

HILL COUNTY ELECTRIC • NEWS & VIEWS

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SEPTEMBER • 2017

Manager's Message

By Craig Gates, General Manager/CEO



Where has the summer gone? Members of Congress and electric co-ops around the country are studying the President's proposed budget for 2018 to determine how our members will be affected.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), also called America's Co-op, is keeping an eye on the following 2018

budget items for us on a national level. Of concern to us here in Montana include the following:

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cutting funding to the USDA's Rural Business Service would remove funding for several grant programs that support economic development in rural areas. These grants support many opportunities that would otherwise not be made available to us here in rural Montana.

POWER MARKETING ADMINISTRATIONS (PMAS)

The administration proposed selling off transmission assets (lines, poles, etc.) for three of the four PMAs that provide clean, low-cost energy from hydropower to over 600 co-ops. This would have negative effects on the cost and reliability of power for millions. First and foremost, the current PMAs are run on a cost recovery basis. This means that it is not being subsidized by the tax payers. Loans were taken out and are being repaid, and on going maintenance is paid by our rates. No extra burden to the US government. Commercializing the PMAs, would be putting our rate structure and current right of way at risk. By selling the PMAs to a private entity, our rates, which are based on cost, will move to what the market will allow. This would most likely mean a rate increase for us on the transmission of our electrical energy. They are also many that believe that the current right of way will not transfer to the new private entity. This would cause many problems, as it would likely take years to procure the necessary routes and if they were not available, the new entity would have to re-route transmission lines, which would again, raise our rates.

LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Eliminating the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

(LIHEAP) would have a significant negative effect on our membership. Although the program has more than doubled in annual expenditures in the last eight years; we all know that without it, many would suffer during the winter months.

Let's switch gears now and talk a little about demand billing. Last month I talked about how you can have the same amount of usage, but different demand depending on how much electricity you use at a given period of time. Let's talk a little more about what demand actually is. Demand means that HCE must have enough electrical energy to meet the maximum demand our members need at any given time. This has a trickle-up effect in our case. The more demand our members have, the more power we need to purchase from our power supplier, Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative (CMEPC). CMEPC needs to make sure they have enough power to meet the demands of all the cooperatives they provide power to. If CMEPC's power demand exceeds what they currently receive, they must buy more power from their power generators, Western Area Power Administration and Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

This change to demand billing will not take place right away, it will be at least 18 months before it is implemented. As we move closer to implementing demand billing, a graph with your monthly demand will appear on your bill. This way you can get used to seeing it on the bill statement and acquire an idea of what kind of demand usage you are currently experiencing. I will continue to talk more about demand billing in future issues.

5 FEDERAL BUDGET ISSUES CO-OPS ARE WATCHING

1. Rural Development



RURAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2. PMA Sell-off



×600 CO-OPS

3. Eliminating LIHEAP



4. International Electrification



USAID ↓

5. DOE Energy and Cyber Programs



Harvest Workers Urged to Take Time to Reap Safe Harvest

It can be an exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, dozens of farm workers are killed and hundreds are injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

“Things people see every day can fade from view and in the busyness of harvest time, it’s easy for farm workers to forget about the power lines overhead,” says Richard McCracken of the Safe Electricity Advisory Board. “But failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.”

Review with all workers the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines – above, below and to the side – a 360-degree rule.

“Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it’s only a few feet,” says Bob Aherin, PhD, CSP & University of Illinois Professor and Agricultural Safety & Health Program Leader. “Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a grain truck.”

FARM WORKERS SHOULD TAKE THESE STEPS TO ENSURE A SAFER HARVEST SEASON:

- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines. Do not let the spotter touch the machinery while it is being moved anywhere near power lines.
- As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path!

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Power Line Safety - Plan Ahead.



Survey your farm & note the location of power lines. Plan safe travel routes for large equipment.

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A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

