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## **WESTAR ENERGY EXPANDS RELIABILITREE INTO MANHATTAN, TOPEKA**

### **Program will improve reliability, support safety initiatives.**

TOPEKA, Kan., Jan. 3, 2012 — Keeping the lights on and improving safety for customers are the goals of Westar Energy’s ReliabiliTree program. The program is expanding to include Manhattan and Topeka.

Trees contacting power lines are a leading cause of power outages and ReliabiliTree improves electric service reliability by keeping harmful limbs away from those lines. 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 through community meetings and mass media.

“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,” Elsie Eisenbarth, director, support services, said. “As we’ve witnessed in Wichita and in Lawrence, ReliabiliTree significantly improves electric reliability and customer satisfaction.”

ReliabiliTree began in the Wichita area as a pilot program in 2010. Since its launch, Westar has cleared 70 percent of Wichita's circuits and reduced the number of tree-related power outages in those circuits by more than 60 percent. ReliabiliTree expanded into Lawrence in late 2011. To date, tree-related power outages on the cleared circuits have been reduced by 67 percent.

Customer education is an important component of the ReliabiliTree program. Westar will provide customers a door hanger, including information about the ReliabiliTree program and pruning practices, prior to work being done. Westar will also use other avenues for customer education including presenting at community meetings and mass media.

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. Additional program information is available at [www.WestarEnergy.com/tree](http://www.WestarEnergy.com/tree).

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 through community meetings and mass media.
- For more information about ReliabiliTree and to check the line clearance schedule to see when ReliabiliTree will be in your area, visit [www.WestarEnergy.com/tree](http://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. For more information about Westar Energy, visit us on the Internet at <http://www.WestarEnergy.com>. Westar Energy is on Facebook: [www.Facebook.com/WestarEnergyInc](http://www.Facebook.com/WestarEnergyInc) and Twitter: [www.Twitter.com/WestarEnergy](http://www.Twitter.com/WestarEnergy).