4230 Hatwai Road
Lewiston, ID  83501
(888) 743-1501 toll free
(208) 743-1501 local
www.clearwaterpower.com
E-mail: cpc@clearwaterpower.com
Propane: (888) 798-5280 toll free
Propane: (208) 798-5220 local

Board of Directors:
Richard E. Butler, Culdesac, Idaho
President
Alan Lansing, Lenore, Idaho
Vice-President
Kenneth Weiss, Asotin, Washington
Secretary-Treasurer
M.M. Harris, Saint Maries, Idaho
Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
Pamela Anderson, Potlatch, Idaho
Robert Callison, Kendrick, Idaho
Thomas Hutchinson, Craigmont, Idaho

General Manager
K. David Hagen

Staff
Edwin Ausman
Director of Purchasing and Warehousing
Lisa Hall
Manager of Financial and Office Services
Douglas Pfaff
Manager of Engineering
Robert Pierce
Manager of Member Services
Scott Seegmiller
Manager of Information Systems
Cynthia Tarola
Director of Accounting
Lisa Tuell
Director of Member Services
Stanley Vannoy
Manager of Operations

Business Hours:
Monday - Thursday
7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Closed Friday

JUST A DROP IN THE BUCKET?

If a faucet drips once per second, it adds up to over 2000 gallons in one year! That’s $30 in potential water heating and pumping! Fixing a leak is an easy way to save power and water.
Look up & Live!

You can't see, smell or hear electricity, but the power above can strike you down. Be alert for power lines when working outside. Identify potential hazards before starting any task.

A message brought to you in the interest of safety by your locally owned and operated electric utility.
Manager’s Report

Dear Customers—Our Friends and Our Neighbors,

On numerous occasions, we have voiced our frustration about the lack of a realistic and effective national energy policy in the U.S. The country needs a policy that charts an affordable, environmentally responsible path toward energy independence and cost stability. We are happy to report that our nation may now be on the cusp of a historic opportunity regarding its energy future.

In January, our own Senator Ron Wyden was promoted to chair of the U.S. Senate’s Energy and Natural Resources Committee—a committee with a vast and important impact on energy policy and our nation’s energy future. While we are fed up with the political grid-lock in Washington, we are encouraged by Wyden’s leadership and “grab the reins” approach. As in the past, he continues to reach across the aisle to find those energy issues on which all can agree. We believe that promoting what is good for the nation is what politics is about. Sen. Wyden walks this talk.

The first person Wyden reached out to on the committee was the ranking republican member, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. In her recently released plan, Energy 20/20: A Vision for America’s Energy Future, Sen. Murkowski states that there is a consensus in this country that it is in our national interest to make energy abundant, affordable, clean, diverse, and secure. The challenge is to align federal policy with that consensus. Murkowski’s plan includes seven components: producing more, consuming less, clean energy technology, energy delivery infrastructure, effective government, environmental responsibility, and “an energy policy that pays for itself.”

We believe this plan is doable if we have the political will to do so. We bid Chairman Sen. Wyden and Sen. Murkowski god speed in their efforts for our nation’s energy future!

Northern Wasco PUD will be hosting our state PUD association’s annual conference, and we have invited the honorable senators to address our conference. We truly hope they will join us.

Until next time, have a great day.

Dwight Langer
General Manager
Board of Trustees

President
Ralph Rise
District 2, Elmer City

Vice President
Albert Preugschat
District 8, Bridgeport

Secretary/Treasurer
Monte Joseph
District 5, Nespelem

Cindy Corpe
District 1, Coulee Dam

Martin Olbricht
District 3, Belvedere

Dorothy Palmer
District 4, Nespelem

Patrick Morin Jr.
District 6, Nespelem

Gilbert Desautel Jr.
District 7, Disautel

Ricard Tupling
District 9, Okanogan

Board meetings are the fourth Tuesday of every month.

For after-hours emergencies, call 634-4571 to page an on-duty employee.

2013 Youth Energy Seminar Entry Form

Yes, I would like to be an NVEC youth representative and have the opportunity to attend the Nevada Rural Electric Association’s Youth Energy Seminar at the Boreal Ski Resort, on July 8-12, 2013.

Date: _______________________ NVEC Account Number: ___________________

Name: ____________________________________ Age: _______________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

City: ____________________________________ State: ______ Zip: ____________

Phone: __________________________________ Email: _______________________

Parents’ or Legal Guardians’ Name(s): ____________________________________________

Name of School: __________________________________________________________________

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior

I certify that this information is true to the best of my knowledge:

Your Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Parent or Guardian Signature: ______________________________________________________

All applications must be returned to NVEC by Friday, May 31st

Mail (or drop off) the completed entry form to:

Nespelem Valley Electric Co-op, Inc.
PO Box 31 / 1009 F Street
Nespelem, WA 99155
Dear CPI Members:

CPI’s pole inspectors are beginning to swing into action. Our annual pole maintenance program helps ensure CPI’s electric distribution system is safe and reliable.

CPI has budgeted for a number of distribution and transmission pole replacements this year, projecting as many as 30 transmission poles and 110 distribution poles will have decay or damage.

CPI has a big service area, covering 3,500 square miles in parts of six counties. We maintain more than 44,000 poles and 2,100 miles of overhead distribution line, as well as 900 miles of underground line.

The bulk of our pole inspections this year will occur along the inland coastal area, from just south of Lincoln City to Waldport. Contract employees from National Wood Treating will spend most of this year inspecting and treating more than 4,000 poles.

The process involves drilling a small hole into the base of the pole to detect any rot or decay. The employees also climb the pole to detect any decay higher up. Inspected poles are then treated to extend their serviceable life or they are designated to be replaced.

This is a cost-effective way for us to maximize the value of our distribution system assets, and to take care of problem poles before they become a safety hazard.

CPI customers might notice someone looking at utility poles in their area. National Wood Treating employees will be in marked vehicles and carry identification. Please contact CPI at (541) 929-3124 to report any concerns of suspicious activity.

Another Year of Giving Begins

CPI’s Charitable Trust committee had its first meeting of the year last month to review applications and decide on funding levels for nonprofit organizations in our service area. The committee gave $5,300 to the following organizations:

- **Albany Helping Hands Homeless Shelter**, for garden tools for growing fresh produce.
- **Alsea Gleaners**, for food purchases.
- **American Youth Soccer Organization**, to purchase materials for an irrigation system.
- **Bright Horizons Therapeutic Riding Center**, to replace worn safety equipment.
- **Community Outreach**, for food for children’s day care.
- **Corvallis Parks and Recreation Youth Corps**, to make emergency disaster kits.
- **Friends of the Family**, to buy books and toys for children’s play therapy program.
- **Linn County Grange Women**, to buy batting for quilts given to veterans’ homes.
- **Linus Pauling Health Youth Program**, for healthy-cooking scholarships for low-income children.
- **Mary’s River Gleaners**, for food supplies.
- **Pedee Women’s Club Soldier Fund**, for making supply boxes sent to soldiers.
- **Senior Dog Rescue**, for veterinary care for rescued senior dogs.
- **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program**, for food supplies.

Last year the Charitable Trust gave $14,910 to 18 nonprofits, thanks to CPI members and employees who give to the trust through Operation Round Up.

The next two meetings will be in August and November.

To learn more about the trust or to join this tremendous program, please call (541) 929-8520 or write info@cpi.coop.

Roman Gillen
President/CEO
Co-op Leaders Advocate For Members

This spring, nearly 60 Oregon electric co-op leaders traveled to the state Capitol to advocate on behalf of more than 200,000 members of Oregon’s electric co-ops.

From all reports, their voices were heard. They also were told repeatedly by legislators that the best advocates are not the pin-striped suit-wearing lobbyists who roam the halls of Salem, but folks from communities across the state.

Electric co-op leaders visited both Republicans and Democrats and discussed several proposals we are closely watching. The legislature is debating energy legislation to encourage customer-owned renewable generation, such as solar or wind power. While electric co-ops work closely with consumers on net metering of renewable generation, we remain concerned new mandates could shift costs to low-income consumers.

Your electric co-op leaders urged legislators to keep local control of these programs instead of a one-size-fits-all mandate that may not work well in your community.

But more than anything, your co-op leaders discussed the importance of affordable and reliable power, reminding legislators the economic recovery has yet to find every part of Oregon.

About two months are left in the legislative session. We will continue to keep a bird’s-eye view on the Capitol until the final gavel comes down.

We may ask for your help, and hope we can count on your support to help keep your electricity affordable and reliable.

Provided by the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association for its Power of Community members. To learn more or sign up, go to www.oreca.org/power-of-community.
Manager’s Message

Power Rate Increase

Last November, Bonneville Power Administration released its preliminary record of decision on the wholesale power and transmission rates for the fiscal years 2014 and 2015, beginning October 1, 2013.

In this release, BPA announced an average increase of 9.6 percent for power services and a 13 percent increase for transmission. These numbers are averages for the region’s utilities, and each utility’s rate impact will differ based on its load. In Wasco Electric’s case, the increases are projected at 7.1 percent for power and 7.5 percent for transmission.

While the final decision on the region’s rates will not be released until late July, it is anticipated they will not differ much from the preliminary announcement. Therefore, we continue to evaluate our future rate design based on these preliminary figures.

Wasco Electric management is conducting a revenue requirements and cost of service study to determine what our rates will need to be to cover the additional cost of power. Your board of directors and staff are committed to doing all we can to lessen the impact of rates to members and still provide reliable service today and into the future.

