



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049

(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

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OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

2020 District Meetings

With Vigilante Electric Cooperative's annual meeting approaching, it is time to announce the dates, locations and times for the 2020 district meetings. A district meeting serves two important functions: it is where nominations are made for district trustee and it provides a forum for open discussion about the affairs of the cooperative.

Vigilante Electric's service territory is divided into nine districts. Each district has an elected representative on the board of trustees who serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six experienced trustees at all times. District meetings provide members interested in running for the board, or supporting a candidate, the opportunity of securing a nomination. The election is held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

The district meetings also provide those who are not able to attend the annual meeting the opportunity to hear about the state of the cooperative from General Manager Rollie Miller. Because the district meetings are less formal than the annual meeting, they provide the member with an excellent opportunity to interact with the manager and staff members who may be in attendance.

This year's district meetings are as follows:

District # 3 Townsend/N. Helena/ Lump Gulch

District # 8 Dillon South/Grant

District # 9 Dell/Lima

January 6, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. Toston Fire Hall

January 7, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. Vigilante Electric Co-op Office

January 8, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. City Fire Hall, Lima

Members with their primary membership located within these districts are notified by mail regarding the meeting for their district. If you would like further information regarding the district meetings or running for district trustee, please call us at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

Residential Energy Efficiency

Residential efficiencies offer great potential savings with the easiest, most cost-effective solutions. To start, let's keep two things in mind. You need to understand where your usage comes from, and you need to keep it simple.

In our climate zone about 40 to 50 percent of your home energy usage goes toward heating your home. There are three aspects of heating your home to consider: how efficiently your heating system converts the energy source to heat, how effectively that heat is distributed throughout the home and your home's ability to retain heat.

The conversion of energy to heat is a big issue with gas appliances. If your heating system is natural gas, propane or heating oil, have your heating system inspected annually. Regular maintenance will improve the system's performance and potentially spot problems before they become serious and inconvenient. Also, heating systems lose efficiency over time, and at some point you should consider replacing them.

How effectively is heat distributed through your home? There are several things to consider. In forced air heating systems one of the biggest problems is clogged air filters. Air filters should be looked at monthly during the heating season and cleaned or replaced to ensure proper air flow. You should also ensure that your registers are clean and that nothing is blocking the flow of air. There should also be adequate spacing around registers and heaters to ensure that heat can circulate through the room properly.

Another thing to inspect is ductwork that is outside the conditioned space. Ductwork is often located in the crawl-

space. If the seams in ductwork are not sealed properly they can and will leak air. This is putting warm air in an area that you do not want to heat. This causes your heating system to run longer to maintain the inside temperature.

Finally, look at the home's ability to retain heat. Start by looking for areas where cold air can enter and/or heat can escape. Start by inspecting doors and windows. If you can feel drafts or see exterior light around the edges, you should replace the weather stripping. Infiltration issues can also be around plumbing and electrical penetrations. Again, many of these issues can be addressed by inexpensive weatherization measures.

In older homes you should also look at insulation levels. Proper insulation has a large effect on your home's ability to retain heat. While not as easy and inexpensive as some of the measures, adequate insulation levels can provide cost-effective, long-term savings.

Looking at how to save money on your energy bill doesn't have to be complicated. However, if you are like many homeowners, any project you do around the house can seem daunting. Just remember you're not in this alone. We have a variety of resources available to help you make informed decisions on energy-efficient improvements. There are many no-cost/low-cost things you can do on your own, and there are great resources that you can find online, including *Touchstone Energy's Home Energy Savings Guide* and *101 Easy Ways to Save Energy and Money*.

Investing in the Safety of our Communities

Electric cooperatives adhere to seven core principles — Principle Seven is Concern for Community. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, one of the ways we live out this principle is through donating to worthy organizations within our service territory. In many situations, these donations are needed to fund items that cannot be purchased because of budgetary constraints. This is also the reason why we started Vigilante Safety Roundup.

Vigilante Safety Roundup provides our members with a way to donate to the organizations in our communities that keep us safe. Members can “Opt In” and allow Vigilante Electric to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. The average roundup donation is about 50 cents. Members can also add a few extra dollars each month, or make a one-time donation.

Regardless of how the donations are made, 100 percent of the money will be presented to qualifying organizations through grants. Grants will be awarded through an application process and will be reviewed by the Vigilante Electric Board of Trustees.

In April this year, Vigilante Electric awarded the first grant to the Beaverhead Ski Patrol. The Beaverhead Ski Patrol is responsible for on-mountain safety at Maverick Ski area. Their grant outlined equipment needs, specifically a new medical-grade digital pulse oximeter and a new rescue toboggan.

The application period is still open. If your organization has an idea for a safety project send us a letter providing some details. In the letter, we want to know about your organization, specifics regarding the project and how it will improve community safety. Please send all information to General Manager Rollie Miller.

We know that in today’s world everyone’s budget is tight and every cent counts — this is why Vigilante Safety Roundup is such a fantastic way to make your pennies work to benefit others. Individually this money doesn’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) or contact our office, and we will be happy to sign you up.



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 316

Total Contributions: \$3,376.42

To apply contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.



Pictured is General Manager Rollie Miller awarding the first grant from our Vigilante Safety Roundup program to Rich Norquist of the Beaverhead Ski Patrol.

2020 Rate

Single Phase Services

It is through proper rate design that we keep pace with our financial commitments. In November, members received a letter from General Manager Rollie Miller regarding the rate modification effective January 1, 2020. This information also appeared in the December edition of this publication.

Historically, our goal with rates has been to ensure that each rate class pays for its share of building and maintaining our electrical system. These are our fixed costs. Based on our 2018 cost-of-service study completed by consultant CH Guernsey, our fixed costs for a single-phase service is \$47.16 per month.

As explained by Rollie, we are increasing the monthly base charge to \$28, and implementing a slight increase on the kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge. Under normal usage these elements satisfy our fixed costs and contribute to margins. However, we have a lot of low-usage or no-usage accounts. In order to prevent these accounts from being subsidized by the rest of the rate class, in 2018 we implemented a minimum month bill feature that will increase to \$40 January 1st.

This rate modification is intended to create a fairer rate structure across all the members, and is an important step in our long-range plan to recover our fixed costs for each service and minimize cross subsidization. If you have any questions regarding this, please for free to contact us at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

Making Washington, D.C., Work for You

By Dan Riedinger

Electric cooperatives are deeply connected to the communities they serve, and are focused on meeting consumers' energy needs today and into the future. Providing our consumer-members with safe, reliable and affordable power will always be our highest priority, but this requires much more than simply maintaining overhead power lines and other infrastructure.

It requires us to focus on what our elected leaders are doing in Washington, D.C., to ensure they are acting in your best interest. Here are some of the things we're keeping an eye on in the nation's capital.

Congress created a problem for electric co-ops when it made changes to the tax code in 2017 that inadvertently put co-ops' tax-exempt status at risk if they receive government grants. This could stick co-op members with the cost of paying taxes unless Congress fixes the problem. Fortunately, there is a solution. Bipartisan legislation known as the RURAL Act has strong support in Congress, and we're working with lawmakers to pass this important legislation.

Wind Energy

Recently, the U.S. Department of Energy selected the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) — our national trade association — to research small-scale, community-based wind energy solutions that can be

deployed by electric co-ops. This research, to be conducted in partnership with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, is critical to helping co-ops meet their members' desire for affordable renewable energy solutions.

Carbon Capture

In response to public policy discussions in Washington about ways to reduce emissions, electric co-ops are participating in cutting-edge research to capture and use carbon emissions to make commercial products. This work is under way at the Integrated Test Center, just outside of Gillette, Wyo., where researchers will strive to advance technologies and expand understanding of what's possible in this new arena.

Rural Broadband

Many electric co-ops are working to help close the digital divide by bringing broadband to unserved and underserved areas. NRECA called on Congress to make more funds available for rural broadband deployment. Congress answered the call and funded ReConnect, a pilot program that supports efforts to make broadband possible in rural communities. The first grants were announced late last year, with several co-ops and their communities the beneficiaries.

