



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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VEC adding after-hours call center for outages

Basin Electric dispatch will connect you to the appropriate Vigilante Electric personnel

THE phrase “opposite sides of the same coin” comes to mind when it comes to power outages. Most aspects of power outages can be frustrating and inconvenient for our members and us as an organization. While we cannot prevent outages from happening, we can improve how they are communicated.

Traditionally, during work hours, you call our office to report an outage, where we have four phone lines and staff answering calls. After hours, you get a pre-recorded message informing you of the person to contact to report the outage. During the week, this is typically our line superintendent. On the weekend, you get the number for the on-call lineman.

Regardless of when the outage occurs, a widespread outage can inundate our phone lines and potentially drop calls. After hours, there is no way for the on-call lineman to keep up with the calls and set into action what is needed to respond to the outage.

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we pride ourselves on providing top-rate member service; therefore, we have decided to contract with an after-hours call center for outages. Considering the growth we are experiencing, we think there is no better time than now to make this change.

Vigilante Electric is contracting with Basin Electric Power Cooperative to handle after-hours and weekend outage calls. We have spent the last few months

working out the details on the transition with Basin Electric so that it will be as smooth as possible.

You will still call our office numbers for all outages. After-hours and weekend calls will be transferred to Basin’s dispatch center. The dispatchers will answer calls on behalf of us as Vigilante Electric. They will collect information about the outage and notify the appropriate Vigilante Electric personnel.

This will add significant productivity and safety to our organization. Not having to field calls, the on-call linemen can focus solely on responding to the outage. The call center will also track the progress of our linemen from the time they leave the shop until they return, ensuring their safety.

Several cooperatives in the state already use Basin’s services and are very satisfied with it. For Vigilante Electric, the time is right for making this move, and we are convinced that this will make the outage notification process better for everyone.

General Manager Rollie Miller added “the safety of the linemen is paramount while running outages, especially after hours. We simply have grown to a point where after hours calls needed to be handled in a more timely and responsive manner. This service will be a great benefit to the members and additional safety for the linemen while working trouble after hours.” RM

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

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President

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Allen Martinell, Trustee
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Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller,
General Manager

Preparing for the worst

Hoping for the best when it comes to wildfire prevention

VIGILANTE Electric Cooperative's service territory covers several areas of heavily timbered land. Due to the dry conditions we are experiencing, we have taken steps to reduce fire potential caused by downed power lines.

Throughout our system, we use protective devices called reclosers. A recloser is used to section off portions of a circuit to avoid having the entire circuit go down in the event of a fault, such as a fallen tree in the power line.

Reclosers detect a problem on a line and interrupt the flow of electricity in an attempt to clear a temporary fault, after which the recloser will reset. If the fault has cleared, the electricity stays on; if it doesn't, then this cycle will happen again. Under normal operation, this cycle will happen up to four times. After the fourth time, the recloser will lock out and have to be reset manually.

If a tree were to fall into a line or bring the line to the ground, the



repeated cycling of the recloser could potentially start a fire. This is why we have set reclosers protecting circuits in heavily wooded areas to operate just once before locking out, limiting the potential for ignition.

While these areas may experience

more short term outages, we believe it is our best option for avoiding something catastrophic. We would like to thank the members in these areas for their ongoing patience as we have already placed the reclosers in these areas on "one shot."



Linemen Cody Tarter and Charles Wharton put on a safety demonstration for Beaverhead County High School. | **VIGILANTE ELECTRIC PHOTO**



Growing up co-op, it's a community

By **MEGHAAN EVANS**
For *Vigilante Electric*

DON'T you love the feeling of being able to walk into your favorite locally-owned shop, restaurant or store knowing that the money you spend makes positive impacts in your community? The spirit of main street is embodied in local businesses, just like it is in Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

Electric cooperatives are as local and community centered as they come. Founded as a way to bring electricity to communities that didn't interest investor-owned utilities (or IOUs), electric cooperatives have been a cornerstone of community and economic development in rural Amer-

ica and beyond for decades.

That feeling you get when you frequent a local businesses in our community is the same feeling we get when we come to work at the co-op. It is a feeling of pride. We are proud to be a part of an organization that serves the communities in which we live, instead of a group of shareholders who may never have set foot in our service territory.

