

# ELECTRICAL HI-LITES

## PUTTING SAFETY FIRST NATIONAL ELECTRIC SAFETY MONTH

It's May – and Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is top priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety excellence. (#68941000)

This year, we're focusing on electrical safety in the home. Electricity is the cause of over 140,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 deaths, 4,000 injuries and \$1.6 billion in property damage, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International.

There are many measures you can take to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Use these helpful tips from ESFI to safeguard your home.

### IN THE KITCHEN

- Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create fire hazards.
- Ensure all countertop appliances are located away from the sink.
- Keep all appliance cords



away from hot surfaces. Pay particular attention to cords around toasters, ovens and ranges. Cords can be damaged by excess heat.

- The top and the area above the cooking range should be free of combustibles, such as pot holders and plastic utensils. Storing these items on or near the range may result in fires or burns.

### LIGHT THE WAY TO SAFETY

- The wattage of the bulbs you use in your home should match the wattage indicated on the light fixture. Overheated fixtures can lead to a fire.
- Check lamp cords to make sure they are in good condition – not damaged or cracked. Do not attempt to repair damaged cords yourself. Take any item with a damaged power cord to an authorized repair center.
- Do not use extension cords to provide power on a long-term or permanent basis. Have additional outlets installed by a professional to provide power where needed.



### BE PREPARED

- Nearly two-thirds of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be located on every level of your home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area.
- Test smoke alarms every month. Replace batteries at least once a year – or sooner if indicated in the manufacturers' instructions. All smoke alarms should be replaced at least every 10 years.
- Talk to your family about an emergency plan in the event of a fire in your home. If you have small children, include them in planning an emergency escape route. They are more likely to remember the plan if they're involved in creating it.



### FOR MORE SAFETY TIPS

Electrical safety awareness and education can save lives. For more tips and information about electrical safety, visit [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org).

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# GENERAL MANAGER'S COLUMN

BY BRANDON WITTMAN



## 79<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

### POWERING GROWTH

#### The 79th Annual Meeting of Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative was a great event.

With well over 500 folks in attendance, the participation by members was inspiring and impressive. Additionally, 12 local students each won a \$500 scholarship at the meeting, employees were recognized for their years of service, and two trustees were re-elected to three-year terms on the Board.



Twelve \$500 "Luck of the Draw" scholarship winners pose at the 79th Annual Membership Meeting. Either the parent or student must be present at the meeting.

The theme of the meeting this year was, "Powering Growth, Preserving Values." What a timely theme that truly is for YVEC. We are growing faster than any electric co-op in Montana and yet working hard to preserve the values that got us to this point.

With the exception of a few years in the late 1980s and early 1990s,

YVEC has grown very consistently. Lately, we have seen quite an uptick in that growth. Over the last 10 years, our cooperative has averaged the addition of 300 meters per year. However, since the end of 2012, we have seen that average climb to 445 new meters per year. The same type of growth can be seen in our sales

and plant additions. In 2007, YVEC sold 224.7 million kilowatt-hours. We ended 2016 having sold a record 260.9 million kilowatt-hours. In the past 10 years, we have averaged an increase of 3.6 million kilowatt-hours in sales each year. That is significant considering sales to co-ops and essentially all sectors of utilities nationally have been flat. In fact, no growth has been seen in electricity sales nationally, since 2010.

In order to keep up with and stay ahead of this truly outstanding growth, we have invested a lot into our total utility plant. In 2007, our total utility

### PRESERVING VALUES

plant had a total value of about \$60 million. Since then, we've installed additions, including substation upgrades, pole change-outs and line re-conductors, that brought our total utility plant to \$83 million at the end of 2016. We have averaged \$2.9 million in additions since the end of 2012.

**Through all the growth, we have kept the membership as our true focus.** As you have read above, it's expensive to grow. However, through some very solid financial planning and excellent internal decisions regarding technology and equipment, we have become extremely efficient. Our number of consumers per employee are tops among electric co-ops in the country. Additionally, we also rank as one the best electric co-ops in the U.S. at controlling expenses for our consumers. Because of these efforts, it is with great pride that we can say we haven't had a rate increase at our cooperative since 2011 and we do not foresee one in 2017. Six years and running! That's good for any business and especially for a co-op with growth like ours.

Keep your eye out for some new offerings this year. We will soon be launching a new mobile friendly website, providing an online air filter service for your home and will also be rolling out a very exciting new community support program.

