

P.O. Box 1049,
Dillon, MT 59725-1049
(406) 683-2327
(800) 221-8271



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Website: www.vec.coop
E-mail: contact@vec.coop

ELECTRICAL SAFETY ON THE FARM/RANCH

Ag Industry is one of the most dangerous

AT Vigilante Electric Cooperative, safety is, and will always be, our top priority. For us, being safety-minded extends beyond how we operate as an organization; we are committed to making our communities safer. With irrigation season in full swing, we would like to remind our members in the agriculture community to be particularly mindful about the location of overhead powerlines.

Year in and year out, the agriculture industry is ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations. According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, worker-related deaths in agriculture are seven times higher than the national average, and an alarming number of these fatalities are electricity related. The National Ag Safety Database reports that every year approximately 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the United States. To help our members in the ag community stay safe around electricity, we offer the following guidance:

- “Look up and live” has been a motto used in our industry for a long time. Almost half of all powerline contacts involve large equipment. Always be aware of the location of powerlines, especially when moving high-profile equipment around or under them. Also be mindful when passing under powerlines that are near the transition of a roadway into a field.

- Another consideration would be where you locate haystacks and store aluminum pipe. Not only are haystacks in the immedi-



Pivots and powerlines don't mix well. Be careful when your pivot is under a powerline. | **FILE PHOTO**

ate proximity of powerlines a fire hazard, as you increase the layers of stacked hay, you increase the danger for anybody working on those stacks.

- Storing irrigation pipe under powerlines is another habit that we would like to change. Aluminum is an excellent conductor of electricity, and the pipe segments are long enough to reach the powerlines if

See SAFETY, next page

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
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Capital credits: Uniquely cooperative

All business organizations need capital to operate, which is usually supplied by a combination of equity and debt. A stock company, such as an investor-owned utility, can raise equity by selling shares of stock, or ownership, in the company to the general public. Stockholders invest in the stock willingly, with the expectation of earning a return on the investment through dividends and capital appreciation.

An electric cooperative such as Vigilante Electric Cooperative does not issue stock and pay dividends, however, we still need to maintain an adequate level of equity to ensure financial health and stability. For electric cooperatives, the most significant source of equity is the retention of margins from the sale of electricity to

our members.

Electric cooperatives, by law, are non-profit organizations. After all financial commitments are met, any excess revenue is credited back to the membership. Our capital credit system was adopted at the 1947 annual meeting, and provides a method for allocating each individual member's share of net margins.

The term "capital credits" is used because the actual money, which is classified as net margins, is invested in cooperative capital such as reserves or equipment. This money belongs to the members, but they have agreed to its use for capital purposes by accepting the capital credit provisions in the bylaws.

A capital credit statement is sent to

members annually, notifying them of the allocation of margins for the previous year. When financial conditions permit, a general retirement (or refund) of capital can be made. These retired capital credits are then paid back to the individual member. It is our policy to retire the oldest capital credits first. To date, we have made general retirements through 2008.

One challenge of distributing retired capital credits is keeping track of every member we owe. If you do have capital credits and leave our system, please keep us informed of your current address. A list of past members who we are seeking to contact is posted to our website (vec.coop/capital-credits). In the coming months we will publish this list in this publication. RM

SAFETY

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tipped too far onto one end.

Also consider where your pivots are located in relation to your powerlines. When the pivot is parked, is any part of it under the powerlines? If a powerline were to come down, it could potentially energize the pivot. Also, if the pivot is parked under the powerline, it makes working on one of the towers very dangerous.

Plan your work and work your plan. Start each day by outlining the work for that day, taking time to discuss all potential hazards. The location of powerlines is particularly important if you are working around or moving implements under them. Do not assume that everybody knows where all the powerlines are located. Make sure that everybody is on the same page.

When you see a downed powerline, keep a safe distance and call 911 immediately. By alerting emergency services to a dangerous situation, responders can be dispatched to your location



to ensure scene safety, and they will contact us to let us know the situation and location.

If you are in a vehicle or piece of heavy equipment that contacts a powerline and the line comes to rest

on the vehicle (or equipment), always assume the line is energized and stay put. Contact 911 and wait for one of our linemen to secure the safety of the scene. If there are other people in your immediate area, instruct them to stay away.

