

HOW YOUR COOPERATIVE IS DEALING WITH COVID-19

A Local Viewpoint

BY DAVID FRICK GENERAL MANAGER

As we all deal with the new realities brought on by this coronavirus, I want to assure you that your local electric cooperative has been here to help you through this time. We have always had an emergency plan that serves us well in a variety of circumstances, from ice storms to tornadoes to flash floods. Early in this crisis, our staff updated that plan with a special emphasis on ensuring we can continue to provide the reliable electric service you have come to expect from your electric cooperative.

So far, that is exactly what has happened. We know that after a sufficient supply of food and water, electricity is the number one thing you need to maintain some sense of normalcy as we hunker down in our homes. With that in mind, keeping the power flowing is job number one for everyone involved in maintaining the electric cooperative system.

That starts with our generation cooperative, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, which has taken extreme measures to ensure its (Justin and Sarah Hunt, acct#xxx8900) workforce is healthy and its power plants are functioning as needed. It extends to the 17

cooperatives that wheel that electricity across Colorado, and it includes Morgan County Rural Electric Association where business may be a bit unusual, but our service remains the same.

We thought you might want to know some of the steps we took in order to keep your power flowing. We closed our lobbies to prevent the spread of germs and we encouraged members to use our drop box, online and phone payment options, and the good old U.S. Postal Service to pay bills.

Our employees are being smart about social distancing when in the office. If you call, the phones will be answered as always.

We separated our line crews from other employees and even from each other to limit possible spread of the virus. Trucks were relocated so that lineworkers could head to the job site without coming to the office. New routines are in place for contractors working on our system in order to keep them away from employees. Deliveries are quarantined.

Our management team and board have been meeting constantly to update this plan. We are in constant contact with the other electric cooperatives in Colorado and with the Colorado Rural Electric Association,



DAVID FRICK

which in turn is working closely with our national association, the state legislature, Gov. Jared Polis and several local agencies.

Everyone has adapted to the new norm. That's because we've dealt with crises before. Nothing brings out the best in our employees better than a crisis situation. It's kind of like gold that has been tested in fire ... stronger and more beautiful.

Our focus here for the last month or so has been on doing our part to keep your life as normal as possible through this situation and beyond. The cooperative way of doing business has brought us this far, and the cooperative way will help us through this crisis.

All the best to everyone. Stay healthy, keep your distance and we will get through this together — the cooperative way.

Lineman Scholarship Winners Announced

We are pleased to announce our lineman scholarship winners for 2020:




 Francisco Loera
from Fort Morgan



 Matthew Ryan
from Merino



 Ryan Holbeck
from Fort Morgan



MEMORIAL DAY

Morgan County REA offices will be **closed on Monday, May 25** in observance of Memorial Day. We wish one and all a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend.

WATCHING THE UNEXPECTED UNFOLD

BY JAMIE PLAKORUS MEMBER SERVICES SPECIALIST

We have all been dealing with and adapting to something most of us never had to until about a month ago. This pandemic has taken everyone by surprise and has caused quite the commotion.

In light of how this has affected our cooperative, community, nation and the world, I have seen some great things come about. I watch as neighbors come together to help those in need of supplies or to run errands. I watch as countries in quarantine make the most of it and put on live concerts because music heals. In my own neighborhood, we all banded together to make the most of this difficult time to help our kids enjoy the fresh air and to go on scavenger hunts to find shamrocks, bears and many other items while maintaining the appropriate social distancing.

During this time, families have been given the opportunity to slow down and enjoy their time at home with one another. It's not always possible in a family where both parents work and the kids are involved in multiple activities as well as working themselves. I believe that people have tried to find a silver lining in all of the unpredictability that has come along with this pandemic. Local businesses have stepped up to offer delivery services, pass out free popcorn, offer discounts and many (Tim Jones, acct#xxx1900) other things to bring people together. Being a member of a rural community, we are lucky to get to see more of the good in the world than some urban areas. We all have a sense of love and care for our neighbors and this has been shown over and over during this time. We are all in this together, and we will get through it together.



Local kids ride their bikes around town for scavenger hunts.

TIPS TO AVOID SCAMS

Scammers can threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

Here are a few reminders from your electric co-op.

- Co-op employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Co-op representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let them know as soon as possible.

WIN \$25 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

Each month, Morgan County REA gives two lucky consumer-members a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congratulations, Kevin R. Filter (account # xxx6600) you saw your name and account number in the March edition of *Colorado Country Life*. You received a \$25 credit on your bill.

Sorry, Lewis Williams (account # xxx8500), you didn't see your name and account number in the March edition of *Colorado Country Life* and will not receive a \$25 credit on your bill.

There are two more MCREA member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call member services at 970-867-5688 by May 31 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

This Summer, Seek Savings

through Energy Efficiency Upgrades

BY DERRILL HOLLY

◀ During summer months, consider using smaller appliances like a slow cooker to eliminate heat gain in the kitchen.
Photo: Scott Van Osdol

If May's warmer weather has you thinking about the sultry summer months ahead, this could be a great time to consider energy-saving options and make plans to help control your energy costs.

There's a combination of things you can do yourself, like making slight modifications to your family's routine, that can help identify and achieve opportunities for savings while keeping your home more comfortable throughout the summer cooling season ahead.

