



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

Changes at BPA

On July 15, the Department of Energy Deputy Secretary announced that Elliot Mainzer was appointed Acting Administrator of BPA on an interim basis. Also at that time Mr. Bill Drummond, administrator of BPA, along with Anita Decker, Chief Operating Officer of BPA, were escorted out of their offices and placed on administrative leave. As you may remember, Mr. Drummond was the General Manager for Western Montana G&T until he accepted the deputy administrator position for BPA in 2011. He became administrator in February of this year. The adverse action came in response to so-called accusations of BPA not following federal veterans hiring preference practices and whistleblower retaliation. The Inspector General's office is in the process of investigating the allegations. Personally, I find the actions by the Department of Energy to be very heavy handed. Removing Mr. Drummond from office in the manner done, with his longstanding reputation as a positive industry leader and genuinely good person, is simply wrong. Anyone who knows Mr. Drummond will agree. As I write this article, we have not been informed of any of the details of the allegations. We have been informed that the actions that are alleged began before Mr. Drummond was even employed by BPA. We have also been informed that BPA recently received commenda-

tions for its veterans hiring practices.

Columbia River Treaty

Fundamentally, back in 1964 the United States and Canada agreed to a treaty whereby the Columbia River system would be jointly managed. Canada agreed to provide flood control, for the most part, in exchange for an allocation of power generated from the sources located on the river and payments for flood control totaling several hundred million dollars. The treaty was agreed to for a period of 50 years, and has a 10-year notice period for termination. Currently the "U.S. Entity" comprised of representatives from BPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are reviewing a strategy to either terminate the existing treaty or modify it by working jointly with Canadian officials. The only problem with the current approach is that we, power users in the Northwest, have been left out of the formal input stage for various reasons. We disagree with that approach and are soliciting to be included as a key player in the discussions. We, as the power users, are paying the several hundred million dollars to Canada, and thus are working to be included in the discussions. This is a very complex international treaty and will most likely become very political. Hopefully, we will be allowed to formally participate in the discussions.

Rates

As I stated last month, BPA customers were expecting an approximate 9 percent average wholesale power rate

increase, effective October 1. We received formal notice that the proposed rate increase was upheld. The BPA rates are somewhat complex as various items control the amount paid for power delivery. We are in the process of evaluating the impacts of the various rate components and will formally submit a recommendation to the board late this year.



Rollie Miller
General Manager

Financial Condition

Overall this year has been a very good one for Vigilante Electric. Our sales and revenue are right on track, based on budgeted amounts. We are sitting in a very good position for this time of year primarily due to the increased irrigation sales. We had a similar year last year during the irrigation season. Although the drought persists to a certain degree, water has been available, but I understand it will drop off dramatically during the end of this irrigation season.

We are hoping that your fall season will be great. If you need to contact me for any reason, feel free to do so. I can be reached on my mobile phone at (406) 925-1085, by email at rollie@vec.coop or by mail to: Rollie R. Miller, PE, General Manager, Vigilante Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725, by phone at our office: (406) 683-2327, or by fax at (406) 683-4328.

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

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

SCIENTIFIC IRRIGATION SCHEDULING

By Rod Siring

For more than a decade we have used these pages to provide you with information about Vigilante Electric Cooperative's energy efficiency programs and incentives. Working with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), we offer a wide array of incentives for electric efficiency upgrades on commercial, residential and agriculture facilities. To date, our most successful programs have been those for agricultural purposes.

Struggling for story ideas, I recently reviewed what I have written over the years. Then I was contacted by one of our members about a project that they were starting. It involved the installation of soil moisture monitors, and they wondered if there were incentives available. I did a little research and my answer to them was — yes.

Scientific irrigation scheduling (SIS) has been a BPA offering for some time. My assumption was that this program was more relevant to the type of farming they do in Oregon and Washington — not in southwest Montana.

However, my feelings have changed dramatically while researching this practice.

SIS is a tool growers can use to improve irrigation water management. Over-irrigating wastes water, energy and labor. It leaches expensive nutrients out of the root zone where the nutrients are needed, it reduces soil aeration, and thus, crop yields. Under-irrigating stresses the plant and also reduces yields.

When used properly, SIS indicates when to irrigate, and how much water to apply to satisfy crop water requirements and avoid plant moisture stress. SIS optimizes the use of soil moisture storage and is beneficial in all soil types. It has been found to lower fertilizer costs by holding surface runoff and leaching beyond the root zone to a minimum. It also increases crop yields and crop quality, plus it can save water and energy.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative and BPA's SIS program is designed to encourage and reward growers who actively manage their irrigation. This program applies to agricultural systems that have a pumping capacity beyond what is



A soil moisture monitoring station near Silver Star.

needed to meet normal irrigation needs. To participate, growers must collect and use weekly hydro application data, including water applied, evapo-transpiration, crop water requirements and soil moisture tables.

