



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## Vigilante Electric Community Solar Latest News

*By Rod Siring, Member Services*

As you may recall, last summer Vigilante Electric Cooperative started studying the feasibility of doing a community solar project within our service territory. Overall, our findings were favorable. We received good member support, and our ability to secure grant funding for construction is viable. In addition, we believe that our cost estimates are good. The biggest issue we see is where the installed costs of solar are going.

In an article I wrote for this publication in July 2014, we were looking at an installed cost of about \$5 per watt. Since then, the installed cost of solar has come down drastically. Now, the big question is: will this trend continue? Our research would indicate that it will.

With advancements in technology and more competition amongst the component manufacturers, costs will undoubtedly continue down. Plus, the Department of Energy has very lofty goals for solar. The SunShot Initiative aims to make solar energy cost-competitive with traditional sources of generation.

For this reason, we are opting to proceed cautiously. This is a significant investment, and we want to make the best one possible for our members. As this project evolves we will update the membership on our progress. We would like to thank those members who expressed interest and support for this project, and if there are any questions feel free to contact us.

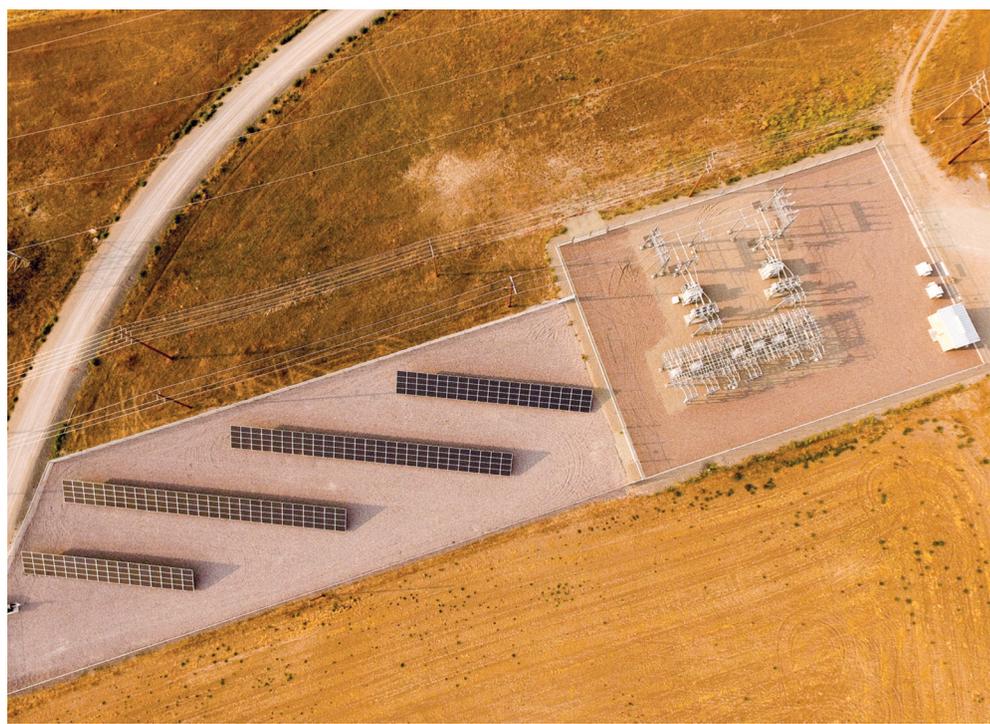


Photo courtesy of Mike Radel, Flathead Electric Cooperative

## Outage Notification Numbers

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

### Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.  
*Justin Bair*.....925-1540  
*Charles Wharton* ..660-1878  
*Gary Ferris* .....683-6321

### Weekends

**683-2327 or  
 (800) 221-8271**

### Whitehall

After Hours and  
 Weekends  
*Marty Simons* .....287-3950  
*Chuck Romero* ....491-5466  
*Zach*  
*Maershbecker*....701-290-9265

### Townsend

After Hours and  
 Weekends  
*John Moos*.....266-3605  
*Chase White* .....459-3892  
*Marty Simons* .....287-3950

**VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

# As Simple As Dialing 811

Call before you dig. You have seen this on TV, in newspapers and on billboards. The Call Before You Dig campaign has been around for years. Why go to all these efforts to have people call in to request utility locates before they dig? Well, because digging into underground utilities is extremely dangerous, there are serious financial repercussions and it is the law.

