



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

A Message from Your General Manager



Rolie Miller
General Manager

Vigilante Electric Cooperative News Wrap Up

Montana Clean Hydro

In the coming months you will see television ads promoting clean, renewable, carbon-free hydro-electric power through our Montana CleanHydro campaign.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative along with several other electric cooperatives in the western part of the state, have teamed up with NorthWestern Energy to promote this valuable and renewable resource. The ads will demonstrate the significant positive influence these hydro facilities have on recreation, irrigation, flood control and hydro-electric generation. Without these facilities in place, our rates would be significantly higher. One adverse effect of the dams is the limitation of the migration of fish from the ocean to their spawning locations. It just makes sense that if you place a dam across a river, the fish can't get back upstream. However, that is not the case. As with other northwest utilities, approximately 1/3 of our wholesale power cost, or nearly \$2 million annually, goes to fish mitigation measures, collectively making for a rather large sum. Dam modifications over the years have allowed for record numbers of salmon returns in the last

couple of years. We have demonstrated that we can work together and have the dams in place for all of the very positive things mentioned above and still preserve the ecosystem, including fish migration as well. I encourage you to visit the Northwest River Partners webpage at NWRiverpartners.org for more information. The northwest dams are under attack by special interest groups with very short minded initiatives and we must defeat them by providing facts on the immense benefits the dams produce and the protections in place for our ecosystem.

New Webpage and SmartHub

As you will see later in this magazine, we have rolled out our SmartHub application, and earlier we rolled out the new webpage. Both are intended to give you easier access to more and better information about your cooperative and your billing statements. If you haven't already, go take a look at them. You can download the SmartHub app from the App Store for your Apple device or the Google Play Store for your android device. As with some of you for sure, I am a little

“old school,” but I find both very informative and easy to use.

Contractor in Whitehall and Townsend

I'm sure some of you have already or will notice that we again have hired Western Line Builders to assist us with pole replacements and power-line rebuilds. They will be working in the Townsend and Whitehall areas throughout the summer. Specifically, they will be working north of Three Forks on the Price Road project, and in the Whitehall area north of our Whitehall office. They have done a very good job for us over the years, and we are happy to have them assisting us again this year. If you have any questions or concerns please let us know and we will get them answered and/or addressed promptly.

Dan Snellman Retirement

If you have had any work done with us over the last 37 years, you most likely worked with Dan Snellman, our line superintendent. He will be retiring on July 6th, and his expertise, dedication and hard work will be greatly missed. I have certainly enjoyed working with Dan as part of our management team, and have always val-

ued his judgement and input. We wish Dan and Jane a very happy and well-deserved retirement. Good luck to both of you!

Justin Bair New Line Superintendent

Having stated the above, I would also like to formally introduce our new Line Superintendent Justin Bair. Justin was promoted from our Townsend office, where he worked as a journeyman lineman for the last approximately 12 years, and we are happy to have him down here managing the entire department in the Dillon office.

Justin comes highly regarded by his coworkers, and we are excited about the strengths he will bring to the position.

Irrigation Season is Here

The irrigation season brings a significant amount of work for your cooperative, but rest assured we will do our best to meet your needs. If you need to contact me for any reason feel free to call me in the office at (406) 683-2327, call or text me on my wireless phone at (406) 925-1085, or email me at rolie@vec.coop. We are here to serve you!

Principle #6 — Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives are now, and will always be, dedicated to the service of our members, and are guided by seven cooperative principles. Principle #6 – Cooperation Among Cooperatives states: “Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.”

At the statewide, regional and national levels we team with electric cooperatives on the issues of power supply, environmental impact and legislative issues in an effort to keep electricity reliable and affordable. Our efforts even go global, with cooperatives working together to build better electrical infrastructure in some of the most impoverished countries in the world.

A more basic example of cooperation among cooperatives is responding to another cooperative’s call for help. On April 15th, a late-season storm hit the service territory of Sun River Electric Cooperative (SREC), whose office is located in Fairfield. By mid-day, we knew the situation was bad, and General Manager Rollie Miller contacted SREC with an offer to provide assistance.