At the end of each irrigation season, the data collected by the grower is reviewed and analyzed. Qualified projects will receive a per acre incentive for the acreage managed under SIS. This incentive is currently \$5.20 per acre per year.

As with all of our programs, I strongly encourage our members to contact us before making any financial

commitments. Although there are no guarantees, with a well-maintained and operating sprinkler system, and with good planning and proper execution of SIS, you should see the results in your field, savings in your electric bill and an incentive for your efforts. If you have any questions regarding this, please feel free to contact Rod Siring at our Dillon office (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

On the Job

Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our newest employee, Brady Birkenbuel. Brady will be working out of our Dillon office as our warehouseman.

Brady was



Brady Birkenbuel

born and raised in Dillon, graduating from Beaverhead County High School in 1994. He attended University of

Montana — Western, where he played football and received an Associate's degree in tourism and recreation in 1999.

Brady is a longtime member of

the Dillon JC's, where he was the coordinator for their Little Skiers program and actively participates in all of their events. Brady is an avid golfer and softball player, and participates in local leagues. Plus, he is an outdoor enthusiast.

Prior to working for us, Brady was employed at the local CARQUEST Auto Parts store.

We would like to welcome Brady to Vigilante Electric Cooperative, and we look forward to a long association.

Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD	95
Total Savings YTD	\$2,321.35
Total Savings Percentage	29.71%
July 2013 paid claims	29
July Savings	\$576.24
July Savings Percentage	22.49%



Do You Surf the Internet?

Check Out These Sites

Whether you like it or not, the Internet and social media are powerful communication tools. More and more organizations are using these media forms to provide people with instant access to vast amounts of information. This includes us, and many of the organizations we are affiliated with.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is the national service organization dedicated to representing the national interests of electric cooperatives and the members they serve. At www.nreca.coop you can learn about the history of electric cooperatives and the seven principles that guide us. You also can read the biography of NRECA's chief executive officer and all about the programs NRECA sponsors. More importantly, you can read about the issues that can impact electric rates and reliability, and where NRECA stands on those issues. NRECA also uses Facebook and Twitter to keep followers abreast of current legislative issues.

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) provides many services to the electric cooperatives in Montana, but its primary purpose is to represent our interests legislatively at the state and national level. At www.montanaco-ops.com, you can read its mission statement, browse editions of the *Rural Montana* magazine and read information and news from member cooperatives. You also can follow MECA on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mtmecca.

Touchstone Energy is a service organization that provides us with programs and services that can help our

members save money every day. When you open their homepage, www.touchstoneenergy.com, you will find information about Touchstone Energy, member cooperatives and national customer satisfaction results, as well as details on its program offerings. This site is also a portal to other sites with valuable information such as Co-op Connections and Together We Save.

We have talked about Co-op Connections for months, and if you have been on its website, www.connections.coop, you know it is a collection of individual websites. Each of the internal sites has a different function, but collectively they help you save money on goods and services. The Co-op Connections site lets you shop online and receive discounts at top retailers nationwide, download and print grocery coupons, or book your next trip. Co-op Connections uses Facebook to promote these discounts.

"Together We Save" is a multifaceted media campaign produced by Touchstone Energy. It includes television, newsprint, radio spots and a website — www.togetherwesave.com. Here you can learn about the power of membership in a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, and about the power of using electricity wisely. You can view an interactive home tour that educates the viewer about potential energy waste in the home. You also can follow Together We Save on Facebook and Twitter.

Over the course of the school year we promote the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. This is an annual event where students from around the country gather in D.C. to learn about electric coopera-



tives and witness history. At www.youthtour.coop you can read about the history of this event, view pictures from current and past events, and learn about what this program has meant in shaping the lives of past alumni. Plus, through Twitter and Facebook, you can be kept current on events that shape this tour.

Finally, this brings us to our website. Vigilante Electric's website can be viewed at www.vec.coop. Building a good website is complicated; you want to provide enough information to the reader without overwhelming them. By using the navigation links at the top of the page you can look at the categories of information available, and then select the

topic you want to look at.

On our website you can pay your bill, learn about your cooperative and your responsibilities as a member, look at the programs and services we provide, and review rates and other valuable information. Plus, you can access all of the websites noted above through ours.

There is a tremendous amount of information available online about electrical cooperatives, the things we stand for and fight for, and ways to save you money every day. It is an easy way to stay connected to events and issues. If you spend any time online, I strongly encourage you to go to these sites and learn more about electric cooperatives — and what they do for you.



Creating Smiles

Pictured are employees Linda Meine and Jackie Clark distributing cupcakes during our summer picnic. The young man is Chaz the son of Dillon Line Foreman Charles Wharton.