**We are indeed Powering Growth, Preserving Values!**



# DIGITAL DEVICES IMPACT ENERGY USE

## THE DIGITAL AGE

We have electronic gadgets galore, the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images and captivating sounds of modern entertainment options and the internet. Clearly, digital devices reign supreme. Yet these cool new capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls – vampire loads and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Over the course of the Digital Age, electricity use has continued to increase. Families have multiple televisions and many homes now have multiple computers. Everyone in the family needs a cell phone. Gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes add to the energy load. (#65886000)

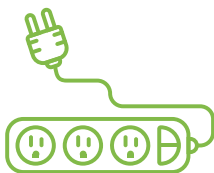
## POWER ADAPTERS

Most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, which is the standard voltage of a home outlet. Low-voltage devices such as smartphones come with a power adapter which takes the 120-volt electricity supplied by Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative and converts it to the appropriate voltage. Unfortunately, when adapters are left plugged in, they continue to consume power even when they aren't charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is called “vampire load.” Studies show that 5-10% of the average home's energy use is from vampire loads.

### Strategies to lower power use include:

- Unplug power adapters when not in use. Get into the habit of unplugging infrequently used electronic devices and appliances.
- Plug electronics into power strips that can be switched off when not in use.
- Use smart power strips. These look like the typical power strip but only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns



on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is ideal for entertainment and computer systems.

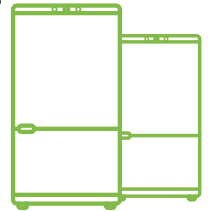
## TECHNOLOGY REINCARNATION

Technological advances have steadily increased energy efficiency and reduced purchase prices. Though this seems like a good thing, consumers tend to go bigger or continue to use the older appliance or electronics at the end of its life. This is termed technology reincarnation.

For example, flat screen television prices have plummeted as technology has evolved – and so has the amount of electricity they use. What consumers used to pay for a 32" model now may net them a 50" giant. Even with increased energy efficiency, upgrading to a bigger television will use as much power as the older, smaller model, which likely ends up “reincarnated” in another room and still using power.

State-of-the-art refrigerators are

the showpieces of the evolution of smart appliances. Many new models include touchscreens and cameras. Yet, the old refrigerator is often not retired and ends up in the basement or garage, reincarnated as a dedicated beverage unit or overflow.



## SMART ENERGY USE

If you want to avoid or reduce the effects of vampire loads and technology reincarnation. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don't oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless family needs dictate the larger capacities. And recycle the replaced appliances and equipment to stem technology reincarnation. You will enjoy the Digital Age for a lot less.



## SPRINGTIME PASTA SALAD



### PASTA

- 1 pound asparagus
- 10 ounces frozen peas, thawed (#57624000)
- 2 yellow peppers, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 3/4 cup fresh baby dill, chopped
- 16 ounces pasta
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes

### DRESSING

- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large lemon, zested and juiced
- Salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Makes 6 to 8 servings

### DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare vegetables while bringing a large pot of salted water to boil. Bend the end of each asparagus stalk until the tough end snaps off. Slice the stalks in half inch pieces and set aside. Chop yellow peppers, onion and dill. Cook pasta according to package directions. Add asparagus 2 minutes before the pasta is done. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking and cool.
2. Combine the pasta, asparagus, peas, peppers, red onion and dill in a large serving bowl.
3. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the olive oil, mustard, honey, garlic and lemon. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss lightly to coat. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving for best flavor.

Note: Choose asparagus stalks that are firm to the touch, with tightly closed spears. Thinner stemmed asparagus is usually more tender and sweet. Avoid stalks that appear yellow or dried out.

**FIND YOUR  
ACCOUNT NUMBER  
WIN A \$25  
CREDIT!**

Richard and Peggy Schottlaender from Billings found their account number in the April issue.

### ENJOY SOME EXTRA POCKET MONEY!

Look for the three electric account numbers hidden in the four pages of the Electrical Hi-Lites. **If you find your account number, give Ronda a call** at the co-op office by May 17. You will receive a \$25 credit on your electric account.

Visit YVEC online: [www.yvec.com](http://www.yvec.com)



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### OUTAGES

After 5 p.m./  
Weekends/Holidays  
Huntley  
406-348-3411  
or 1-800-736-5323

## MAKE ROOM FOR ROADSIDE CREWS

**When the power goes out, so do YVEC's line crews. Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities we serve.**

If you're traveling and see one of our crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask that you move over if possible and give them a little extra space to work. We care deeply about the safety of all, and this extra precaution ensures just that.

If you approach a crew while traveling on a two-lane road, moving over to the next lane might not be an option. In this case, we simply ask that you slow down when approaching roadside crews. If you approach a crew while traveling on a four-lane road, and safety and traffic conditions allow, we ask that you move over into the far lane.

Montana enforces the state "Move Over Law." Visit <https://www.facebook.com/moveovermontana/> for more information.

Utility crews aren't the only ones who could use the extra space. Emergency responders, such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians, often find themselves responding to emergency situations near busy roadways. We ask that you follow the same procedures mentioned above to help keep these crews safe.

There's plenty of room for all. Let's work together to keep everyone safe on our local roadways.

