

Big Skylights



An internal newsletter of the STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

April 13, 2017

Members receive update on demand charge change

Although Sun River Electric Cooperative increased its monthly demand charge by \$2 in January, average power users should see no change in their total power bill, General Manager **Scott Odegard** told members at their annual meeting on March 31.

Mr. Odegard explained the demand charge rewards people who use power more efficiently, but those who don't will see it on their utility bill. "The guy who stomps on the accelerator will pay a little more," he explained.

Co-op members also received an update on the co-op's purchase of a backup transformer for its Conrad substation. The transformer cost \$675,000. Its purchase became necessary when the back-up WAPA transformer was no longer readily available in the event of an emergency. A back-up is important because the entire north half of the co-op's service area is fed by the Conrad substation, Mr. Odegard explained.

He also talked about lessons learned from last year's "Tax Day" major storm that knocked down 230 poles, 30 miles of power line and hundreds of crossarms on April 15. He said the storm revealed some equipment needs, including the need for a back-up emergency generator able to properly operate computers in the event of an outage at the co-op headquarters building in Fairfield. The computers are vital in pinpointing power outages using the co-op's automated metering system. The back-up generator has been purchased, he said.

Members also learned the co-op had received \$900,000 from FEMA as reimbursement for the storm damages, and could receive additional FEMA reimbursement.

In trustee elections, **Russ Bloom** and **Bob Pasha** were re-elected.

MECA appreciated the opportunity to provide a legislative update.

MECA sets photography workshop for mid-April

The Education & Training Committee of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association is sponsoring a two-day Rocky Mountain School of Photography Workshop on April 18-19 at the Rocky Mountain School of Photography, located at 216 N. Higgins Ave., Missoula, MT.

The first day will cover composition and light as well as the basics of exposure and creative uses of aperture. The second day will focus on the essentials of organizing and editing photos with Lightroom. You are encouraged to bring laptops with Lightroom CC installed (there is a trial version available from Adobe) so you can follow along in class. Or you are more than welcome to just watch the instructor demo the program.

There is no charge to those co-ops participating in the 2017 prepaid education & training program. The fee for those co-ops not enrolled is \$550 per participant.

For more information or to register, please contact Beckie Frediani at the statewide office via phone at (406) 761-8333 or via email at beckie@mtco-ops.com.

Glacier Electric to host NESC training May 16

MECA, in cooperation with Glacier Electric Cooperative, will hold a one-day NESC training at Glacier Electric Cooperative in Cut Bank on **May 16, 2017**.

The course will focus on the major changes in the 2017 NESC, and provide a general overview of each part of the NESC. A full course description has been sent to line superintendents and line foremen. The registration deadline for this training is Monday, May 1.

For those participants needing overnight accommodations, area hotels include the Super 8 in Cut Bank (406) 873-5662; the Glacier Gateway Plaza in Cut Bank (406) 873-5544; the Comfort Inn in Shelby (406) 434-2212; and the Best Western Shelby Inn and Suites (406) 424-4560.

If you have any questions, including questions about registration, please contact **Lea Potoczny** at meca@mtco-ops.com or (406) 761-8333.

Condolences

Jim Mullin

Our condolences to **Janet Mullin**, on the death of her husband, **Jim Mullin**, a founding member of what is now MECA. He passed away Feb. 1 in Billings. Mr. and Mrs. Mullin had been married for 28 years at the time of his death. In addition to his wife, Mr. Mullin is survived by his sons, **James Nelson Mullin** of Nevada City, Calif., and **Roger Clark Mullin** of Columbus; and **Robert Mullin**, a brother, of St. Paul, Minn.

Mr. Mullin was a member of the Tongue River Electric Co-op board of directors for 45 years, 37 of which he served as president. He and Janet worked and lived in Lame Deer and Busby with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe for more than 65 years, mainly as proprietor of Lame Deer Trading, also known as the "Big Store."

Mr. Mullin was a war veteran, having served in the U.S. Army during World War II in the Pacific, primarily in the Philippines.

Job Market

Journeyman Lineman

Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. has an immediate opening for a qualified journeyman lineman or apprentice lineman. Requirements include a high school diploma/GED, successful completion of an apprenticeship school or holding a union journeyman lineman card. A valid Montana Class A CDL with excellent driving record is also required. The person in this position will be located at our office in Lewistown, Montana. Technical skills testing and a drug screen are required.

Fergus Electric Cooperative offers an excellent wage and benefit package, including defined benefit and 401k retirement plans. Fergus Electric is committed to having a strong safety program, and safety is the co-op's priority.

Employment applications are available online at www.ferguselectric.coop; or call 406-538-3465 to request an application. Please send resume and application to: Dale Rikala, Fergus Electric Co-op, Inc., 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457-2058; email ferguslinesup@ferguselectric.coop; or call 406-538-3465. Applications will be accepted through May 5.

CALENDAR

April

14
23-25

Marias River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting
NRECA Legislative Conference

Shelby, MT
Washington, D.C.

May

2-5
6
7-10
9-10
9-11
9-11
16
17-19
13
23-24

NRECA Connect Conference
Northern Lights, Inc. Annual Meeting
NWPPA Annual Meeting
MECA Line Superintendents' Group Spring Meeting
Gettysburg Leadership Experience for Co-op Leaders
New Director Orientation
National Electric Safety Code (NESC) Training
New CFO Orientation
Hill County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting
Accounting for Non-Accountants Workshop

Tampa, FL
Sagle, ID
Sunriver, OR
Lewistown, MT
Gettysburg, PA
Arlington, VA
Cut Bank, MT
Dulles, VA
Havre, MT
Great Falls, MT