SREC at this time was still assessing the damage caused by wet, heavy snow, freezing temperatures and high winds. SREC General Manger Scott Odegard contacted Rollie later that night, and first thing on April 16th, four linemen from the Dillon office, three trucks, a pole trailer and materials were headed north. Over the course of the next seven days, our crew teamed with linemen from four other cooperatives and area line contracting crews aiding in the restoration of SREC’s system.

While these are preliminary numbers, this is how bad it got for SREC. They lost 250 poles, 300 crossarms and had 1,250 spans of wire lying on the ground. In the end, they put roughly 40 miles of new wire up. The storm response included 42 linemen (working 16 hours per day) and 50 trucks, plus every member of Sun River Electric’s staff who were either helping in the field or working to keep the office open around the clock. It took eight days to get the electricity back on to all homes and businesses.

From every account we heard regarding the restoration work, the crew from Vigilante Electric represented our cooperative and their trade with distinction. One individual was so impressed that he sent us the following message. We would like to thank Cody Tarter, Travis Jensen, Vance Forsman and Morgan Noel for their time and efforts.

Dear Rollie and Vigilante Electric,

During the last couple weeks I became familiar with your crew, Cody, Travis, Vance and Morgan. They were involved in the Sun River Electric storm restoration response team April 16-23, 2016.

Vigilante should be very proud of these linemen. I’ve been around line crews for over 30 years and have a great understanding of the line trade. Cody, Travis, Vance and Morgan were safe, professional and extremely hard-working.

They exhibited co-op values of team work, passion and helping others in a time of need.

Our Red Rock Power and Outback Power teams were honored to work alongside this crew.

Even while working in difficult conditions and extremely long hours, the crew remained positive and productive. They might have even had some fun.

Just want to say great job and how impressed I was personally with all of these young men. Through this experience all of our guys have made lifelong friends with Cody, Travis, Vance and Morgan.

Thank you and Vigilante Electric for sending this crew to help.

*Best,
Willie P. Pyette
General Manager
Outback Power Company*



Prescription Discount Tracker

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Total Paid Claims YTD | 492 |
| Total Savings YTD | \$15,736.98 |
| Total Savings Percentage | 39.66% |
| March Paid Claims | 4 |
| March Savings | \$157.11 |
| Feb. Savings Percentage..... | 58.28% |

Updating Your Payment Options

Vigilante Electric has made changes and expanded on your payment options. On May 2nd we took SmartHub, live. With the launch of SmartHub you have multiple options for paying your bill online. We feel that SmartHub will be a great compliment to our other payment options, it is easy to navigate, convenient to use and most importantly, secure.

SmartHub has several features that make managing your account easy. Whether through the web, a smartphone or tablet (Android or iOS), you'll be able to pay your bill, view your electricity use, stay in contact with us and much more.

SmartHub has replaced the E-bill payment option. If you previously had an E-Bill account, use the same login to sign into SmartHub. If you are new to electronic billing, create an account by accessing our website at www.vec.coop. There is a SmartHub button in the top right corner of our homepage. Once you log into SmartHub, you can set up your payment and notification preferences.

If you prefer not to register with SmartHub, but would still like to make your payment online, you can use Pay Now. Unlike the full SmartHub site, you cannot view your usage or update information; it only allows you to pay your bill.

Just use your billing account number and your last name, or the name of your business, to pay your bill quickly and easily. This, too, can be accessed through our homepage.

You can also download the free SmartHub mobile app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Once it's

downloaded, search for and select Vigilante Electric Cooperative as your service provider, and sign in using the same username and password you used when you signed up for SmartHub on your computer.

For those of you who have not embraced the use of computers or smartphones, we understand, and we continue to offer a direct payment plan and pay by phone.