Coming in contact with underground power lines is every bit as dangerous as contacting overhead lines. They can carry the same voltage as overhead lines and are much harder to identify. Don't take a chance; one wrong decision could be your last.

Digging up an underground power line also has financial consequences. The costs associated with repairing an underground power line become the obligation of the person responsible for the damage. Depending on the situation, digging into a power line can get very expensive, very fast.

If you need further persuasion, the following are excerpts of Montana law regarding this issue:

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2051, 69-4-502* states: "...an excavator may not make or begin an excavation without first obtaining information concerning the possible location of an underground facility from each public utility, municipal corporation, underground facility owner, or other person having the right to bury underground facilities that is a member of a one-call notification center ...."



*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2015, 69-4-503* states: "Before beginning an excavation, the excavator shall notify, through a one-call notification center, all owners of underground facilities in the area of the proposed excavation."

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2015, 49-4-505* states: "If any underground facility is damaged by an excavator who has failed to obtain information as to its location"... "then the excavator is liable to the owner of the underground facility for the entire cost of the repair of the facility."

## This applies to everybody:

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2011, 69-4-501* states: "**Excavator**" means a person conducting the excavation activities. "**Excavation**" means an operation in which earth, rock or other material in the ground is moved, removed or otherwise displaced by means or use of any tools, equipment or explosives. The term includes but is not limited to grading, trenching, digging, ditching, drilling, augering, tunneling, scraping, and cable or pipe plowing and driving.

The easiest way to stay safe and avoid unnecessary problems is to call the Utilities Underground Locate Center (UULC) at (800) 424-5555, or you can simply dial 811. You need to make your request two full business days before you plan to dig. When you call, you will be asked a series of questions about your worksite. Being prepared greatly speeds up the process! Have the following information ready:

- **Your name, phone number, company name (if applicable), and mailing address;**
- **What type of work is being done;**
- **Who the work is being done for;**
- **The county and city where the work is taking place in;**
- **The address or the street where the work is taking place; and**
- **Marking instructions;** *(These are specific instructions as to where the work is taking place. Please use white or pink paint, or white or pink flags, to outline the area you are digging in.)*

Once UULC has all of the information, it will notify the relevant utilities in your area. Once the utilities are notified, they will dispatch a person to locate their underground utilities. By making a simple call, you could save time, money and maybe even your life.

Please note that Vigilante Electric Cooperative will only locate wire between the transformer and the meter. We will not locate wire between the meter and the load. This is the responsibility of the member and will require an electrician.

## Administrative Professionals' Day

### A Thank You Is Not Enough

On April 26, 2017, Vigilante Electric Cooperative joined businesses across the country in celebration of Administrative Professional's Day. These are the people working behind the scenes whose function is vital to organizations everywhere. Here, we would like to acknowledge our administrative professionals for their efforts in our success.

"In my time at Vigilante Electric, it has been an honor working with the "Administrative Professionals" in our office," states Rollie Miller. "Their individual qualities, dedication and ability to work as a team create a wonderful work environment. If you get the opportunity, please take time to thank these people when you see them next."

Every day, these individuals display the work ethic and skill to keep our office organized and running smoothly. We would like publicly thank Linda Meine, Jackie Clark, Barb Delano, Joy Britton, Emily May and Chelsey Hutchison for their devoted, valued work.

# Contractor Work 2017



By Rod Siring, Member Services

In order for Vigilante Electric to provide reliable electrical service, we invest heavily in our facilities. This ongoing investment involves maintaining, replacing and improving the electric facilities in our service territory. When things get too busy for our line crews, we hire contractors.

