."

"We've done thousands of guitars since the company was founded, and we ship them all over the world. We currently have dealers in China and Europe," Jeannette said.

"The company is currently averaging 10 guitars per month," Mike added. Mike is the grandson of Del and Dixie. Ten guitars may not sound like a lot, but these guitars aren't like any other guitar. They're something special. They're the world's best steel guitars.

There are three models of the Mullen steel guitar: the G2, the Discovery and the Royal Precision. Each one is designed to fit the player's needs. The Discovery is a lightweight model and is the most popular. The G2 model is the top-of-the-line steel guitar. And the Royal Precision is a special model with two necks.

It's hard to imagine what it would be like to build something that many celebrity country stars want. But that's exactly what the Mullen Guitar Company is doing. It's a special company. "What I like most about working here is that we are a family," Jeannette said. "We work together as a team, and our instruments are known worldwide."



Del Mullen (front) and the team at the Mullen Guitar Company.

"People will come up to me and tell me that so-and-so has one of your steel guitars — like a celebrity, you know," Del said. "I never got into that much. I was always focused on making the guitars and making a living. That's what it was about for me."

Del was born south of Seibert in January 1940 into a musical family and started playing the guitar at age 6. That wasn't the family's only talent. "My dad was very good at mechanics, and it came naturally to me," Del said. "That made it easy for me to design the guitars." Mullen steel guitars are known for their mechanical design and it's what sets them apart.

Del never planned to start a company that made steel guitars. He moved to Denver in his early 20s. He worked as an oil and gas professor at the Colorado School of Mines. On the weekends, he'd play guitar in bands to make a little extra money. At the time, Del had already built his first steel guitar. He didn't intend to sell it; he just wanted one.

When he was playing one night, a man asked him if he was willing to sell it. Since he knew that he could make another one, he sold his first steel guitar. Shortly after that, Del was laid off from the School of Mines due to a decline in the oil industry.

He had two options: build guitars or drive heavy equipment. "I enjoyed working with heavy equipment and playing in the dirt like a little kid, but when they planned to send me to Florida, that was the deal breaker for me."

While Del worked at the School of Mines, Dixie helped him build a few guitars for extra income. "She's the best machinist we've had," Del said. "The business would've never taken off without her. Dixie made parts exactly as I designed."

Del is not only an extraordinary designer and builder; he's also a great player. In the 1970s, he played at the National Western

Stock Show for four nights with an up-and-coming 16-year-old named Reba. Del joked, “She signed a record for me, saying that if she ever needed a steel guitar, she knew where to get one, but she never did.”

Del has played in countless shows over the years and has many good friends in the country music industry. One of his friends, Tommy White, played at the Oscars with Lady Gaga this past February. Del has also been backstage at the Grand Ole Opry.

Del’s steel guitar playing has even made it out of this world and into outer space. Steve Robinson, an astronaut and steel guitar player, came out to Seibert to tour the factory and took a CD of Del’s to play on his next mission. At the time, Del didn’t know he was an astronaut. After his mission, Steve told him, “There’s nothing like hearing your music in space.”

The Mullen Guitar Company was based out of Strasburg until it made its way to the plains. Mike took over management of the business in 1998 and continues to run it today. Del and Dixie plan to pass the business onto Mike someday, but they are currently enjoying retirement, living on the same property as the company factory. Del has preached at a local church in Seibert since 2007 and continues to help out with tuning the guitars before they are shipped out.

Del and Dixie exemplify what it takes to build a successful company. Even though he needed to make an income, Del wasn’t focused on making it big. He focused on mastering his craft and that propelled him to greatness. It’s a valuable lesson that we can all learn from. Focus on what matters, and things will work out.

Ethan Miner : Journeyman

Cheyenne Wells employee Ethan Miner recently completed K.C. Electric’s apprentice lineman program and has been promoted to journeyman lineman.

To be eligible to become a journeyman lineman, Ethan had to complete the Merchant’s Powerline Job Training and Safety Program and complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. Throughout this training, Ethan’s test scores and skill level were closely monitored by K.C. Electric’s apprenticeship committee. Upon completion of this rigorous apprenticeship program, K.C. Electric’s apprenticeship committee recommended to promote Ethan to the status of journeyman lineman.

Ethan will now utilize the skills he learned during his apprenticeship to safely complete daily tasks and will begin assisting in the training of current and future K.C. apprentices.