Wasco Electric is committed to helping its members control costs through energy efficiency and conservation, which are among the lowest-cost resources for your cooperative. Simple actions, such as lowering your thermostat in the winter and raising it in the summer, can result in big savings on your power bill.

We continue to offer free home weatherization audits and rebates for insulation and window upgrades. We offer rebates for replacing some of your older appliances, and for upgrading to an energy-efficient heat pump system. We also offer energy-saving rebates for lighting upgrades in commercial businesses and several saving opportunities for our irrigated-agriculture sector.

Learn more about your energy-saving opportunities by calling our member services representative at (541) 296-2740 or visiting Together We Save at www.wascoelectric.com. Click on the quick link on the upper right side of the main page.

Member Survey

All Wasco Electric members were mailed a member survey on April 29. I encourage you to respond to this survey, as it will provide valuable feedback on areas we need to focus on in our continued effort to best serve you.

There are two ways for you to provide your responses to the survey. You may mail it back as instructed on the survey, or go to www.wascoelectric.com and click on the survey link on our front page.

Completed surveys are due to the office by Friday, May 31 to be eligible for the prize drawing. We will share the survey results with you in upcoming editions of Ruralite.

As always, if you have any questions about your cooperative, please feel free to call or stop by the office.

Jeff Davis, General Manager
Dear Member,

This spring, nearly 60 Oregon electric cooperative leaders traveled to the state Capitol to advocate on behalf of more than 200,000 members of Oregon’s electric co-ops. Attending from your Cooperative were Larry Shipley, Shirley Cairns, Todd Munsey, and yours truly.

From all reports, our voices were heard. We were also told repeatedly by legislators that the best advocates are not the pin-striped suit-wearing lobbyists who roam the halls of Salem, but folks from communities across the state.

Our group of electric co-op leaders visited both Republicans and Democrats and discussed several proposals we are closely watching. The legislature is debating energy legislation to encourage customer-owned renewable generation, such as solar or wind power. While electric co-ops work closely with consumers on net metering of renewable generation, we remain concerned new mandates could shift costs to low-income and other consumers in general.

Your electric co-op leaders urged legislators to keep local control of these programs instead of a one-size-fits-all mandate that may not work well in your community.

But more than anything, your co-op leaders discussed the importance of affordable and reliable power, reminding legislators the economic recovery has yet to find every part of Oregon.

About two months are left in the legislative session. We will continue to keep a bird’s-eye view on the Capitol until the final gavel comes down. We may ask for your help, and hope we can count on your support to keep your electricity affordable and reliable.

Provided by the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association for its Power of Community members. To learn more or sign up, go to www.oreca.org/power-of-community.

Best Regards,

Dave Sabala
General Manager
Columbia Power Co-op

P.O. Box 97
Monument, OR 97864
(541) 934-2311
Toll free (888) 203-7638

DIRECTORS
President Paul Walton
Vice President Dave Humphreys
Sec./Treasurer Tom Campbell
Dan Cannon
Cheryl Jenison
LaReta Jones
Adam Temple

MANAGER
Troy Cox

The board of directors meets the second Monday of each month.

POWER OUTAGE NUMBERS
Co-op office .......... 934-2311
Randy Sreek ........ 934-2743
Gary Warner ........ 934-2961
Troy Cox .......... 934-2155
Brian Woodell ...... 934-2260
Josh Hamilton ...... 934-2133
Mike Osborne ...... 934-2067
Joe Ringering ...... 934-2198

You can't see, smell or hear electricity, but the power above can strike you down. Be alert for power lines when working outside. Identify potential hazards before starting any task.

A message brought to you in the interest of safety by your locally owned and operated electric utility
You Are More Than Co-op Members, You Are Community Supporters

I hope you will take a few moments to read the report on pages 4 and 5, recapping our recent Central Electric Annual Meeting. It was one of the most gratifying gatherings of its type that I can remember. The big reason: the sense of community that filled the room at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds.

Of course we reported on the business of the co-op—it is the primary purpose of this meeting required by the CEC bylaws—but it also was an opportunity to share with membership how CEC supports its communities. Hearing our members’ endorsement of our actions made our day.

The audience learned about:

- A $10,000 donation to the Heroes Foundation/Honor Flight Project that each year sends World War II veterans to the nation’s capitol to receive long overdue acknowledgement.
- Janece Justice, this year’s winner of the Central Oregon Community College scholarship from CEC. Janece is a nontraditional student who overcame illness and economic hardship to return to college 37 years after high school and earn her associate degree in business this spring.
- Central Electric’s receipt of the United Way of Deschutes County’s Special Achievement Award for its $15,000 donation, comprised equally of employee contributions and matches by CEC’s membership and CoBank, a CEC business partner.
- CEC employees rolling up their sleeves for such events as Days of Caring and the Redmond Flag Committee’s fair parade posting.

Time didn’t allow for more, but other recent community contributions on behalf of CEC’s members include donations to the Sisters Kiwanis Club’s new food bank project; the Boys and Girls Club; Oregon Youth Challenge; the American Cancer Society; and dozens of small organizations serving youth and seniors.

Concern for Community is one of the seven cooperative principles, and CEC’s members have a right to be proud of how it is upheld by CEC. This principle states support is essential to the sustainable development of the cities and towns where we live. All of us can take great pride in what we do as a cooperative to make our communities stronger.

Sincerely,

Dave Markham
President and CEO
Some people say if it's too good to be true, it's too good to be true. I can assure you that is definitely not the case with the free duct testing and sealing program currently being offered by your electric cooperative.

ES Contracting, a company in West Linn, Oregon, approached our energy conservation specialist about two months ago with a proposal to test and seal duct work on manufactured homes in our service area. The cold temperatures this winter have caused electric bills to be higher than a lot of members can remember. And manufactured homes tend to be the worse because they have some of the leakiest duct systems built. Quite often, higher energy bills are the result of an old, inefficient duct system losing the heated air as it moves through the house. By the time the air gets to that favorite chair you sit in to read your book, it feels cold. The natural tendency is to turn up the thermostat. By doing proper repairs and decreasing the energy consumption, the benefits of doing a duct-sealing program become twofold. We save energy and the member saves money on their electric bill.

You might wonder how we can offer this “free” service to members. As you are probably aware, Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative Inc. offers rebates for energy conservation measures installed according to Bonneville Power Administration specifications. One of BPA’s approved programs is a $400 incentive available to any CCEC member having their duct system tested and sealed to prevent leakage and conserve energy. So members could hire a contractor who is Performance Tested Comfort Systems certified, which is a BPA requirement. Or, they could have the work done through a company like ES Contracting and let their PTCS-certified employees do all the legwork.

Now ES Contracting employees are going door-to-door to promote the program. With the member’s approval, the work is done. ES Contracting sends the necessary paperwork to CCEC. We submit it to BPA and, when we receive the rebate from BPA, we send it to ES Contracting. The member doesn’t have to worry about getting an approved contractor and they can enjoy a warmer, more energy-efficient home.

The members who have had their duct system tested and sealed by ES Contracting are raving about the contractor and the work. As one member said, the “job was completed with no mess or inconvenience” and they gave “kudos to all involved for providing this service and saving energy.”

We will continue to offer this program as long as BPA funds are available. Work began in the Brookings area; however, ES Contracting expects to make the same door-to-door offer to members living in manufactured homes in the Gold Beach, Port Orford and Coquille areas. As always, we welcome your feedback on this and other programs and services offered by your electric cooperative.

Roger Meader
General Manager
Three Items of Note

May is National Safety Month and there are articles inside this issue of Ruralite that are important to read regarding this ever important topic. Safety is an essential practice at WOEC as we work around highly dangerous electrical currents. Each month our staff has safety training and afterwards holds a monthly safety committee meeting to discuss ways to make our work and work environment safer, and making sure our equipment is safe. In our line of work it really is the difference between life and death, so we take it very seriously. We want to make sure our members take safety around electricity seriously as well. Watch for overhead lines, call before you dig, and never touch downed power lines are the main three things to remember.

Two of our neighboring utilities have experienced a telephone scam targeting their customers. They receive a telephone call threatening to cut off their power if an alleged past-due bill isn't paid immediately. The customers are directed to purchase a pre-paid credit card and provide the number or pay via credit card. The caller may identify themselves as representing the utility. If you receive such a call, the safest thing to do is to hang up and call our office immediately at 503-429-3021 and inquire about your account and report the incident. To help the police to catch these telephone scammers we encourage you to; note the number on the caller ID, write it down and the phone number you are asked to call with the payment information on the pre-paid credit card, and any other information the caller provides.

WOEC notifies its members with written notification and a follow up automated phone call that asks the member to call the WOEC office if they are past due, but never asks for a pre-paid credit card to be purchased. We are in the process of setting up the ability to make payments online and will alert our membership when the system is up and running. If a member is having difficulty paying their bill, WOEC urges them to contact our office to arrange a payment plan or connect them with energy assistance.

In May, there will be a legal notice placed in all the local newspapers for the next four months alerting those who were members of the electric co-op from 1944 through 1969 that there are unclaimed capital credits they may qualify to receive. To know if your name is on the list, members during that timeframe may go to our website, come into our office in Vernonia to view the list, obtain a list printed in the St. Helens Chronicle, or call our office at 503-429-3021. These unclaimed credits are ones we have not been able to establish a current address for and want to be able to locate these members to receive their capital credits.

