VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

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

What Are Your Kids Doing Next Summer?

2014 Youth Tour

Each June, high school students from across the country gather in our nation's capital to partake in a very special event. They come to see American history enshrined in Washington, D.C., and to witness history being made. They come to learn and share with others whose geographical diversity is rivaled only by the demographic diversity. Most of all, they come to have fun. What event is the thread that brings them together? The National Rural Electric Cooperatives' Association Youth Tour to Washington D.C.

The seed for this remarkable event is attributed to then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperatives' Association (NRECA) annual meeting in Chicago in 1957. *"If one thing goes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital, where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."*

Beginning that year, Texas electric cooperatives sent groups of young people to Washington, D.C., to work during summers in Sen. Johnson's office. In 1958, rural electric people in Iowa sponsored the first busload of youth on a weeklong study tour of the nation's capital, and other states started picking up on the idea. In 1964, NRECA began to coordinate the program. Participating groups arranged to be in the city the same week, and there were about 400 young people from 12 states that year. Since then, the Youth Tour has continued to grow. In 2013, there were nearly 1,600 participants from 43 states.

For more than a decade, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has participated in the NRECA Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. In June 2014, we will again send a representative on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. The term "once in a lifetime" has been used to describe this weeklong event, but even this might not adequately describe an event that has had such an enormous impact on so many lives.

"The Youth Tour was the greatest experience of my life. I learned life lessons, American history and how to give back to my community. I hope everyone can see our nation's capital and history like I did. On the tour I made lifelong friends and memories that I will never forget. "Thank you," Vigilante and members for this incredible opportunity."

Jordan Peterson,
Beaverhead County
High School,
2013 Tour Participant

In 2014, the dates of the Youth Tour are June 14-20. You can learn more by going to the tour website at *www.youthtour.coop.* To qualify, the student must be the dependent of a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative and must be going into his or her junior or senior year in the fall of 2014. Selection is based on an application and short essay. Information is available at area high schools or on our website, *www.vec.coop.* Applications and essays are due to the Vigilante Electric office, PO Box 1049, Dillon MT 59725, by November 29, 2013.

This year's essay topic is: *"Describe how electric cooperatives operate based on the seven cooperative principles. Tell which of the seven cooperative principles you think is the most important and why?"*

Trustees

President
Dean Peterson

Vice President
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Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271

Dillon
After Hours Mon. - Thurs.
Dan Snellman 683-6222
Tim Myllymaki 683-6369
Charles Wharton 660-1878

Weekends
683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271

Whitehall
After Hours and Weekends
Marty Simons.....287-3950
John Moos 266-3605
Justin Bair 266-3351

Townsend
After Hours and Weekends
John Moos 266-3605
Justin Bair 266-3351
Marty Simons.....287-3950

Winter Heating Assistance

Where to Turn For Help

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Like it or not, winter will be upon us quicker than most of us would like. With the cost of everything going up, the prospects of a long, cold winter are very scary. Every year, low-income families struggle to keep their homes warm and to pay their utility bill. Fortunately, there are organizations available to lend some assistance.

Since 1998, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has helped qualified members receive credit on their accounts to aid in winter heating. Applications are available October 1, 2013, and must be returned by November 8, 2013. You may contact us at (800) 221-8271 or (406) 683-2327 for an application.

However, it should be noted that the funding levels for the Vigilante Electric program are very limited. That is why we also recommend that families in need apply for the programs offered by the state Department of Public Health and Human Services.

- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program** – This program assists with a portion of winter energy costs for eligible people. If you are eligible, the payment amount is figured according to the size and type of your home, type of fuel used to heat, income level and number of family members.
- **Weatherization Program** – This program helps improve the heating efficiency of homes and permanently reduces energy consumption. This may include air infiltration, insulation and repair or replacement of your furnace. All applications are ranked according to energy consumption. Eligibility is based on income and resources.
- **Energy Share of Montana** – This program provides emergency utility assistance loans to households experiencing financial hardship.
- **Warm Hearts, Warm Homes** – Provides low-cost/no-cost weatherization materials for self-installation.

These programs are administered through regional offices. Each office serves specific counties, so contact the office nearest you. Members in Gallatin County must contact the office in Livingston.

Human Resources Council

District 12 – Butte
(800) 382-1325
(406) 496-4975

Rocky Mountain Development Council

LIEAP Office - Helena
(800) 356-6544
(406) 447-1625

HRDC

District 9 - Livingston
(800) 289-0896
(406) 222-0896

From our experience, people find the LIEAP application a little daunting. If you think you qualify, call for an application. There are people available to help you through the process. Plus, it is worth inquiring about the weatherization program. Where LIEAP provides assistance for your immediate needs, the weatherization is a long-term solution, that helps lower your energy bill.

