



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE: YEAR-END CO-OP UPDATE

By **ROLLIE MILLER**
General Manager



BPA

As you may remember, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is our wholesale power provider, and we have an "all requirements" contract with them to serve our power needs until 2028. We are currently working on an extension of that contract, as well as reviewing the various details of the existing contract that need attention.

BPA has proved to be a very good business partner over the years and decades, and we want that to continue. I say that because we have recently been notified that, due to the shape of the snow melt this past year and the excess energy sales to the open market, we will be getting a rebate in our power costs over the next ten months in the amount of approximately \$1.16 million. By "shape of the snow melt," I mean it came out of the mountains slower than normal and thus did not force the dams to spill excessive amounts, allowing for more and stable generation.

In addition, we had another solid year of sales and load growth. Our irrigation sales were down slightly, but our residential sales made up for it. We are sitting in a strong financial position, allowing for another year-end rebate back to the membership. That being said, I am taking a proposal to the board of trustees at the next meeting to get approval for a rebate back to you as

members on your December billing. The size and extent of the rebate will be determined after serious deliberation by the board.

Capital Credit General Retirement

This is also the time of year that we complete what is called a general retirement of capital credits. As a non-profit, any excess revenue that we collect over and above our costs is allocated back to the individual members based on their energy used throughout the year. This means that, if you had a membership that provided enough revenue back in 2008, you will be getting those excess margins returned to you.

If the rebate is less than \$50 for an individual with a current membership, you will be given a credit on your power bill. For those with more than \$50, we are issuing a check. So, if you meet the later criteria, be on the lookout for a general retirement check from us here in the next week.

Supply Chain Problems Persist

As I have stated in this and other forums, we have been experiencing problems getting transformers, poles, underground wire, hardware, etc. for the work that we do to deliver power to you, our members. For instance, a three-phase transformer that we purchased two years ago for \$12,890 is currently quoted to us at \$63,535, with a delivery time of four times what it was then. This is the worst case that I am familiar with so far, but other items have costs that

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

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Rollie Miller,

General Manager

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VEC awarded for communication

VIGILANTE Electric uses a variety of ways to communicate relevant and timely information to our members and, like many cooperatives, it takes a team. Recently, Vigilante Electric was recognized for our communication efforts by two of our trade associations.

Each year, Northwest Public Power Association (NWPPA) and the Montana Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) host communications awards in conjunction with one of their major events. Affiliates of each submit their best communications efforts for the previous year in a variety of categories. Awards are given to the top entries in each category.

NWPPA Awards

NWPPA is a not-for-profit association of more than 150 public/people's utility districts, electric cooperatives, municipalities and Crown corporations in the Western U.S. and Canada. Its Excellence in Communications awards are held as part of its Northwest Innovations in Communications Conference (NIC), which was held this year in Anchorage, Alaska.

This year, NWPPA received 263 entries from 45 utilities. The timeframe for these entries was that they had to be published in calendar year 2021. This year, Vigilante Electric, which is in the smallest utility group, was honored with three awards:

Best Newsletter – 3rd place.

Best Photograph – 2nd place for *Light at the End*, a photo taken by Townsend Area Foreman John Moos.

Best Wild Card Entry – 2nd place for *Honoring a Member and a Veteran*, a feature story about retired Marine Corps Colonel Elaine Davies.

MECA Awards

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) is a not-for-profit, statewide trade association representing



Light at the End was awarded 2nd place from NWPPA. The photo was taken by Townsend Area Foreman John Moos.

the 25 consumer-owned electric distribution cooperatives and three generation and transmission cooperatives in Montana. Its communications awards are held in conjunction with its annual meeting, which is held in Great Falls.

This year, MECA received 135 entries from across the state. The MECA Communications Awards' publications timeframe this year was July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022. Here, Vigilante Electric is grouped with the large cooperatives. The following is what we were recognized for by MECA:

Best Newsletter – Honorable mention.

Best Feature or Promotional Photo – Honorable mention for *A Beautiful Start*, a photo taken by General Manager Rollie Miller and used for the cover of our 2022 annual meeting report.

Best Feature Story – 2nd place *Honoring a Member and a Veteran*, the feature story about retired Marine Corps Colonel Elaine Davies that also won an NWPPA award.