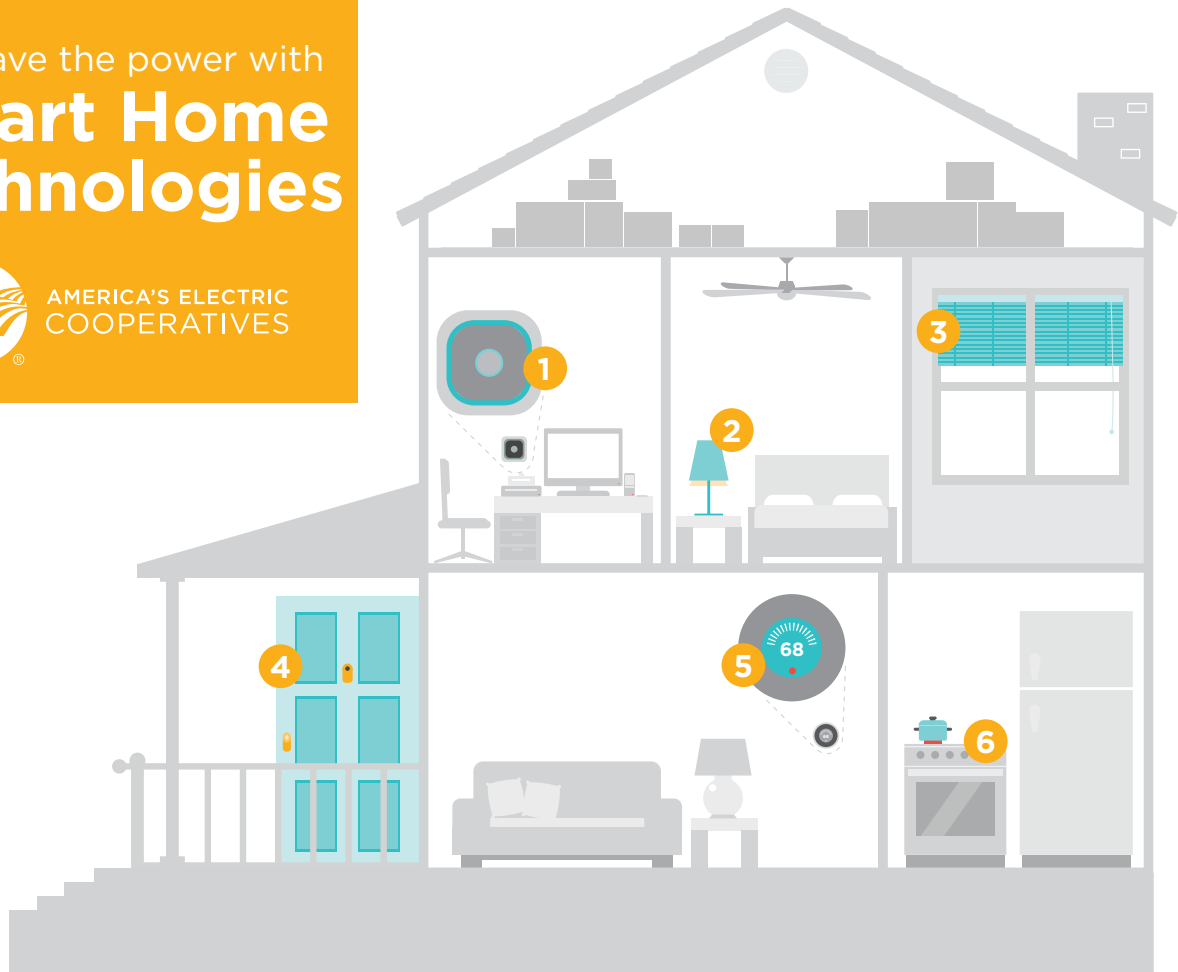
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AMERICA'S ELECTRIC
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1 Smart Hub/Bridge

If you are looking to make your home smart without having to hire a company to install an interconnected system, then an internet-connected smart hub is the first thing you'll need. A smart hub will allow you to control all your smart devices from one app by acting as a middle man that facilitates communications between all your smart home devices.

Smart Lighting

2 Like most items in a smart home, smart lighting can be controlled with a few swipes of a smart phone app. But smart lighting is more than just convenient. Smart light bulbs are more energy efficient than standard incandescent bulbs. Some bulbs use GPS on your phone to determine your location, and can turn on or off depending on where you are located. Some bulbs are even voice controlled!

Smart Blinds

3 Smart blinds can be useful for those who have tall, hard-to-reach windows; for those who have difficulty moving around the house;

or for those who simply want to smarten their home. Smart blinds allow you to schedule your blinds to open and close during certain times of day – a bonus if you are trying to be energy efficient – or control them via an app.

4 Smart Locks

Smart locks allow you and anyone else you wish to enter your home with ease. Some smart locks let you open your doors with your cell phone. Some let you see who is coming and going while you are out of the house. Some even allow you to assign security privileges to certain people.

5 Smart Thermostat

A smart thermostat is a great way to keep your home smart and energy efficient. Many smart thermostats can learn your heating and cooling behavior and will auto-schedule based on your preferences.