W. Marc Farmer, General Manager
Be Serious About Electrical Safety

Dear Members,

May is National Electric Safety Month. I urge you to take some time to look around your home, office and work areas for electrical hazards.

If you are working with irrigation pipe or farm equipment, take extra care in locating electric wires overhead to avoid electrical contact in the areas where you plan to work.

Before digging for a project, call the nationwide 811 hotline to have underground utility lines located and marked to ensure there are no underground utilities where you plan to dig.

If your children like to fly kites or climb trees, check for electric wires overhead. Even trees and kite strings can conduct electricity.

Don’t risk incurring an electrical contact. If you spot an electrical hazard around your home or office, get it fixed.

If a contact, accident or hazard occurs involving our power lines, do not attempt to handle the situation yourself. Contact our office so we can send our crew to take care of the problem.

Don’t be Surprised When You Dig!

Before picking up a shovel, pick up the telephone. Electric, water, sewer, natural gas, telephone and cable television lines often are buried underground. One wrong move can cause you and your neighbors to be cut off from vital services—or cause death or injury to you from an electric shock or an explosion.

At least two business days before you plan to dig, call the national 811 number. Affected utility companies will come out and use color-coded paint to mark the locations of underground utilities. Calling ahead not only is common sense. In California, it is the law!

Safety Demonstrations

SVE provides electric safety demonstrations for school classes, clubs, service groups, first responders and any other interested party. Please contact us to schedule a demonstration.

Jim Hays, General Manager
Dear Member:

With Spring just around the corner, the weather is beginning to warm. As the cold temperatures wane and the trees, shrubs and flowers begin to bloom, we begin making plans for the outdoor projects we put on our to-do list over the winter - those in the garage, around the house and in the yard.

While you're eager to get an early start, please don't let your enthusiasm and impatience overshadow basic safety and common sense. Plan your work and then, work your plan.

For indoor projects that involves wiring and electrical fixtures, make sure you turn the power off at the breaker panel to avoid getting shocked. If you're digging holes for new fence posts or planting trees or shrubs, ask yourself where possible underground wires might be. It is very important that you do not nick or cut them with a shovel or pick.

If you are unsure about the location of underground wires, please take a minute and call 811, the Oregon Underground Notification Center. The process is quick and easy. When you call 811, you are connected to the One Call Center closest to your area. The call center takes your information and notifies Lane Electric of your request. A qualified professional is dispatched from the co-op to locate and mark the location of underground power line before you dig and find them. In order to ensure that your job stays on schedule, please call a few days before you're ready, to allow for processing. Remember, knowing what's below ground will protect you, your family and your neighbors.

As well, be aware of any overhead power lines in your area. Look up before moving irrigation pipes, using a ladder, installing a new antenna or flag pole, or moving large trucks, trailers or heavy equipment. As you make your plan, remember, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. It just might save your life.

Please take the proper precautions as you begin your springtime chores. You'll be glad you did.

Rick Crinklaw
General Manager
Manager’s Report

Dear Members,

Last month, I reported on the lobbying efforts in which Blachly-Lane and the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association were involved. As an update, three of the four net metering and community solar project bills have failed to leave committee for a vote and are likely done for this session. Blachly-Lane is certainly not opposed to solar generation, but these bills contained provisions that were potentially costly to our members or allowed unsafe conditions to exist for Blachly’s line workers. There is still one Senate Bill (SB 562) up for consideration that we actively oppose.

A bill we support that would allow electric cooperatives to count their voluntary green energy programs toward their renewable portfolio standard has failed to move forward. We will continue to support this bill and hope it will have more success in upcoming sessions.

Annual Audit/New Financial Services Manager

The accounting firm Moss Adams audited Blachly-Lane’s 2012 financial statements and provided an unmodified opinion, meaning the statements fairly represent the financial condition of the cooperative with no modifications. This is a change in verbiage from previous audits due to new accounting standards. In the past, the term “unqualified opinion” was used, which had the same meaning. In lay terms, we refer to this as a clean audit.

Working with the auditors to ensure they had access to all of the information they needed was a challenge this year, as we had some key employee changes affecting the finance department during this critical period. Fortunately, we are now back to capacity in that area with the hiring of Carole Phillips as our new manager of financial services. Carole was previously the controller at Flathead Electric Cooperative in Kalispell, Montana. She will be featured in an employee interview in next month’s Ruralite.

A copy of the 2012 Annual Report, which includes a summary of the financial report, is included in this month’s Ruralite.

Annual Meeting Reminder

I hope you can attend Blachly-Lane’s Annual Members’ Meeting Saturday, May 4 at Elmira High School. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. with reports from the board chairman, general manager and Moss Adams, the cooperative’s auditor, and election of board members for districts No. 1 and No. 3.

Due to budget constraints, we are serving coffee and cookies and we will have registration gifts purchased for previous meetings. The meeting will likely be much shorter than in past years, but your attendance is encouraged so you can actively participate in your electric cooperative.

I hope to see you there!

Joe Jarvis, General Manager
With the slowdown in the economy during the past several years, we have seen a decline in new electrical service installations for new customers throughout Klickitat County. As a result, our crews have had the opportunity to devote more time on maintaining our systems, and we are using fewer contractors.

This results in reduced system-improvement costs, while ensuring we are making improvements that are necessary to maintain your reliability.

Transmission system improvements planned for 2013 include rebuilding 2 miles of 69-kilovolt transmission lines that feed east from Goldendale toward the Bickleton area, rebuilding a portion of the Wishram transmission system that has been susceptible to snow and ice storm damage, and the continuation of transmission system pole replacements.

We also plan to improve the reliability of our distribution system. We are working with the Port of Klickitat on a plan to build a new feeder from our substation in Dallesport to the Murdock area. This essentially will isolate the Murdock area from the main Dallesport circuit.

There are further plans to replace some aging underground line in the White Salmon area, in conjunction with a planned project done by the City of White Salmon. We also will have a June or July nighttime outage at the Bingen Substation to do critical maintenance and testing. We anticipate this outage to be no more than eight to 10 hours.

In 2012, we started a long-range project that will sectionalize Goldendale with separate feeders from the EE Clouse Substation. By dividing the city into sections, we can minimize the effects of some outages, and have the ability to provide power from other sources.

Our engineering department is also investigating the possibility of sectionalizing Bingen and White Salmon so outages will not affect an entire city. This work is tentatively planned for 2014.

There are also aggressive plans to continue replacing aged conductors in several areas during the next several years.

Water and wastewater system improvements include replacing aging and leaking steel pipe in Lyle, drilling a new well and applying for additional water rights in Lyle, drilling a new well in Roosevelt, and installing a new water main from that well.

We also plan to start replacing and upgrading the Human Machine Interface systems at both our Dallesport and Lyle wastewater facilities, and the operating system for the Dallesport lift stations. These systems are critical to the monitoring and operational requirements for the plants.

As Ron Ihrig discussed last month, we have systems and processes to assist us in identifying where reliability needs to be addressed. This analysis and the resulting system improvements will ensure we continue to provide safe and reliable service to all of our customers.

With the cooperative work and planning of all the departments within the PUD, we strive to not only provide safe and reliable service, but to use as many PUD resources as we can to keep our costs at a minimum to achieve these goals that benefit our customers.
The Importance of Northwest Hydropower

It's annual meeting time. I hope many of you are able to attend the meeting Saturday, May 4, at Sagle Elementary School. Registration starts at 8:30 a.m., and the meeting kicks off at 10 a.m. I look forward to seeing many of you again, and hope to meet some new people as well.

This spring, residents of the Northwest are presented with something that has been a part of our way of life for more than 75 years, yet is often overlooked: how hydropower dams and the incredible power of the Northwest's rivers benefit people in their daily lives. This story of hydropower and river commerce is now running on television and in print advertising to remind us all of the importance of hydropower.

The public education effort, called CleanHydro, is coordinated by Northwest RiverPartners. Other regional and national organizations with a stake in hydropower and river commerce also are supporting the effort to educate the public about these resources and their benefits. With the changing energy industry, hydropower has been overlooked in recent years. There has been a huge growth in other renewable sources of energy, particularly wind and solar. These other energy resources have been so prominent in the media it has led to a perception that they are the only renewable energy sources out there.

Hydropower has quietly and steadily done its job for decades: producing clean, reliable, low-cost power that has served as the foundation for the Northwest's economy, environmental benefits and quality of life. The purpose of the CleanHydro campaign is to educate citizens about the tremendous benefits our dams and rivers bring to the Northwest. Nearly everything we depend on requires the immense power of electricity. In the Northwest, it is important to remember hydropower provides 90 percent of our renewable energy and it keeps 100 percent of our air clean. Informing our friends and neighbors about the value of our dams and rivers helps people appreciate these natural resources.

Keep your eyes and ears open for this valuable information in the media, and please remind your friends and neighbors about the importance of hydropower. Without it, our way of life here in the Northwest would be very different.

Cheers!

—Annie Terracciano
General Manager
The Years of Big Challenges

This is the third in a series on the history of Idaho County Light & Power Cooperative, which celebrates its 75th year in business this year.

Dear Members,

In any life that spans 75 years, one can look back and point out significant events that have shaped the course of that life’s history. Your cooperative has certainly lived through interesting times, which have challenged our existence and shaped our growth. Let’s take a brief stroll through history and look at a few of those significant events.