Vigilante Electric was honored to accept these awards on behalf of its employees who worked together to produce these communications. RM



General Manager Rollie Miller presents Lineman Jess Davidson with the MECA Life Saver Award. | **VEC PHOTO**

Lineman Jess Davidson receives Life Saver Award

At the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) annual meeting, the Life Saver Award is presented to a cooperative employee or board member whose actions in a time of crisis contribute to another person's survival. Vigilante Electric Line-

man Jess Davidson received one of MECA's Life Saver Awards at this year's annual meeting for his actions in response to a recent single car rollover. Congratulations to Jess on this honor, and for representing our organization so well. RM



VEC gets recognition for safety

AT Vigilante Electric, safety is priority one, and this is a claim that we can substantiate. Each year, we must report to OSHA any work-related injuries and illnesses involving days away from work and/or days of restricted work activity. Recently, Vigilante Electric received an award at the MECA annual meeting for having no reportable incidents over the past five years.

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have gone up considerably, with lead times going out further and further.

It has been difficult to keep the shelves stocked with basic powerline construction material, despite our best efforts to stay ahead of the situation. So far, we have been able to stay ahead of it, but just barely. This, coupled with increases in costs and lead times, has created budget and planning problems to where we are ordering equipment now to be delivered in 2024.

It has been challenging to say the least, but the Vigilante guys and gals have really stepped up to make it all work. I really don't know how much longer we can keep the retail electric rates where they are with these kinds of increases in costs. But rest assured, we will do our best. We have the lowest

residential and irrigation rates in the state of Montana, and some of the lowest in the country.

Looking ahead

This is a busy time of year for us, as we are making plans for projects to be completed in the next year, along with the normal budgeting process. We are also making plans for the next annual meeting of the cooperative on March 3, 2023, in Townsend at the Watson Training Center. District meetings will take place next month in Toston, Lima and here in Dillon.

We hope you have a Merry Christmas and a great start to next year. If you need to get ahold of me for any reason, feel free to call the office, email me at Rollie@vec.coop, or you can call my mobile phone at (406) 925-1085. Thanks for allowing us to serve you, the members of Vigilante Electric! 

A SAFE RIDE

Vigilante Electric awards safety grant

IN 2016, Vigilante Electric Cooperative launched the Safety Roundup program. The goal of this program is to help organizations within our service territory fund projects that promote and make our community safer. Since implementing this program, we have helped several organizations, and we are proud to announce our latest grant recipient – the Beaverhead County DUI taskforce.

When we last reported the status of this program, we were very pleased with the growth in participation and funding. What we needed were organizations that were looking for funding and, thanks to the efforts of Vigilante Electric employee Chelsey Hutchison, the DUI taskforce brought its Sober Rides Program to our attention.

“Montana’s Biggest Weekend” is dubbed by many as the unofficial end of summer party, which brings thousands of visitors to our area. The Sober Rides Program was started three years ago in an effort to reduce the number of people drinking and driving by offering them a free ride.

This is a well thought out local response and commitment to maintaining a safe environment during the Labor Day weekend. It is supported by the Dillon Police Department, Montana Highway Patrol, Beaverhead County Sheriff’s office and a variety of community-oriented groups. Over the last three years, the Sober Rides Program



Vigilante Electric General Manager Rollie Miller and Chelsey Hutchison presents VEC’s latest Safety Roundup award to the city of Dillon’s Chief of Police Jeremy Alvarez. | VEC PHOTO

has provided free rides to 823 individuals, including 273 people in 2022.

Year in and year out, Montana ranks among the highest (if not the highest) in alcohol-related traffic deaths. So, when the opportunity was presented to help sponsor such a program, our board and general manager were immediately on board and approved a grant for \$2,000.

This is a great example of what Safety Roundup was designed to do, and we can do much more with your help. This program is driven through voluntary participation, where members can “roundup” their bill to the next whole dollar. They can also add a few extra dollars each month, or

make a one-time donation. Regardless of how your donations are made, 100 percent of the money collected will be presented to worthy organizations through grants. To the members that are already participating, thank you. Safety Roundup would not exist without you.

If you would like to join us in this effort, give us a call and we would be glad to help you with the enrollment. If you are part of a group or civic organization and have an idea on how to improve safety in our community, contact us with information about your organization and details about your project, and how it will improve community safety. RM



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 758

Total Contributions: \$16,473.60

To apply, contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.