



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Vigilante Electric Cooperative General Manager Rollie Miller presents a grant to Beaverhead County Search and Rescue (S&R) Commander Clint Rouse. Beaverhead S&R developed first responder wilderness kits and Vigilante Electric awarded a \$500 grant to them. | COURTESY PHOTO

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SAFETY ROUNDUP

Vigilante Electric Grants Fourth Award

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services*

In early 2017, Vigilante Electric Cooperative introduced our Safety Roundup program, providing our members a simple way to donate to organizations in our communities that keep us safe. Since its inception, we have awarded grants to some very deserving organizations.

Beaverhead Ski Patrol received funding for a medical-grade digital pulse oximeter and rescue toboggan. The award to the Broadwater County Sheriff's Office was to produce safety related educational material. Jefferson Valley Rural Ambulance received funding to be used to buy

AEDs and train people in CPR. Today, we are proud to announce our latest grant recipient, Beaverhead County Search and Rescue (S&R).

Beaverhead S&R is a volunteer-based organization that works in conjunction with the Beaverhead County Sheriff's Department and is responsible for search and rescue operations throughout our county. Following our 2020 annual meeting, we were approached by S&R Commander Clint Rouse. He was interested in the first-aid kits used as gifts at the meeting, and was wondering if we

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SEASONAL ELECTRIC LOAD

Heaters can quickly raise your power bill

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services*

As the seasons change, so do our energy requirements. The need to maintain comfort and keep things functioning properly has an impact on our energy usage. With winter setting in, we need to remain mindful of items that are unique to the season and that can add a significant amount of usage to your electric bill.

After 20 plus years of dealing with high bill inquiries, I have run across numerous situations where members have forgotten or underestimated the impact of seasonal electric load. Particularly, loads created by portable electric space heaters, engine block heaters and stock tank heaters.

While these items each serve a different purpose, they are all forms of electric resistance heat. These items come in a variety of wattages, with 1,500 watts being most common. The chart at right shows the potential cost associated with the addition of just one of these units.

As you can see, the impact from just one unit can be substantial. It is common that more than one of these units may be used at one time. While the use of these items may be unavoidable, it is possible to mitigate overusing them.

Space heaters are often misused because of misleading claims that lead people to believe that there is financial savings from the use of the product. However, research does not support these claims.

Space heaters are designed to be used as supplemental heat, and are only capable of warming small spaces. If you need to use one, use it in the space that you currently occupy and follow all safety guidelines. For savings, we recommend a holistic



An average space heater or even engine block heater can quickly raise your energy bill.

ENERGY COST OF A 1500 WATT HEATER

HOURS USED PER DAY	COST PER MONTH
2	\$5.22
8	\$20.88
12	\$31.32
18	\$46.98
24	\$62.64

or whole house approach to saving energy in your home, and would be glad to help you explore better options.

An engine block heater is a simple device that uses electricity to power a heating element that warms the engine block and engine oil. Depend-

ing on the model and style of heater, it might also warm the coolant. There are several styles, but they all work generally the same by plugging into a standard electrical outlet with the goal of warming up the oil before the engine is started.

The size and type of engine, as well as outdoor temperatures, all impact how long you should have a vehicle plugged in.

For peace of mind, consult your owner's manual or talk to your mechanic, but block heaters do not have to be plugged in overnight. Typically, two to four hours prior to use should be adequate. All you need are a heavy-duty timer and heavy-duty extension cord.

Finally, stock tank heaters or de-icers are commonly used throughout our service territory. With the probability of having long periods of sub-freezing temperatures, these units have the potential to be on 24 hours, seven days a week to keep the ice off the water tank.

However, when daytime temperatures are above freezing these units can be shut off, but doing this manually is impractical. This is why there are thermostatically controlled tank de-icers and thermostatically controlled outlets. Both are designed to prevent freezing, and turn off when temperatures reach a certain level.

A few other examples of seasonal energy users are heat tape to prevent plumbing from freezing, and Christmas lights.

While the use of these items may be unavoidable, you can manage the impact they have on your power bill. If you have any questions or would like to discuss product options, please feel to contact us. 

WORKING OR LEARNING FROM HOME?

Avoid these everyday safety hazards

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

We are all spending more time at home during these unprecedented times. Whether as a means of social distancing, working remotely or students learning from home, people are home and they are plugged in.

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize potential electric hazards looming, and provide tips on keeping you, your family and home safe.



Avoid overloading outlets

An overload happens when the electrical demand placed on a circuit is more than the circuit can handle. Most often, an overload occurs because too many items are plugged into a single circuit.

Be aware of not only how many items you plug in, but what you are plugging in. When using and charging laptops, smartphones and other digital devices, only use the charging cord that came with the device. Discontinue use of devices or chargers that become excessively hot or emit a burning smell.

Always ensure that the plug is fully inserted into the outlet and remains that way while in use, and unplug



devices when not in use to save energy and minimize the risk of shock and fire.



Extension cords dangers

With the increase in electric load you need to be cautious with the use of extension cords. Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis. Regularly inspect electrical cords and extension cords for damage, and check them for heat when in use. Never run cords under rugs, doors or windows, and make sure cords do not become tripping hazards.



Space heater safety

Space heaters are designed to warm a small space, specifically the one you are in. Do not leave a space

heater unattended for long periods of time and never while you are asleep. Never plug a space heater into an extension cord or power strip, for it poses a major fire risk. Keep papers and other potential combustibles at least three feet away from space heaters and other heat sources.

Use proper lamps in fixtures

One of the most overlooked hazards comes from not using the proper lamps in lighting fixtures. Fixtures have a manufacturer-recommended wattage rating that needs to be followed to minimize the buildup of heat. Not every type of lamp can be used in an enclosed fixture. Always follow the manufacturer recommendations.



Use, test smoke detectors

Finally, the most valuable piece of safety equipment that you should have in your home are smoke detectors. If you do not have them, get them. Test your smoke detectors monthly, change the batteries yearly and replace the unit every 10 years.

Wherever you are working or learning from, it's always important to be safe. 

YOUTH TOUR SCHOLARSHIP

Vigilante Electric ups the ante with 2 winners

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

Last month, we noted that the cooperatives in the state of Montana chose not to attend the 2021 Youth Tour to Washington D.C. In lieu of the trip, the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association is offering a \$2,500 post-secondary scholarship to the winning essay from the kids who wanted to go. While it may be short notice, Vigilante Electric Cooperative wanted to announce that we will be upping the ante on this essay contest.

At our October Board of Trustees meeting, it was decided that the top two essays that we receive from our



service territory will each receive a \$1,500 scholarship to be awarded to the winner upon their graduation from high school. Then, the best essay will be forwarded to our statewide for a chance to win that scholarship.

The deadline for essays to be turned in to Vigilante Electric is **Dec. 18, 2020**. The essay topic and eligibility guidelines are as follows.

Topic: How has reliable electricity benefitted you and your community through the COVID-19 pandemic?

The student must be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2021 (currently a sophomore or junior).

The student and/or parent or guardian must be served by Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

The essay must include a cover page with the student's name, address and telephone number.

This information has been forwarded to area high schools and updated on our website (vec.coop). If you have any questions, please call us at (406) 683-2327 or (800)221-8271.

SAFETY

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would donate some to their organization. Since those kits were very basic, we told Clint about our Safety Roundup program and asked him to submit an application for financial resources to purchase something more appropriate.

At a subsequent S&R meeting, they approved \$2,100 for the development of first responder wilderness kits. Working with Dr. Mike Clarke and Dr. Greg Moore, they formulated an inventory of items that should go in their kits. Retail, a kit of this nature would cost over \$200, but they were able to purchase the individual items and build their own for just over \$100 per kit. To date, they have built 20 kits, and with some financial assistance they can build more.

At our October Board of Trustees meeting, their proposal was discussed and a \$500 award was approved. Rouse was very complimentary when receiving the donation.

"We cannot thank Vigilante Electric enough, not only for this award but for the ongoing generosity and commitment of the organization and staff have to our community," Rouse said.

Our Safety Roundup program embodies the cooperative spirit and is a shining example of us living out one of our core principles, concern for community. Vigilante Electric is proud to be associated with and contribute to organizations such as our four grant recipients. Their dedication to our communities is inspiring, and we look forward to work-

ing with more deserving organizations.

Programs such as Safety Roundup have great potential for good, but we need your help. Our Safety Roundup is a member-driven program where participants donate by allowing us to round their bill up to the next whole dollar, or they can opt to add a few extra dollars to their bill each month. Then, 100 percent of the funds from the roundup will be presented to worthy organizations for safety related projects.

Individually, these donations don't go far, but when members come together, we can make a difference. If you would like to participate or learn more about this program, you can visit our website at vec.coop, or contact our office for more details at (406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271. 



**Vigilante Electric
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 394
Total Contributions: \$6,593.66

To apply, contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327
An online application is available at www.vec.coop.