



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

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

Website: www.vec.coop

E-mail: contact@vec.coop

25 YEARS AND COUNTING

Recognizing Andy Johnson's years of service

ONE of the attributes of a successful electric cooperative is continuity of leadership, particularly in position of cooperative trustee. Due to an ever-changing business environment, it takes time and dedication to properly serve as district trustee. In March we honored Alan Martinell for his 40 years serving our members. In April we celebrated Andy Johnson's 25th year as district trustee.

Andy was appointed to the Vigilante Electric board on April 25, 1996, to serve as trustee for District #6 - Dillon north. Andy and his wife Terry live north of Dillon where they farm and ranch. During his tenure he has served as president and vice president of the Board of Trustees on multiple occasions. He currently represents Vigilante Electric on the Montana Electric Cooperative's Association's Bylaws and Policies Standing Committee, and as a member the Montana Energy Alliance board.

Andy is one of the individuals you immediately like once you meet him. He has represented us honorably as an organization and membership. He has proven himself as a capable leader with a willingness to listen and to fight for what he believes in, and he has a knack for adding some needed humor to any discussion.

According to General Manager Rollie Miller, "Andy continues to be a very active participant and a respected member of the Board of Trustees. He is a very important fixture on the board, ensuring the success of the governance function of the organization. Thank you for your 25 years on the VEC board, and we look forward to many more years to come."

The management and staff of Vigilante Electric would like to thank Andy for his years of honorable service to our membership and our organization. We also look forward to many more productive years. RM



District Trustee Andy Johnson has served Vigilante Electric Cooperative for 25 years.

He has served in multiple capacities, including president and vice president of the Board of Trustees on multiple occasions. | **VIGILANTE ELECTRIC PHOTO**

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

Cheyenne Garrison,
President

Dist. #5
Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Andy Johnson,
Vice President

Dist. #6
Dillon North/Glen

Tom Mitchell,
Sec./Treas.

Dist. #8
Dillon South/Grant

Norm Tebay, Trustee
Dist. #1

Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee
Dist. #2

Silver Star/Waterloo

Tom Helm, Trustee
Dist. #3

Townsend/N. Helena/
Lump Gulch

Colt High, Trustee
Dist. #4

Twin Bridges/Point of Rocks

Dean Peterson, Trustee
Dist. #7

Jackson/Wisdom

Allen Martinell, Trustee
Dist. #9

Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller,
General Manager

Trustees earn Credentialed Cooperative Director status

FOR our trustees and management, the energy industry is complex and constantly evolving. To properly navigate this environment, it is important to stay abreast of current topics, whether they be political or regulatory. To help trustees and directors, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has a three-part director education program. Today we would like to recognize Cheyenne Garrison and Tom Helm for completing part one of this training, the Credentialed Cooperative Director program.

The Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program focuses on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Upon completion, the director is awarded the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate by NRECA.

At our April board meeting trustees Cheyenne Garrison and Tom Helm received their CCD certificates.



Tom Helm and Cheyenne Garrison were recently awarded the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate by NRECA. | **VIGILANTE ELECTRIC PHOTO**

Garrison is the trustee for District #5 (Melrose, Divide, Ramsey and Wise River), and is the current board president. Helm is the trustee for District #3 (Broadwater County, Gates of the Mountain, Lump Gulch and North Helena Valley). Tom has served the board as both president and vice president on multiple occasions.

“The NRECA Board of Trustees

training program is very good and I recommend any of the courses as they become available. Cheyenne and Tom join others on the board in achieving NRECA training milestones, and should be commended for taking the additional time and putting in the additional effort to further educate themselves on cooperative governance issues. Thank you for the extra effort and being a part of making VEC a great cooperative,” General Manager Rollie Miller said.

With the completion of the CCD program, Cheyenne and Tom can now proceed with the Board Leadership Program (BLC), which focuses in greater depth on specific industry and governance issues. These include issues such as risk management, power supply, parliamentary procedure, technology and policy development.

We would like to thank Cheyenne and Tom for the time they committed not only to our organization but to advancing their knowledge of our industry as well. **RM**

Prepare for what Mother Nature may bring

WITH summer getting into full swing, we welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the warmer weather. Summertime brings many of our favorite activities such as cooking out with family and friends, afternoons on the water and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

Unfortunately, summer months also make conditions right for dangerous storms and fires. These potential events can cause destruction to our electrical system, but we want you to know that Vigilante Electric Cooper-

ative crews are ready and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area.

When a major event knocks out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. We would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm

and disaster preparedness. You can also visit www.ready.gov for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).

- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies, including towelettes, soap and hand

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Why can't safety be fun?