The Direct Payment Plan allows you to have payments made automatically from your checking, savings or bank card. You simply fill out an authorization card providing the bank account or card information. Payment will be deducted on the first banking day

after the 24th of each month. Direct Payment Plan authorization cards are available by contacting us or applying through SmartHub.

The ability to pay your bill by phone, wherever you are, is a convenient way to stay on top of payments each month. With Vigilante Electric's pay by phone system, you can pay your bill, check your balance and update your account information over the phone, 24 hours a day. To access it, simply dial toll-free (855) 385-9904. Using your account number, voice commands will guide you in accessing your information.

This is not to say that the old-school ways of paying bills are antiquated. We gladly accept checks or cash, and it is perfectly OK to mail in your payment or drop it by our office. This being said, in today's hectic world — isn't it nice to know that you have options?



Driving Blindfolded on the Highway

By Anne Prince

Would you drive on a highway blindfolded? Of course not. However, if you text while driving 55 miles per hour (mph) on a highway, you are essentially doing just that.

Five seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55

mph, that's like driving the length of a football field while blindfolded. Talking on a cellphone also carries significant risks. According to the National Safety Council, drivers can miss seeing up to half of what's around them — traffic lights, stop signs, pedestrians — when talking on a cellphone.

In our digital world, people feel pressure to remain in constant contact, even when behind the wheel. As mobile technology use increases, distracted driving — talking, texting, sending emails — is a growing threat to community safety. We have all seen distracted drivers and, most likely, we ourselves have used a phone while driving. Drivers don't realize the dangers posed when they take their eyes off the road and their hands off the wheel and focus on activities other than driving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, each day in the U.S., more than nine people are killed and more than

1,153 people are injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver. The National Highway Administration notes that 3,154 people were killed and an estimated 424,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver in 2013.

Texting and cellphone use behind the wheel takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel and your focus off driving, putting yourself and others in danger, including passengers, pedestrians other drivers and bystanders. When distracted driving causes a deadly accident, the victims' families, friends, co-workers and community are tragically impacted.

At Vigilante Electric, safety is a core value. At this time of year in particular, when more people are on the roads and kids are out of school, our goal is to raise awareness and spur conversation about the dangers of distracted driving. Talking on a cellphone quadruples your risk of an accident, about the same as if you were driving drunk. Your risk doubles again if you are texting while driving. We are committed to eliminating this unnecessary risk and believe that no conversation or text is worth the potential danger.

Help promote a culture of safety. We encourage everyone in our service territory to join us and help keep our families, friends and neighbors safer by putting their phones down and focusing on the road when they drive. Together, we can put

Make Rural Issues a Priority in 2016

Over the past several weeks, millions of Americans have trekked to local school gymnasiums, churches and community centers to cast votes in presidential, congressional and local races. Before the nominating process is over, millions more will follow suit. The enthusiasm with which citizens are participating in this election season is encouraging and foreshadows a robust debate as we head into the elections.

In the months ahead, it would be wise for candidates to remember the 42-million-member electric cooperative community, a diverse and vast group of Americans that reach into almost every district and every state in this country.

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit energy providers that are owned by the members they serve. They provide coverage for 75 percent of our nation's landmass. They are a foundation in their communities, and their consumers are making their voices heard this election on issues that matter most to them, such as affordable electricity, broadband Internet access and job security for veterans.

To ensure that all electric co-op members are part of the

debate this election season, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has launched the Co-ops Vote initiative. This nonpartisan program has three goals: to increase rural voter registration and turnout, educate co-op consumers on key issues and elevate the influence of rural Americans in the outcome of this election.

By participating in the Co-ops Vote program and taking the pledge to make electric co-op issues a priority this November, consumers are sending a resounding message that candidates will need to put our concerns front and center in order to earn our vote. With millions of electric co-op members speaking out with one voice, we are already having a major impact in making our top issues part of the national conversation.

I encourage everyone, regardless of their political beliefs, to join America's electric co-ops in this national effort. Let's stand up for the priorities of the rural electric co-op community in the lead-up to November 8. Join us, and learn more at www.vote.coop.

