



# Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## COOPERATIVE INVOLVEMENT

### 2022 DISTRICT MEETINGS

**A**t the beginning of each year, preparations for our annual meeting are in full swing. For those of you who are new to our organization, our annual meeting is the culmination of all our activities from the previous year. It is your opportunity to hear from our cooperative's leaders and participate in decisions that guide the course of our organization.

While we use the term annual meeting to mark the event, it really is an order of business dictated by our bylaws to ensure fair representation for our membership. The next annual meeting will take place on March 4, in Dillon. The process happens in two parts: the annual meeting, where district trustees are elected, and the district meetings, where nominations for district trustee are made.

Our 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 ensure that we have six experienced trustees at all times. For members interested in running for the board, the district meeting is your first opportunity to secure a nomination. Nominations can also be made from the floor at the annual meeting, prior to the actual election being held.

District meetings also provide those who are not able to attend the annual

#### UPCOMING DISTRICT MEETINGS

##### **District #2: Silver Star/Waterloo**

January 17 - Borden Hotel  
Conference Center – 7 p.m.

##### **District #1: Cardwell/Whitehall/ Three Forks**

January 18 – Cardwell School  
Gymnasium – 7 p.m.

##### **District #6: Dillon North**

January 20 – Vigilante Electric  
Cooperative Boardroom – 7 p.m.

meeting the opportunity to meet and hear from General Manager Rollie Miller. Because the district meetings are more personal than the annual meeting, it provides members with an excellent opportunity to interact with the general manager and the candidates running for trustee.

Members residing 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. 

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

# Year-end rebate coming

By **ROLLIE MILLER** | General Manager

2021 was a very good year for your electric cooperative from a financial perspective, among other things. Record new service installations, good irrigation sales and record residential sales all contributed to the high margins for the year. As a nonprofit electric cooperative, each year excess margins, over and above our costs, are allocated back to the membership based on patronage received.

In 2021, our margins above our costs far exceeded what we had planned for at the beginning of the year based on our budgeted estimates. The Board of Trustees deliberated and discussed the best way to reduce our margins to a more acceptable level. Staff proposed a rebate similar to the one we did last year, and the board approved that rebate at its November trustee meeting. So I am happy to report, for current active accounts, you will be receiving

a bill credit on your December 2021 statement. The credit will be based on your Kwh usage for 2021. The total amount credited will be just less than \$800,000.

I am very proud of the entire Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) team in being able to keep up with the record amount of new services we completed, among all the other work necessary to keep up with record energy delivery. Simply staying in front of the needed material was a huge challenge. They did an awesome job and should be commended! We have low rates and rebate excess margins to our membership, which is the epitome of a true nonprofit electric cooperative organization.

We hope your Christmas and New Year's holiday season was great. 2022 looks to be another challenging year. Rest assured, the VEC team will take on those challenges with vigor. Thanks for your patronage and allowing us to serve you in the coming year. **RM**

## English earns Journeyman certification

**A**CROSS our great nation we are seeing the demand for skilled laborers exceed the supply.

In our industry there are concerns with the number of line workers nearing retirement age, and the number of people entering the trade. This is why we support trade schools with scholarships, and why we work with the Mountain States Apprenticeship Program to produce quality line workers.

While this occupation is well compensated, line work is not for everyone. The inherent dangers of the work and the potential working conditions dissuades many. Yet for the right person, it is a meaningful career with endless possibilities. Fortunately for us, we have been able to have locals such as Andrew English who have wanted to pursue this career path.

In October 2018, Andrew joined Vigilante Electric Cooperative as an apprentice lineman, working out of our Dillon shop. In November of this year, Andrew successfully completed his apprenticeship and earned his journeyman lineman certification through the Mountain States Apprenticeship Program. This apprentice program is quite intensive, taking about four years to complete, with a minimum of 7,000 hours of on-the-job training and related instructional class work.

General Manager Rollie Miller said, "Congratulations to Andrew on achieving a major milestone in any lineman's career. He was clearly a leader in his apprenticeship class.