If staying in the vehicle is not an option and you are in imminent danger, there are specific things that you need to do to clear yourself from danger. The most important thing to remember when getting out of the vehicle is not to contact the vehicle and ground at the same time.

Position yourself so that you can safely jump away from the vehicle with your arms crossed in front of you. It is important to land with your feet together and then bunny hop, putting distance between you and the vehicle.

Working in agriculture is dangerous and stressful. To navigate your work safely, sometimes you need to slow down and take in your surroundings, especially when in the proximity of overhead powerlines. Electricity is unforgiving, and a casual oversight could be catastrophic. RM

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC'S
BRATS & KILOWATTS
Townsend Member Appreciation Barbeque



JUNE **27** 2023
11 AM - 1 PM

Heritage Park
TOWNSEND, MT



WHITEHALL MEMBER APPRECIATION BBQ JULY 19 · LEGION AVE PARK	DILLON MEMBER APPRECIATION BBQ AUG 23 · VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
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Show up for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit!



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 806
Total Contributions: \$19,838.77

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

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



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406-683-9500
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AIR-SOURCE HEAT-PUMP TECHNOLOGY IMPROVING YOUR INVESTMENT

THERE are a variety of reasons why people decide to go electric with their heating system and water heating in their home. Electricity is clean, efficient, safe and cost-effective, and there are ways to upgrade and save with heat-pump technology.

Heat pumps offer an energy-efficient alternative to furnaces and air conditioners for all climates. When properly installed, an air-source heat pump (ASHP) can deliver up to three times more heat energy to a home than the electrical energy it consumes. This is possible because a heat pump transfers heat rather than converting it from a fuel source.

Like your refrigerator, heat pumps use electricity to transfer heat from one location to another. During the heating season, heat pumps extract heat from outside ambient air using a refrigerant, and moves that heat into the house. During the cooling cycle, this process is reversed. While air-source heat pumps cannot accommodate 100 percent of the heating needs in our climate, this technology has advanced to the point that heat can be extracted from fairly cold air.

In homes with electric forced-air systems, an ASHP can be incorporated using the existing ductwork for heating and cooling. When outside temperatures drop too low, the air-source heat pump will shut down and heating elements of the forced air system will take over.

For homes with electric zonal heat, an air-source heat pump system referred to as a ductless heat pump (or mini-split system) is employed. There are two main components to a ductless heat pump. The outside compressor unit is capable of extracting heat from outside ambient air during the heating season and expels hot air during the cooling season.

The outside unit is connected to an



Heat-pump technology offers energy-efficient options for furnaces and air conditioners. An air-source heat pump can be incorporated into an existing forced air systems. | **FILE PHOTO**

indoor unit, usually mounted on a wall, through electrical wiring and a refrigerant line. The indoor unit regulates room temperature by either taking heat off the refrigerant line and circulating it throughout the room, or by taking heat out of the room and replacing it with cooler air.

As part of our energy efficiency efforts, Vigilante Electric Cooperative offers incentives on both types of installations. On a qualifying installation, members can receive up to \$1,000 back on incorporating an ASHP to an electric forced-air system, and up to \$800 for a ductless system.

Water heating can be a large component of an energy bill regardless of the fuel source. Electrically, there is the option of using air-source heat-pump technology for heating water. A heat pump water heater (HPWH) pulls heat from the air surrounding the tank and increases the temperature



Heat-pump water heater technology has been getting better over the past few years. Vigilante Electric offers incentives for installing one. | **FILE PHOTO**

to heat the water in a storage tank. If system demand is too high or there is a mechanical issue with the heat pump, electrical resistance heating elements are available.

This technology has been evolving over the past few years and has been getting better and better. However, site location is a key consideration for a heat pump water heater to work optimally, and they are more expensive. This is why incentives are available. Depending on the type of system installed, we will offer up to \$900 on a qualifying installation.

For many of us, our home is the largest investment we make in our lifetime. Air-source heat-pump technology not only saves you money on your energy bill, but it adds value to this investment. To qualify for an incentive, there are specific requirements. Contact Vigilante Electric Cooperative and we will help guide you through this process.

RM