



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

A Message from Your General Manager, Rollie Miller

Latest news from your cooperative

District Meetings

In early January we completed the District Meetings for the three board positions up for election, namely District 3 (North Helena, Lump Gulch and Townsend), District 8 (Dillon South) and District 9 (Lima Dell). Tom Helm, Jim Petersen and Allen Martinell are the current trustees in those districts respectively. A quorum of 15 members from the district is required to conduct the meetings. All three districts received a quorum, and Tom Helm and Allen Martinell were both re-nominated from their districts. Jim Petersen has decided to step down at the completion of his term, and therefore Mark Boka and Tom Mitchell were nominated as candidates for the Dillon South district. There is also an opportunity for prospective board candidates to be nominated from the floor of the annual meeting taking place March 6th at the auditorium on the campus of University of Montana-Western. All the candidates properly nominated will be voted on at this annual meeting by the members in attendance. The notice for the annual meeting will be mailed to all the members mid to late February according to the by-laws. The next issue of this magazine will be dedicated to your annual meeting.

A New Year

At the December Board Meeting the Board approved the 2020 Capital and Operating Budget. We have a very busy year ahead of us. Some of the major projects we have planned are 1) Rebuilding approximately seven miles of 69-kilovolt transmission line over Butch Hill between Bannack and Jackson 2) Replacing the 69kV oil circuit breaker on line serving the Jackson and Wisdom areas 3) Rebuilding several miles of three-phase line north of Dillon on Highway 91 4) Rebuilding several miles of three-phase line south of Twin Bridges along Highway 41 and finally 5) Replacing approximately 230 poles in various locations as a result of our ongoing pole-testing program. In addition we have several small-

er jobs in the Townsend and Three Forks area. As far as equipment goes, we plan on spending approximately \$205,000 on replacing three vehicles and purchasing a new mini-excavator for the Townsend crew. In total, that's almost \$3 million worth of capital upgrades, which is an aggressive budget for us for sure.

Safety

I am very pleased and proud of the guys and gals for another year of working without a loss-time accident. In fact, we went the year without any recordable incidents on our Occupational Safety and Health Administration Form 300. That is three years in a row without any loss-time accidents. The last time we went two years without a loss-time accident was back in 1984. So again, kudos to the entire team for working together to make sure we all come home at night safely. That is what it takes...All of us watching out for one another. Nothing makes me happier than signing one of those OSHA Form 300s with all 0s across the bottom.

Jim Petersen

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Jim for his more than 42 years of dedicated service to Vigilante Electric Cooperative. He has been an excellent board member representing member interests not only in the Dillon

South district, but the entire service territory. He was the chairman of the board when I started here, and has been a respected friend and mentor my entire time here. He also participated on the Vigilante Electric Cooperative Safety Committee and the Montana Energy Alliance Board. His historical perspectives on various issues will be missed. Thanks again, Jim!!!



2020 Annual Meeting of Members

Why should you attend?

We are currently making preparations for our annual meeting. For the trustees, management and staff of Vigilante Electric Cooperative, this is the most important event of the year, the culmination of all the activities from the previous year. As a member, why should this matter to you, and why should you attend the annual meeting? Simply put, the annual meeting is about you.

Cooperatives are different because we adhere to a set of core principles. Principle #2: Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. As a member, the annual meeting is the best opportunity to participate in this process.

The 82nd annual meeting of members will be held on March 6, 2020, at the Beier Auditorium on the campus of the University of Montana-Western. Registration will be held in the foyer of the auditorium beginning at 10 a.m. with the meeting to follow at 11 a.m.

Members will hear our leadership discuss cooperative issues, recap events of the previous year, participate in trustee elections, vote on bylaw changes and receive information regarding our financial status.

For members who attend the meeting, a ticket will be provided at the time of registration for lunch. At the conclusion of the business meeting, members are welcome to move



over to Mathews Hall, where lunch will be served in the Lewis and Clark Room, and in the campus cafeteria. Members can choose from a prime rib sandwich or lemon butter cod, and are welcome to stay and eat at their leisure and catch up with old friends and members.

Attending members will receive a gift at registration, be eligible for wonderful door prizes at the end of the meeting, and be treated to a delicious meal. Watch for your formal invitation in the mail. We hope to see you there.

Off the Clock

Longtime Receptionist Retires

After nearly 21 years of service to our organization, Barb Delano has retired. For those of you who would drop your payment off at our office, Barb was most likely the person who greeted you and provided assistance.

"I enjoyed working with Barb. She was very punctual and dependable. She worked very well with the members at the front counter." General Manager Rollie Miller said.

In fact, Barb's easy demeanor with customers was a valuable asset because she made their experience more like talking to a neighborhood friend, and not just an employee at the power company. We would like to thank Barb for her dedicated service and wish her years full of bowling, books and happiness.



