



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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A record year

WHAT A YEAR IT'S BEEN... *SO FAR*

By **ROLLIE MILLER**
General Manager



IN 2020 we had a record year of new service installations, and as of the end of September this year we have almost doubled that record. Most notable are the areas around Three Forks, Whitehall, North Helena Valley and Dillon, which have seen the largest numbers. But quite frankly it is all areas seeing growth. It is nice to see a little growth to be able to spread the fixed costs with a larger number of members, but this has been simply crazy. In addition, just keeping enough transformers, meter pedestals and meters, among other things, in front of us has been very difficult. All of which have seen significant increases in costs of up to 60 percent over last year's costs, and delivery lead times doubling or even tripling. For instance, earlier this year we purchased three voltage regulators at a cost of approximately \$42,000, with a 26-week lead time. We need three more, and we were just quoted three identical

units as the ones previously purchased at more than \$65,000 and 62-week lead time. Another example is we purchased a Ford F550 bucket truck in 2019 for \$150,000, with a nine-month lead time. We need to make another similar purchase and were quoted \$200,000 and a 26-month lead time. That's over two years wait. Just getting a pickup is a six-month wait. Thankfully, we are headed into winter and hopefully that will give us a needed break to replenish and be ready for next year.

Record Sales

One of the benefits of several new services is that power usage increases, and that has certainly taken place this year as well. Both record energy sales and record high peak demand, or rate of energy usage, have occurred this year. New residential installations, cabins being used for longer periods of time, drought conditions attributing to higher irrigation usage and sufficient water for irrigation have all contributed to higher sales. As a result of those record sales, the Board of Trustees is

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

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Rollie Miller,
General Manager

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

FROM EVERYONE AT VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Vigilante Electric office will close December 24 for Christmas and December 31 for the New Year's holiday.

VEC Safety Roundup

Program helps local organizations, businesses

WHEN guided by sound principles and integrity, good things usually happen. When great principles intersect and are acted upon, you have great potential for good. For us, the truest example of this is where our commitment to safety intersects with the Seventh Cooperative Principle of Concern for Community. From this intersection, our Safety Roundup program was born.

Established in 2017, members are provided an easy way to donate to organizations that are working to keep our communities safe. Members who choose to participate allow Vigilante Electric to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. They can also add a few extra dollars each month, or make a one-time donation. Regardless of how the donations are made, 100 percent of the money is presented to worthy organizations through grants.

In true cooperative spirit, participation in the program has steadily grown. Being an “opt-in” program, we started from zero and, as of our last billing cycle, had more than 600 members participate.

Since its inception, we have awarded grants to five very deserving organizations. The first donation was made to the Beaverhead Ski Patrol, the group responsible for on-mountain safety at Maverick Mountain Ski Area. Its funding request was for a medical-grade digital pulse oximeter and a new rescue toboggan.

An award was also given to the Broadwater County Sheriff’s Office for a community safety program that it was developing. The plan was to provide educational material to children pre-school age and older. Topics included safety, drug prevention, bullying, identity theft, Internet safety and safety for seniors.

Jefferson Valley Rural Ambulance was granted funding to supplement its budget to buy AEDs for its communities and train people in CPR. Beaverhead County Search and Rescue used its grant for the development and purchase of supplies for first responder wilderness kits.

Finally, at this year’s annual meeting, we proudly awarded Broadwater Search and Rescue \$1,000, our biggest grant to date. It is using the funds to purchase first-aid kit supplies for its members’ packs.

This grassroots program is a shining example of the cooperative spirit and, with your help, we can build this into an even better program. It’s simple: The more member participation we have in this program, the more organizations could potentially benefit from the grants. More organizations applying for grants means a greater impact on



Rich Norquist, left, accepting our first grant on behalf of the Beaverhead Ski Patrol from Vigilante Electric Cooperative Manager Rollee Miller. | **FILE PHOTO**

the safety in our communities.

If you would like to join us in this effort, please contact us and we will help you with the application process. If you are part of a group or civic organization and have an idea on how to improve safety in our community, we would like to hear from you. Send us a letter to provide us information about your organization and details about your project, and how it will improve community safety.

Please send all information to General Manager Rollee Miller. RM



**Vigilante Electric
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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 638
Total Contributions: \$11,225.15

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

MANAGER

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thoroughly evaluating another rebate back to membership at the end of the year, similar to what took place last year. More to come on that next month after the decision has been made.

Hopefully we will be getting some rain/snow this winter to replenish the reservoirs.

Construction Projects

If you have been around Dillon at night recently you have probably noticed the lights at the mine east of town. For those unfamiliar, there is a Barrett's Mineral talc mine up there that, for the most part, was run electrically from portable generators. In the last year we have negotiated with them to get three-phase power up to that mine. They have agreed to the proposal and paid the upfront costs of the powerline, and we have been


constructing it for the last couple of months. By the time you read this the job will, for the most part, be complete. This will be a very good load for your cooperative, and we are excited to be able to serve them station-service three-phase power soon.