Income Guideline 2013-2014 Program Year
Application period is October 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014

Family Size	LIEAP	Weatherization
1	21,498.00	22,980.00
2	28,113.00	31,020.00
3	34,728.00	39,060.00
4	41,343.00	47,100.00
5	47,958.00	55,140.00
6	54,573.00	63,180.00
7	55,813.00	71,220.00
8	59,445.00	79,260.00

Abandoned Services

By Rod Siring, Member Services

One of the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the management of Vigilante Electric Cooperative is to write, review and approve company policy. Policies are guidelines on how certain circumstances are to be dealt with. Policies are drafted by management and approved by the board to ensure equity, fairness and consistency. Recently, we updated our policy dealing with services that have been disconnected for an extended period of time.

Members have the option of disconnecting an electrical service when the service is not in use. We refer to this as an idle service, and they are very common for services to stock wells. While a service is in idle, the assets needed to bring electricity to that location are still in place, but are not generating revenue.

Upon review of this situation, it was determined that there were more than 500 idle services, many of which have been in idle for a decade or longer. Our policy now has a time element for determining when idle services are to be considered abandoned, and the procedure to follow before a service is removed.

A review of idle services will be done by the line superintendent. Services that have been disconnected for one year are considered to be abandoned and are subject to removal. The Line Superintendent will review his findings and recommendations with the general manager.

For those services being considered for removal, the property owners will be notified and presented with two options. The member can reconnect the service and start paying the monthly service charges or, at our discretion, the line extension and/or service may be removed.

It is important the members, who have services that are subject to removal, take some time to seriously weigh these two options. Reconstruction of an abandoned service where the facilities have been removed will be done according to our normal line extension policy.

Outages

The temporary (but frustrating) loss of power

By Rod Siring, Member Services

If you took some time and looked at the spaces 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 is a necessary part of our lives — one we too often take for granted until there is an outage.

Because of the complexity of the systems needed to deliver electricity, outages will happen, and happen for a variety of reasons, most of which we have absolutely no control over. Your power can be interrupted through acts of nature, human error, equipment failures and animals, to name a few. While we do our best to minimize outages, keeping the power on 100 percent of the time is not possible.

It also takes more than one organization doing their job to get electricity to your door. Vigilante Electric Cooperative does not own any generation assets, and we have very limited transmission facilities. We have to rely on Bonneville Power Administration and NorthWestern Energy for these services. This issue has been particularly frustrating for us and our members this year. When an outage occurs on their systems, we have no control over the situation.

Outages also can be planned, for instance, many times when we are 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 we take a planned outage, we make every attempt to localize the area and minimize the number of members affected. We also maintain a list of people that have requested notification prior to these types of outages. If you would like to be on this list, please contact our Dillon office.

Outages are going to happen, but there are things you can do to minimize the impact:

1. 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 your portable respirator is working properly.
2. Keep flashlights or candles handy.
3. 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.
4. Refrigeration – refrigerators and freezers will keep food safe for hours without electricity. The key is keeping the doors shut.
5. For people who 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 on its size and the load plugged into it.

Every year parts of the country are hit by catastrophic events that leave people without power for days, if not weeks, at a time. While we haven't had an event like this in our territory, it doesn't mean it couldn't happen. The key for Vigilante Electric is to keep our system in the best operational condition possible. The keys for you are preparing for what could happen, and being patient after it does happen. When the lights go out we will do everything within our power to get them back on as quickly as possible.

Co-op Connections

A taste of what is available

By Rod Siring, Member Services

For months we have used these pages to promote the benefits of our affiliation with Touchstone Energy and the discounts available through the Co-op Connections program. Over the last three editions we have reviewed the travel benefits available but the Co-op Connections program offer much more. In this edition we will look at offerings on one of my favorite things – food.

Cabot Creamery Cooperative has operated since 1919 and is owned by the dairy farm families of Agri-Mark, the Northeast's premier dairy cooperative. They make a full line of cheeses and other dairy products, including "the World's Best Cheddar" as judged at the 22nd Biennial World Championship Cheese Contest.

Cabot Creamery Cooperative is offering co-op members 10% off their purchases, some exclusions apply. You can view Cabot Creamery's products on their website. You can find a link on the Co-op Connections webpage under the My Co-op Deals section. You can also call 1-800-639-3198. Whether ordering online or over the phone the discount code is "Connections".

