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Vigilante Electric Cooperative

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



FIRE MITIGATION EFFORTS

WORKING OUR PLAN

In service territories such as ours, providing reliable power comes with several challenges. One of the most daunting is maintaining distribution lines in heavily wooded areas. Not only is this interface a potential cause of outages, it is also a potential cause of a fire. This is why Vigilante Electric Cooperative has a fire mitigation plan, and why we will remain proactive in our fire mitigation efforts.

Over the years we have identified several areas in our system territory where our distribution lines run through areas with high tree density and narrow rights of way. One part of our fire mitigation plan is to identify and remove problem trees in these areas. This work will be conducted by both our line crews and a logging contractor we hired to work in particularly challenging areas. However, to minimize fire potential, selective harvesting is not enough.

Throughout our service territory, we use protective devices called reclosers. A recloser is used to section off portions of a circuit to avoid having the entire circuit go down in the event of a fault, such as a fallen tree in the power line.

Reclosers detect a problem on a line and interrupt the flow of electricity in an attempt to clear a temporary fault, after which the recloser will reset. If the fault has cleared, the electricity stays on; if it doesn't, then this cycle will happen again.



Under normal operation, this cycle will happen up to four times. After the fourth time, the recloser will lock out, shutting down the power. At this point, linemen are dispatched to the outage to investigate the situation, remove or repair the cause of the

See FIRE, next page

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

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Irrigation improvements

COST SHARING TO HELP YOU GROW EFFICIENTLY

VIGILANTE Electric Cooperative has provided energy-efficiency incentives on qualifying projects for decades. While we actively promote and incentivize residential and commercial projects, due to the demographic of our service territory, our biggest consumer segment for energy-efficiency dollars is agriculture.

Vigilante Electric is a summer-peaking utility, meaning that our demand for energy is highest during the summer months. This is due to the amount of connected irrigation load we have on our system. In collaboration with the Bonneville Power Administration, we provide several incentives that will help reduce the costs of irrigation system upgrades, while reducing energy requirements.

The easiest upgrade for an irrigation system is hardware, specifically the regulators, rotating sprinkler heads and nozzles. Over time, these components wear out. Studies show that properly functioning irrigation hardware not only saves energy, but increases crop uniformity, decreases the amount of water and fertilizer required, and can increase yield. This incentive is \$15 per drop.

Another incentive available is for new pumps. As pumps wear over time, they become less efficient. An irrigation pump might also not be a good match for your current irrigation requirements. Installing a new, more



efficient pump that matches your irrigation system requirements can help optimize your irrigation system, saving you energy and money. There is a \$70 per horsepower incentive for the replacement of an existing turbine or centrifugal pump, where the new pump is equal to or less in horsepower compared to the existing pump.

Installing a new pump with a larger horsepower rating is only eligible when paired with a variable frequency drive (VFD). VFDs are designed to adjust pump motor speed to match changing irrigation needs by controlling the frequency of the electrical power that is supplied to the motor. Even small speed adjustments using a VFD can create big energy savings, often

as much as 10 - 20 percent. You will also get greater precision and tighter control over water distribution and pressure, and help the pump match flow and pressure requirements.

An incentive for VFD integration is available on new and existing turbine or centrifugal pump installations. For qualifying installations, the incentive for a VFD paired with a turbine pump is \$100 per horsepower.

Each of the offerings listed has specific requirements that need to be met to receive the incentive. If you would like more information about these or any of our programs, please contact Rod at 406-683-2327 or 800-221-8271. RM

FIRE

Continued from previous page

fault and reset the recloser manually.

However, if a tree were to fall into a line or bring the line to the ground, this repeated cycling of the recloser

could potentially start a fire. Starting June 1st, we will be setting reclosers protecting circuits in heavily wooded areas to operate just once before locking out, limiting the potential for ignition. This practice was initiated in 2021, and will continue as part of our fire mitigation efforts.

While many people may think that the snow pack this winter will lessen fire potential this summer, Vigilante Electric cannot afford the luxury of a wait-and-see philosophy. While these areas may experience short-term outages, we believe it is our best option for avoiding something catastrophic. RM

SmartHub: The service of convenience

SINCE introducing SmartHub in 2016, we have seen a steady growth of members using this service. To date, we have more than 3,200 members using SmartHub. For those new to our membership, SmartHub is an innovative tool that makes managing all aspects of electric account(s) easier.

SmartHub, which can be accessed through our website (*vec.coop*) and the mobile app, allows you to interact with us and gives you access to a wealth of information. You can pay your bill, view your electricity use, stay in contact with us and much more. You'll be notified when your bill is due, and you can pay it immediately.

SmartHub helps you to stay on top of your usage and takes the guesswork out of your bill. Through detailed graphs, you'll be able to monitor your usage and potentially find ways to

reduce energy consumption and save money. Engaged users may also discover issues that lead to high bills. They can then use this information to modify their habits and reduce their energy costs.