Another notable project completed this year was Phase 2 of the Bannack-Wisdom transmission line rebuild from the turnoff to Polaris to the bottom of Butch Hill. We completed the \$1.2 million eight-mile Phase 2 portion in September, with the help of our contractor Western Line Builders. Again, we would like to thank the landowners in that area for their assistance in getting this portion completed. These two projects were completed alongside of the significant new service work needing to get done.

Deposits

When we connect a new member, we collect a deposit to ensure the

electric bill is going to be covered. In the past we have retained that deposit money until the member has left the service of the cooperative. Recently the board approved a revision to that policy that allows us to return the deposit to the member if the account has remained current for the previous 12 months. We are in the process of implementing that policy provision now and will be providing a credit soon to those accounts that have been current long term.

Again, it has been a very busy and trying year for the board and staff of your cooperative. A very large amount of work was accomplished by the guys and gals, and they deserve kudos for making it all happen in these crazy times. If you see any of them, please tell them so. As always, if you need to get a hold of me it is best to email me at rollie@vec.coop. You can also reach me on my mobile at (406) 925-1085. Thanks for allowing us to serve you, the members of VEC! 

Stay safe at home with tamper-resistant outlets

ELECTRICITY, when treated with respect, is extremely safe and a vital part of our lives, especially in our homes. In past editions of this publication, we have provided tips on how to use electricity safely in and around your home. While researching ideas for a safety article, I came across one disturbing statistic that is heartbreaking and completely preventable.

Each year, approximately 2,400 children suffer severe shocks and burns when they stick items into the slots of electrical receptacles — that is nearly seven children a day. It is estimated that there are six to 12 fatalities a year related to this. Nearly one-third of these injuries are the result of small children placing ordinary household objects, such as keys, pins or paperclips, into the outlets — with disastrous consequences.


Located in practically every room in every house throughout the United

States, electrical outlets and receptacles represent a constant and real danger wherever young children are found. This danger can be minimized, however, through the use of tamper-resistant receptacles (TRRs).

TRRs look just like ordinary outlets, but are designed with spring-loaded interior cover plates that close off the receptacle openings, or slots. When equal pressure is simultaneously applied to both sides, the receptacle cover plates open to allow the standard plug to make contact with the receptacle contact points. Without this simultaneous pressure, the cover plates remain closed, preventing insertion of foreign objects and protecting your children from painful, traumatic electrical injuries.



TRRs have been required in hospital pediatric care facilities for more than 20 years. In fact, TRRs have proven to be so effective that the National Electrical Code (NEC) now requires them to be installed in all new home construction for 15- and 20-amp receptacles.

The additional cost of these specialized outlets is about 50 cents more than a traditional receptacle. In existing homes, receptacles can be easily retrofitted with TRRs using the same installation guidelines that apply to standard receptacles. We recommend, however, that the retrofit be done by a licensed electrician. While this will be an additional expense, it is a small price to pay to ensure that your children are protected against electrical shocks and burns from electrical outlets. 

HOLIDAY DECOR TIPS

FOR AN ENERGY-WISE HOME

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

WHETHER you've already decked your halls or you're just getting started, there's still time to incorporate energy savings into your holiday décor planning.

If you haven't strung your twinkle lights, be sure to use LED light strands. LEDs consume far less energy than incandescent lights, and they can last 40 holiday seasons. They're also safer because they're made with epoxy lenses, not glass, making them more resistant to breaking — and they're cool to the touch, so no burnt fingers!

If you missed Santa's memo about energy-saving LEDs and your holiday lights are already up, you can still save on lighting costs. All you need is a programmable light timer. Most models cost between \$10 to \$25, and can be purchased through online retailers such as Amazon or at big box stores such as Lowe's or Wal-Mart. With a light timer, you can easily program when you want your holiday lights turned on and off, which will



If you prefer a more natural approach to your holiday décor, consider making a simple wreath or garland for the exterior of your home. You can also use solar-powered spotlights to illuminate the greenery at night. | **PHOTO BY JACKIE RAMIREZ**

save you time, money and energy. If you're using a timer for exterior lighting, make sure it's weatherproof and intended for outdoor use.

If Clark Griswold's décor style is a bit much for your taste, consider a more natural approach. Many Christmas tree farms, and even retailers such as Lowe's and Home Depot, give away greenery clippings from recently trimmed trees. With a little twine, extra ornaments and sparkly ribbon, you can create beautiful garlands and wreaths to hang over your front door or windows. To add extra twinkle at night, you can install solar-powered spotlights to illuminate your new (essentially free!) greenery. Solar spotlights can vary in price, but you should be able to purchase a quality set of four for about \$30 — and because they run on natural energy from the sun, there's no additional cost to your energy bill.

Regardless of how you decorate your home for the holidays, there are plenty of ways to save energy throughout the season. Visit energy.gov for additional energy-saving tips. RM



If you haven't made the switch to LED holiday lights, it's time. LEDs can last 40 holiday seasons, and they're safer than incandescent holiday lights. | **PHOTO BY HANS BRAXMEIER**