


VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049
(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271
Web site: www.vec.coop
E-mail: contact@vec.coop



OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

A Message from Your Manager

As I write my first column I have been your general manager for the last three months. I have started getting to know the employees and some of the members, and look forward to continuing that process. I am very happy with the current state of our cooperative, from the wholesale power supply side to the staff, to the state of the poles and wires utilized to serve you, to the board of trustees. Based on my experience, we have a very good cooperative here, and I intend to do what I can to keep it that way. I am very pleased and humbled to be working for such a great organization.

Annual Meeting

As reported last month in this forum, the Vigilante Electric Cooperative annual meeting was a great success. We had speakers from the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association and Western Montana G&T. Kathy Simkins at the University of Montana – Western (UM-W) did an outstanding job with the meal as I have heard numerous positive comments. Mark your calendars as next year's annual meeting will be March 7, again at UM-W.

Power Supply

As you may know Vigilante Electric receives its wholesale power from the Bonneville Power Administration. For the most part the power comes from hydro dams in the northwest, although in recent years there has been integration of wind generation. A nuclear plant

also serves to complete the wholesale power portfolio. With the recent appointment of former general manager of Western Montana G&T Bill Drummond to the top post at BPA, rest assured that our southwest Montana power supply concerns will be heard. As I reported during our annual meeting, we have the lowest wholesale power rates in the state and the second lowest of the more than 800 electric cooperative systems surveyed in the country.

State Legislation

With the numerous bills that have been or currently are in front of the state legislators in Helena affecting electric cooperatives, our Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association delegation has been busy. From what we have been informed through weekly phone conference calls it appears we as cooperatives have fared pretty well. Member-owned electric cooperatives are dramatically different from investor-owned utilities such as NorthWestern Energy, and the two, need to be treated differently. Our delegation in Helena has commented numerous times that this legislative session has been much more productive than the last couple. With problems associated with the Montana-Alberta Tie Line (MATL), among other things, eminent domain legislation has dominated the session, and we have been informed that no electric cooperative in the state has ever used the eminent domain power granted to it in its enabling

statutes. We have always found a way to address landowner concerns when trying to build new powerlines serving the members. That is the cooperative way.

Irrigation Season is Upon Us

During the summer months the Vigilante Electric load doubles because of the irrigation systems operating. This is the time of year that we are stressing the substations, powerlines, protective equipment and transformers the most. Our engineering Department works very hard to ensure all of the equipment is operating as planned during this period. If you plan to upgrade your irrigation equipment at a specific service please let us know so that we can make sure the equipment serving it is sized accordingly. In addition, we have the ability to read the meters from the office with our automated meter reading system, which greatly enhances our ability to more efficiently locate outages and check service loading.

Thanks for allowing us to serve you, the members of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. We do not take that task lightly, and we will do what we can to ensure a safe, reliable, affordable electricity product. If you need to contact me personally please feel free to call the office at (406) 683-2327. You also can reach me via email at rollie@vec.coop or on my mobile phone at (406) 925-1085.



Rollie Miller
General Manager

Trustees

President

Dean Peterson

Vice President

Dean Hanson

Secretary/Treasurer

Sharon Lasich

Tom Helm

Andy Johnson

Don Jones

Allen Martinell

Jim Petersen

Norm Tebay

General Manager

Rollie Miller

Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271**

Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.
Dan Snellman683-6222
Tim Myllymaki683-6369
Charles Wharton.....660-1878

Weekends

**683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271**

Whitehall

After Hours and Weekends
Marty Simons287-3950
John Moos266-3605
Justin Bair266-3351

Townsend

After Hours and Weekends
John Moos266-3605
Justin Bair266-3351
Marty Simons287-3950

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JORDAN PETERSON TO ATTEND YOUTH TOUR IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

On June 14, Jordan Peterson embarks on a journey as Vigilante Electric Cooperative's representative to the 2013 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., Jordan attends Beaverhead County High School and is the daughter of Clay and Stephanie Peterson of Wisdom.

The Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., has evolved from 400 students from three states to more than 1,500 students from 44 states. During the week, participants tour the city and many of its historical treasures, visit with their state's congressional delegation, and participate in youth rallies and socials attended by all participants from the represented states.

This is the 11th year that Vigilante Electric Cooperative has participated in this program, with Jordan being the second student from Beaverhead County High School to attend. On behalf of Vigilante Electric, I would like to congratulate Jordan on her selection and we look forward to hearing and reading about her trip.

As in previous years, the participant for this tour was selected through an essay contest. This year's essay topic was: *"Cooperatives are member-owned and controlled, as a future decision maker for your cooperative, describe the best ways we can connect and communicate with you."* The following is a reprint of Jordan's essay:

I live in a rural area and my family has been a user of Vigilante Electric since it began. Communicating and staying connected can be

hard, but through social media, local radio and brochures, Vigilante Electric can easily inform its members.

