



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049

(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

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See You at the Annual Meeting



By Anne Prince

Most of us lead busy lives. We find ourselves multitasking, constantly checking phones and email to keep up with the demands of modern life. Thanks to technology, we can accomplish many tasks electronically and remotely to be more efficient. With so many pressing obligations, we like to protect our “spare” time. Invitations to attend in-person meetings and gatherings are weighed carefully as we decide whether or not our time and effort to attend is beneficial. The answer to the question, “what’s in it for me?” must be compelling. You may think attending Vigilante Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting would be easy to lump into the “no benefit to me” category. However, I’d ask you to think again.

Vigilante Electric exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to its members (that’s you!). Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of all members and to serve the long-term interests of our local communities. This is where you can help.

As a member of the community, you have a perspective that is valuable — and we invite you to share it with the co-op. At the annual meeting, co-op leaders will discuss priorities and challenges, and discuss

the financial health of the cooperative. The annual meeting is also the time to vote for the trustees who will represent your interests of the cooperative board. Trustees are members, just like you.

Perhaps you may feel that you have nothing to add to the discussion, so there is no need to attend the annual meeting. However, every energy bill you pay to the co-op helps ensure better service and reliability for our entire service territory. Your dollars are reinvested into improvements that impact the reliability and affordability of your energy, and Vigilante Electric wants to hear from you to better inform our decisions as we plan for the future.

While Vigilante Electric provides convenient electronic options for bill-paying and communication, there are times when there is no substitute for in-person engagement. When members come together for a common purpose, we improve the quality of life for all in our corner of the world.

If you’ve never attended our annual meeting, or if it’s been awhile, please stop by. Registered members receive a gift for attending, are eligible for door prizes and are treated to a wonderful meal. Our co-op family looks forward to visiting with you! Mark your calendar for the annual meeting on March 8, 2019.

Board of Trustees & General Manager

Allen Martinell, President – Dist. #9
Dell/Lima

Tom Helm, Vice President – Dist. #3
Townsend/N. Helena/Lump Gulch

Sharon Lasich, Sec/Treas. – Dist. #4
Twin Bridges

Norm Tebay, Trustee – Dist. #1
Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee – Dist. #2
Silver Star/Waterloo

Cheyenne Garrison, Trustee – Dist. #5
Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Andy Johnson, Trustee – Dist. #6
Dillon North/Glen

Dean Peterson, Trustee – Dist. #7
Jackson/Wisdom

Jim Petersen, Trustee – Dist. #8
Dillon South/Grant

Rollie Miller – General Manager

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

2019 District Meetings

A Great Informational Forum

Currently, we are making preparations for our 2019 annual meeting. This is the most important event of the year, as it is the culmination of all the activities from the previous year. A vital part of our annual meeting process is the district meetings. District meetings serve two important functions: (1) they are where nominations are made for district trustee; and (2) they provide 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 the opportunity of securing a nomination. The actual election is held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

District meetings also provide those who are not able to attend the annual meeting the opportunity to meet and hear from General Manager Rollie Miller. Because the district meetings are less formal, they provide members with an excellent opportunity to interact with the general manager.

This year's district meetings are as follows:

Dist. # 1 Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

January 16, 2019 – 7 p.m. Cardwell School Gymnasium

Dist. # 2 Silver Star/Waterloo

January 17, 2019 – 7 p.m. Borden Hotel Conference Center

Dist. # 6 Dillon North

January 15, 2019 – 7 p.m. Vigilante Electric Cooperative

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.

Call for Proposals

Vigilante Safety Roundup

In early 2017, Vigilante Electric Cooperative introduced our Safety Roundup program. Vigilante Safety Roundup provides our members with a way to donate to the organizations in our communities that keep us safe. If you have been following the updates in these pages, you see our progress has been slow but steady. However, we feel now is the time to make our first round of grants from this program.

As you may recall, participating members voluntarily allow Vigilante Electric to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. They can also round their monthly bill up plus add a few extra dollars each month, or make a one-time donation. Regardless of how the donations are made, 100 percent of funds created by the roundup will be presented to worthy organizations through grants.

This is an 'opt-in' program so we started from zero with our general manager and a few trustees being the first participants. Through their leadership and the participation of many of our members, we feel it is time to give back.

Vigilante Electric is now accepting written proposals for funds for safety related projects within our service territory. A letter detailing your request must be sent to Vigilante Electric General Manager Rollie Miller, and the deadline for grant proposals will be March 22, 2019.

In the letter we want to know about the organization requesting a grant and its location. We want to know specifics regarding the equipment or project that the funds are being requested for, how it will improve community safety, the timeframe the funds will be used, and contact information for the organization and writer of the request.

At Vigilante Electric we are committed to this program and excited that we are to the point of rewarding potential grants. We also hope that by doing this we are persuading more and more of our members to join the worthwhile endeavor.



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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 182
Total Contributions: \$1,614.57

To apply contact our office at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327. An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Electric Cooperatives' Post-Election Priorities

Electric cooperatives across the nation played an active role in the midterm election, and worked to get to know each candidate running for federal office. This was particularly important this election, since more than 60 members of Congress decided to retire or run for other offices.

Through Co-ops Vote, a nonpartisan political engagement effort led by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, more than 100 candidates attended electric cooperative functions or met with co-op staff. Several statewide co-op associations sponsored or hosted a debate or forum for gubernatorial candidates, while more than 30 local electric cooperatives participated in National Voter Registration Day activities.