HVAC tuneup

When it comes to heating, ventilation and air-conditioning equipment, spending a few dollars at the beginning of the season can add up to big savings and help you avoid expensive surprises and system failures.

A qualified service technician with the right skills and equipment will check key components like the compressor and condenser, clean the coils and inspect the ductwork. A technician may also offer advice on the how to get the most value out of your programmable thermostat.

According to experts with the Energy Star program, sealing and insulating ductwork can improve the overall efficiency of your heating and cooling system by as much as 20%. Making sure systems are appropriately sized can also improve performance.

Consider replacing systems that are more than 10 years old — or those that no

longer keep your home comfortable — with a high-efficiency system that is properly sized and designed to meet your needs.

Gain insights from energy assessments

Sometimes it pays to get the big picture, so when it comes to energy efficiency and getting real value for your home improvement dollars, professional advice is a good place to start.

Your local electric cooperative may be able to recommend professionally trained energy advisors who can conduct comprehensive assessments and provide recommendations that could help you control energy costs and improve comfort.

Energy assessments include examination of heating, cooling and water heating equipment, as well as interior and exterior lighting. Other available services can include inspections and assessments of windows, crawl spaces and other voids for air leaks, which can degrade HVAC performance.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, a professional energy auditor will review monthly, seasonal and annual energy bills; consider household occupancy patterns; and examine condition, age and use of appliances and other electronics.

An analysis developed from the collected information can help determine a series of recommendations that,

if accomplished, can produce savings. Homeowners can then decide which measures fit into their budgets or schedules as they consider improvement projects.

Small changes add savings

When the goal is keeping the house cool and comfortable, remember that any activities adding heat to your air-conditioned spaces can increase your costs.

Open doors don't just allow people to come and go. They also provide an instant exchange of cooler inside air for warmer air. A cooler placed outdoors that is stocked with cold drinks and chilled snacks can help cut down on household traffic on hot summer days.

When cooking, consider using smaller appliances, like a slow cooker or toaster oven. Better yet, take the extra heat from cooking outdoors and fire up the grill.

Ceiling fans operating in air-conditioned space can make you feel about 4 degrees cooler while you are in the room, but the benefits only occur when a room is occupied. Make it a habit to turn off the fan when you leave the room.

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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Electrical Safety: What Your Teen Should Know

Parents of teens can relate. You want to share important information with your teen, but he braces for the next lecture instead: #IDon'tNeedYourUnendingWisdom or #HereComesAnotherLecture.

Your teen may give you the quintessential eye roll, but sharing this safety information could help save his or her life. When the time is right, relay this information to your teenager to prevent electrical shock.

AT HOME

- Do not use a cellphone near the bathtub or sink or with wet hands while it is plugged in and charging. Do not use an extension cord in the bathroom to extend your phone's reach closer to the tub. Teens have died after a charging phone dropped into bath water.
- Do not sleep with your charging cellphone under your pillow or in bed with you. The phone can overheat, causing bedding to catch on fire or burns to the skin. Also, a short in the charging cord can cause electrical shock when you are using your phone. This is especially a risk when using generic or incompatible charging equipment. Always replace charging equipment with matching items. They cost more, but they are less likely to malfunction.
- Do not charge your cellphone, tablet or other devices on soft surfaces, such as a blanket, pillow or bedding.

ON THE ROAD

- **This advice can save your teen's life:** If you are in an accident involving a downed power line, damaged pad-mounted transformer or other electrical equipment, call 911 and do not get out of your car. Only get out if there is smoke or your car is on fire. If that is the case, make a clean exit from the vehicle — make a solid jump out without touching the car — and hop with feet together as far as you can. Do not walk. If there is damaged power equipment, the ground and anything else the lines touch could have electrical current running through it.
- If you approach an accident with a downed power line, do not attempt to help the victims and do not go near the scene. Instead, call 911 and warn others not to approach the area.

OUTSIDE

- Do not use plugged-in devices, such as a charging cellphone, near water, like a pool, hot tub or other damp conditions.
- If you are swimming in a lake and feel odd sensations in your body, such as tingling or zaps, swim away from the dock or other source of electricity. Sometimes electrical currents can leak into the water and cause electric shock drowning. If you feel odd sensations in a wading pool, hot tub or swimming pool, get out.

IN THE DORM ROOM

- Do not hang decorative light strands with metal tacks or nails.
- Do not overload outlets or extension cords.
- Do not run extension cords under a rug or use them if they are frayed or cracked.
- Use extension cords with care: They are for temporary use only.
- Use reputable laboratory-tested cords.
- Only use appliances allowed by your dorm or campus.

Although you might not be able to cover all these tips with your teen in one sitting, they are important to convey and could prevent injuries and save lives. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

ELECTRICAL Safety for Teens

- DO NOT use generic chargers** or cords. They could **overheat** or shock or burn you.
- DO NOT** put your cell phone **under your pillow** or take it to bed with you.
- DO NOT** use charging cell phones or other electrical devices **with wet or damp hands**.
- DO NOT** bring a charging cell phone or other electrical devices **near water**, including a **bathtub or pool**.
- If you are in a car accident involving a downed power line, **DO NOT get out of the vehicle** unless you see smoke or fire.
- If you must exit a burning vehicle** near or on a downed power line, make a **clean exit from the car** and **land on both feet**; then **hop** with feet together, **DO NOT WALK**, to safety.

SafeElectricity.org