




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

Telling Our Hydro and Rivers Story

By Rollie Miller, General Manager

You may have noticed recent TV and print advertisements in your area that celebrate “CleanHydro,” an informational campaign that is raising awareness of the tremendous value of the Columbia and Snake River system. I am very proud that Vigilante Electric Cooperative is a part of this effort — now in its second year — because the Northwest’s hydropower dams and rivers benefit all of us and our customers in so many ways.

We joined this campaign because hydropower isn’t capturing the same kind of attention in the eyes of the public as it once did. There are several reasons for this; chief among them is that many people have moved to the Northwest from other parts of the country where hydropower wasn’t a daily part of their lives. Our young people haven’t grown up with the dams as we have, and so they don’t understand their value. And, dramatic changes in the energy industry and government-led efforts to encourage other types of renewable energy, such as wind, have dominated news media headlines.

That’s why we need to continue to actively tell the incredible story of our dams, hydropower, and Columbia and Snake Rivers through CleanHydro. Last year, the campaign increased support for hydro across the board by demonstrating its value to the Northwest’s environment and economy. But our work is not done, which is why it is so important for Vigilante Electric Cooperative to be a part of this public education effort again this year. It will take a sustained effort to regain lost ground and to keep the value of hydro firmly planted in the public’s mind, and in conversations and debates about our energy future.

I hope you will also take a moment to visit the website CleanHydro.com so you can view the TV and print advertisements. While the advertisements promote the key ways that hydropower and the rivers affect our lives, the website shares in greater detail more about these amazing resources. Please share it with your friends and families so they, too, can feel the same sense of pride about what we have right here in our own Northwest backyard. Join us and help spread the word about this tremendous asset to our Northwest way of life.



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

Gary Ferris683-6321

Cody Tarter925-3326

Charles Wharton660-1878

Weekends

683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Whitehall

After Hours and Weekends

Marty Simons287-3950

Chuck Romerio287-3144

Dake Green871-4184

John Moos266-3605

Townsend

After Hours and Weekends

John Moos266-3605

Justin Bair266-3351

Chase White459-3892

Marty Simons287-3950

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Beware of Downed Power Lines

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Every month we use these pages to inform you, our members, on important information regarding your cooperative. The problem is that with the vast information available, we have to choose what is printed. The topics have run the gamut from political to educational, and from human interest to ways to save money. However, in light of two recent events we may not be spending enough time on one specific topic — safety.

Electricity brings a lot of convenience to our lives, but it can also bring some danger. A particularly dangerous situation occurs when overhead power lines and structures are damaged bringing the lines close to the ground. Contacting an energized power line can result in serious injury or death, and there are NO guarantees that a downed line is not energized.

Electricity needs to be respected, but not feared. If you come across a situation with a downed power line, the Electric Safety Foundation International has the following safety tips:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. The ground around power lines — up to 35 feet away — may be energized.
- You cannot tell whether or not a power line is energized just by looking at it. You should always assume that all downed power lines are live.
- The proper way to move away from the power line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.
- If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Call 911 for help.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or stick. Even non-

conductive material such as wood or cloth can conduct electricity if even slightly wet.

- Be careful not to touch or step in water near where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed power lines.
- If your car comes in contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the vehicle. Honk your horn to summon help, but direct others to stay away from your car.
- If you must leave your car because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together, and avoid contact with both the car and the ground at the same time. Shuffle away from the car.

Since the first of the year, there have been two incidences in our service territory where individuals have come in close proximity with downed power lines. In one incident, the people who approached the power line realized the dangers and retreated immediately. In the other incident, the individual involved was either unaware of the danger or made the assumption that the line

was dead and continued to work. In both of these cases the power lines were still energized when our line crews arrived on the scene. Thankfully, nobody made contact with the power lines, but this could have been disastrous.

Downed power lines are nothing to mess with. Our line crews are highly trained to deal with these situations, and have the proper equipment and protective gear to deal with it safely. Remember, electricity is very unforgiving; one contact may be the last.

Contractor Work 2014

Our mission is to provide the most reliable electrical service at the lowest possible cost.

Not only does Vigilante Electric Cooperative have the best rates in the state of Montana, but we have one of the best in the country. As for reliability, the power is on to our members 99.98 percent of the time. Both of these are due, in part, to our system maintenance program.