Sometimes you just have to think outside the box

CREATING an effective safety culture has been a primary focus at Vigilante Electric Cooperative for years. Something that we are very proud of is that the end of 2020 marked the fourth consecutive year without a lost-time accident. An effective safety culture, however, does not happen overnight or by chance. It takes the right people in leadership positions, commitment to doing things right, all employees taking ownership in the program and training.

A well-rounded safety training program has to encompass more than just occupational safety; it has to include psychological and wellness elements. To keep employees engaged in our training, we sometimes have to think outside the box. An example of this occurred at our safety training in April.

Our employees routinely work in snake and bear areas, and enjoy a broad variety of outdoor activities. Because of this, we brought in two experts that educated us on what to do in chance encounters with wildlife. Our presenters were Kim Johnson,



Roger Siemens of R&R Resources talks about snake safety. | **PHOTO COURTESY OF VIGILANTE ELECTRIC**

Kim Johnson, field project manager for the non-profit organization People and Carnivores, and Roger Siemens of R&R Resources.

Kim explained the physical and behavioral differences between grizzly bears and black bears. She discussed how to recognize the signs that bears are active in an area, how to stay safe in the backcountry, and what to do in the event of a bear encounter.

She also explained the difference between a predatory bear and a defensive bear, and presented different bear encounter scenarios with tactics in dealing with each. After her presenta-



Kim Johnson, field project manager for People and Carnivores, explains how to be safe in the backcountry and what to do in the event of a bear encounter. | **PHOTO COURTESY OF VIGILANTE ELECTRIC**

tion, our group went outside and practiced with inert bear spray canisters to get a feel for what using the real canisters is like.

One of Roger's specialties is dealing with rattlesnakes. He brought in several live species for us to look at, including prairie rattlesnakes (mature and juvenile), a bull snake and a garter snake. He used a live rattlesnake and a handbag to demonstrate how rattlesnakes strike, and also explained their anatomy and habitat.

Roger provided handouts on what to do in the event of a snake encounter and first-aid tips for when someone is bitten. He also passed around photos of snakes that he had caught and snakes that were feeding.

These were great programs, and the topic of conversation in our office for weeks. Unique training such as this helps in the evolution of our safety culture. **RM**



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 575
Total Contributions: \$8,704.91

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

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

Things to consider when landscaping

WHETHER you are building a new home or have an existing one, we would like to point out an opportunity for energy conservation through landscaping. Most often, the focus of landscaping is to enhance the area around your home so that it adds curb appeal. What you may not know is that a well-designed landscape can also help you save on heating and cooling costs.

According to the Department of Energy, there are a couple of ways that landscaping can help reduce energy costs. The first is having a landscape designed to aid in the solar gains of a structure. Solar gains refer to the heat increase of a structure that results from the absorption of solar radiation. Solar gains can be beneficial in the heating season, but undesirable in the cooling season.

The most cost-effective way to benefit from solar gain is through the planting of deciduous trees, shrubs and ground cover. Plant leafy trees on the south and west sides of your home to provide shade on hot summer days. Plant trees with crowns lower to the



ground on the west side to help with the lower afternoon sun angles. Planting shrubs and ground cover around your house can also help reduce heat buildup. In the fall, deciduous trees allow the sunlight through, helping heat your home during winter.

Another way to use landscaping to lower energy costs is through the development of windbreaks. Studies have shown that windbreaks reduce heating costs by lowering the wind chill near your home. It also creates dead-air space that insulates your home in the summer and winter.

You can develop windbreaks by

planting evergreens and shrubs to the prevailing wind side of your home. Installing a fence in addition to evergreen trees makes the windbreak more effective. Also, if snow tends to drift in your area, plant low shrubs on the windward side of the windbreak to trap snow before it blows next to your home.

While there are a lot of variables to consider in these landscaping strategies, seeking advice and help from professionals may be a reasonable investment. The Department of Energy states that, on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years.

Finally, before you begin your landscaping project, call 811 to have underground utility lines marked. Knowing the location of underground utility lines on your property will help you avoid injury, service outages and costly repairs.

For more information, see Landscaping for Energy-Efficient Homes from the U.S. Department of Energy. 

NATURE

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sanitizer.

- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current. For members on oxygen this should include spare tanks and batteries for portable units.

- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.

- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive elec-

tronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure that if it is connected to the source-side supply that a properly installed double-throw switch is installed according to National Electrical Code requirements, it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information and check Vigilante Electric's Facebook page for power restoration updates.

Regardless of the type of event, avoid downed power lines, and allow

ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Advanced planning can reduce stress and anxiety of a prolonged outage caused by a weather or fire event, and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. To stay abreast of current weather information, power restoration efforts and other important co-op news and information, sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings, and follow us on our Facebook page and website.

We hope we don't experience severe storms or fires this summer, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Vigilante Electric, we recommend that you act today because there is power in planning. From our co-op family to yours, we hope you have a safe and wonderful summer. 