Replacing Your HVAC System? Think Heat Pump

This time of year we field a lot of questions from people who are either building a new home or making significant upgrades to their existing one. This year the main questions have focused on what is the most efficient way to heat and cool a home. In particular, people want to know about heat pumps.

When discussing heat pump technology there are a few misconceptions. People tend to think that heat pumps are extremely complicated — they're not. They work like a refrigerator, simply displacing heat from one place to another.

The other misconception is that heat pumps are relatively new technology. The scientific concept behind heat pumps and the development of the first heat pump dates back to the 1850s. The first ground source heat pump was built in the 1940s and the modern era for heat pumps is considered to have started in the 1980s. In fact, for almost 20 years Vigilante Electric has promoted and offered incentives on heat-pump technology for residential heating and cooling.

Most of the projects that we have been involved with over the years have been geothermal systems. As you may be aware, your home sits on an endless source of renewable energy. Regardless of where you live, the underground temperature stays relatively constant all year, even though outdoor temperatures can vary widely. A geothermal heat pump system can harness this relatively constant, renewable energy source, and use it for heating, air conditioning and hot water.

During the heating cycle, a geothermal heat pump uses a buried loop to extract heat from the ground. As the system pulls heat from the loop, it distributes it through a conventional duct system as warm air. The same heat energy can also be used for a radiant floor system or domestic hot-water heating.

In the cooling mode, the heating process is reversed — creating cool, conditioned air throughout the home. Instead of extracting heat from the ground, heat is extracted from the air in your home and either moved back into the earth loop, or used to preheat the water in your hot-water tank.

Since energy is not used in the creation of heat, geothermal systems are extremely energy efficient, only needing a relatively small amount of electricity to power the circulation pumps, compressor and fan. Geothermal systems typically deliver up to five times more energy than they consume, so you save on your monthly energy bills when compared to other types of heating and cooling systems.

Of the three systems in this article, geothermal units have

the highest energy savings but come with the highest upfront cost when you take into account the unit and the excavation of the ground loop. However, there are very generous state and federal tax incentives, and Vigilante Electric offers up to \$3,000 for a qualifying installation.

Currently, the hottest heat pump technology would be ductless heat pumps. Ductless heat pumps are a type of air-source heat pump and are ideal for adding cost-effective, year-round comfort in existing homes that have some type of zonal heat (baseboards or ceiling heat).

There are two main components to a ductless heat pump. The outside compressor, which is where heat is extracted and expelled, and an indoor unit that regulates room temperature by either taking heat off the refrigerant line and circulating it throughout the room, or by taking heat out of the room and replacing it with cooler air. The two are connected through cables and a refrigerant line, there is no duct work.

While a ductless heat pump cannot handle 100 percent of your heating, these systems are capable of extracting heat from very low ambient air temperature. When the air temperature gets too cold, you simply switch back to your home's zonal heat. As for air conditioning, when compared to wall mounted units, a ductless heat pump is a much more efficient way to cool.

Ductless heat pumps are far less expensive than geothermal heat pumps, but because the inside unit is wall-mounted, they are a bit intrusive. Tax incentives are available and, depending on the existing heat type, Vigilante Electric Cooperative offers an incentive ranging from \$800 to \$1,200.

Finally, Vigilante Electric provides an incentive on air-source heat pumps. Even in our climate, air-source heat pumps are ideal for homes with electric forced-air furnaces. The inside component is incorporated into the existing heating system using its fan to circulate warm air throughout the home or extract heat from the home. Tax incentives are available and, depending on the existing heating system, Vigilante Electric will provide an incentive ranging from \$500 to \$1,400.

If you are planning to build a new home or are considering changing your existing heating system, take some time to research heat pumps. A lot of valuable information can be found online or by contacting us. If you are considering installing a heat pump, contact us first. There are specific requirements that need to be met before work starts to qualify for an incentive.