On November 30th, Vigilante Electric Cooperative hosted a legislative luncheon at our office in Dillon. Invitations were sent to every legislator representing our service area. The meeting was attended by Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Assistant General Manager Gary Wiens, several of our trustees, General Manager Rollie Miller, and two area legislators, State Senator Jeff Welborn of Dillon and State Representative Ray Shaw of Sheridan.

As we progress into a new legislative session at the state level, Vigilante Electric will actively work with our statewide association in advocating policies that protect our membership and communities, and fight legislation that could potentially impact the cooperative way of doing business.

On the national level, improving our nation's aging infrastructure is one of the highest priorities. Congress and the White House should explore an infrastructure package that benefits all Americans, especially those at risk of being left behind in rural America. This investment in critical infrastructure needs to go beyond roads and bridges. Congress should leverage an infrastructure package to help maintain and modernize the electric grid and connect rural communities to the modern economy.

The new Congress also presents an opportunity to expand access to high-speed Internet service in rural communities that currently lack it. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 23 million rural Americans lack access to broadband Internet, and most of them are members of an electric co-op. Roughly 100 electric cooperatives are working to close the digital divide by bringing broadband to their communities.

Despite that progress, an expanded combination of grants and loans is necessary to continue providing rural communities with the wherewithal for education, telemedicine and a 21st Century economy. Both the Trump administration and Congress agree on the need to bolster rural broadband.

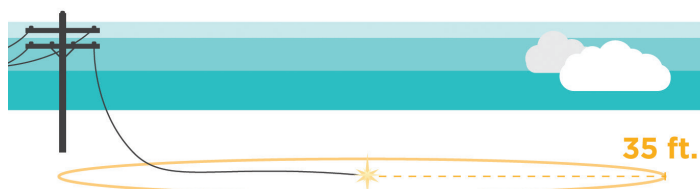
Another area of possible bipartisan agreement lies in the need to produce a new farm bill. The farm bill, which authorizes numerous rural economic development programs, traditionally has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress. Although the House and Senate have passed very different versions of a farm bill this

year, we are hopeful that lawmakers can come to an agreement on a compromise bill that promotes rural economic development and protects Rural Utilities Service electric loan funding, upon which electric co-ops depend.

Electric cooperatives such as Vigilante Electric are an important part of the communities we serve in Southwestern Montana. We are proud to continue working toward a brighter and more prosperous rural America.

Downed and Dangerous

If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 ft.** away - so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify the local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed power line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a non-conductive item - this will not prevent injury or death!

Source: ESFI.org

Outages

The Temporary (but Frustrating) Loss of Power

If you took some time and looked at the spaces that you occupy during the course of a day, you would probably see a lot of things that rely on electricity to function. Electricity is more than a mere commodity; it has become a necessary part of our lives and one we often take for granted until there is an outage.

Due to the complexity of the systems needed to deliver electricity, outages will happen for a variety of reasons, most of which we have absolutely no control over. Your power can be interrupted through acts of nature, loss of transmission from power suppliers, human error, equipment failures and animals to name a few. The outage could also be caused by something that occurred on the member side of the meter.

While we do our best to minimize outages, it is impossible to keep the power on 100 percent of the time. So, when outages occur, please take the following steps:

1. Check your meter to see if the display is on.
2. Check your breaker, which is typically located under the meter. If the breaker is tripped you can reset it by firmly pushing the breaker to the off position, then back on.
3. Look around the neighborhood for lights. This helps us determine how widespread the outage is.

If the power is still out, call Vigilante Electric Cooperative at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271. You can use these numbers 24 hours a day, seven days week. During the work hours these numbers will connect you to office personnel who will take your relevant information and dispatch line crews. Week nights these numbers will take you to a recorded message that provides you with contact numbers of on-call staff in your area. During weekends, all numbers are forwarded to a dispatch center. Please do not contact linemen directly, as they may not be the linemen on call. It is best to call the numbers listed above.

When talking to area personnel or the dispatch center, the more information that you can provide the better. Be prepared to provide your name, account number, physical address and the approximate time the outage occurred. Most importantly, provide a phone number that you can be reached at if more details are needed.

At Vigilante Electric we work very hard to ensure the reliability of our distribution system, and we respond as quickly as possible to outage calls. While long-term outages are rare, it is important to take steps to prepare yourself for when long outages occur.

- For a person on oxygen you will have to use your portable system until power is restored. Make sure that you have full spare tanks and that your portable respirator is working properly.

- Keep flashlights or candles handy.
- Have some nonperishable food and bottled water available.
- When outages occur in the winter, avoid repeatedly

going in and out of the house. While most dwellings retain some heat, you want to avoid introducing fresh cold air into the home when the power goes out.

- Refrigeration – refrigerators and freezers will keep food safe for hours without electricity. The key is keeping the doors shut.

- For people that use their computers a lot, and especially those that work out of their home, losing the electricity can be costly if data is lost. Save your work regularly and purchase an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). Essentially this is a battery backup for your computer. In the event of an outage, this device will supply electricity to the computer and allow you to save your data and turn off your computer properly. The duration that the UPS will operate depends of its size and the load plugged into it.

Outages can also be planned. Many times for replacing or upgrading facilities we will shut down the power to create the safest possible work environment for our line crews.

These outages occur during the work week, during normal business hours. When an outage is planned we make every effort to contact the impacted members prior to the outage. If this is important, you can help facilitate this process by keeping your contact information up to date, including a working phone number.

Nobody likes when the power goes out, but if we are prepared we can lessen the impact. For us this means keeping our system in the best operational condition possible. For you this means being prepared for when the lights do go out. When it does, rest assured we will do our very best to get the power back on as quickly as possible.

