Effective Oct. 1, Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative will become members of a regional transmission organization (RTO) — the Southwest Power Pool. Both cooperatives will place their transmission systems into SPP. The power pool will charge a tariff to entities, including the transmission owners, to use the lines.

SPP membership will also provide access to a wider electricity market.

**What is the purpose of SPP?**

It manages a single transmission tariff, putting all transmission into one bundle and issuing a charge to use the transmission, paid by all entities, including the transmission owners.

SPP operates an electricity market into which generation is bid.

**Why is Corn Belt Power joining?**

The need to respond to compliance regulations is a driving force for Corn Belt Power choosing to place its transmission system in SPP, as Western Area Power Administration is no longer a balancing authority and Mid-Continent Area Power Pool will soon not operate as a planning authority. SPP will fulfill both of those roles. As Corn Belt Power joins SPP Oct. 1, its 161 kilovolt and looped 69 kilovolt transmission lines along with its radial lines with two or more transmission customers will be included in the power pool.

**How does an RTO change access to power markets?**

An RTO offers the opportunity to buy or sell power to a wider area due to the elimination of several transmission fees being added on top of each other. Members of an RTO pay one fee, regardless of where the power they buy or sell needs to go.

**Why is Basin Electric joining?**

Joining an RTO means Basin Electric and its members will have access to the market when Basin Electric needs to buy power or has surplus power to sell.

**How will membership affect operations at Corn Belt Power?**

- Corn Belt Power will still have the same responsibilities for maintaining and operating its system. There will be no reduction in Corn Belt Power employees due to the SPP membership.
- Being part of a bigger entity can help protect Corn Belt Power's transmission lines from outages and overloads. It also helps better coordinate transmission use on a broader scale.
- With Basin Electric being able to buy and sell power in a wider market, all members of Basin Electric should benefit from stabilized costs and more limited risk.
- SPP reports some excess capacity in the next few years, which will allow Basin Electric to buy power to meet its short-term needs until the cooperative adds more generation to its portfolio.
- Corn Belt Power will give up managing its own tariff, but the rest of the changes involve moving from one organization — MAPP — to another — SPP.
- Control center staff will learn a new outage scheduling process.
- Since 69 kilovolt lines are also included in the power pool along with the 161 kilovolt lines, the requirement that maintenance outages be scheduled 10 days in advance may reduce the flexibility of Corn Belt Power crews’ work schedule.
Above | Carla Hofmaster, left, environmental/safety coordinator, uses smoke to test the fit of a respirator worn by Cody Montgomery, control operator, while Rod Stephas, shift operator, waits to have his respirator tested next. The annual testing assures the equipment continues to be used properly.

**Annual respirator training keeps employees safe**

Clean shaven and with the classroom portion of training behind them, Corn Belt Power Cooperative’s Wisdom Station employees demonstrated their knowledge and technique for using respirators during an annual safety test July 15.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires training to be completed annually for all employees who use respirators. When they are first hired, new power plant employees must have a physical to test their lung capacity. The annual qualitative respirator fit test assures employees continue to use the equipment properly.

Wisdom employees use respirators when they work in dusty environments or when inhalants could cause a problem — during painting jobs or fuel spills, for example. The safety devices keep particles out of lungs and protect workers from fumes that could affect the nervous and respiratory systems, explains Carla Hofmaster, environmental/safety coordinator.

The training helps assure a proper fit for two different models of respirators — the 3M - N95 white mask used for dust and the 3M - 7500 half mask that includes two filters. During the test, employees fit each style of mask around their faces and test for a tight seal. Clean-shaven faces are necessary to get the best results.

Hofmaster then breaks a glass vial of irritant smoke to test that the masks fit tightly enough to keep each employee from smelling the smoke, assuring the masks will provide the protection needed.

All employees who work at Wisdom Station are tested annually. The 3M - N95 white masks are available in “one size fits most” and are disposable. The half masks come in three sizes and have filters that are replaced for each use. The rest of the unit can be cleaned with soap and water.

For some projects that are especially dusty and could result in debris getting into eyes, a full face mask is also available.

Hofmaster says the employees see the annual training as a necessary part of their jobs to work safely. “We have a lot of different environments at the plant. We need to be covered for whatever comes up so we can keep the guys safe. We have a long-term employment history here, so we make sure when they retire, they are still in good shape.”

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**EPA’s Clean Power Plan will increase electric bills**

Corn Belt Power Cooperative is concerned final regulations released Aug. 3 from the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon emissions from existing power plants will dramatically increase electric bills member-owners pay.

Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, explains, “Because we have substantially invested in coal-fueled generation as the lowest cost resource for our member co-ops, this rule greatly affects Corn Belt Power and the co-ops we serve.”

This year, approximately 65 percent of all of the electricity Corn Belt Power’s member co-ops will deliver to their member-owners will be generated with coal. The new regulations call for a 32 percent reduction in carbon emissions from plants by 2030. Currently, no commercially available technology exists to control carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion.

Not only will the new regulations significantly increase costs to operate coal-fueled generation, but the new EPA mandates could potentially force the premature shutdown of power plants. The burden of paying off the remaining debt on those plants and paying for electricity from
Jim Vermeer, vice president, business development, has been elected first vice president of the National Rural Economic Development Association. In his role, he will be responsible for chairing next year’s annual conference in Charleston, S.C.

Iowa State Fair

Above | Meghan Zach, member of the Exira Explorers 4-H club, puts a magnet on the map to mark her electric co-op, Guthrie County REC, at the Touchstone Energy display at the Iowa State Fair. Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa once again sponsored the 4-H Exhibits Building.

‘Power of Co-op Membership’ promoted at Iowa State Fair

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa sponsored the 4-H Exhibits Building at the Iowa State Fair Aug. 13-23, promoting the benefits of electric cooperative membership.

Located inside the 4-H Exhibits Building on the south end of the fairgrounds, the Touchstone Energy display showcased all Iowa cooperatives on a map of Iowa. Magnetic “markers” were available for fairgoers to place on the state map to show their membership. A scan-able “QR” code allowed fairgoers to register to win a GoPro® digital video camera kit. One winner will be chosen, at random, following the close of the fair.

Cooperative members have a voice in how cooperatives are run, making sure their co-ops enhance quality of life by providing affordable, reliable electricity. Co-ops encourage members to save money through responsible energy use and offer discounts on products and services members use every day.

Plug in to learn more about the benefits of co-op membership.

Go to www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Loan to be used for new housing subdivision

In July, Corn Belt Power loaned $150,000 from its Revolving Loan Fund to the Coon Rapids Development Group. CRDG will use the funds to construct its third housing subdivision.

Corn Belt Power partnered with Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, which loaned $350,000 and donated $180,000 toward the project.

Humboldt County Housing receives loans

Corn Belt Power, Midland Power and Homeward loaned funds to Humboldt County Housing Development Corporation for the 14th Building Trades house. Corn Belt Power and Midland Power each loaned $75,000 and Homeward loaned $100,000 for the project that is located in the Eagle Ridge addition, Humboldt.

The Building Trades program is a course taught by Iowa Central Community College in which Humboldt High School students get hands-on experience constructing a home. The basement of the home has been dug and the foundation poured. Construction is planned to be completed in May 2016.

Other sources will fall on co-op member-owners, not shareholders. Stranded debts and reduced capacity will increase co-op member-owners’ electric bills, jeopardize reliability and threaten thousands of American jobs.

Additionally, new generation sources — whether they be natural gas-fired, wind, solar, hydroelectric or nuclear — cost more than existing electric generation resources, further increasing electricity rates co-op member-owners will pay.

Corn Belt Power and its member cooperatives have demonstrated their commitment to a sustainable environment by making substantial investments to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy, both of which help reduce carbon emissions. Most recently, Corn Belt Power converted its Wisdom Unit 1, Spencer, Iowa, from burning coal to operating on natural gas with fuel oil as a backup. Also, Corn Belt Power and its member co-ops have invested millions of dollars in load management systems to help reduce peak demand and delay addition of new generating sources.

Additionally, Corn Belt Power’s member cooperatives have connected 100 small renewable projects to their lines, including 50 wind projects, 42 solar projects and eight projects that generate electricity with both wind and solar.

Corn Belt Power will work with Basin Electric and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to evaluate and potentially challenge the new regulations to make sure electric cooperative member-owners continue to have affordable, reliable electricity.

Vermeer elected to NREDA post
Mike Coleman, director, Midland Power Cooperative, demonstrates the Touchstone Energy value of commitment to community by participating in the Humboldt County Farm Bureau’s “Adopt a Farmer” program and inviting students from Taft Elementary School to his family’s farm.

Coleman talked about various equipment farmers use to produce corn and soybeans. The students had the opportunity to climb into the driver’s seat of a tractor.

He says, “We started working with the program because we like to give back to the community. It’s for the kids. It’s important to teach them about agriculture, especially since there are fewer and fewer farmers.”

Compressed air training helps save energy

Corn Belt Power Cooperative and its member cooperatives encourage industrial and agricultural members who use compressed air in their operations to discover energy savings by learning how to best manage their compressed air systems.

The Iowa Energy Center will host two training sessions in Ankeny — “Fundamentals of Compressed Air Systems” on Oct. 20, and “Advanced Management of Compressed Air Systems” on Oct. 21-22. Corn Belt Power will cover half of the registration costs for members who attend.

Register by Sept. 18 at iowaenergycenter.org.