The next most important accomplishment for our young cooperative after securing a Rural Electrification Administration loan was to become a power customer of the Bonneville Power Administration. The BPA was created by the Bonneville Project Act of 1937 to build transmission lines and market power from the Bonneville and the Grand Coulee dams, with the stated purpose “to give preference and priority at all times to public bodies and cooperatives.”

While our original incorporators had their eye on federal power from the start, it would not be available to us for at least four more years. So, until the cooperative’s application was approved and a contract signed for power purchases in June 1942, we were a wholesale customer of the Washington Water Power Co. (now Avista). Notably, while we have purchased power from BPA since then, we continue to receive that power over Avista’s transmission lines.

A third big issue has been the cooperative’s struggle to establish and maintain service territory. Early on, the struggle was against a slowly awakening economy, and from the mid-1940s even into the mid-1950s, it was exacerbated by shortages of materials due to World War II. However, the interesting part of this story is the battle from the beginning that will always go on as long as there is healthy competition between the investor-owned and cooperative utilities serving in proximity.

This cooperative has had its successes as well as losses. In one instance, the government looked at establishing a radar station on Cottonwood Butte. The co-op’s board and manager sprang into action and sent a delegation to Portland to lobby to bring this service to Idaho County Light & Power. Success was realized when the service was connected in September 1957. Of course, the radar base was eventually closed. But to show you the importance of this win, the service was transferred to the Job Corps and finally to the state of Idaho which—as we now know—turned the compound into the North Idaho Correctional Institute. Today, the NICI is our largest single load, representing approximately 8 percent of our sales.

There are more stories I would like to tell, but I see I am running out of room. I will follow up next month with the exciting conclusion to the “territorial wars.”

—Thanks for listening, Jake Eimers, Manager
On April 18th, your cooperative held its 75th Annual Meeting at the Walla Walla County Fairgrounds. Because of our publishing deadline, we’re only able to provide a brief recap in this issue of Ruralite, but promise more thorough coverage in the June Ruralite.

First, the Board of Directors election results: in District 1 Bill Stonecipher is the winner, District 2 will continue be represented by Eric Johnson and in District 3, Tim Pettyjohn is your Board representative. I provided the winners under the district numbers that they ran on in the ballot that you voted but, if you voted you’ll remember that there was also a Bylaw amendment proposed to consolidate from 9 districts to 3 districts. I am pleased to report that the amendment passed. Again, more details on this change in June but, we expect this will be a positive change.

Next, scholarships, every year we are pleased with the number and quality of applications that we receive for our scholarships. This year was no exception. Samantha Case was awarded the Clark A. Brewington memorial scholarship in the amount of $1,500. Alex Naylor and Malia Frame both received $1,000 scholarships. Also this year we awarded three lineman school scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each to Nathan Roughton, Wyatt Jenkins and Nathan Deal. Congratulations to all of our scholarship winners, we are proud of what you have accomplished and look forward to what you will accomplish in the future.

Finally, I don’t think we can say this enough; this is your electric cooperative. You are the member-owners, we function best when you participate and this year saw all time record high voting, thank you for voting and being part the cooperative.

Until next time!

Les Teel, CEO
Manager’s Message

Dear Member,

As a member of Midstate Electric Cooperative, you are much more than a customer. You are an owner. Being a member-owner provides many great benefits to you and your family.

MEC’s annual meeting, a special day just for MEC members, is coming up soon. The meeting will be Saturday, May 18, at La Pine Middle School. The meeting begins at 10:30 a.m. with a health fair, displays, demonstrations and a barbecue lunch. The business meeting begins at 12:30 p.m.

Our annual meeting is a great opportunity to get together with friends and neighbors to listen to and discuss your co-op. It is a chance for us to provide information about your benefits, and to tell you what we are doing to keep your electric rates affordable and service reliable.

One of our pressing issues is the increasing regulatory pressure by state and federal policymakers that threatens affordable rates. With the Oregon Legislature back in session, your board of directors and I are carefully following comments and actions of proposed bills regarding energy policy. In March, we visited our legislators in Salem to voice our concerns about laws that could affect the co-op.

One important energy theme surfacing in this year’s legislative session relates to changes to the state’s net-metering law. The current net-metering law allows our members to install small-scale renewable generation—such as solar—at their residence. The energy their system produces in excess of their needs is generated back into MEC’s system. We purchase these kilowatt-hours from our members at wholesale rates.

MEC has offered this program for many years. To date, MEC has 21 net-metering accounts connected to our system.

Several net-metering proposals recently introduced threaten to undo local control and potentially shift costs to the majority of consumers who do not have net-metered facilities for their homes or businesses. Some proposals dictate the rate electric co-ops would have to pay net-metered consumers, and greatly increase the size and the type of projects the co-op would have to net meter.

As energy legislation is debated in the Oregon Legislature, we urge lawmakers to be cautious when addressing net metering. What has worked so well with customer-owned generation for electric co-ops is that the governing policies are developed locally with the members who own the co-op.

Our message to our legislators is to preserve local control of your co-op to keep our rates affordable and our service reliable.

This topic and other important information will be discussed at our annual meeting. I look forward to meeting and talking with many of you. I hope to see you there.

Dave Schneider
General Manager
Manager’s Message

Dear Members,

I am excited to announce that work to renovate and expand the HREC offices will be underway about the time you receive this issue of Ruralite.

Some of you may have already noticed we have set up temporary mobile structures to house the staff during the four to five months of demolition and construction work. Business operations will be conducted from these temporary offices.

Those who visit the office in person are welcome to continue doing so. However, access will be from Graves Road, which is just east of the current entrance to the facility. Turn south on Graves Road then west along the south side of the Willard Johnson Substation. Parking will be in the graveled area in proximity to the northeast corner of the fenced area. See the map below.

Your patience during this period of change is greatly appreciated!

John Gerstenberger, Manager

---

**DIRECTORS**
President Butch Gehrig
Vice President Patrick Moore
Secretary Bernie Wells
Treasurer Roger Nelson
Gary Bloom
Opal DeBoard
Doug Mahurin
John McGhee
Mike Udelius

**MANAGER**
John Gerstenberger

---

*Serving rural Hood River County since 1945*

---

Imagery ©2013 DigitalGlobe, State of Oregon, USDA Farm Service Agency; Map data ©2013 Google
You can’t see, smell or hear electricity, but the power above can strike you down. Be alert for power lines when working outside. Identify potential hazards before starting any task.

A message brought to you in the interest of safety by your locally owned and operated electric utility.
Manager’s Report

Electric Safety is a Priority

One of the core principles of Salmon River Electric Cooperative’s mission statement is that we will provide safe energy or electricity. We take safety seriously and have incorporated a culture of safety into our entire organization. The culture starts with our board of directors and trickles down to every employee at SREC. Our co-op is recognized nationally and accredited for its safety culture and for adhering to safety practices.

One area we concentrate on is the safety of our employees. We think we do pretty well in this area and our excellent safety record is evidence of this. We make sure employees are trained and have the proper tools, equipment and personal protective equipment to work safely. We also make sure employees abide by stringent safety rules and regulations aimed at protecting them, our electric delivery system and the public.

Another area of concentration is the safety of the power delivery system. This includes making sure power poles, wires, substations and other power apparatus are built and maintained so they are safe for employees who work on them and for the public exposed to them. We adhere to stringent regulations that dictate how this is to occur.

We believe we can improve on educating the public with regards to safety around electricity. We are proud of the safety education we have been able to offer to the young people of our communities, such as the Natural Resource Awareness Day at Challis Elementary School each year. We have also had the opportunity to train many emergency responders about electrical hazards.

I dedicate one back page of Ruralite magazine each year to educating the SREC membership about electrical hazards. You might recall I have written about the dangers of lifting long conductive objects such as antennas and sprinkler pipes near overhead power lines. I have written about the dangers of trees near overhead power lines, and I have discouraged the planting of new trees under power lines. I also have written to discourage people from placing haystacks under overhead power lines.

Safety around buried power lines has been much publicized lately. Not only have I warned about these hazards in Ruralite, but just last month Idaho Gov. Butch Otter thought it important enough that he issued a proclamation declaring April 2013 to be “Safe Digging Month.” The governor emphasized calling the National 811 Call-Before-You-Dig number in advance of a digging project.

One way we can better teach the public about electric safety is by having your organization invite SREC to present an electric safety demonstration. This demonstration usually can be done in an hour’s time, with time to spare to answer safety questions you have always wondered about. We will consider other ways to get the “safety around electricity” message out. Our desire is that the electric safety culture will permeate our entire service territory and beyond.

—Ken Dizes, Manager
Ever wonder who owns your power company? The answer is easy—look in the mirror. You and the other folks who receive electricity from United Electric are the member/owners. It doesn’t mean you can drive to a substation and take home a transformer. But it does mean the assets of the co-op are owned collectively by the entire membership, which includes you.

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit, they operate at cost—meaning they collect enough revenue to maintain and expand infrastructure to provide reliable electric service to the local membership, but they don’t generate profits for shareholders who may be, well, anywhere in the world. Operation at cost is part of the cooperative difference.

Have I mentioned there is a perk to being a member/owner of a not-for-profit electric co-op like United Electric? You get money back!

At the end of each year, any funds left over after the bills are paid and infrastructure is maintained and built goes into a capital credit account with your name on it. The amount that goes into your account depends on the amount of electricity you used. Then, when the board of directors determines United Electric is in good financial shape, the capital credit in your account is given back to you.

This year, the board of directors authorized $216,283 of capital credits from 1982 to be returned to member/owners. If you were a member of Rural Electric Company or Unity Light & Power in 1982, you will receive a check in the mail.

