



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
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A Message from Your General Manager



Rollie Miller
General Manager

Updating members on cooperative happenings

Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI)

By the time you read this we should be close to finishing our metering system upgrade. We started this process last year when we were informed that our then-current system was obsolete and no longer supported. We began this \$3.5 million project with hopes that it would be completed this summer. I am very happy to report that we are well under budget due to assistance from retired former linemen Andy Allard and Barry Duschaneck, and simple prudence in task efficiency by those within the organization that are directly involved in the project. Everyone stepped up and made this very expensive project run smoothly and efficiently. Kudos to all involved.

Outage Response

During this time of year we see, more than normal, the amount of outages caused by the weather. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work on these and all outages. We do not have a call center under contract that handles calls after-hours. To report an outage, simply call our office number and you will be provided additional information on how to report the outage. Another option is to call the operations staff directly as outlined elsewhere in this newsletter. We will respond to every outage immediately no matter the number of members affected or severity of the outage. Although not utilizing a call center for outages may be considered by some as out-of-date and antiquated, it works fine for us. And better yet, it saves the cooperative several thousand dollars along the way. The end goal is that we keep the lights on 24/7/365, and we will work in any kind of conditions, in any kind of weather, to make that happen.

Wholesale and Retail Electric Rates

During this time of year and lately every two years, our wholesale power supplier, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) goes through what is called a rate case. We will see our wholesale rates increase October 1 of this year. Right now it appears that wholesale increase will

amount to approximately 6-8 percent, which is considered high in light of previous rate case increases. We are working with our hired associations within the state and in Portland to ensure our local concerns are heard and represented. In August we will find out exactly just how much our wholesale rates will be increasing on October 1. We will then prepare our needs assessments to efficiently and proactively keep the power flowing to you, the members, today and into the future. As of today it appears that we will propose an increase in retail rates, most likely effective January 1, 2016. We work very hard to control our costs, and rest assured that will continue. More to come on this as we move into fall and have a clearer picture of our rates moving forward. One nice thing about this is that the wholesale rates approved for October 1 will remain constant for at least the next two years.

Montana Energy Alliance

As you may know, the Montana Energy Alliance (MEA) is owned equally by Rocky Mountain Supply and Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC). Gerry Goody, the manager of MEA and the staff have done a great job of not only maintaining the company but also growing it. As one of the Board members representing VEC, I see first-hand the effort put forth by Gerry and his team. The propane business can be very difficult to predict. In February 2014, the wholesale propane spot price rose to nearly \$5/gallon. And now I see that Gerry is selling summer fill retail at nearly \$1/gallon. VEC benefits greatly from this business relationship as we receive one half of the annual profits as co-owners. Keep up the good work Gerry and staff, and if you need propane for next winter now would be a great time to get the tanks topped off.

I hope you are enjoying your summer, and if you need to contact me for any reason feel free to do so at rollie@vec.coop, the office number is (406) 683-2327, or call my mobile at (406) 925-1085. The staff and I are here to serve you, the members of Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

Cooperative Principles at Work

Today's Members Program

Cooperatives around the world operate according to a core set of principles. These principles, along with the cooperative purpose of improving quality of life for their members, make electric cooperatives different from other electric utilities. One of these principles is vital in perpetuating the success of the cooperative model, and it's why we are looking to send a member(s) to Great Falls in October.

Principle #5 Education, Training and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperatives.

Each year, interested members from cooperatives across the state participate in the Today's Members Program. In conjunction with the Montana Electric Cooperatives'

Association (MECA) Annual Meeting, the Today's Members Program educates participants in a broad variety of topics that provide a better understanding and appreciation for electric cooperatives and what we represent.

Over the course of this program, participants will hear from cooperative leaders and interact with many members of the Montana electric cooperative community. Many past participants have become directors (or trustees) of the cooperative serving their electrical needs. While we tout this as an excellent educational opportunity, this interaction does spill over into a fun social environment.

This year's program will be held October 6-8 in Great Falls. Lodging and travel expenses will be paid by Vigilante Electric for the individual(s) selected to attend. If you are interested, contact Rod Siring at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327 for more details.

Seven Cooperative Principles

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

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. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

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 the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

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COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

Haystacks

Habits are defined as a constant, often unconscious inclination to perform an act. Sometimes habits become routine and we ignore potential dangers. As we proceed into the growing season, we would like to bring to your attention a serious potential hazard. It is common practice in the agriculture community to put haystacks on nonproductive ground, but too frequently this is underneath power lines.

By law we cannot place our electrical line over existing buildings and structures. There are too many risks involved in such a practice. Placing a utility line over an existing structure increases the danger of fire to the structure, and seriously increases the chances of someone contacting the power line.

Consider living in a house where the power lines crossed over the structure. Anytime there was work to do on the

roof, you or whoever did the work would be in danger of making contact with the line. Additionally, if the line ever breaks and protective devices do not react fast enough, the damage could be devastating.

As haystacks are erected, each layer puts whoever is working on it closer and closer to danger. Haystacks present an inviting place for children to play. Plus, you are also putting a dry fuel source directly under an instrument that could ignite it.

Most of us know somebody or have heard of somebody whose life was changed permanently because they came into contact with a power line. Within our service area the combination of haystacks and power lines has caused many close calls and a few serious injuries. The threat is real — and it can kill.