Let's face it — outages are costly. Many outages occur after hours so we incur more labor costs, more equipment costs and then there is the lost revenue from the electricity being out. It is in our best interest and yours for us to maintain the best system structurally that we can. To this end, Vigilante Electric Cooperative does annual pole testing and replacement.

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 for bigger projects involving pole changes and line maintenance.

This year we will have two contractors working in our service territory. In May, Western Line Builders from Nevada will be doing pole changes and maintenance in the Divide and Wise River areas. Starting in June, Western Power Pole Testing will be in the Whitehall and Townsend areas.

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



Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association safety instructor Daren Beede uses fruit to show what can happen when something come in contact with a power line.

Thinking of installing an Air Conditioner?

Consider This

By Rod Siring, Member Services

While I am personally glad that winter is behind us and I am looking forward to warmer weather — I know this sentiment is not shared by all. Many of you probably dread the thought of extended periods of hot weather. In reality, for most homes it is much easier to manage your comfort levels in the winter than in the summer. Many of you have probably even thought about adding an air conditioner to your home.

No, I am not talking about one of those units you slide into the window. I am talking about units that can distribute cool, comfortable air to multiple rooms in your home. If you have ever thought about, or are considering adding air conditioning to your home, let me recommend a heat pump instead.

In essence, they are very similar. Both air conditioners and heat pumps work the same way. Like a refrigerator, they displace heat from one location to another. They have relatively the same materials, and they are the same type of installations.

However the operation of a heat pump can be reversed. In the summer, the unit displaces the heat inside the

home to the outside. When heat is needed, the system is reversed and the heat pump extracts heat from outside and distributes it through the home. I might add that heat pumps provide a cost-effective means of heating your home. If you install a ductless or an air-source heat pump, the unit works with your existing heat source, providing comfort and potentially lowering your heating bills.

Other important differences are tax incentives and rebates. Depending on the type of heat pump installed, qualified installations may be eligible for tax incentives from the federal and state governments. Plus, there are incentives available from Vigilante Electric Cooperative for qualified installations of an air-source, ductless or geothermal heat pump.

Also for existing homes, heat pumps



allow for quite a bit of design flexibility so they can be incorporated into an existing forced-air system, as well as in homes that have some type of zonal heat. There may be some additional costs with a heat pump, but the benefits will make it worth the cost. If you would like to explore the addition of a heat pump to your home, contact our Dillon office for details.

A Matter of Principles

You might be surprised by the number of co-ops around you. Co-ops have been formed to sell produce and electricity, offer financial and banking services, provide housing and health care, and much more.

So where did the bright idea for co-ops come from? It's a matter of principles (seven, to be exact). The modern movement traces its roots to a store started by weavers in the town of Rochdale (pronounced Rotch-dale) in northern England in 1844. The group was guided by a set of principles drawn up by one of its members, Charles Howarth. When introduced into the U.S. by the National Grange in 1874, these "Rochdale Principles" fueled a cooperative explosion.

Although stated in many ways, the Rochdale Principles require that a cooperative must be open for anyone to join. Every member retains one voice, one vote. Electric co-ops hold member business meetings annually, allowing members to elect fellow consumers to guide the co-op and have a say in how their utility is run.

There also has to be real member benefits. For example, members of electric co-ops often get money back

(called capital credits or patronage refunds) when the co-op is in good financial shape. More than \$9.5 billion has been returned to members by electric co-ops since 1988 — nothing to sneeze at.

Education remains another big focus. Electric co-ops provide safety information in schools, share ideas on how to make your home more energy efficient to keep electric bills affordable, and make sure elected officials and opinion leaders know about the co-op business model. Because there is strength in numbers, co-ops tend to stick together when tackling regional and national issues.

Perhaps most important of all, co-ops are independent and community-focused, not tied to the purse strings of far-flung investors. Co-ops help drive local economic development, fund scholarships, support local charities and work to make life better in the areas they serve — the heart of the cooperative difference.

For more information about cooperatives and cooperative principles, go to the Touchstone Energy website or the website for the National Cooperative Business Association.

Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD	233
Total Savings YTD	\$6,994.22
Total Savings Percentage ..	37.41%
Mar. paid claims	14
Mar. Savings	\$609.51
Mar. Savings Percentage ..	43.54%