These are just a few of the ways that electric co-ops are working in Washington to meet the needs of the communities we serve because our commitment to you extends far beyond the edge of our service territory.

We Want to Hear from You

By Anne Prince

We live in a device-driven world. Our smartphones, tablets, laptops and an assortment of other devices help us communicate and connect. Companies spend billions of dollars pushing out a steady drumbeat of messages and information, and we are constantly bombarded with one-way communication. But is anyone listening on the other end?

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we are not only listening, we are eager to hear from you. Whether you respond to a social media post, send an email or simply stop by and chat in person, we thrive on your feedback. Connecting with you helps us keep pace with our community's priorities and needs.

Because we are a cooperative, we have a different way of operating. Vigilante Electric exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve. We hope you will consider us as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports the communities that we serve and powers economic development and prosperity for the people.

You will notice that throughout the year, we create opportunities for you and other community members to attend co-op gatherings and events in order to hear from you. These include our annual meeting, district meetings and our

outreach through safety demonstrations.

Organizations such as ours are led by a board of trustees that are local members, just like you, who understand the needs of the community and are looking out for the long-term interests of the larger community. They sacrifice a significant amount of time, working on your behalf.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative works to continually learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you — because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community. But we can only improve, adapt and effectively plan for the future if we have two-way communication.

For our co-op and our communities to thrive now and in the future, we depend on hearing from you. I hope you will connect with us and let us know your perspective. You can always reach us — we're listening.

When your power goes out:

1. Check your meter to see if the display is on.
2. 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.
3. Look around the neighborhood for lights. This helps us determine how widespread the outage is.
4. Then call our office numbers: 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

America's Electric Cooperatives

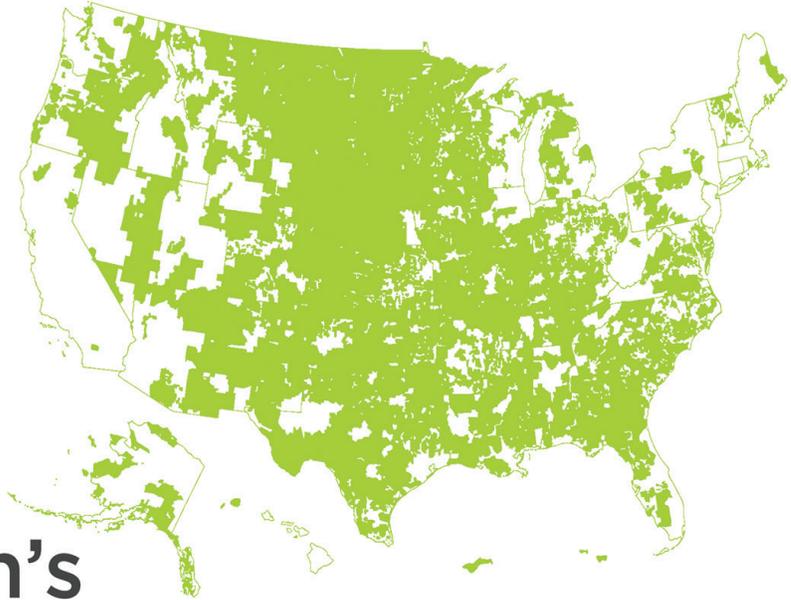
From booming suburbs to remote rural farming communities, America's electric cooperatives are energy providers and engines of economic development for more than 19 million American homes, businesses, farms and schools in 47 states.

833 distribution and 62 generation & transmission cooperatives

Power

56%

of the nation's landmass.



Own and maintain **42%** (2.6 million miles) of U.S. electric distribution lines.

Power more than **19 million** businesses, homes, schools and farms.

Serve **42 million** people across **88%** of U.S. counties.

Distribution cooperatives are the foundation of the electric cooperative network. They are the direct point of contact with co-op members in the delivery of electricity and other services.

Generation & transmission cooperatives provide wholesale power to distribution co-ops through their own electric generation facilities or by purchasing power on behalf of the distribution members.

For more information, visit: www.electric.coop | @NRECANews