1982 may seem like a long time ago. But those funds have helped keep rates low and have reduced the amount of money the co-op needed to borrow to maintain and expand a reliable electric distribution system.

The check is in the mail. That is the cooperative difference.

Cordially,

Jo Elg
General Manager
Copper Valley Electric Association
2013 Director Election Results

At the 2013 Annual Meeting of Members, Board of Director election results were announced. The Copper Basin District re-elected Fred Williams and elected Michael Johnson, each to a three-year term. The Valdez District re-elected Dan Stowe to a three-year term.

The Credentials and Election Committees in both districts reported voting results for the director elections as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copper Basin</th>
<th>Valdez</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballots Received</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballots Counted</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Williams</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Johnson</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl Crosman</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel Jindra</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Clark</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Swanson</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CVEA welcomes new and returning directors and appreciates the participation of all director candidates in the election.
Dear Customers:

A decades-long treaty between the United States and Canada will soon be up for renewal. The Columbia River Treaty is an agreement between Canada and the United States guiding the development and operation of some water resources in the Columbia River Basin for flood control and power needs.

The treaty obligates the United States to send an estimated $250 to $350 million annually in power benefits to Canada (called the Canadian Entitlement). This cost is paid by electricity ratepayers in the Northwest who receive power from the Bonneville Power Administration and the Mid-Columbia PUDs and has a clear impact on power rates in the Northwest.

The treaty was implemented in 1964, and either country may terminate most treaty provisions on or after September 16, 2024, by providing 10-year’s advance notice. Some provisions terminate on that date without any action being taken.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and BPA have kicked off a series of public meetings to gather public input about the treaty’s future. Studies of the treaty’s costs and benefits are underway so that a recommendation can be made to the U.S. State Department regarding notice of termination by late 2013.

Much has changed in the river system since the treaty was implemented in the 1960s. Analysis by federal agencies indicate the United States does not receive much of the reciprocal benefit originally anticipated by this arrangement.

While Canada continues to receive about 450 average megawatts of power, the United States only sees benefit of 40 to 50 average megawatts. In addition, much of the flood control allowance received from Canada expires in 2024, even if the treaty continues. Meanwhile the United States would remain obligated to pay the Canadian Entitlement unless the treaty is terminated or renegotiated.

We are concerned about the lack of balance in the current treaty implementation and its impact on power rates. Tillamook PUD is involved through our trade associations in the Columbia River Treaty Power Group, and will work closely with federal, state and tribal governments to seek common ground on these important issues.

Sincerely,
Raymon D. Sieler
Dirty filters are huge energy wasters. Become an energy saver. Change your furnace filter each month. And remember to clean your lint screen after each use.

Often, saving energy doesn’t require a trip to the hardware store or expensive retrofits to your home. Many savings are at your fingertips by simply changing your behaviors. Start by turning off lights and TVs when you don’t need them.

Learn more about how you have the power to use less with Golden Valley Electric’s Home$ense Energy Audit. The audit costs $39.95 – a great value considering you’ll receive energy-saving products worth $150 to $200.

Schedule your Home$ense Audit and discover your power to use less today. Call (907) 458-4555 or email homesense@gvea.com.

Visit gvea.com/save for more energy-saving tips.
Dear Members:

We would like to share that it looks like PSREC will be able to avoid a rate increase in 2013.

We had previously announced a modest increase for this year, but we believe we can hold off due to prudent actions.

First, we were able to carry some funds from 2012 into 2013 for our cost of power. Second, we made changes to our power portfolio, including the High Sierra Cogeneration project, which allowed us to avoid impacts from California’s greenhouse gas law.

Northern California had a wet December, but the driest January, February and March on record since 1850. Taking that into account, we are still able to avoid a rate increase.

There is one important caveat to this: If the federal government changes its anticipated hydropower deliveries to its customers in a significant fashion, we may be required to revisit rates later in the year.

Your board of directors is very sensitive to rates. The entire organization is dedicated to reducing costs and debts, while still improving our overall electric grid to maintain a reliable system.

Fiber Optic System

The Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications Fiber Optic Project is a mid-mile, grant-funded project designed to bring a fiber optic line to our area and improve the telecommunications capacity of our region. The line will also connect PSREC’s electric substations, giving us more control and improved reliability.

We expect to begin testing the system in the very near future. Progress is happening so fast that any information at pretime will be out of date, so please look up the latest information at www.plumassierratelecom.com.

We get questions on the purpose of the line. The Stimulus Fund grant is designed to bring abundant, cost-effective connectivity to our region. The grant paid for direct connections to critical anchor institutions and service providers, such as local incumbent phone carriers, cable providers, cell phone carriers and Internet service providers.

In the earliest stages, we will connect commercial customers and those commercial hook-ups will start the process of building the system further out. The benefit to most residential customers, at first, will be in greatly expanded capacity on the networks of local incumbent carriers and service providers.

We are also working on hot spots in different communities where residential customers can use the fiber connection on a regular basis. The grant did not pay to bring fiber to the home. But we are working with multiple partners to improve local broadband, and we are also working on projects for the future to expand the system.

Please contact us for more information. We are glad to make presentations to home-owner groups and communities on the system and what it means to the region.

New Logo

I would like to thank our Member Services Department for their work on the new logo. We were asked if the new logo cost us anything. I am happy to report that the new logo was developed internally at no cost to the members. We are only changing to the new logo as we run out of envelopes, letterhead, etc., so there is no impact on our costs.

Please let me know if you have further questions, (800) 555-2207 ext. 6076, or email me at bmarshall@psrec.coop.

Sincerely,

Bob Marshall
General Manager
NV-40

MT. WHEELER POWER

P.O. Box 151000
1600 Great Basin Blvd.
Ely, NV 89315

(775) 289-8981
(800) 97-POWER
info@mwpower.net

Emergency Contacts
Ely Office
(775) 289-8981

Eureka Office
(775) 237-5693

Outside Ely / Eureka Area
(800) 97-POWER

Board of Directors
District 1 – Ron Miller
District 2 – Bob Swetich
District 3 – Jerry Morrill
District 4 – Don Phillips
District 5 – Rick Hendrix
District 6 – Jerald Anderson
District 7 – Sandra Green
District 8 – Wilma Sanford
District 9 – Frank Leon

Proudly serving more than 10,000 residents and businesses throughout Nevada and Utah.

Winter hours are November through April; Summer hours are May through October.

Summer hours: Ely office will be open from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Eureka office is open 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

“Powering Your Future”

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense.

Safe Digging Is No Accident:
Always Call 811 Before You Dig

Know what’s below. Always call 811 before you dig. Visit call811.com for more information.

32 MAY 2013
Reduce your energy usage with the V-Meter at: www.vea.coop

800 East Highway 372
P.O. Box 237
Pahrump, NV 89041

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DISTRICT 1  DISTRICT 2
Peter Gazsy  Shiea Rau

DISTRICT 3  DISTRICT 4
Rick Johnson  John Maurer

DISTRICT 5  DISTRICT 6
Dave Lowe  David Dawson

OFFICE PHONE
(800) 742-3330 (within Nevada)
or 775-727-5312, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Weekdays, except holidays

AFTER HOURS & EMERGENCY
We are here 24 hours a day,
seven days a week for your
emergency needs.
775-727-5312
Web site: www.vea.coop
Email: wmc@vea.coop

Always Call Before You Dig

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense.

Safe Digging Is No Accident:
Always Call 811 Before You Dig

Know what’s below. Always call 811 before you dig.
Visit call811.com for more information.
Kittitas County Public Utility District No. 1

1400 Vantage Highway
Ellensburg, WA 98926
(509) 933-7200
(24-hour phone service)
Office hours: 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday
www.kittitaspud.com

Commissioners
Roger C. Sparks
Paul Rogers
Shan Rowbotham

General Manager
Matt Boast

Assistant General Manager
Brian Vosburgh

Please visit our website listed above for all approved board minutes.

The Board of Commissioners meets the last Tuesday of each month in Building “B.”

The State of Our Utility

Our PUD has suffered a few tough years with personnel turnover and controversy. Today, things are looking up. Matt Boast, the former engineering manager, was promoted to general manager. The Board of Commissioners decided not to do another national search for a manager, but rather promote from within. The auditor position was accepted by Genine Pratt, who was a contract consultant, and brings years of CPA experience to the office. Brian Vosburgh was appointed to assistant general manager. These key positions run the day-to-day utility operations with the help of nine other employees.

New management brings fresh perspectives. That includes myself, Commissioner Shan Rowbotham. It’s been 16 years since a new PUD commissioner has been seated.

Several changes have been implemented, including installation of new meters. This will provide accurate energy measurement and, through an innovative, cost-effective, aerial reading method, eliminate customer meter reads.

Work continues to update policies and areas needing improvement.

Recently, the staff and commissioners attended a two-day retreat. Each brought 10 items of concern to be discussed. It was a productive study session where policymakers listened to staff, and staff heard commissioners’ concerns. As a study session, no formal actions could be made, and certainly not all of the challenges were solved in two days, but priorities were identified and plans were made to work on them.

Things to watch for?

- With the new meters, more complete data will help with studying options for updating irrigation rates to actual consumption as it is used, and eliminate horsepower charges.
- Further assistance for low-income customers.
- Improved system reliability and reduced outages.
- An updated webpage.
- Our new convenient online bill pay.