Too often it takes a traumatic event for people to change. The risk of losing a haystack to fire or worse, a life to electrocution, is unacceptable. Please do not place your haystack under power lines.

The Power of American Independence

Celebrating July 4th and declaring our energy independence

By Anne Prince, National Rural Electric Coop. Association

Fireworks and flags. Cookouts and cold drinks. The Fourth of July is a festive day on which we celebrate our nation's independence with family and friends. Typically, this is not a day of quiet reflection. While we spend a lot of energy having fun, if we give any thought about our forbearers and their determined efforts to bring about our nation's independence, it's fleeting.

An independent spirit is a part of our DNA

It is worth reflecting that this uniquely American spirit of independence remains part of our collective DNA more than 200 years after the independent nation of the United States was formed and the Declaration of Independence was crafted. And this sense of independence has served us well. For example, more than 70 years ago, an independent streak inspired groups of farmers across America's countryside to band together and improve their quality of life.

Aside from President Franklin Roosevelt's promise of federal aid in the form of low-interest loans and engineering expertise, rural Americans had little help in bringing electricity to their homes. So, they did it themselves by pulling together and working cooperatively — a shining example of American determination and ingenuity.

For the past 40-plus years, nearly every president since Richard Nixon, during the time of the Arab oil embargo, has talked about the goal of U.S. energy independence — reducing our reliance on imported oil and other forms of foreign energy. Today, while we still have a ways to go, we are closer to that goal than ever before. We are exporting more gas and importing less foreign fuel than in recent memory.

American ingenuity in the form of new technology and innovation is opening up more options and spurring greater efficiency across all forms of energy. According to the Energy Information Agency, energy expenditures as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) are forecast at 6.2 percent in 2015, their lowest level since 2002, reflecting both lower

oil prices and ongoing increases in energy efficiency.

The road to energy independence

Consumers have an important role to play on the road to energy independence. They don't have to wait for Democrats and Republicans to agree, or environmentalists and fossil fuel advocates to reach consensus on a path to energy independence. Consumers can play a part in moving us toward national energy independence by taking action in simple, practical ways — insulating and caulking around windows, doors and electrical outlets; washing clothes in cold water instead of hot; replacing air filters; installing a programmable thermostat; and using more energy efficient appliances and home heating and cooling systems. Efficiency efforts can cut costs for individual households, but the collective benefit to our country is even greater.

If we all work together to achieve increased energy efficiency and reduce our overall energy consumption, we can make even more progress on our road toward energy independence. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we want to be a resource for you in this effort. We can provide energy-saving tips tailored for your unique household needs.

Electric co-ops provide renewable energy resources

In addition, Vigilante Electric, along with other electric co-ops across the country, have been actively engaged in promoting renewable energy resources such as hydroelectric power and wind through our Alternative Renewable Energy (ARE) Program. Today, nearly 95 percent of the nation's 900-plus electric co-ops provide electricity produced by renewable sources, all playing a key role in powering rural America while fostering our nation's energy independence.

Recent advances in technology are transforming how we make and move electricity and, over time, these changes will greatly improve not only the efficiency but the reliability of electric power. So this Fourth of July, as you gaze up at the fireworks lighting up the night sky, reflect on the enduring spirit of independence that is integral to our American character.

Co-op Connections Appliance Rebate Finder

Since joining Touchstone Energy we have used these pages to tout the benefits of our membership, one of the centerpieces being the Co-op Connections program. The team behind Co-op Connections continually strives to find ways to make the program better by offering innovative ways to save you money. The newest feature is the Appliance Rebate Finder.

Most rebates and incentive programs are underutilized. Touchstone Energy has teamed with Eco Rebates to provide an award-winning online and mobile platform that makes finding rebate and incentive information on energy-efficient appliances easy. Eco Rebates clients include eight of the top 10 home appliance and home improvement retailers, and four of the top six appliance manufacturers.

I have spent some time reviewing this feature and the information is geographically specific, user friendly and timely. You can find current rebates offered by manufacturers, and are provided the forms needed to receive the rebates. You will also see if an appliance qualifies for any federal or state tax credits. Note, for some appliances the tax incentives are very generous.

If you are in the market for or are consid-

ering updating a major appliance, be it electric, gas or LP — see for yourself. Access the Co-op Connections website through our home page at www.vec.coop. Log onto your account and click the link labeled “Rebates.” Simply type in your zip code and click the button labeled “Find Rebates.”

Next, you will want to filter your search. There are three filters to this search engine; the first is by appliance type. Select the type of appliance you are looking for and a list of options will appear. You can also filter it down by brand and even down to a specific model.

To view details click on the “More Info” link. Here you will find links to applicable forms, information on the entity offering the incentive and the relevant dates for the incentive. In some cases this incentive can be combined with ones offered by Vigilante Electric. Call for more details.

Saving money and energy is a win-win. This is just another example of how you can save with the Co-op Connections program as a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. Co-op Connections continually evolves and is worth your time to explore this site. If you have any question regarding Co-op Connections, please contact us.

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 Ferris683-6321
 Cody Tarter925-3326
 Charles Wharton 660-1878

Weekends

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

Whitehall

After Hours and
 Weekends
 Marty Simons287-3950
 Chuck Romerio....287-3144
 John Moos266-3605

Townsend

After Hours and
 Weekends
 John Moos266-3605
 Justin Bair266-3351
 Chase White459-3892
 Marty Simons287-3950



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

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