



# Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE**

## Electrical Safety Down on the Farm

By Rod Siring, Member Services

**A**T Vigilante Electric Cooperative, safety is our top priority. We work extremely hard to keep our employees, membership and general public safe around our electrical facilities. To aid in our efforts, we need you to be aware of potential hazards when it comes to electricity, especially if you work or live on one of the farms and ranches we serve.

Farming/ranching ranks as one of the most dangerous industries. Year in and year out, it ranks in the top 10 when it comes to the number of fatalities and serious injuries, and unfortunately, electrical contacts play a significant role in these statistics.

Since we are in the midst of another growing season, we would like to take this opportunity to raise the awareness of electrical hazards on today's farms and ranches. One of our biggest concerns for us is when aluminum pipe is in the same proximity as an overhead powerline. Handline, wheel lines and pivot pipe are excellent conductors of electricity and making contact with an overhead line can be fatal.

Never set up your pivot where any part can be parked directly under our distribution lines. We cannot emphasize this enough. If a power line were to come down on the pivot, it may become energized. Do not work on a pivot if it is under a power line. This could put workers dangerously close to overhead lines.

Do not store irrigation pipe under or near overhead power lines, and never tip pipe on its end to clear an obstruction. Doing this puts you at risk of contacting a



power line. If needed, use water to clear it.

Do not assume that everybody knows the location of power lines just because you do. If you or others will be handling pipe, or moving tall equipment, take the time to remind workers of the location of power lines.

Another problem we see is when electric service panels are not properly maintained or have been damaged by livestock or rodents. These are potentially dangerous situations when working in or around your service panel. During the irrigation season, look over your equipment prior to energizing the system to make sure everything is in proper working order.

One of the worst habits we see is the placement of haystacks under our power lines. By law, we cannot place our electrical line over existing structures. There are too many risks involved in such a practice. Placing a utility line over an existing structure increases the danger of fire to the structure, and seriously increases the chance of someone contacting the power line. Placing a haystack under a power line is no less dangerous.

Be aware that if we see something that we feel is a serious hazard, we are obligated to de-energize the service and leave it de-energized until the situation is corrected. The threat of harm from electricity is real. At Vigilante Electric, we want you to be safe when working around electricity.



# Staying Connected

## More important than ever

By Rod Siring, Member Services

**T**HE COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world. Whether it is personally or professionally, we have learned the importance of staying connected, staying engaged and staying informed. One way we make this easy is managing your electric accounts with SmartHub.

SmartHub is a Web and mobile app that allows you to interact with us. With SmartHub, you can pay your bill, view your electric use, stay in contact with us and much more. You will be notified when your bill is due, and you can pay with just a few clicks. Once registered, your account details, contact information and payment preferences are securely stored.

SmartHub allows you to stay on top of your usage and takes the guesswork out of your bill. Through detailed graphs, you will be able to monitor your usage and potentially find ways to reduce and save. Engaged users may also discover issues that lead to high bills, then use this information to modify their habits and reduce their energy costs.

For those members who are not comfortable providing contact and payment information but still would like to pay online, we offer SmartHub 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.

SmartHub and SmartHub Pay Now can be accessed by using the green buttons in the upper right corner of our webpage ([vec.coop](http://vec.coop)) or by downloading the free mobile app available through the Apple store or the Google Play store.

Once it's downloaded, search for and select Vigilante Electric Cooperative as your service provider, then follow the cues to register. You can find instructions on how to download the mobile app to your tablet or smartphone on our website in the "Members" section under "Paying Your Bill." If you have any issues setting this up, we are always happy to assist you.

For those members who are not tech savvy, Vigilante Electric offers a direct payment plan. This allows you to have

payments made automatically from your checking or savings account, or bank card. You simply fill out an authorization card providing the bank account or card information. The payment will be deducted on the first banking day after the 24th of each month.

We also offer a pay-by-phone service. 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, simply dial toll-free (855) 385-9904. Voice commands will guide you in accessing your information using your account number.

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. However, in today's hectic world it is nice to know that with Vigilante Electric, you have options on staying connected, staying engaged and staying informed.



# A New Energy Across America

**T**HERE is a quiet transformation happening across the nation. America's small communities are changing in remarkable ways, while holding steadfastly to the values that, for generations, have made them the places people choose to build a better life for themselves and their families.

People want to embrace the beauty of a simpler lifestyle; to live independently, yet also be part of a community that looks out for each other; to grow in new ways, in new directions; and to feed the world, change the world and build the future.

America's rural communities seem quiet, but if you scratch below the surface, you will find a whole lot happening. There is a new energy here to go along with the more affordable, down-to-earth way of living that has been here all along. The opportunity to create something new has never been greater.

These are the communities served by America's electric cooperatives. You might think of us as the local electric company, and you would be right. We are led by members like you, created by and for the communities we serve. Electric cooperatives are community-focused organizations that work hard to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to their members. Every cooperative is as unique as the communities that shape it, changing over time as our communities grow and change.

America's local electric cooperatives may be independent, but together they are mighty. Across the country, local cooperatives work together to fight political forces that endanger their mission to their members and help each other recover from catastrophic events. They also learn from one another, whether it is through the implementation of new technology or through a peer review of each other's facilities to ensure safety.

By working together and looking out for one another, cooperatives bring electricity to one in eight Americans and more than 19 million homes, businesses, farms and schools in 47 states. They also provide 71,000 great jobs, invest billions of dollars in local economies every year, and are a driving force in helping attract and grow business and industry in rural America.

America's electric cooperatives are not just eco-

nomics; they are stewards, working to strike the right balance in the deployment of renewable energy into a balanced, yet economically responsible, energy mix. We are always looking for new ways to help our members save energy, save money and take advantage of the technology that has changed the way we live.

It is the cooperative spirit that has always been one of the best things about living in rural communities: neighbors looking out for neighbors and people working for the common good. Even as we celebrate our differences and our individual achievements, we know that we cannot do everything alone – we are all in this together, and we are stronger and better for it.

That is community. It is what fueled the cooperative movement so many years ago, and is the source of our new energy today. The power of community is what being an electric cooperative is all about.



## Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 395

Total Contributions: \$4,948.27

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).

## When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

Seek shelter indoors or in a hard-topped vehicle. If you can't get to shelter:

- avoid open fields and hilltops.
- stay away from tall, isolated trees and objects.
- spread out (if you're in a group).

**#StormSafety**



# Smart Thermostat Services

## *A Comparison of the Market's Smartest and Most Popular*

By Maura Giles

**H**HEATING and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8 - 15 percent, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule. Other models are designed for complex multi-stage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features; price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style; and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing, which uses your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjusts the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone at a time. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee offer for purchase remote sensors, which must be purchased separately, that allow the ther-



mostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further with occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house, in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after about a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. It continuously learns and responds to your adjustments. Nest records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during that time. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwired installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help monitor total energy use, how the weather influences use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around \$135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart-home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

Regardless of which model fits your lifestyle and preferences,



a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way.