



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## Giving Back is the Co-op Way

*Cooperative Principle #7, Concern for Community: Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.*

Cooperatives adhere to seven cooperative principles that guide all of our decisions, from how we run the co-op to how we engage with our local communities. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we live these principles every day. While all the principles are of equal importance, Principle 7, Concern for Community, is more than just how we operate as a business; it is a reflection of who we are as an organization.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative and its employees have a proud record of giving to and working with our communities to make them strong. Our trustees and staff are dedicated stewards, donating countless hours of their time, and our philanthropy serves a wide range of organizations. In 2017, we donated more than \$31,000 to the organizations listed at the end of this article.

In August 2016, we implemented a program that provides our members with the opportunity to contribute to making our communities safer. Vigilante Safety Roundup is a

voluntary program where members allow us to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. To date, no awards have been distributed as it takes a while to grow this fund to the point where significant awards can be made, but we are making progress. At the end of March, we had 98 members participating, with total contributions of \$738.33. If you would like to contribute, you can find an application on our website or we can take your information over the phone.

Since 1998, Vigilante Electric has helped members with their winter heating needs through our low-income assistance program. In 2017, we credited back more than \$14,500 to members meeting low-income guidelines.

Serving nine counties in Montana and one in Idaho, we get a lot of requests for donations, and will continue to help and do what we can on behalf of those we serve. We are members of these communities and want our communities to thrive. It is the cooperative way.

American Cancer Society-Relay for Life  
BAA Dillon Little Guy Wrestling  
Beaver Boosters  
Beaverhead Community Wood Bank  
Beaverhead County Fair  
Beaverhead FFA Alumni  
Beaverhead Men's Association  
Big Hole Watershed Committee  
Broadwater Rural Fire Department  
Chemical-Free Senior Party - Dillon  
Chemical-Free Senior Party - Lima  
Chemical-Free Senior Party - Townsend  
Chemical-Free Senior Party - Twin Bridges  
Chemical-Free Senior Party - Whitehall  
Clancy Volunteer Fire Department  
Dillon Concert Association  
Dillon Fire District #2  
Dillon Jaycees  
Duck Creek Rural Fire Department  
Grant Rural Fire Department  
Grasshopper Valley Fire Department  
Jackson Rural Fire Department  
Jefferson Valley Rural Fire Department  
Kiwanis Club of Dillon  
Lima Rural Fire Department  
MECA – Memorial Scholarship

MECA – Youth Tour to Washington D.C.  
Melrose Rural Fire Department  
Montana 4-H Foundation  
Montana Lineman's Rodeo Association  
NWPPA-Communications Awards  
School District #11 - Wise River  
School District #12 - Lima  
School District #16 - Cardwell  
School District #16 - Wisdom  
School District #21 - Polaris  
School District #24 - Jackson  
School District #26 - Reichle  
School District #4 - Divide  
School District #5 - Melrose  
School District #7 - Grant  
Sheridan Volunteer Fire Department  
Southwest Montana Arts Council  
Southwestern Montana Family YMCA Inc.  
Toston Rural Fire Department  
Townsend Rodeo  
Twin Bridges Rural Fire Department  
University Of Montana-Western  
Whitehall Chamber Of Commerce  
Wisdom Rural Fire Department  
Wise River Rural Fire Department

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

# Safety Above All Else

By Anne Prince

“Safety” is a universal word that is mentioned often and used loosely. Communities large and small, as well as companies across all industries, are committed to safety. Sports leagues, at every level, take safety seriously. Unfortunately, when it really counts, steps to keep the public, workers, athletes and loved ones safe are often ignored in the interest of expediency or convenience.

However, safety is a serious issue, especially when it comes to electrical safety. For Vigilante Electric Cooperative, it’s the number one priority. This is not empty talk. Over time, Vigilante Electric has created a culture of safety by putting our employees’ safety and that of the community above all else. At its essence, our mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity to our members, but equally important we want to return our workers home safely. To do this requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

Working with electricity is an inherently dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. Vigilante Electric focuses on keeping employees and the community safe around electricity. We established and follow safety protocols based on leading national safety practices for the utility industry. We require our lineworkers to wear specialized equipment when working next to or with power lines. There are specific protocols that our lineworkers follow when dealing with electricity. As an organization, we have regular safety meetings, we monitor and track near-misses in order to understand them, share “lessons learned” and improve in the future.

As importantly, we encourage all of our crews to speak



up and hold each other accountable for safety. By cultivating a culture of openness and transparency, we promote problem-solving with regard to safety, rather than defaulting to a blame game. We examine the information and data gleaned from near-misses and accident reports to discern patterns and improve in those areas where we have fallen short. As appropriate, we brief contractors on our safety protocols and set expectations for their engagement.

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors. Vigilante Electric conducts electrical safety demonstrations in schools and for community events. We also use this publication to impart important safety information to our members.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, each year thousands of people in the United States are critically injured as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. There is much you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity. We don’t want people to fear electricity, but to respect it and be mindful when it comes to electrical safety.

## Contractor work planned in 2018

In order for Vigilante Electric Cooperative to provide reliable and safe electrical service, we continually invest in our facilities. This ongoing investment involves testing, 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 have one contractor working in the area – Western Line Builders from Wells, Nevada. At the time this article is written, Western Line Builders was completing a major line upgrade on Anderson Lane north of Dillon. They will also be working in the Rock Creek area in Glen, and spending much of the summer in the Grasshopper Valley.

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 – [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop).



# Implementing a surge-protection plan

With the proliferation of electronics in the home, and more and more people working from home, it's becoming increasingly important to employ tactics that will help our electronics last as long as possible. Due to the sensitive nature of today's electronics, the best way to achieve this is to protect them from electrical surges.

An electrical surge is a brief, unexpected increase in voltage that can cause damage to electrical equipment. For example, the standard United States voltage is 120V. If an increase of 10 percent above this rating were to come through a power outlet for more than three nanoseconds, it would be considered a surge. Many people think "blinks" from Vigilante Electric's system are surges, but these are generally caused by the system's protective devices causing an interruption in the flow of electricity in order to protect wires and other components.

A true surge can enter your home through several avenues, the most obvious being through power lines. Less obvious avenues are through telephone lines, cable/satellite connections or water lines. While you can't stop all power surges, there are steps you can take to minimize your electronics' exposure.

We think the most important step is to install a surge protector at the point of use.

It is estimated that only about 20 percent of power surges come from outside the home. Most surges come from devices in the home that create a surge in the electrical current when they're switched on or when their motors kick on. Refrigerators, air conditioners and even space heaters can cause a power surge strong enough to damage electrical systems.

Regardless of how the surge is created or where it comes from, computers and entertainment centers are particular-

ly vulnerable because they are not only connected to the electrical grid, but may also be connected to phone and/or television services. Protection for these devices generally comes in the form of power strips with an integrated surge suppressor.

When shopping for a quality product, look for one from a manufacturer such as Monster, Belkin, Tripp Lite or APC, to name a few. Look for one with a joule rating of at least 1,000, a connected equipment warranty, and compatibility with digital signals from cable and satellite.

The next step would be to ensure that all of the grounds in your home are good and that they are bonded together. Over the years, grounds can deteriorate and a faulty ground will allow surges into the home rather than bleeding them off into the earth. Get a qualified electrician to test and correct your grounding system.

Finally, protect your electrical service entrance with a surge device mounted at the main electric panel. When a surge travels down the electric lines, these devices will act to "clamp" the surge and reduce its power. These are sacrificial devices and typically have an indicator light showing when the device has been compromised.

Again, you are not going to prevent all power surges, but following the steps above should allow you to get the most out of your electronic equipment.

**Affordable. Innovative. Member Focused.**

It's hard to predict the future, but one thing seems certain — **new government regulations will increase the cost of electricity.**

We want to work with you to keep your electric bills **AFFORDABLE**. We're controlling costs and no matter what the future holds we'll continue to put you, our members, **FIRST**.

**Vigilante Electric Cooperative**

Find out how we're Looking Out for You at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)

**Looking Out for You**

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# Know What's Below Simply Dial 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. 811 is the national number designated by the Federal Communications Commission to help protect do-it-yourselfers, landscapers and contractors from unintentionally hitting underground utility while working on digging projects — large and small.

Why call 811? To start, it's the law — every digging project requires a call to 811, and the law applies to everybody.

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2017, 69-4-502(2) states: "...an excavator may not make or begin an excavation without first obtaining information concerning the possible location of an underground facility from each underground facility owner having the right to bury underground facilities."*

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2017, 69-4-503(1) states: "Before beginning an excavation, the excavator shall notify, through a notification center, all owners of underground facilities in the area of the proposed excavation."*

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2011, 69-4-501(12)(a) states: "'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. 'Excavator' means a person conducting the excavation activities."*

Hitting an underground utility line can cause serious personal injuries or death, damage the environment, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and become very expensive to the person that dug up the utilities.

*Montana Law, Annotated Code 2017, 49-4-523 (1) (b) states: "an excavator who damages an underground facility is liable for the entire cost of the repair of the underground facility."*



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

The easiest way to stay safe and avoid unnecessary problems is to call the Utilities Underground Locate Center (UULC) at 811 or (800) 424-5555. 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 or work is being done.**
- **Who the work is being done for.**
- **The county and city the work is taking place in.**
- **The address or the street where the work is taking place.**
- **Marking instructions,** (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 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.



## Prescription Discount Tracker

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Total Paid Claims.....         | 631         |
| Total Savings .....            | \$24,258.99 |
| Total Savings Percentage ..... | 43.05%      |
| Mar. Paid Claims .....         | 7           |
| Mar. Savings .....             | \$342.39    |
| Mar. Savings Percentage .....  | 54.89%      |