Co-op Connections Travel

Expanding the Possibilities

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Over the previous two editions of this publication we have provided you with information on travel discounts available through Co-op Connections. We have highlighted the opportunities that are available for lodging and transportation at locations around the world. In this edition, we will be looking at offers from Endless Vacation Rentals and Avoya Travel.

Endless Vacation Rentals is part of Wyndham Worldwide, and has one of the largest collections of global vacation rentals in the industry. By accessing their website through the Co-op Connections site, you can browse more than 200,000 vacation rental accommodations in 100 countries.

Endless Vacation Rentals offers a vast selection of vacation rentals, ranging from studios to multiple bedroom units in destinations throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and beyond. They also offer thousands of villas, apartments, cottages and homes in Italy, France and the UK. These unique accommodations offer more space, flexibility, privacy and “comforts-of-home” conveniences, making a vacation stay more enjoyable. Plus, vacation rentals can be the most cost-effective use of your vacation dollars.

Co-op Connections members receive 10 percent off the best available rate when booking online or over the phone. *Endless Vacation Rentals.com/coopconnect* provides an easy and conven-

ient way to search for, view and book vacation rentals. Members can get assistance in booking a rental by calling 1-877-670-7088 option 3. Regardless of how you do it, you will have to provide the Co-op Connection promotion code 100004709 at the time of booking.

If a cruise is on your bucket list then you should look into the deals provided by Avoya Travel. Avoya Travel is part of the world's largest travel agency network, and has been inducted into the American Express World Wide Travel Hall of Fame for excellent service and long-term commitment to their agents and customers.

Avoya Travel leverages their bulk buying power to secure the lowest rates with all the major cruise lines. Additionally, Co-op

Connections members have access to a variety of discounts including up to 50 percent off things such as room upgrades, onboard credits and discounted shore excursions. Avoya Travel also offers a variety of weekly savings. For details and booking, contact Christine Armstrong at (866) 489-0590 and mention that you are a Touchstone Energy member to receive additional discounts.

The properties and offers provided by these organizations are quite impressive. These and all of the travel benefits that have appeared in these pages are available to you every time you travel because you are a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

Next month we will look at other opportunities to save money through the Co-op Connections program.

Plugged In Kids

Website offers fun ways to “switch on” youth to energy efficiency

By Megan McKoy-Noe

Getting children excited about energy efficiency may seem hard — for some parents, it's enough of a challenge to get them to do chores. But a website has been designed with young energy savers in mind.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the brand “ID” of the nation's not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, offers Kids Energy Zone (www.kidsenergyzone.com) featuring a spunky energy efficiency mascot, CFL Charlie. The site is designed to teach children in kindergarten through fifth grade how to be Super Energy Savers in their homes. The Kids Zone also includes interactive games, videos, activity sheets and surprises.

“The website is all about engagement,” explains Ruben Musca, senior manager of advertising and market-

ing for Touchstone Energy. “This is a way for parents to interact with children so the family can focus on energy-efficiency together, and help everyone develop energy efficient habits that will last a lifetime. Through fun activities, students and their parents learn about energy, electrical safety and energy savings.”

For example, Lights Out! — an energy-saving game in the Kids Zone — challenges kids to speed through a virtual house, replacing traditional incandescent light-bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light-bulbs (CFLs), and turning off lights and appliances as fast as possible. The less energy a player uses by the time everything's off, the better the score.

“Playing the Lights Out! game and taking kids through a house with an energy-efficiency checklist, which parents can find in the

Kids Zone, are great ways to work together to get good habits started,” Musca recommends.

Teachers searching for ways to help students focus on energy efficiency also have several resources available. Vigilante Electric provides schools with CFL Charlie Super Energy Saver kits.

“Each kit accommodates a class of 30 students, and includes a checklist that children can use to help guide their parents on an ‘energy efficiency expedition,’” Musca explains. “In the exercise, kids walk through the house with their mom and dad to make sure the refrigerator door is closed, and they discuss switching out incandescent bulbs with CFLs, turning off all lights after leaving a room, and shutting off computers when not in use.”

Finished checklists signed by children and parents are

submitted to teachers for a certificate declaring the student “an official Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Super Energy Saver.” Certificates carry the image and signature of CFL Charlie.

“The kits also contain classroom activities such as connect-the-dots and word search games,” Musca adds. “Handing out these materials provides a great way to influence household energy efficiency.”

The latest addition to the kit is an educational coloring book.

“As a kid growing up, I loved coloring books — it's what kept me entertained on weeknights, road trips, anywhere,” Musca says. “The new 10-page coloring book we've added can keep kids entertained and educate them about energy savings at the same time.”

Plug into these resources and more at www.kidsenergyzone.com.