This summer we will only have one contractor doing work — Western Line Builders out of Wells, Nevada. They will be working in the southern part of our service territory on the following projects:

- Starting the end of April, they will be working in the Dell area doing a three-phase conductor upgrade.
- The balance of May and through June, Western Line Builders will work in the Centennial Valley, where they will be changing insulators for a voltage upgrade.
- In July and August, they will be in the Horse Prairie area working west of Clark Canyon Reservoir. This project involves rerouting a section of power line and upgrading it to three-phase power.

We do not anticipate many major outages, but there will be a few minor outages associated with this work. We ask for your patience and understanding in these efforts. We will continue to use this publication for periodic updates, but for current information you can check the News/Events section on our website at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop).

## Small Business LED Promotion *Time is Running Out*

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Vigilante Electric Cooperative, working in conjunction with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), provides a variety of opportunities to receive rebates on energy-efficiency improvements. Because of the demographic composition of our service and program offerings from BPA, the majority of our funding has gone to agricultural and residential improvements. However, last spring a great opportunity for small businesses was introduced.

When looking at how energy is consumed in a small business, a significant amount is consumed by lighting. According to the Small Business Administration, lighting accounts for 20 percent to 50 percent of businesses' annual energy bills. However, with upgrades and good design, the energy consumed by lighting could be cut in half while maintaining or improving overall quality.

To illustrate, say your business has ten T8 light fixtures. Each fixture has four 32-watt lamps that are four-feet long. For this example, the fixture wattage (ballast and lamps) is 118 watts. The business is open seven days a week for 10 hours a day, making the electrical consumption for the lights 11.8 kilowatt hours per day, or 354 kilowatt hours over a 30-day billing cycle.

If we replace these with 15 watt LED T8 replacement lamps, the wattage comes down to 60 watts per fixture. Under these conditions, the monthly usage would be 180 kilowatt hours, a 49 percent reduction.

Additionally, the benefits of proper lighting go beyond economics. Proper lighting supports the building's occupants. Studies indicate a building's lighting directly affects the comfort, mood, productivity, health and safety of its occupants.

Currently, there is an effort being put forth to encourage the adoption of LED technology in the commercial sector. Working with BPA, our Small Business LED promotion will pay 100 percent of installed costs up to 23 cents/kilowatt hour of the estimated first year savings on qualified projects completed before September 29, 2017. An opportunity like this will not happen again.

To qualify, your business must be served by Vigilante Electric and be less than 20,000 square feet. A review of the project specifications and business site is required prior to any work being done. Only prequalified LED lights are eligible. For questions regarding this program, or to have a free lighting audit of your business, call our Dillon office at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

# This May, take the time to plug into safety

By Rod Siring, Member Services

We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used. May is Electrical Safety Month, and we would like to share some safety tips to raise awareness about the dangers of electricity

Vigilante Electric’s concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to “plug into safety.” According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured and/or killed as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we provide free safety demonstrations to schools, civic organizations and emergency responders. We frequently provide electrical safety content in this publication, and we encourage the public to contact us if they see a downed power line or any other type of dan-

gerous electrical situation. We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable and affordable electricity, and to serve as your trusted energy advisor now, and well into the future.

It is no accident that safety is a top priority at Vigilante Electric. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations. In fact, Vigilante Electric is part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) that follows specific guidelines and protocols for electrical safety that are considered leading practices. Our lineworkers are required to wear personal protective equipment while on the job and our safety team regularly discusses important safety issues.

We believe it is our duty and responsibility to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. Please take a moment to “plug into safety” by visiting our website at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop) and click on the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFi) link for tips about how to keep you and your loved ones safe.

**ELECTRIC CO-OPS**  
are committed to  
keeping members  
and employees **SAFE.**

May is National  
Electrical Safety Month

plug into safety

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVES



## BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM STRIKES

In the event of a power outage, be prepared by keeping the following items in an easy-to-find emergency supply kit.



■ **WATER**  
Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.



■ **TOOLS**  
Flashlight, extra batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.



■ **FIRST AID KIT AND PRESCRIPTIONS**  
First aid supplies, hand sanitizer and at least one week’s supply of prescriptions and medications for the family.

Learn more at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)



Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency.