

# 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](http://www.vec.coop)  
 E-mail: [contact@vec.coop](mailto:contact@vec.coop)

## Getting to know the Vigilante Electric Cooperative Board

- Name: Donald H. Jones
- Family: Don and Liz, his wife of 54 years, have three children, Keith, Yvonne and Jodi.
- Occupation: Ranchers
- Education: Beaverhead County High School
- Military Experience: United States Army, 1953-1955
- District: Don represents District #5, covering Wise River, Silver Bow and Melrose
- Years on the Board: 53
- Positions held on board and board appointments: Past board president – twice. Past secretary/treasurer. Past vice president. Served on the Western Montana G&T board. Served 30 years on the Montana Electric Cooperatives’

- Association board, serving on the executive committee and for 11 years as vice chairman. Don also represented Vigilante Electric Cooperative on the Northwinds Publishing and Printing board.
- What are the current challenges facing Vigilante Electric? Rates – keeping rates affordable while maintaining reliable service. Government regulations and rules i.e., endangered species and working toward common-sense solutions.
- What are the long-term issues facing Vigilante Electric? Long-term power supply contracts at reasonable rates.
- Any hobbies? Reading



Don Jones

### 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*

## Don Jones Stepping Down from Vigilante Electric Board

For the past 53 years, Don Jones has represented District #5 – Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose — on the Vigilante Electric Cooperative Board of

Trustees. At the November board meeting, Don announced that this year would be his last.

During Don’s tenure he has served the Vigilante Electric board in every capacity. Don also has represented us with distinction at the regional and statewide level. A proper tribute will be paid to Don in these pages in the coming months. For now, we would like to thank Don for his years of service and wish him well in the future.

With Don’s departure from the board, a vacancy exists for the District #5 trustee position. The term length is three years. If you are interested, information regarding the responsibilities of trustees and the procedures for getting on the ballot, contact General Manager Rollie Miller in our Dillon office at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.



## Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

### Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.  
*Dan Snellman*.....683-6222  
*Gary Ferris* .....683-6321  
*Cody Tarter* .....925-3326  
*Charles Wharton* 660-1878

### Weekends

683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

### Whitehall

After Hours and Weekends  
*Marty Simons* .....287-3950  
*Chuck Romero*.....287-3144  
*John Moos* .....266-3605

### Townsend

After Hours and Weekends  
*John Moos* .....266-3605  
*Justin Bair* .....266-3351  
*Chase White* .....459-3892  
*Marty Simons* .....287-3950

# 2015 District Meetings

With Vigilante Electric Cooperative's annual meeting approaching, it is time to announce the dates, locations and times for the 2015 district meetings. District meetings serve two important functions: It is where nominations are made for district trustee, and it provides a forum for open discussion about the affairs of the cooperative.

Vigilante Electric's service territory is divided into nine districts. Each district has an elected representative on the board of trustees who serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six experienced trustees at all times. District meetings provide members interested in running for the board or supporting a candidate the opportunity of securing a nomination. The actual election is held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

The district meetings also provide those who are not able to attend the annual meeting the opportunity to hear about the state of the cooperative from General Manager Rollie Miller. Because the district meetings are less formal than the annual meeting, they provide the member with an excellent opportunity to interact with the manager and staff members who may be in attendance.

This year's district meetings are as follows:

- District # 4 Twin Bridges - January 14, 2015 – 7 p.m.  
Montana Room, Twin Bridges High School
- District # 5 Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose -  
January 20, 2015 – 7 p.m. Grange Hall, Divide
- District # 7 Jackson/Wisdom - January 15, 2015 – 7 p.m.  
Community Center, Wisdom

Members residing within these districts are notified by mail regarding the meeting for their district. If you would like further information regarding the district meetings or running for district trustee, please call us at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

## Prescription Discount Tracker



Total Paid Claims YTD.....	327
Total Savings YTD .....	\$10,431.01
Total Savings Percentage .....	41.48%
November Paid Claims .....	16
November Savings .....	\$744.33
November Savings Percentage .....	42.32%

# Distributed Generation — A Regional Perspective

When it comes to distributed generation (wind or solar), there is one question that gets asked over and over. Does Vigilante Electric Cooperative offer incentives for the installation of distributed generation? The answer is no, but to understand why you need to know a little about what drives conservation and energy efficiency in the Northwest.

On December 5, 1980, Congress passed the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, which authorized the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington to form the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. The Northwest Power Act directs the council to prepare a plan to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife of the Columbia River Basin that have been affected by the construction and operation of hydroelectric dams, while also assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable electric power supply.

If this seems complex that's because it is. In simplest terms for power supply side, this means making the best use of the energy produced by the 31 hydroelectric dams that make up the Federal Columbia River Power System to ensure future needs.

According to the Regional Technical Forum (RTF), the advisory committee that develops standards to evaluate conservation savings potential, it is estimated that energy efficiency can meet 80 percent of the region's rising electric demand over the next 20 years. Energy efficiency is a means of conserving electricity by reducing the amount of energy needed to do the same amount of work.

Therefore, the current emphasis of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and Vigilante Electric is on acquiring all available cost-effective conservation by promoting and investing in energy-efficiency measures and projects. This is using conservation locally and regionally as a way to reduce long-term need, and thereby, the long-term cost of electricity.

A significant amount of research is dedicated to what is and what is not determined to be cost-effective conservation. Currently, small-scale renewable energy projects — specifically as it relates to distributed generation — are not deemed to be cost-effective by the RTF. However, as technology in distributed energy and storage advances and costs decline, this may not always hold true.

At this time Vigilante Electric Cooperative is only administering energy-efficiency programs that have been approved by the RTF and/or are BPA qualified. The program offerings are diverse and work well for our service territory. Over the last 15 months, we have provided our members with more than \$197,000 in incentives for energy-efficiency projects, and saved more than 1 million kilowatt hours.

## Skin in the game

By Adam Schwartz

The following is from the International Cooperative Alliance summary of the third cooperative principle, Members' Economic Participation:

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

So what do those words mean? Let's take a closer look. Chances are when you joined Vigilante Electric Cooperative you paid a deposit. That is your part of the equity or your share of ownership (members contribute equitably to the capital of their cooperative). You also do something else every month that allows your co-op to keep the lights on — pay your bill!

As a member, you have a say (democratically control) through your elected board of directors. The board sets the strategic direction of the cooperative, then the management and staff put that direction into action through the operations of the co-op.

At the end of the fiscal year, if your co-op has received

more money than it needed for expenses, a portion is set aside for reserves (this is how members allocate surplus reserves), which is like a savings account for the co-op. So if a storm or flood comes through, the co-op will have the funds to do the needed repairs. The remaining amount is allocated to each member based on how much electricity they used during the year (benefiting members in proportion to their transactions). This is the amount you will see as a capital credits check.

While the safe, reliable and affordable provision of electricity is most important, your co-op does many other things, too. Vigilante Electric provides support to many charitable organizations, provides educational opportunities to area students, and donates time and equipment in support of various organizations — just to name a few.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is not some large power company headquartered in a far-off state with stockholders from around the world. We are right here, we are your neighbors. We were formed by neighbors and friends who came together with the goal to improve the quality of our lives through electricity. Our goal is to continue to do that by improving the quality of your life with the same neighborly approach.

Our cooperative principles guide us, and through your economic participation (a.k.a. "skin in the game") we make sure our focus is on you, the member-owner.

*Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, speaker and a member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative or email him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.*

## How renters can fight the winter chill

By Abby Berry

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 33 percent of Americans lease their homes. Unfortunately, many lease agreements forbid major alterations to rental properties. But don't worry, renters! Consider using these low-cost, energy-efficient tips from Vigilante Electric Cooperative to improve the efficiency of your home this winter.

### Hot savings

Heating the home typically makes up about 48 percent of your utility bill. Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter — *Energy.gov* recommends 68 degrees Fahrenheit to boost energy efficiency.

During the winter months, take advantage of heat from sunlight. Open draperies and shades during the day to allow natural light to heat your home. Remember to close them in the evenings as the temperature drops and windowpanes become chilly.

Does your home have window air-conditioning units? This winter, remember to insulate the units from the outside with a tight-fitting cover, available at your local home improvement center or hardware store. This keeps heated air from escaping outside. If desired, you can remove the window unit during winter months to prevent energy loss.

Another way to save on heating is to make sure your water heater is set at the lowest comfortable setting. Have you

experienced scalding hot water when taking a shower? If so, it's likely that your water heater is set too high, which is a waste of energy. Older models of water tanks are often not insulated, which can be easily remedied by covering them with an insulating jacket.

### Bright ideas

Lighting is one of the easiest places to start saving energy, and savings are not strictly limited to winter months. Try replacing a few of your most frequently used light bulbs with ENERGY STAR-qualified lights, and save more than \$65 a year in energy costs. ENERGY STAR-qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use 75-percent less energy and last several times longer than incandescent light bulbs, saving money on energy bills and replacement costs. Practicing energy-efficient habits is another great way to reduce energy use. Always turn off your lights when leaving a room.

### Other ways to save

Leasing an older home or apartment? Odds are you have single-pane windows and old or missing caulk. Don't let the winter chill seep indoors! Apply caulk around window frames, sashes and door panels to combat air leaks. Also, be mindful when using electronics at home. Unplug devices when not in use, and use smart power strips to save on energy use. To learn more ways to be energy efficient around the home, go to Touchstone Energy's *TogetherWeSave.com*, or the Department of Energy's website at [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov).