



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## Creating Community Along the Line

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Vigilante Electric Cooperative is defined by geography. After all, our service territory is easily drawn on a map. But I've come to realize that our electric cooperative is much more than a set of boundary lines; it's a community.

In a community, neighbors watch out for neighbors, families take care of families, and we all work together toward the common good. That's not so different from an electric cooperative. We're community-focused, and our goal is to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to the people who count on us. That means if we have to choose between making a buck or watching out for your best interest, we'll choose you and the greater community every time.

And really, that's no surprise. We aren't a traditional for-profit company. Our electric cooperative was built by the communities we serve, and we continue to be led by

consumers such as you. Even when we work together with other cooperatives around the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, we always have an eye on our community at home, working hard to make sure these new solutions work for the local community we represent.

To us, the power of a community comes from the people who live here: people who love where they are, and love being together. All of us at Vigilante Electric are glad to be a part of your community, doing our part to help it thrive, from securing 24/7 energy sources to building better communities.

We didn't set out to create a community when our electric cooperative began. But we like to think, as we've grown and served you and your neighbors over the years, we've helped to create one along the way. For that opportunity, and so many others, we are truly grateful.

## Safety Roundup

### *Keeping the Momentum Going*

Electric cooperatives adhere to seven core principles; principle seven is concern for community. In today's world, one of the biggest concerns is public safety. Many public safety organizations need donations to fund items that cannot be purchased because of budgetary constraints. This is one of the reasons we founded Vigilante Safety Roundup.

Established in early 2017, Vigilante Safety Roundup provides our members with a way to donate to the organizations in our communities that keep us safe. If you have been following the updates in these pages, you have seen that our progress has been slow, but steady. This year, we were able to award our first grant to the Beaverhead Ski Patrol in May.

Participation in this program is voluntary. Funds accumulate when members allow us to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. Participants can also add a few extra dollars each month to their bill, or make a one-time donation. Regardless of how the donations are made, 100 percent of the funds will be presented to worthy organizations through grants.

Vigilante Electric is still accepting written proposals for funds for safety-related projects within our service territory. A letter detailing your request must be sent to Vigilante Electric General Manager Rollie Miller.

In the letter, please let us know about the organization requesting a grant and its location. We want to know specifics regarding the equipment or project that the funds are being requested for, how it will improve community safety, the timeframe in which the funds will be used, and contact information for the organization and writer of the request.

We know that in today's world everyone's budget is tight and every penny counts — this is why Vigilante Safety Roundup is such a fantastic way to make your pennies work to benefit others. Individually, pennies don't go far, but when we add up all the donations, we can make a difference.

To sign up for Vigilante Safety Roundup, you can go to our website ([www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)) or contact our office, and we will be happy to assist you.



### Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 255

Total Contributions: \$2,811.73

To apply contact our office at

(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop).

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

# Co-ops Fuel Economy

Electric cooperatives have a broad financial impact on the United States, directly or indirectly supporting nearly 612,000 jobs each year, and contributing hundreds of billions of dollars to the economy over a five-year period, according to a new analysis.

Between 2013 and 2017, co-ops employed an average of 67,800 people a year, hired about 100,600 contractors, and by extension helped provide jobs for about 170,300 people who supplied equipment and services, the report states. Another 273,100 jobs were supported through consumer spending by co-op employees, contractors and suppliers.

“This report quantifies what many rural American families and businesses know well — electric cooperatives are powerful engines of economic development in their local communities,” said National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson. “Affordable and reliable electricity is a key ingredient for a successful economy. Because electric cooperatives were built by, belong to and are rooted in the communities that they serve, they play a vibrant role as economic cornerstones for millions of American families, businesses and workers.”

The study, *The Economic Impact of America’s Electric Cooperatives*, was commissioned by NRECA and the National Cooperative Services Corporation, an affiliate of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC), and conducted by FTI Consulting Inc. It used data from generation and transmission cooperatives, as well as distribution co-ops.

The analysis found that, from 2013 to 2017, co-ops contributed \$440 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP), \$881 billion to U.S. sales output and \$200 billion to the nation’s labor income.

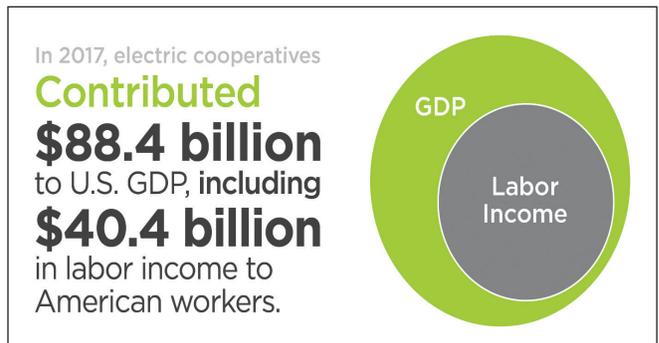
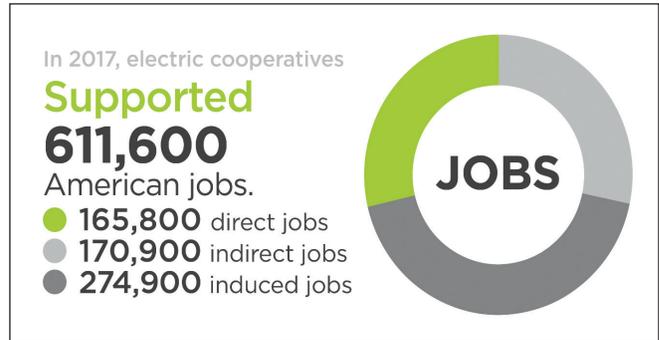
In addition, people employed directly and indirectly by co-ops paid more than \$52 billion in federal taxes and nearly \$60 billion in state and local taxes over the five-year period, the analysis estimates.

Electric co-op spending during the study period totaled nearly \$360 billion. Most — nearly \$274 billion — went toward operations, including employee salaries and fuel for power plants. Some \$60 billion was spent on capital investments, and more than \$20 billion on maintenance.

“For decades, America’s electric cooperatives have played a vital role in the U.S. economy,” the report notes. “Electric co-ops...are locally-engaged in their communities, driving economic activity and fostering development.”

Co-ops that brought electricity to rural areas for the first time in the 1930s are now bringing solar energy and broadband to their consumer-members, CEO Mike Keyser of BARC Electric Cooperative in Virginia said at a Capitol Hill briefing to unveil the report.

“With everything we have going on today impacting the community, BARC is as relevant to our customer-owners’ quality of life as it was 80 years ago when we lit the first light bulb,” Keyser said. “We employ 70 full-time employees between our electric cooperative and broadband subsidiary — and we can say something that seemed unimaginable



five years ago — we’re growing.”

Ron Holcomb, CEO of Tipmont Rural Electric Membership Cooperative in Indiana, said his co-op has created two community grant programs that have contributed more than \$1.7 million in member donations to food banks, health and rescue groups, educational programs, environmental and alternative energy programs, and economic development.

“The economic impact Tipmont and our rural cooperatives have on rural America is unquestionable,” Holcomb said. “Our tools may expand to include broadband and perhaps other essential services. But our mission of community success never changes.”

# Navigating Outage Communications

Power outages can be inconvenient and frustrating, and while we've talked about the complexity of outages and all the things that have to work together in order to supply members with electricity, we have never discussed the communications process and its issues.

When your power goes out, we always want you to:

- Check your meter to see if the display is on.
- Check your breaker, which is typically located under the meter. If the breaker is tripped you can reset it by firmly pushing the breaker to the off position, then back on.
- Look around the neighborhood for lights. This helps us determine how widespread the outage is.
- Then call our office numbers: 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

You can use these numbers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During work hours, you will connect with office personnel, who will take your relevant information and dispatch line crews. There are adequate phone lines into our office, and an entire staff available to take calls. If we lose power supply to one of our substations or if we have outages in multiple areas, we can be hit with such an influx of phone calls that all the lines are busy. In this situation,



please keep trying to call.

For nights and weekends, our interactive voicemail system will walk you through the steps to get the contact information for the on-call lineman in your area. Our linemen rotate this on-call position, so it will not always be the same person or phone number. In these situations, please be aware that it doesn't take a large call volume to bog things down. If you don't get through

to the on-call personnel the first time, please be patient and call again. For bigger outages during nights and weekends, we plan to bring staff back into the office to answer calls.

We are always trying to improve communications to make our members feel comfortable and sure in knowing that we are out there working hard to get their power restored quickly. While we plan to enhance our use of Facebook and instant messenger to better keep our members informed about outages, we highly recommend this as a last resort because we do not constantly monitor Facebook. We want everybody to call our office lines first for quicker and more effective communication.



*Pictured is Vigilante Electric Cooperative Lineman Cody Tarter handling the hot work for the first safety demonstration done with our new high-voltage trailer.*

# Co-op Connections

*Sign Up and Save*

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Since becoming a member of Touchstone Energy in 2012, we have used this publication to tout Touchstone Energy benefits available to you, our members. The most publicized of the benefits is access to Co-op Connections, a program to save you money. While we have repeatedly promoted the Co-op Connections program, it has evolved a lot over the years, and we believe that it is time for another look.

Spending time on the Co-op Connections website ([www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop)) is the best way to learn what is available and how to save money every day. While not everything on the connections site is applicable to our membership, with a little exploration, you will find plenty of ways to save. The scope of savings available is pretty broad and more than I can cover in one article, so I will start with my favorite savings opportunity — travel.

As you navigate this site, you may see reference to the Co-op Connections card. There are two ways to obtain this card. You can contact our office and we will send you one or, once you create an account on the Connections website,



you can just scroll to the middle of the homepage and find the option to print a paper version.

Now that you are armed with everything you need to save, visit the national discounts section of the Connections site. Here you will find a wide variety of savings from nationally recognized companies. The site is easy to navigate, and each available discount is clearly explained.

If you have an upcoming trip and need a place to stay, the Connections site has several ways to save on lodging. Here you will find discounts from franchises such as Wyndham, Best Western and LaQuinta.

Need a broader picture of hotel/motel options for your destination? There are a couple of options for this, but I recommend going to the hotel tab on the main menu. Here you will find savings of up to 70 percent at more than 400,000 hotels worldwide.

Maybe you will need to rent a car for your next adventure. Co-op Connections provides you discounts with rental car companies such as Avis and Enterprise. Maybe you need transportation just to and from your hotel. Have you ever considered a ride share? Through Co-op Connections, you can qualify for a free ride from Lyft or Uber for first-time customers.

This is just the start of the savings you will find on the Co-op Connections site. These savings are also available on your phone by downloading the convenient Co-op Connections mobile app from the app store on iPhone and Google Play on Android.

## Community Safety Education

*VEC Builds Safety Demo Trailer*

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is committed to safety. Whether it is in our communities or in our workplace, safety is our number-one priority; especially when it comes to electricity. Understanding the dangers of electricity is important for everyone, and we are so excited to announce that we have completed construction on our new, high-voltage safety demonstration trailer.

For years we have offered free safety demonstrations to schools, civic organizations and emergency service personnel. However, in the past we borrowed the safety trailer owned by our statewide association, and often missed out on opportunities for demonstrations because neither of their trailers were available.

Starting last fall, we began to collaborate with the Beaverhead High School Vo-Ag program to build our own safety demonstration trailer. We completed construction early this summer and held our first safety demonstration in conjunction with Pivots Plus's customer-appreciation barbeque. The trial run of our new trailer was a success.

This new trailer overcomes all the issues we had with the past demonstration trailers used. It requires very little setup time, it comes with its own power supply and it is ours. We no longer have to schedule demonstrations around trailer availability.

We would like to thank Beaverhead County High School VoAg instructor Caleb Igo and his class for their efforts in building this trailer, and Pivots Plus for allowing us to participate in the customer-appreciation lunch.

If you would like more information about safety demonstrations or would like to schedule a demonstration, please call our Dillon office at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271..