With SmartHub, you can efficiently manage your account(s). You can store credit card information, set up automatic payments and can keep this information up to date. Plus, SmartHub is very secure, adhering to credit card industry standards and best practices.

For those of you who would like to pay online, but do not want to register or have information stored, 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 icons on the homepage of our website. The

SmartHub mobile app can be downloaded for free through the Apple App 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.

Information on all of your payment options is available on our website (*vec.coop*). You will also find instructions on how to download the mobile app to your tablet or smart phone. If you have any issues setting this up, please give us a call. We are always happy to assist you. RM

The relationship between renewables

THE Northwest is the leader in renewable energy with more than 50 percent of our region's power being provided by renewables. Hydro accounts for 46 percent annually, with wind providing 9 percent and solar contributing around 1 percent to the mix. Due to climate concerns, our reliance on renewable generation will continue to grow as we move to a carbon-free future.

In fact, many Northwest cities and states have committed to bold clean-energy goals. Washington set the bar especially high, passing legislation that aims for 100 percent clean energy by 2045. Cities such as Boise and Portland also plan to go completely carbon-free with their energy in the next three decades.

Luckily for us, our largest renewable, hydropower, is helping us in our quest to go greener.

Wind and solar power represent important, growing energy resources



in the Northwest. They also share a common trait; they are intermittent. This means their electric output fluctuates based on the availability of wind and sunshine.

The challenge for grid operators is that if there is too much or too little power at any one time, blackouts can occur. To balance the grid, we need electric generation to fill in the gaps.

Fortunately, hydroelectric dams can quickly react, releasing water into their turbines when more power is necessary, and holding that water back when there is already enough. With

hydropower, this important balancing role can be filled without any carbon emissions.

This harmony between renewables is allowing the Northwest to expand its adoption of solar and wind rapidly. As a region, we're able to set high goals for carbon-free energy and add these new technologies at a fast pace. Doing so has also allowed us to be more proactive about climate change and its risks to endangered species such as orcas and salmon.

Equally as important, our long-standing hydroelectric dams have allowed the Northwest to add thousands of megawatts of renewable resources reliably and at a relatively low price. Northwestern states still have the lowest electricity costs in the nation.

The future for carbon-free energy in the Northwest is promising. Partnered together, hydro, solar, and wind make an excellent team of renewables. RM

MAKE THE RIGHT CALL

CALL 811 BEFORE YOU START ANY DIGGING PROJECT

In our industry, certain messages bear repeating, especially if those messages involve safety. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, safety is at the forefront of how we operate. Safe work practices are something that we review every day, and we want to help our members and community be safe in their practices as well. As we transition into spring and summer, one of the most important things to remember is to call before you dig.

Whether you are a contractor or a do-it-yourselfer, summer is when the most dirt is turned. Whether you are turning it with a backhoe or a hand spade, there is always the possibility of danger lurking just below the surface. Digging into an electric power line, natural gas line, water line or telephone line has consequences. Depending on what you dig into, the consequences can be physical and/or financial.

In terms of bodily harm, contacting an underground powerline is every bit as dangerous as contacting overhead lines. They can carry the same voltage as overhead lines and are much harder to identify. Do not take a chance; one wrong decision could be your last.

From a financial standpoint, the



statistics are startling. The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is an organization dedicated to preventing damage to underground utility infrastructure and protecting those who live and work near them. They collect and publish data regarding utility infrastructure damage and estimate the annual cost at \$30 billion. CGA also estimates that 60 percent of damages to underground utilities are caused specifically by professional contractors not calling in locates.

The Call before You Dig campaign has been around for years. 811 is the national number designated to help protect do-it-yourselfers, landscapers and contractors from unintentionally hitting underground utility lines while working on digging projects. Every

digging project, by law, requires a call to 811.

Contacting 811 at least two business days prior to digging, either by phone or online (montana811.org), starts the process of getting your underground utility lines marked for free. Then 811 will notify the utility companies in your area, who then will send a professional locator to mark the approximate location of your lines. Be advised that some utility companies, including Vigilante Electric, hire third-party professionals to handle these locates. If you are having issues with getting the locate done, or are unsure if it has occurred, it is best to contact 811 with the ticket number you were given to follow up on your request.

Please also note that Vigilante Electric's third-party locators through 811 will only locate the powerline between the transformer and the meter; they will not locate wire between the meter and your home, as this is a private line that was not installed by our cooperative. This is your responsibility as the homeowner, and will require you to call and hire an electrician in your area to perform the locate service. The cost for this service varies depending on the electrician and scope of the job. RM



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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 800
Total Contributions: \$19,268.60

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

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



24 Hour Emergency Service

**Bulk Propane Delivery • Gas Stoves • Wood Stoves
Gas Room Heaters • Gas Fireplaces • Much More!**

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Dillon, MT

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