General Manager Rollie Miller congratulates Andrew English on the completion of his apprenticeship, and presents him with a certificate of completion. | **VEC PHOTO**

I am very proud of him and happy to have him as part of our Vigilante Electric team, as are all of us. I am looking forward to continuing our relationship for years to come. Congratulations again Andrew!" **RM**

## CELEBRATING THE SEASON



Our little red truck was part of the Beaverhead Chamber of Commerce Trails of Bales holiday decoration contest. We would like to thank Chelsey Hutchison, Jackie Clark, Raquel Reno-Morast, Paige Garrison and Emily May for their time and effort in this creation, and for making our holiday a little brighter. | **VEC PHOTO**



## Options make it easy to pay your bills

**A**T Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we provide several payment options as a service to our members. All options are available at no additional fee, are easy to navigate, convenient to use and most importantly – secure.

SmartHub is our innovative tool for account management. SmartHub has several features that make managing your account easy. Whether through the web, a smart-phone or tablet, you'll be able to pay your bill, view your electricity use, stay in contact with us, and much more.

If you are new to electronic billing, you can easily sign up for an account on our website ([vec.coop](http://vec.coop)) using the SmartHub link at the top of the page. Once you have created an account you can log into SmartHub and set up your payment and notification preferences.

If you prefer not to register with SmartHub, but would still like to make your payment online, you can use 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 Mobile - You can also download the free SmartHub mobile app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Once it's downloaded, search for and select Vigilante Electric Cooperative as your service provider, and sign in using the same username and



password you used when you signed up for SmartHub on your computer. If you're new to a smart phone, there are step by step instructions that will guide you through this process available on our website.

Another option is our Direct Payment Plan. This allows you to have payments made automatically from your checking or savings account. Payment will be deducted on the first banking day after the 24th of each month. Direct Payment Plan authorization forms are available by contacting us, or you can sign up through SmartHub.

Finally, we have Pay By Phone. 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, you simply dial toll-free (855) 385-9904. Using your account number, voice commands will guide you in accessing your information.

This is not to say that the old school ways of paying bills is antiquated. We gladly accept checks or cash, and it is perfectly ok to mail in your payment or drop it by our office. This being said, in today's hectic world – isn't it nice to know that you have options? RM

# WINTER ADDITIONS BRING SAFETY CONCERN

## BE INFORMED AND MINDFUL WHEN USING HEATERS AND EXTENSION CORDS

**QUESTION:** What are the two items that get used a lot more this time of year that can be extremely dangerous if not used properly? The answer is portable space heaters and extension cords. While they may seem innocuous, the statistics that come from improper use is frightening.

Space heating is the second-leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries, and the third-leading cause of home fire deaths. Local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 48,530 fires involving heating equipment per year in 2014-2018. These fires resulted in 500 civilian deaths annually. Forty percent of these deaths are attributable to portable space heaters.

While we prefer a whole-house approach to home comfort, we understand that when the weather turns cold, portable space heaters are used to enhance comfort. If you plan to use portable electric space heaters, the National Fire Protection Agency makes the following recommendations:

- Purchase a heater with the seal of a qualified testing laboratory.
- Keep the heater at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including people.
- Choose a heater with a thermostat and overheat protection.
- Place the heater on a solid, flat surface.
- Make sure your heater has an auto shut-off to turn the heater off if it tips over.
- Keep space heaters out of the way of foot traffic. Never block an exit.
- Keep children away from the space heater.



Space heaters are the second leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries. When using them, be vigilant. | **FILE PHOTO**

- Space heaters should be turned off and unplugged when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Plug the heater directly into the wall outlet. Never use an extension cord.

Using extension cords properly is also critical to your safety. With continuous use, an extension cord can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. In fact, there are approximately 3,300 residential fires annually attributable to the improper usage of extension cords. These fires account for an average of 50 fatalities and 270 injuries annually.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) offers the following tips for staying safe from electric shock and electrical fires when using extension cords:

- Do not overload extension cords.
- Do not substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Do not run through walls, door-

ways, ceilings or floors.

- Do not run cords under rugs. If the cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which may result in a fire hazard.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can give you an electric shock or burn.
- Never use three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots for the plug. Do not cut off the ground pin to force a fit.
- Use extension cords with polarized and/or three-prong plugs.
- Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

Both items can serve a valuable purpose and, if used properly, are safe to use. Always remain mindful with these items and refer back to this article if needed. Safety is our top priority at Vigilante Electric Cooperative and this includes the safety of our members. **RM**