A new level of transparency and cooperation is surfacing at the PUD. This will foster ongoing improvements in several areas. There will be bumps in the road to progress, but we have a truly dedicated staff working to provide safe, reliable cost-based power to our PUD customers.

—Shan Rowbotham, PUD Commissioner District 2
Manager’s Message

At our annual meeting last month, we honored Peggi Timm, one of the founders of Oregon Trail Electric Co-op. Peggi and her husband, Glenn, were two-thirds of the driving force behind OTEC in the early days, and have continued to help lead our organization for almost 25 years.

When Idaho Power announced in 1979 they would no longer provide power to the CP National branch then operating in our region, many assumed Idaho Power would purchase CP National and little would change for the customer. But at the last minute, Idaho Power pulled out, leaving folks across Union, Baker, Grant and Harney counties without a power provider. While the lights didn’t go out, something needed to be done soon if Eastern Oregon was going to continue to enjoy safe and reliable electric power.

Peggi and Glenn joined with Dick Haines to determine the best option for our corner of Eastern Oregon. The group settled on forming an electric cooperative to pick up where the investor-owned utilities had failed. The group first met at the Copper Kettle—now the Sunridge Inn—in Baker City, along with officials from CP National and the Bonneville Power Administration. The only thing they were missing were the 25 consumers they needed for a quorum. So Peggi went out into the restaurant and started recruiting customers and restaurant staff until they got their 25.

After the co-op was officially founded, the next step was to sign up members. They decided to sell memberships at a penny each, and needed a good turnout to show the financiers on the west side of the state that the communities were committed to the co-op. Peggi spoke at community gatherings throughout the four counties, answering questions and telling people her vision for OTEC. All told, they raised 700 pennies and were able to convince CP National to sell them the electric system for $33 million in cash with an additional $12 million note. The note was provided by Cooperative Finance Corporation, with no equity beyond that $7 they raised from members.

In 1988, after countless community meetings and long nights of worrying, the lights came on under OTEC’s power. But Peggi didn’t stop there. She has tirelessly served on the OTEC board since that day in the Copper Kettle. She has brought OTEC through many challenges and has ensured those communities that rallied together to form the co-op have received the best service possible.

This year, the OTEC board chose to honor Peggi by creating the Peggi Timm Civic Leadership and Community Service Award. The award will honor a woman in OTEC’s service territory who best exemplifies the dedication to community service and leadership that Peggi has demonstrated. We at OTEC are proud to have had Peggi as a founder, a leader and a friend.

Regards,

Werner Buehler, General Manager
Dear Members:

Our annual meeting was again a success. I think everybody had an informative and enjoyable evening. Unfortunately, the weatherman was not very kind to us, so I want to express my appreciation to all of our members who took time out of their busy schedules to attend.

I also want to thank the ladies of the Ohop Grange, who always spoil us by providing delicious sandwiches and cookies.

Our special invited guests always look forward to the annual meeting because of the friendly atmosphere and positive information about Ohop Mutual, although I wonder if one of the reasons is the goodies, especially since the Grange ladies see to it that our guests take a few cookies home to their families.

This time, the Ohop board and I did not talk about rates in detail. The Bonneville Power Administration has two rates cases going on at the same time, one for power distribution and one for transmission. We will definitely see higher rates in the near future. Both BPA account executives talked about it in generalities because even they do not have the numbers yet. But the good news is, in spite of increasing prices all around us, the board of directors decided to hold rates steady this year.

We also talked about what we accomplished last year up to now. After we finished building the Mashel Substation, we thought we could slow the pace, but I don’t think that is possible in this industry, especially with a small company where often capital improvements are postponed for years because of lack of funds.

The transformer in the Ohop Substation was built in 1957, making it 56 years old. The normal life of a transformer is 40 to 50 years. This transformer was not new when we bought it, only refurbished, and it had a few serious issues a few years ago. There is no telling how long it will last. It could go out in one cold night and leave half of our system in the dark. The odds not being in our favor, that was a gamble none of us wanted to risk. So we took advantage of the slow economy and low prices, and purchased a new transformer. Now we are remodeling that substation.

We also worked on some pretty big construction jobs to make system improvements and improve system reliability. We upgraded feeders up to Scott Turner Road and down the Ohop Valley Road to SR 161. That enabled us to pull most of our load out of the BPA-owned Lynch Creek Substation and transfer it to our Mashel Substation, which saves us money every month in delivery charges. Another big project is upgrading the conductor on Meridian to 400th Street.

We had several guest speakers at the annual meeting. Auditor Ed Ramos gave us a clean financial report. We also heard from Dave Luxenberg, our attorney. State Sen. Randi Becker informed us what is going on in Olympia. BPA issues were presented by Paul Munz and Melanie Jackson, our BPA account executives.

We completed the meeting with the drawing of door prizes, which were enthusiastically received by our members.

—Isabella Deditch, General Manager
It’s official. Soon you will see a new graphic symbol accompanying the familiar name and logo of Tanner Electric Cooperative on utility bucket trucks, your power bill, the website and headquarters in North Bend. On April 1, Tanner Electric Cooperative joined the ranks of cooperative electric utilities across the country as a Touchstone Energy cooperative.

Touchstone Energy is a nationwide brand and marketing effort that identifies cooperative utilities providing superior customer service, while maintaining a strong local presence. The Touchstone Energy brand will take Tanner Electric Cooperative and its members into the future as the electric utility industry changes. It’s much more than a graphic addition to our name and logo. It’s a commitment to our members, both households and businesses, that they can count on us, as a locally based and controlled utility to deliver reliable, affordable energy services and to be an advocate for energy and community needs.

We believe our local presence is one of our strongest assets, and our affiliation with Touchstone Energy will remind our members who we are and what we stand for.

Electric cooperatives across the United States launched the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives brand to represent the advantages of locally owned and controlled electric service, which is rooted in the direct connection electric cooperatives such as Tanner Electric Cooperative have with their members. The dictionary definition of touchstone is a test of genuineness. Touchstone Energy symbolizes everything electric cooperatives represent today: electric power, human connections, and the strength of co-ops’ commitment to the communities and the members they serve.

By pooling resources through the brand with other cooperative utilities, Tanner Electric Cooperative will be able to provide consumer information and enhance awareness of its member-focused services as the electric utility industry evolves.

We will help our members cut through all the clutter and we will be here for our members for the long haul. For accountability, service and commitment to community, look no further than Tanner Electric Cooperative.

Touchstone Energy is a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives providing high standards of service to members large and small. More than 740 Touchstone Energy cooperatives in 46 states are delivering energy and energy solutions to more than 30 million members every day. Touchstone Energy Cooperatives serve members with integrity, accountability, innovation and a longstanding commitment to communities.

—Steve Walter, General Manager
AK-64

Manager’s Message

Dear Members:
As you read this month’s Ruralite, take a moment to think about how much of your day-to-day life is powered by electricity. At home, a host of appliances are hooked to electrical outlets, including stoves, refrigerators, coffee makers, blenders, televisions and computers. Our light and the ability to heat our homes come to us through wires strung throughout town.

But the electrical current that keeps us going has only been in Kotzebue for a relatively short time, Kotzebue Electric Association has only been around since the 1950s.

Before KEA brought electric power to all of us in Kotzebue, electricity was only available to those who lived close to Kotzebue businesses. Arctic Literage, Alascom, Rotman Store, the hospital and Archie Ferguson were among those who supplied and sold excess power from their business generators to homes nearby. If you were not close, you did not have power.

Around 1949, a group of Kotzebue people sent out feelers to find out how to start a local electric power cooperative. The group made arrangements to get a loan from the Rural Electrification Administration.

The original incorporators of KEA were a group of men whose names are closely tied to much of Kotzebue’s history. Archie R. Ferguson, a noted Alaskan bush pilot; Nels G. Hanson, the original owner of the Hanson Trading Co.; Edward Ward, a communications specialist working for the Federal Aviation Authority; Thomas Richards, the first commercially licensed Native pilot; Jack O. Jones, a local businessman; and York Wilson, a reindeer herd owner, were all involved. Along with Arthur J. Flatt, a mechanic for Ferguson; Delos H. Wesbrook, the administrator for the California Friends Mission in Kotzebue; and Charles E. McGowan, an FAA employee who set up the first local commercial freezer units; these men made up the first KEA Board of Directors.

In 1951, KEA was established. To get funds for a generator, poles, transformers, wire and more, the original board had to do a U.S. Census to qualify for an REA loan. Through a lot of work and perseverance—as evident by a box of telegrams I found at the office—a chain of correspondence to Washington, D.C., was established and a loan was secured. In 1954, KEA started generating power for all of the 66 homes in Kotzebue. Back then, the power demand was about 66,000 kilowatt-hours for the year. Now we generate that much every 10 days.

At KEA, we take pride in our history and our part in the development of our community.

Regards,

Brad Reeve
General Manager/CEO
Highlights from the 44th AVEC Annual Meeting

The 2013 Annual Meeting was well attended, with 71 of 78 possible delegates registering at the Coast International hotel in Anchorage. Almost one-third of the delegates were first-time attendees and a new delegate orientation session was held for them at AVEC headquarters. Delegates were given an overview of the AVEC board, operating system, the departments and how they function and the role of the delegate.