SmokinTex electric barbeque smokers for home and commercial use make old-fashioned pit barbeque and delicious natural wood-smoked foods. Smokin Tex smokers create excellent smoke flavor and tender, moist meals

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Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD	112
Total Savings YTD	$2,925.57
Total Savings Percentage	30.71%
July 2013 paid claims	17
July Savings	$604.02
July Savings Percentage	28.89%

Co-op Connections

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every time. In a SmokinTex smoker, food is slow-cooked over real wood smoke. The low, slow, even heat is gentle to food — you can really taste the difference!

Smokin Tex is offering 10 percent off any smoker or accessory, some exclusions apply. There is a Web link for Smokin Tex on the Co-op Connections website. You also can call during business hours, at 1-888-922-1511. When placing your order, you have to provide your Co-op Connection member number found on the back of your card.

Are you tired of the same boring gifts or same boring meals? Then try something from Lobster Gram. Choose from ocean-fresh live Maine Lobsters with all the trimmings, exotic lobster tails from around the world, tenderly aged gourmet steaks, savory soups, exquisite desserts, the freshest crab, shrimp and so much more. Lobster Gram has been featured as the best and most unique gifts to give by Oprah's *"O" Magazine*, Rachael Ray's *Everyday Magazine, Fortune, Time, USA Today, Reader's Digest, The Wall St. Street Journal, Bon Appétit* and dozens more national publications.

For more information on Lobster Gram, you can access their page through the Co-op Connections website. Its online catalog is pretty amazing. When ordering online, you will be required to set up an account with Lobster Gram. You can also order by calling 1-800-Live-Lob (800-548-3562). Through Co-op Connections members of Vigilante Electric will receive 10 percent off their order. To receive this discount you will need to use the discount code ENERGY.

If you have Internet access, spend some time reviewing the offers on the Co-op Connections website. These discounts and more are available to you because you are a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. For those of you that do not have, or want, Internet access, we are using the *Rural Montana* magazine to promote these offers and how to get them.

Auditing Energy: Small Measures, Real Savings

By Magen Howard

Getting children excited about energy efficiency may seem hard — for some parents, it's enough of a challenge to get them to do chores. But a website has been designed with young energy savers in mind.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, the brand "ID" of the nation's not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, offers Kids Energy Zone *(www.kidsenergyzone.com)* featuring a spunky energy efficiency mascot, CFL Charlie. The site is designed to teach children in kindergarten through fifth grade how to be Super Energy Savers in their homes. The Kids Zone also includes interactive games, videos, activity sheets and surprises.

"The website is all about engagement," explains Ruben Musca, senior manager of advertising and marketing for Touchstone Energy. "This is a way for parents to interact with children so the family can focus on energy-efficiency together, and help everyone develop energy-efficient habits that will last a lifetime. Through fun activities, students and their parents learn about energy, electrical safety and energy savings."

For example, Lights Out! — an energy-saving game in the Kids Zone — challenges kids to speed through a virtual house, replacing traditional incandescent lightbulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs), and turning off lights and appliances as fast as possible. The less energy a player uses by the time everything's off, the better the score.

"Playing the Lights Out! game and taking kids through a house with an energy-efficiency checklist, which parents can find in the Kids Zone, are great ways to work together to get good habits started," Musca recommends.

Teachers searching for ways to help students focus on energy efficiency also have several resources available. Vigilante Electric provides schools with CFL Charlie Super Energy Saver kits.

"Each kit accommodates a class of 30 students, and includes a checklist that children can use to help guide their parents on an 'energy efficiency expedition,'" Musca explains. "In the exercise, kids walk through the house with their mom and dad to make sure the refrigerator door is closed, and they discuss switching out incandescent bulbs with CFLs, turning off all lights after leaving a room and shutting off computers when not in use."

Finished checklists signed by children and parents are submitted to teachers for a certificate declaring the student "an official Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Super Energy Saver." Certificates carry the image and signature of CFL Charlie.

"The kits also contain classroom activities such as connect-the-dots and word search games," Musca adds. "Handing out these materials provides a great way to influence household energy efficiency."

The latest addition to the kit is an educational coloring book.

"As a kid growing up, I loved coloring books — it's what kept me entertained on weeknights, road trips, anywhere," Musca says. "The new 10-page coloring book we've added can keep kids entertained and educate them about energy savings at the same time."

Plug into these resources and more at *www.kidsenergyzone.com.*

Source: Touchstone Energy