Living on co-op lines is more than just knowing there are people out there working to bring you safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Living on co-op lines is an investment in our communities and its members.

You see, Vigilante Electric is a not-for-profit business. When we make more money than we need to

keep the lights on safely, affordably and reliably, we return it back to our members (that's you!) in the form of capital credits. This means after all co-op expenses are paid, any additional money we earn goes back into our communities, instead of going into a shareholder's pocket, which is pretty great!

We hope you view Vigilante Electric not just as your electric utility provider, but as a local business that brings pride and prosperity to our communities.

If you are interested in learning more about how we keep the lights on and beyond, please stop by the co-op or give us a call. We love being a part of this community, and we hope you feel the same way too! RM

Beware: Don't fall victim to utility scams

By **ABBY BERRY** | For *Vigilante Electric*

Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, and text messages. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports from local and national news outlets, as well as your local utility companies.

A few years ago, Vigilante Electric Cooperative members were targets of a series of phone scams in which the scammers demanded immediate payment and threatened to shut off power if the money was not received through a credit card payment.

The scammers employ this tactic hoping to put you in panic mode so you provide your credit card number for their use.

Please remember, Vigilante Electric Cooperative does not take credit card numbers directly over the phone. We have a secured automated system for credit card and electronic

check payments. We also do not use high-pressure phone calls for delinquent accounts.

Additionally, we want you to be aware of two trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims that you have *overpaid* your utility bill. The scammers will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, Vigilante Electric will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to your next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility.

Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when

you've been targeted by a scammer:

Take your time. Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so that you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially over the phone.

Be suspicious. Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags.

Confirm before you act. If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent Vigilante Electric or another utility, but you're unsure if that is true, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly. You can reach us at 800-221-8271 or 683-2327 to verify.

Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. Be vigilant, and please report any utility scams to us so we can let others in our community know. Together, we can help prevent our friends and neighbors from being victimized. RM

UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

THERE are many unique features of an electric cooperative that make us different from other electric utilities; the most distinguishing being that we are owned by those we serve (our members) and return all profit margins back to our members in the form of capital credits.

All business organizations need capital to operate, which is usually supplied by a combination of equity and debt. A stock company, such as an investor-owned utility, can raise equity by selling shares of stock, or ownership, in the company to the general public. Stockholders invest in the stock willingly with the expectation of earning a return on the investment through dividends and capital appreciation.

An electric cooperative such as Vigilante Electric does not issue stock and pay dividends, however, we still need to maintain an adequate level of

equity to ensure financial health and stability. For electric cooperatives, the most significant source of equity is the retention of margins from the sale of electricity to our members.

Vigilante Electric, by law, is a non-profit organization. After all financial commitments are met, the remaining margins are credited back to the membership. Margins are allocated to members as capital credits based on their purchases from the cooperative, or patronage.

Our capital credit system was adopted at the 1947 annual meeting, and provides a method for allocating margins. The term "capital credits" is used because the actual money, which is classified as net margins, is invested in cooperative capital such as reserves or equipment. This money belongs to the members, but they have agreed to its use for capital purposes by accepting the capital credit provisions in the

bylaws.

Capital credit statements are sent to members notifying them of the allocation of margins for the previous year. When financial conditions permit, a general retirement of capital can be made. The capital credits, allocated for a particular year or years, will be paid to the individual member.

In the event of the death of a cooperative member, our main office should be contacted as soon as possible to discuss options concerning estate payments. If you have any questions regarding capital credits, please contact our Dillon office.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is currently trying to locate the following individuals for payment of Capital Credits. If you have any information regarding names on this list, please contact us at 800-221-8271 or 683-2327 or by email at contact@vec.coop. RM