At a lively all day meeting April 10, numerous questions and suggestions for improvements were raised by the delegates. Written responses to issues raised at village meetings were provided to each delegate, and AVEC staff provided answers to other questions presented on the floor. The most frequently asked questions concerned:

- Streetlights—relocations of existing lights and how to get additional lights.
- Local electricians—to assist with electrical needs of homeowners.
- Leaning poles—need to re-guy poles affected by winter freeze/thaw cycles.
- Abandoned underground wiring exposed by erosion and ground conditions.
- Converting memberships so Elders and others can be represented at village meetings.
- Support for continuation of Power Cost Equalization.
- Support for renewable and alternative energy projects to reduce the cost of energy.

Delegates received written responses to their questions and others raised at the meeting. Those responses will be included in future articles in Ruralite magazine.

The delegates re-elected Walter Sampson from Noorvik and Fred Sagoonick from Shaktoolik to three-year terms on the board. In the organizational meeting after the conclusion of the annual meeting, the board elected officers for the following year. Charlie Curtis will serve as chairman, Walter Sampson as vice chairman, Phyllis Clough as secretary and Helena Jones as treasurer.

Thank you for taking an active role in the operation of your electric cooperative and thank you for allowing us to serve you. All of us at AVEC are truly dedicated to doing the very best we can in service to our communities!

Until next time,

Meera Kohler
President and CEO
Lassen Municipal Utility District Celebrates 25 Years of Service

LMUD was founded in May 1988, when a group of concerned citizens advocated for the formation of a public utility district. At the time, C.P. National, an investor-owned utility, provided the electric service to most of Lassen County.

The question of whether to take over the existing electric system from C.P. National was put to a vote and decided by the people. The initiative passed and LMUD was brought into existence.

When LMUD took over from C.P. National, residential customers were paying 17 cents a kilowatt-hour. Today, LMUD’s residential rate is 12 cents a kWh.

Since then, LMUD has worked hard to lower rates and increase reliability.

Lower rates and increased reliability are not the only benefits LMUD customers enjoy by being part of a publicly owned utility:

- The LMUD Board of Directors is elected by the people, and it serves to promote the best interests of the community.
- Board meetings are open to the public, and your comments and concerns are welcome and invited—giving you a voice in how your utility operates—something investor-owned utility customers do not have.
- Public power customers pay an average of 10 to 20 percent less for their electricity.
- LMUD is a nonprofit organization, meaning it exists to serve the customers—not stockholders or investors.

Please join LMUD this month and throughout the year, as it celebrates its 25th year of service.
System Improvements and Rates

In the past two years, we have implemented a 12-year capital planning and budgeting process at the Power District. It would allow us to systematically identify and prioritize projects to rehabilitate the aging electric infrastructure in Lincoln County, much of which was initially installed from the 1930s through the 1950s. We have made significant strides with the installation of new switches, reclosers, metering and poles.

One of our main projects for 2013 is repair of the 22-kilovolt distribution line leading from our Prince Substation to the town of Pioche. This line was originally built in 1937 and has served us well for more than 75 years, but is now in need of significant repair. By the time you read this, we will have broken ground on this project. Well in advance of onsite work, the Power District staff spent months engineering and purchasing materials. The line is designed to provide additional capacity to Pioche, with significantly improved lightning protection to cut down on momentary power interruptions, and heavy duty crossarms and supports to handle the snow, ice and wind loads as the line crosses over Mount Ely west of town. When completed, the rehabilitated line will provide reliable service to our customers for the next 75 years.

In the past few months, people have told me they appreciate what the Power District is doing to rehabilitate the system, but they are concerned electric rates will increase because of it. The short answer is there will be little impact. Our capital program is just that, a capital program. In other words, all of the work being done under the program is capitalized and only affects rates through the amount of annual depreciation. For example, the Pioche line repair project is budgeted at $202,000. However, the annual depreciation for this project will be about $6,733, which when rolled into rates equates to about a 0.15 percent impact.

When trying to hold the line on electric rates, reducing expenditures on maintaining our system is not the solution. There are better places to look for savings. The cost to buy power for Lincoln County is our largest single expense, accounting for more than 44 percent of our operating cost. Because of this we look for ways to manage and control power costs. One example is our work at the Nevada Legislature to help pass Senate Bill 438. This bill would give the Colorado River Commission of Nevada authority to issue debt to refund debt relating to construction of the visitors center and installation of air slots in the spillways at Hoover Dam. The debt for these projects is at 8.06 percent and 9.8 percent rates, respectively. If these projects could be refinanced by Nevada, Arizona and California at current market rates of around 4.5 percent, savings to the district and its customers would be about $65,000 a year. We also are reviewing other controllable costs. For example, we recently withdrew membership from a trade association where we felt the benefit did not outweigh the cost. That saved more than $10,000 a year. We also reduced our insurance costs, which were approaching $70,000 per year. We achieved savings by improving safety performance, coupled with restructuring insurance deductibles and coverages.

Our efforts are like a balancing act. On the one hand, we have the responsibility of rehabilitating an aging electric system. On the other is the responsibility of keeping rates affordable for our customers. It is a fine line to walk, but we are definitely trying.

—David Luttrell, General Manager
With hundreds of photovoltaic systems being installed across Kaua‘i, some people have asked us about KIUC’s position on PV. After all, they say, PV is taking money away from the utility by enabling customers to essentially make their own electricity. So KIUC must be trying to discourage people from buying PV systems, right?

Wrong.

We want to be clear: We support any choices our members make to help lower their electricity bills. We would rather people use the sun to make electricity than for KIUC to import one more barrel of oil than necessary.

The co-op’s staff recently reorganized to devote more resources into the processing and review of PV applications so members and their contractors get all of the information they need to determine if PV is right for them.

We also are developing two large PV projects that will be owned by the cooperative and that will benefit all of KIUC’s members. Other than hydropower, these projects will be the cooperative’s lowest-cost source of power.

Between KIUC’s investment in large systems and our members putting in their own systems, Kaua‘i soon will lead the nation in the use of solar.

Our board recently voted to increase the amount of the rebate KIUC pays to members who install solar hot water systems. Using the $1,000 rebate and state and federal tax incentives, members can reduce the cost of installing a solar hot water system to about $2,000.

A typical family can save $100 or more a month on their electric bill by using a solar hot water system, so the investment will pay for itself in less than two years.

We believe solar hot water is the easiest, most cost-effective way for most members to achieve real savings by using renewable energy.

We also encourage members who want to invest in a PV system. These systems can provide even bigger savings and help reduce Kaua‘i’s dependence on imported oil. By the end of this year, we estimate there will be more than 2,100 residential and commercial PV systems at work on Kaua‘i.

So what’s the impact on KIUC? Don’t we care about losing revenue? As a member-owned cooperative, KIUC does not need to “grow the business” through increased revenue. We don’t have to answer to shareholders or investors who need to earn a return.

But we need to cover the costs of providing electrical service to our customers, pay our debts and have enough left over to keep our financial position solid.

We are analyzing what our finances could look like if thousands of customers—including big commercial customers like the county and the state Department of Education—aren’t buying as much electricity as they used to, maybe 20 percent less.

Our rates include not only the cost of fuel, but the fixed costs of running power plants and maintaining connections to more than 26,000 business and residential customers 24 hours a day.

Even if a customer installs PV, they are still connected to the KIUC grid, drawing power for the 18 hours when the sun isn’t high in the sky. But now they are paying a smaller share of the fixed costs than their neighbor who doesn’t have PV.

One of the issues for this board and our staff is to determine the most equitable way for rates to be designed so the cost of providing electricity is spread fairly among members.

This isn’t just a KIUC issue. Utilities across Hawai‘i, in Alaska and on the Mainland are grappling with it. The issue is more pressing for Kaua‘i because of the large amount of solar that will be coming onto our system by 2015.

In the meantime, this board and our staff remain committed to helping our members reduce their bills through conservation and the use of new technology.

Mahalo for your support. If you have any questions, please email us at kiucbod@hawaii.rr.com.
Make Safety a Top Priority

This May, as we once again celebrate National Electrical Safety Month, let’s remember this is a time to refresh ourselves on electrical safety tips and practices.

The electricity Escambia River Electric Cooperative provides day-in and day-out is a phenomenal resource, powering our modern lifestyles in a safe, reliable and affordable way. But electricity must be respected. If safety isn’t made a priority, what changes our lives for the better could change them for the worse in an instant.

It is not hard to understand why safety remains a top priority for EREC. Working around electricity is a life-or-death situation every day for many of our employees. We provide regular safety training, and we supply the equipment necessary to keep employees safe as they perform their jobs. In addition, we work hard to instill a culture of safety that becomes second nature to our folks in every facet of their lives.

As a member-owner, your safety is of utmost importance to EREC as well. We strive to raise safety awareness among EREC members of all ages. We visit schools each year with our Safety City demonstration, which helps both students and adults become more aware of the importance of electrical safety. It emphasizes that electricity is a valuable and useful form of energy that helps us live better, and it is a very safe form of energy when used safely and properly.

We also provide safety tips in this publication each month to help you respect the power of electricity and be aware of the dangers associated with it.

Safety is a top priority at EREC for our employees and members alike. Make it a priority for your family as well. Together, let’s make National Electrical Safety Month a year-round celebration by focusing on safety every month.
Electric Bills to Rise with Summer Temperatures

With summer almost here, we are about to enter our warmest months of the year in the Florida Keys. Each June, consumers begin calling FKEC and asking about the sudden jump in their electric bills. After this year’s mild winter and cooler than average spring, this jump may seem even greater than usual.