Vigilante Awards Second Safety Grant

In early 2017, Vigilante Electric introduced our Safety Roundup program. Vigilante Safety Roundup provides our members with a way to donate to the organizations in our communities that keep us safe. In January 2019 we awarded the first of what we hope to be many grants from the Safety Roundup programs. We are now excited to announce our second grant to the Broadwater County Sheriff's office.

Late last year, the Broadwater County Sheriff's Office reached out to us about a community safety program they were developing. Their plan is to provide educational material to children in preschool and older. Topics include safety, drug prevention, bullying, identity theft, Internet safety and safety for seniors.

As an electric cooperative, we follow seven core principles; Principle Seven is Concern for Community, and this request aligns with that principle. At the December meeting of our board of trustees, this request was presented by General Manager Rollie Miller. After some discussion, the board of trustees awarded the Broadwater County Sheriff's Office \$300 to help with this campaign.

We would like to thank the Broadwater County Sheriff's Office for bringing this to our attention, and we are happy to be able to participate. We would also like to thank all of the members who participate in this program. Without you, this program and donations such as this would not be possible.

For those of you unfamiliar with our Safety Roundup program, it is a voluntary program where members allow us

to round their bill up to the next whole dollar, or add a few extra dollars each month, or they can make a one-time donation. Regardless of how the donations are made, 100 percent of the money will be presented to worthy organizations through grants. Individually, these donations don't go far, but when members come together, we can make a difference.

If you would like to participate, learn more about this program, or if you need information about submitting a grant request, contact our office for more details at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 328

Total Contributions: \$3,798.73

To apply, contact our office at

(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Home Conservation

Little Steps Can Save A Lot

Investing in energy efficiency may sound like it requires a lot of effort, time and money, but it doesn't have to. While there are certainly high-impact and high-cost measures that can be done, there are also smaller steps you can take to make your home more energy efficient, help you save energy and money, and improve comfort.

One of the simplest things you can do is shut off your electronics, appliances and lights when they are not being used. Some electronics, such as televisions, can draw power even when turned "off," in what is known as phantom loads or vampire draw.

This also occurs for smartphone chargers that are not connected. To avoid those pesky energy-sucking creatures, consider completely unplugging them or shutting off the power strips they are connected to. You can also consider a smart power strip, which has certain outlets that can cut

power to electronics not in use.

Change out old lighting to light-emitting diode (LED) technology. LEDs last 20-30 times longer than incandescent bulbs while saving more than 75 percent on energy. The features to pay most attention to with LEDs are lumens (how bright the bulb is) and color temperature (how warm or cool the light is). A 10-watt LED can emit the same light as a 60-watt incandescent.

Replacing the air filter(s) on your heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system can help keep the air in your home clean by reducing particles and other pollutants. A clean filter also allows your HVAC system to run more smoothly and efficiently because it does not have to work as hard to get air out. Most air filters should be changed every one to three months.

Set your thermostat to "auto" and keep an eye on tem-

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Conservation

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peratures. Setting your thermostat fan to “auto” will ensure that it is running only when it is supposed to, and only when the system is heating or cooling. When the fan is “on,” it is running constantly and can add up to \$50 per month. Also, try to keep your thermostat to the coolest comfortable temperature in the winter. Depending on your daily schedule, you may consider investing in a programmable or smart thermostat to automatically set temperatures when heating.

Have your duct work checked for leaks. Leaks at the return, air handler and supply can be a major source of high bills. In mobile homes, check for leaks at the grill, cross-over duct and down-flow air handler.

Use your laundry and dishwasher only when the loads are full. Use cold water when possible for general clothes washing. Hot water can be saved for bedding, or stained or soiled clothes. When dishwashing, try air-drying instead of heat drying.

Invest in low-flow showerheads and faucets. Low-flow showerheads and faucets use fewer gallons per minute (gpm) of water, and can save money and energy by reducing demand on your water heater. Look for one with the Water-

Sense label, which indicates the product met criteria set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce energy use without compromising performance.

When ready to purchase a new appliance or electronic, look for the Energy Star label. Energy Star is a program through the EPA and U.S. Department of Energy that promotes and supports energy-efficiency products. Appliances and electronics with the Energy Star designation have gone through testing to ensure they perform as expected and reduce energy consumption. A huge number of products can be certified by Energy Star, including refrigerators, ceiling fans, light bulbs and washing machines.

These simple actions are low-cost ways to improve your home’s energy efficiency, increase savings and enhance comfort. Some can be done one time and not thought about again for years (e.g., changing light bulbs and faucets), others require maintenance every few months (e.g., replacing filters), and the rest are behavior changes or things to keep an eye on as you go about your day (e.g., temperature settings, turning off electronics). But what they all have in common is their ability to increase comfort while saving you energy and money.

This article was provided by Advanced Energy, a nonprofit energy consulting firm. For more information, visit www.advancedenergy.org.

Four Tips for Winter Safety

By Abby Berry

It’s no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers use additional electrical devices and appliances, such as space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1. Don’t overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections — they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you’re relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you’re using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room.

Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you’re using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risk for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads — look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home’s electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.