AMERMAN, JON & MELODY - WHITEHALL, MT
 ANDRIST, LAUREN - LOVELAND, CO
 ANSLEY, JUDY - MISSOULA, MT
 ARCANGELI JR, JOSEPH & NICOLA - THREE FORKS, MT
 ARNOLD, RANDOLPH & SANDRA - HELENA, MT
 ASHPOLE, DAVID W & KAREN - OWASSO, OK
 BALCH, JAN - DILLON, MT
 BANKS, JEAN D - WILMINGTON, DE
 BAUM, STEVE & EVELYNAPO, AP
 BEGLEY, ALESHA - TWIN BRIDGES, MT
 BEGLEY, KAYTLIN - LIVINGSTON, MT
 BEICK, MEL & SHIRLEY - JACKSON, WY
 BERG, GENE & MERRILEE - TOSTON, MT
 BEST, WILMA C - WHITEHALL, MT
 BEVIER, KERRY - BELGRADE, MT
 BINGHAM, CHUCK & IDA - PINE, AZ
 BJORKLUND, DALE - HENDERSON, NV
 BONTRAGER, LEVI & RACHEL - VEVAY, IN
 BOSWELL, KRISTY - EL RENO, OK
 BOWSER, ARNOLD - RANDOLPH, KS
 BRADLEY, ALLEN D - DILLON, MT
 BRADLEY, LISA - BOULDER, MT
 BRINKMAN, VIRGIL D & CAROLYN - LINCOLN, CA
 BROOM, RACHEL - DILLON, MT
 BRYANT, JIM & ANGELA - TOWNSEND, MT
 BUCHMAN, JENNY - MOCCASIN, MT
 BYRUM, VIRGINIA - LA MESA, CA

CALHOUN, JOHN - LIVERMORE, CO
 CARLIN, KRISTEN - WATERTOWN, NY
 CARPENG, ERIC - MISSOULA, MT
 CASEY, DESIREE - SILVERDALE, WA
 CHAMBERS, BOB & FAYE - BUTTE, MT
 CHAPMAN, ROBERT - TOWNSEND, MT
 CLARK, JEAN - MISSOULA, MT
 CLOS, NICK - HELENA, MT
 COLEMAN, CAROL - LINCOLN, MT
 COLEMAN, RON - COMMERCE CITY, CO
 CORNELIUS, WILLIAM & JODIE - DILLON, MT
 COUCH, MIKE & MARY - IDAHO FALLS, ID
 CRAVENS, PAMELA - DYERSBURG, TN
 CURRIE, JAMES & KARA - DILLON, MT
 DAILEY, TAMA - TOWNSEND, MT
 DAVIS, ADAM & DANALEE - WENDELL, ID
 DAVIS, LEONARD - HILL CITY, SD
 DAY, ELENA - DILLON, MT
 DECKER, BEAU & SARA - SHERIDAN, MT
 DEEDS, RON - TOWNSEND, MT
 DEGROODT, BARBARA - TOWNSEND, MT
 DEMERS, JIM - GLEN, MT
 DENNY, TERRI - DILLON, MT
 DEYONGE, KENNETH & SANDRA - WHITEHALL, MT
 DIMICK, JEREMY & VALERIE - WEST UNION, WV
 DODD, MISTY - DILLON, MT
 DOMBROSKI, ROBERT J - BUTTE, MT
 DROPINSKI, RICHARD & NANCY - SEWARD, NE

ECKLES, ROBIN D - WHITEHALL, MT
 EGGAR, HAROLD & JANET - WOLF POINT, MT
 EICH, MICAH - TOWNSEND, MT
 EICHINGER, KAREN - BISMARCK, ND
 ENDERLE, MIKE & TERRY - BOZEMAN, MT
 EVANS, MARVIN & CHERYL - VIAN, OK
 FAYRAM, DALE - ANACONDA, MT
 FELLOWS, ELEANOR - BUTTE, MT
 FIELDS, RANDY & TERRI - CARMEN, ID
 FISCHER, TOM & JACKIE - BOULDER, MT
 FLOERCHINGER, TYLER & KAYLA - MARTINSDALE, MT
 FORD, CARRIE - BOULDER, MT
 FOSS, STEPHANIE & BRANDON BARNES - LIBBY, MT
 FRENCH, SHAYLEE - DILLON, MT
 FRERCK, JENNY - COLUMBUS, MT
 FRITTS, DAN & CHRIS - SHERIDAN, MT
 FUCHS, CHRIS & MARJORIE - ALBANY, OR
 FURHMAN, KELSEY - DILLON, MT
 FUSSELL, MIKE & CINDY - CHANDLER, AZ
 GALLENKAMP, KIRK & KELLY - LITTLEROCK, CA
 GARCIA, DANIEL - BUTTE, MT
 GARCIA, GENEVIEVE - DILLON, MT
 GEE, MICHAEL - DILLON, MT

**CAPITAL CREDITS
 CONTINUED NEXT MONTH**