Congratulations and good job, Ethan.



Tenants Notice

Tenants in K.C. Electric’s service territory who rent or lease from a landlord who pays the monthly K.C. electric bill should take note. In situations of disconnection for nonpayment, the account owner will receive the monthly electric bill and the delinquent notice. As a tenant, you can also receive a copy of the monthly electric bill and any delinquent notices if both the account owner and tenant sign a bill delivery authorization.

Another option could be for the tenant to ensure their rental or lease agreement contains language detailing who is responsible for paying the electric bill and the ramifications if the electricity is disconnected for nonpayment. If you have any questions regarding K.C.’s bill delivery authorization, please contact the Hugo office.

Claim Your Savings

Each month, members have a chance to claim a \$10 credit on their next electric bill. All you must do is find your account number, call the Hugo office at 719-743-2431 and ask for your credit. The account numbers are listed below. How simple is that?

Jennifer Witt, Flagler - 530200002
Carlos Arnold, Seibert - 800200001

Darren Richards, Vona - 1114450002
Geoffrey Wolfe, Kit Carson - 718350001

In April, three consumers called to claim their savings: Robert Mayhan, Wild Horse; Cassandra Walsworth, Hugo; and Earl Helm, Cheyenne Wells.

Sinister Summer Storms

You might joke that you have a better chance of getting hit by lightning than winning the lottery, and you're right. According to the National Weather Service, there are an estimated 25 million lightning flashes in the United States each year, killing 28 people and injuring 252 annually. (Averages based on data from 2008 to 2017.)

The NWS tracks all kinds of storm data and publishes the odds of becoming struck by lightning. Your odds of being struck by lightning are 1 in 1,171,000 in any given year. Before you deny that might ever happen to you, consider a person's average life span, estimated at 80 years, and the odds drop to around 1 in 14,600. The odds of winning the Mega Millions jackpot is 1 in 302.6 million and the Powerball is 1 in 292.2 million, according to Lottery USA.

While there is little you can do to increase your chances of becoming a multimillionaire by winning a huge lottery, there are proactive steps you can take before and during a storm to stay safe. Safe Electricity and K.C. Electric offer the following weather-related reminders from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross and other safety organizations:

- Never seek shelter under an isolated tree, tower or utility pole since lightning tends to strike tall objects. Get away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.

- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, including wires, fences and golf clubs. Astonishingly, approximately 5% of annual lightning deaths and injuries in the United States happen on golf courses, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- Learn about your community's emergency warning for severe thunderstorms.
- Pick a safe place in your home for family members to gather during a thunderstorm. The location should be away from windows, skylights and glass doors that could be broken by strong winds or hail.
- Protect your animals by ensuring that any outside buildings that house them are structurally sound.
- Never talk on a landline telephone during a thunderstorm. Lightning could strike the building you are in, and the electricity will look for the quickest route to the ground via wiring.
- Know the difference between a watch and a warning. A severe thunderstorm watch means one is possible in and near the area. A severe thunderstorm warning means severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. A warning is serious and means that there is imminent danger to life and property.

The best way to protect yourself against lightning or other storm-related injury or death is to monitor the weather and cancel or delay outdoor activities when thunderstorms are forecast. Lightning can strike from 10 miles away, so if you can hear thunder, you are at risk for being struck by lightning.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Shedding some light on lightning

According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, lightning can strike in the same place twice (or pretty darn close), contrary to folk wisdom.

Also according to the NSSL and the National Weather Service:

- It is not possible to have thunder without lightning; thunder is a direct result of lightning. However, it is possible you might see lightning and not hear the thunder because it was too far away. Some people call this phenomenon "heat lightning" because it occurs most often in the summer.
- Lightning can have 100 million to 1 billion volts and contains billions of watts.
- When lightning travels down a tree trunk, its heat turns water to steam. If it gets under the bark into the surface moisture of the wood, the rapidly expanding steam can blast pieces of bark from the tree and the wood along the path is often killed.
- Lightning is hotter than the surface of the sun, and it can reach temperatures around 50,000 degrees.

A thunderstorm is considered severe if it produces hail at least 1 inch in diameter or has wind gusts of at least 58 miles per hour, according to the American Red Cross. Heavy rain from thunderstorms can cause flash flooding and high winds can damage homes and blow down trees and utility poles, causing widespread power outages.