In the 21st century, technology has become an integral part of our daily lives; therefore social media is a great way of communication. One way to reach technologically inclined members is to make a Vigilante Electric Facebook page. Making a page is simple and there are millions of users on Facebook, including myself. The average person spends 46 minutes per day on Facebook. Demographics show that people of all ages are on Facebook. On your page you could update recent news, what scholarships are available and show contact information for Vigilante Electric. This will keep members informed and more high school students will be aware of your scholarships. People can see when their friends endorse your business by linking your page or connecting with it, and it can influence their own purchasing decisions. Technology is here to stay. Use it and embrace it to get linked with your members.

Many people listen to the radio every day. Vigilante Electric could air a short ad on the

local radio station. It could point out the advantages of being a consumer with VEC. This could serve the consumer better and keep customers satisfied. If you successfully tested radio ads on the local radio, you could consider running ads on many radio stations at the same time. This will reach people who rarely switch stations. One of the best times to air these ads would be during community events, such as sports games, when a majority of the community is tuned in.

Finally, Vigilante Electric could make a brochure. The brochure could contain all the information about Vigilante Electric, what it does for its users, and how users can take the next step in working with

Vigilante. Sending out brochures with bills and patronage checks could answer many users' questions. The brochures would be available at the Vigilante Office. Realtors could also give them to people interested in buying a house, so they could see the value in being a consumer with VEC as opposed to the competitor. Brochures are a good way for people to read at their leisure.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative gives back to its users, supplying them with low-cost and very dependable power with minimal outages. I believe with social media, local radio, and brochures, Vigilante Electric will always be connected with its members.



Abandoned Services

By Rod Siring, Member Services

One of the responsibilities of the board of trustees and the management of Vigilante Electric Cooperative is to write, review and approve company policy. Policies are guidelines on how certain circumstances are to be dealt with. Policies are drafted by management and approved by the board to ensure equity, fairness and consistency. Recently, we have updated our policy that deals with abandoned services.

Members have the option of disconnecting an electrical service for up to one year when the service is not in

use. We refer to this as an idle service. Over the years, this has been common with stock wells.

While a service is in idle status, the assets needed to bring electricity to that location are still in place but are not generating revenue. The basis for this policy is the determination of when disconnected services are to be considered abandoned, and the procedure to follow before an abandoned service is removed.

A review of disconnected services is done by the line superintendent. Services that have been disconnected for one year are considered to be

abandoned and are subject to removal. The line superintendent will review his findings and recommendations with the general manager.

On the services being considered for removal, the property owners will be notified and presented with two options. The member can reconnect the service and start paying the monthly service charges, or at our discretion the line extension and/or service will be removed.

It is important the members who have services that are subject to removal take some time to seriously weigh these two options.

Reconstruction of an abandoned service where the facilities are removed will be done according to our normal line extension policy.

There is a New Member to Our Energy Efficiency Team Bitterroot RC&D

For years, Vigilante Electric has teamed with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in providing incentives for energy efficiency projects. The largest portion of these incentives has been for irrigation upgrades. While our programs have been very successful, we still are missing opportunities. To help identify these opportunities, we are teaming with Bitterroot Resource, Conservation & Development (RC&D).

Bitterroot RC&D has contracted Rich Norquist, a retired National Resources Conservation Service agricultural engineer, to outreach to our members with irrigation accounts to find efficiency opportunities. Rich's skill set and experience will lend itself well in these efforts. Rich will be meeting directly with our members and communicating his findings to us.

If you have entertained the thought of doing irrigation upgrades, contact us first. We will provide you with program details, incentive potentials and make arrangements for Rich to meet with you about your project. Contact Rod Siring at our Dillon office at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

CONTRACTOR WORK 2013

Our mission is to provide the most reliable service at the lowest possible cost. While outages will occur, we try to minimize them through an ongoing testing and maintenance program.

Each year a different segment of our system is checked to identify rotten poles and loose hardware.

When problems are found we do our best to correct them in a timely manner. To aid us, we use contractors for pole testing and, on occasion, pole changes and to address hardware issues. Starting in May, we will have two contractors working in our service territory.

Independent Inspection Company of Havre will test

poles around Buxton, Divide and Wise River. Western Line Builders from Nevada will do pole changes and maintenance in the Centennial Valley.

We don't anticipate many outages, but there may be a few taken for safety reasons. We ask for your patience and understanding in this effort.



Affordable. Innovative. Member Focused.

It's hard to predict the future, but one thing seems certain—**new government regulations will increase the cost of electricity.**

We want to work with you to keep your electric bills **AFFORDABLE**. We're controlling costs and no matter what the future holds we'll continue to put you, our members, **FIRST**.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative

Find out how we're Looking Out for You at www.vec.coop

Looking Out for You