6 Smart Cooking Appliances

Smart cooking appliances, like smokers, allow you to cook a perfect meal away from home, without burning the house down! Wi-Fi technology makes these cooking appliances smart!

Swap & Shop

SWAP & SHOP is a classified advertising section of the Hill County Electric and Triangle Communications websites and newsletters. It is maintained as a service to customers and communities wanting to buy, sell and announce non-commercial items. To include an ad, go to itstriangle.com/swap-and-shop and complete the online form. Administrators will review the information within two business days and if approved, the ad will appear on the website. It will stay online for 60 days unless you notify us to remove or change it. It will also appear in any of the HCE & Triangle newsletters printed during that 60 day window. HCE and Triangle reserve the right to abbreviate ads. If the section is full, we will display ads on a first come, first-served basis.

Announcements

Great Montana Sheep Drive

September 3, 2017 in Reed Point, MT. Starts at 7:00 am with a pancake breakfast at the Fire Hall. Old time country fair with arts & craft and food booths, live auction, parade, sheep shearing demo, lamb cook off, gun fighters, log sawing contest, bale rolling contest, kid's games plus inflatables. Street dance starts at 6:00 P.M. For booth information call 406.326.2293, parade information call 406.780.1074, general information call 406.326.9919.

Family History Conference

September 21-24, at Big Horn Resort, Billings, MT. Presenters: CeCe Moore on genetic genealogy (DNA) and Thomas Jones on Five Ways to Prove Who Your Ancestor Was. Open to the public. Registration required (\$65 - \$124). See <http://montanamsgs.org/> for more details. For questions, contact blgsmarket@aol.com.

Agriculture

Farm for Lease

Farm for lease in Hill County, 3 miles west of Kremlin and 10 miles north with farm land (2240.92) and crop land (2218.91). Cash only lease. Current lease expires August 31, 2017 or completion of harvest in the fall of 2017. Contact Allan at 406.265.6839, cell 406.945.1070 or e-mail kathywoepfel@gmail.com.

Harrows

Noble 3-bar Tine-Tooth Harrows with mounting brackets and NEW spring teeth. Two 7' sections and five 6' sections. Also two 3' extensions for Melroe duckfoot. Asking \$1000.

Call 406.788.8166.

Automotive/Recreational

Lincoln Town Car Parts

90-93 Lincoln Town Car window regulators for sale. Front LH, part number 3553-1990L, 125-1685L and rear left, part number 3553-1991, 135-1686L. These are still new and in their shipping boxes because the project was abandoned. \$20 each or \$40 for the pair. Call 406.357.4282.

2014 F350

2014 F350, 4x4, King Ranch, diesel, SRW, long box with 76,000 miles. Kodiak Brown and Caribou two-tone paint. Extended premium 100,000 mi warranty-transferable. King Ranch leather interior with off road and camper packages, plus spray on bed liner. Call Arville Lammers at 406.632.4140. *(Pictures available at www.itstriangle.com)*

Miscellaneous For Sale

Tires

17 inch wheels with 10 ply tires for GMC Acadia, Chevy Traverse and other GM vehicles. Call 406.398.5330.

Longhorn Air Compressor/Gen/Welder Combo

New, never used 2015 Longhorn air compressor/generator/welder combo. Generator is 5,000 watts, 110-220. Welder is 20 -200 amps with leads. Gallons 30 ACFM 21.7-DCFM 31. Honda 13hp, pull and electric start. Paid \$6,500, asking \$4,250. Call 406.462.5521 after 9:00 pm or 406.567.2201.

Cutting and Welding Equipment

Lincoln electric AC/DC arc welder with numerous welding electrodes, a 65' extra heavy duty power cord, mounted on a hand truck for easy moving. Excellent condition. An oxygen/propane welding and cutting unit with oxygen tank, propane tank, victor gauges, 60' of hoses, two Smith lifetime guarantee cutting torches also mounted on a cart for easy moving. \$700.00. Will consider splitting the set up. Call 406.321.4008. *(Pictures available at www.itstriangle.com)*

Post Hole Digger and Canoe Trailer

Eight inch, three point post hole digger.

Asking \$50. Canoe trailer, single canoe.

Good condition. Asking \$40. Call 406.265.9785.

HCE Happenings

Last month, Hill County Electric (HCE) had approximately 460 account hours affected by outages. Of these hours:

Equipment/Material failure: 11

Underground fault: 192

WAPA or NWE: 210

Weather or wildlife caused: 22

Misc or unknown: 25

This compares to 686 hours one year ago.