Cooling Costs Account for Half of Your Electric Bill

Summer’s hotter temperatures and higher humidity keep air conditioners working harder to keep homes and businesses comfortable. Even if you don’t lower your thermostat for summer, cooling can still account for half or more of your electric bill during hot weather. And then if you do lower your thermostat in high humidity, your air conditioner runs longer which increases energy use even more.

Avoid Summer “Sticker Shock” & Minimize Cooling Cost

So what can you do to stop the “sticker shock” of your June power bill? Start by preparing your home for hotter temperatures and then be more conscious of your electricity use throughout the summer months. For the greatest savings, follow the home efficiency tips on the facing page.

How Rising Temperatures Impact Cooling Cost

For every degree the outdoor temperature rises above your indoor temperature setting, your A/C will use 6-8% more electricity.
CEO’s Message

Passage of Bylaw Amendment Aids Recovery of Uncollectibles

Thank you, members, for passing the bylaw amendment at our annual meeting with an overwhelming affirmative vote of 217 in favor versus 28 opposed. Because of your actions, we will recover $223,964.64 from uncollectable accounts written off in years past. Clearing this bad debt also results in years and years and years of eliminated record keeping.

This nearly quarter-million-dollar recovery may sound like an astronomical sum, but it still leaves $743,540.03 of uncollectible bad debt on our books. How did we allow that, you may ask? Well, in the past, our collection policies and procedures were not as strict and we lacked the technology now available to pursue collection of bad debts. Under our old ways, we were writing off well more than $100,000 a year. With new policies, procedures and technology, our annual write-off of uncollectible accounts is closer to $26,000 a year.

The new bylaw amendment should reduce that amount even more, as you have given us another tool to operate your cooperative in the most efficient manner possible.

Another valuable tool we use to keep write-offs as low as possible is our Additional Deposit program. It can be a tough program because any member affected by it is required by cooperative policy to place on deposit two times their highest monthly bill. During the last five quarters, this program has recovered $32,060.79, which otherwise would be uncollectable. The AD program is implemented when a member has hit our disconnect list for the third time. To hit the disconnect list, a member’s account remains unpaid from the previous month at the time their meter is read for the current month. This means the member is two months in arrears; thus, the reasoning behind setting the additional deposit at two times the highest monthly bill. History has shown us it is at this time that we have the most walkaways. Even with the AD program in place, we still wrote off $45,335.26 as uncollectable during the same five quarters.

Of course, we recognize extenuating circumstances can lead to member hardships, and we work with members in these cases. Many times solutions are found in use of the Glades Electric Charitable Trust or the many other programs our member service personnel are aware of. And there is redemption for a member affected by the AD program. All they must do is pay their monthly bill by the due date for 15 consecutive months and their additional deposit will be refunded against their bill.

Due dates are prominently displayed on our bills, and payments must be received at one of our offices by close of business on or before the due date. We open early, 7 a.m., and stay open late, 6 p.m., for our members’ convenience. If you see your due date approaching and you have concerns about making your payment, please call us. We want to work with you before your service is interrupted or you are affected by the cooperative’s AD program. After all, we are “Neighbors Working for Neighbors.”
The Erosion of Responsibility

Today, it is always someone else’s fault

When I was growing up in the 1960s in north Mississippi, we were taught to be responsible for our actions. If I had trouble with a teacher in school, I was whipped at home regardless of who was to blame.

Today, it seems neither children nor parents are responsible for anything bad that happens at school—or for their education. When I talk to teachers, it’s the parents’ fault. It’s always someone else’s fault.

It’s not just our schools. If we broke someone else’s property, we replaced it. Today, someone would be more likely to blame you for leaving it where they could break it, and most often not even offer to replace it. It’s always somebody else’s fault.

The concept of “it’s not my fault so I don’t have to deal with it” is infuriating. As I consider what happened to our standards of responsibility, it seems an environment of government dependence and entitlement is to blame for much of the change. After all, it couldn’t be our fault.

Just last night, I asked a taxi driver—a recent immigrant from Nigeria—what he thought about the United States. He said Americans depend on the government for too much—both the rich and the poor.

Italy intrigues me. Italian history is a legacy of greatness, dominance and conquest. The Roman Empire was the breeding ground for much of the world’s culture. Roman history is the story of driven people doing what was necessary, taking responsibility and not assigning blame for the damage.

I doubt if Roman Legions thought about fault as they conquered the world. I doubt they even counted the bodies.

But people and civilizations change. And Italy changed.

In 2009, six Italian scientists and a government official were convicted of manslaughter for the deaths of more than 300 people.

They were not killed by a scientific experiment gone awry or a targeted murder, but by an earthquake. They were convicted of failing to accurately predict the earthquake.

The earthquake, near the town of L’Aquila, followed a series of 400 smaller tremors over the course of four months. The seven defendants predicted the tremors had released seismic pressure, and that a major earthquake was unlikely in the short term.

The experts were wrong, and L’Aquila, severely damaged by earthquakes four times before, was again struck and people were killed.

Of course, the deaths could not be the residents’ fault for remaining in an area known for devastating earthquakes and that had more than 400 recent tremors. It had to be someone else’s fault.

A progressive Italian government system wouldn’t have it any other way. It had to be the fault of those predicting earthquakes.

The convictions will not make earthquake prediction more accurate in Italy. In fact, it should have the opposite effect. I would be hesitant to predict anything in Italy.

What about us? It strikes me that our culture is moving in the direction of Italy’s. Anything that goes wrong must be someone else’s fault.

Did you lose money in the Great Recession? It must have been the fault of unscrupulous investment brokers and bankers. Our progressive government is prosecuting some of them for failing to disclose the risks of investing in the stock market and is imposing laws and regulations that make financial forecasting more complicated and difficult.

Some deserve to be prosecuted, but not for a failure to predict the recession or that an investment would decline in value.

Did your business lose money or did your property depreciate in value during the time of the Gulf oil spill? You don’t have to prove damages. The government will ensure you are compensated for your losses.

It wasn’t your fault. Politicians on television told us so.

I suspect my Nigerian driver was right: We rely too much on an increasingly progressive government to make up for our mistakes and shortcomings.

We are no longer responsible for things that go wrong.

If I am wrong, or if I hurt your feelings, it is not my fault.
GCEC President’s Message

Power Safely During an Outage

One of the great things about the modern American electric grid is that power almost always flows when we need it. Given our dependence on electricity, it is understandable why portable generators are popular when the power goes out and stays out for a while.

But generators can cause more harm than good if not used properly. In honor of National Electrical Safety Month, recognized each May, I want to give you a few safety tips to protect yourself and our line technicians who are working to restore your power.

First, never ever plug a portable generator directly into one of your home's outlets—unless you have had a licensed electrician install a transfer switch in your home. If you don't have a transfer switch, power provided by the generator can backfeed along power lines, which can electrocute a line technician working on those lines.

In addition, portable generators create carbon monoxide—the odorless, colorless gas that can quickly become deadly if the generator is not exhausted outside. Attached garages with an open door don't count. The carbon monoxide can seep indoors and poison inhabitants. Generators must go outside in a dry area, which might mean you will need to rig a canopy to protect it from precipitation at a safe distance from your home's windows, doors and vents. How far is a safe distance? Even 15 feet can be too close.

Other things to keep in mind: Plug appliances directly into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords, but don't overload the generator. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maximum load. Shut off the generator before refueling or a fire could start—and it is a good idea to have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby, just in case.

Safety is a top priority at Gulf Coast Electric Cooperative—for our employees and consumer-members alike. Call us at 265-3631 to learn more about how to properly install and use a portable generator.

For more tips on how to stay safe during a power outage, visit our website at www.gcec.com.

Kinneth Daniels

Gulf Coast Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday, May 27, in observance of Memorial Day.

Have a safe and happy holiday weekend!
Powering Safely During an Outage

One of the great things about the modern American electric grid is that power almost always flows when we need it. Considering our dependence on electricity, it’s understandable why portable generators are popular when the power goes out and stays out for a while.

Generators come in all sizes. From small models which can run a few devices, to very large units which can power an entire home.

But generators can cause more harm than good if not used properly. In honor of Electrical Safety Month, recognized each May, I want to give you a few safety tips to protect yourself and our linemen who are working to restore your power. If not used properly, a generator can maim or even kill, so it’s important to know the facts.

First, never, ever plug a portable generator directly into one of your home’s outlets — unless you have had a licensed electrician install a “transfer switch” in your home. If you don’t have a transfer switch, power provided by the generator can “backfeed” along power lines, which can electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including PRECO linemen making repairs.

In addition, portable generators create carbon monoxide, the odorless, colorless gas that can quickly become deadly if the generator isn’t exhausted outside. Attached garages with an open door don’t count — the carbon monoxide can still seep indoors and poison inhabitants. Generators must go outside in a dry area, which might mean you’ll need to rig a canopy to protect it from precipitation at a safe distance from your home’s windows, doors, and vents. How far is a safe distance? Even 15 feet can be too close.

Parents, keep your children away from portable generators at all times. A child’s natural curiosity can result in a nasty burn from hot generator surfaces or even death by electrocution.

Other things to keep in mind: Plug appliances directly into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords, but don’t overload it. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for maximum load. Shut off the generator before refueling, or a fire could start — and it’s a good idea to have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby, just in case.

We deal with electricity every day, so safety is a top priority at Peace River Electric Cooperative — for our employees and consumer-members alike. Contact us at 1-800-282-3824, if you’d like to learn more about how to properly install and use a portable generator. For more tips on how to stay safe during a power outage, visit SafetyAtHome.com.