



[The Outlet]

On Outages: SDCEA Improves Communication to Members

BY PAUL ERICKSON || CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Many people remember the widespread electric outage on Christmas Day 2016. On that day, a severe wind storm slammed our region. Not only did it damage numerous Sangre de Cristo Electric Association distribution lines, it impacted electric transmission and distribution lines throughout Colorado and other western states.

Transmission lines are high-voltage electricity-carrying lines used to deliver power throughout the country as an essential component of the national power grid. When a transmission line is damaged, it affects power delivery to an extensive area. If a transmission line is down, it cannot supply power to regional substations.

Substations convert high-voltage power to lower voltages which are sent out on distribution lines such as those built and maintained by SDCEA to reach consumers at their home or business.

In the case of the Christmas Day 2016 outage, wind destroyed several of SDCEA's lines. Crews worked relentlessly in extreme weather conditions to repair those lines. The storm also damaged

transmission lines from Black Hills Energy, Xcel and the Western Area Power Administration, all of which supply power to our substations. If a transmission line is down, it must be repaired by the company that owns that transmission line before SDCEA can restore power to consumers through the distribution lines we own, build and maintain.

Unfortunately, that storm was so widespread, calls from thousands of people from around the western United States overwhelmed our 24-hour dispatch system, which is based off-site so it is not affected by local storms, and is shared with other electric providers. Worse, SDCEA's Buena Vista office phone lines also went down, as did access to the internet. This left the impression with some of our consumers that we were not working to restore power that day. That's understandable, but nothing could have



Paul A. Erickson

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been further from the truth. Our staff was as frustrated and impacted by this event as our consumers were.

It is always our goal to better serve you. We learned some valuable lessons that day and made it a top priority to make sure our communications to consumers would not be hindered in that way again. SDCEA reviewed and took immediate steps to strengthen its dispatch redundancy to respond to this unprecedented occurrence. In case we lose telephone or internet communications again, we now have a Facebook page, a Twitter account and a completely revamped website that allow us to post notices about outages with or without online service. Please check in and follow these accounts for up-to-date information on outages.

Could an unprecedented weather event happen again? Yes. We now have several communications options that we did not have previously. We are committed to continually working to review and improve these systems going forward.

Never assume that we know about an outage. We would much rather you call us than think that we already know about an outage. If you have an outage, call our dispatch 24/7, 365 days a year at 1-844-395-2412 or 719-395-2412 to report that outage. We understand that being without power is inconvenient and frustrating. One call is all that you need to make. SDCEA will then work around the clock, if necessary, to restore your service as quickly as possible. We encourage you to follow our Facebook and Twitter posts, as well as check our website for updates during outages.

When you call, you may get a live person who will verify your information and send it on to our crews. Or, you may get a message that we are aware of the outage, as the call center recognizes the phone number associated with the account that is currently experiencing an outage.

That's why it's important for you to keep your phone number current with SDCEA. We may also need to contact you to follow up on whether power has been restored. Sometimes we use your phone number to notify you of upcoming maintenance or planned outages, too. We do not call you to sell you stuff and we never sell your information to other parties.

And a note on preparedness. Have emergency supplies to sustain your household on-hand and easy to access while the power is out, such as battery-operated lanterns and non-perishable food and water. A complete list of emergency items to keep on hand may be found on our website, myelectric.coop under the Safety tab.

Following are some commonly-asked questions and some answers to those questions about outages.

How long does it take to restore power following an outage?

Removing a branch from a line can be relatively quick — it's just a matter of finding it. Replacing a downed line, a broken power pole or digging up buried cable to find and repair a fault can be a much longer process. Outages can last from minutes to hours, even days, depending on the severity of a storm or other event.

Your location also affects the time it takes to get power restored. If you live in a remote area, it might take SDCEA crews an hour or

more just to arrive on location (especially if they need to leave their home in the middle of the night). Then, they need to inspect equipment, determine the cause, and develop a plan to restore power safely.

Sometimes members call within a few minutes of their power going out wondering when it will be back on. In reality, our crews haven't had a chance to arrive on scene yet, or determine what's causing the problem.

One thing that is consistent, however, is that Sangre de Cristo crews, often braving dangerous conditions will do everything they can to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. It's a critically important, dangerous job that SDCEA crews take very seriously.

Why does my power sometimes blink?

A "blink" (a brief momentary interruption in service) is a normal part of a power delivery system that serves an important purpose. Two examples: Heavy snow dropping from trees may make contact with our lines. Strong winds can cause trees to make contact with wires. When either of those situations happen, your lights may dim or you might lose power for a few seconds as the system operates to identify and clear the problem. Without this protective equipment, members could experience a prolonged outage instead of just a blink.

How is power restoration prioritized?

SDCEA energizes just shy of 13,000 homes and businesses along more than 1,700 miles of power lines. That's a lot of ground to cover.

The main goal in any outage is to restore power safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible. Restoration priority is to first make sure transmission lines are functioning to supply power to substations (which then distribute power to thousands of consumers), so these lines would receive first priority if affected by an outage. Next, crews would make any needed repairs at substations, followed by repairing transformers and distribution lines — the last steps in the system that bring power to your home.

I'm out, but my neighbor isn't. Why?

Homes in a neighborhood may be fed by different distribution lines, different service lines or different transformers. It could be that the cause of the outage might be originating in the home and be unrelated to SDCEA's system. Even so, we'd prefer that you call us to let us know your power is out so we can identify the issue and get your power back on as soon as is possible.

Sangre de Cristo Youth Tour

BY ABBY BERRY

Tennis shoes. Check. Bottled water. Check. An eagerness to learn and lead. Check, check. If you're a high school student looking for the trip of a lifetime, then the Washington D.C. Youth Tour is the trip for you.

Imagine a chance to visit our nation's capital for one week, meet with more than 1,800 students from across the United States and visit with Colorado's senators and congressional representatives. The best part? It won't cost you a penny.

Colorado's electric cooperatives share a strong commitment to their communities and the consumers they serve. Sponsoring students for this exciting, educational trip is just one of the ways we invest in our youth.



Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc., 2018 Youth Tour representatives gather for a group photo on the Colorado State Capitol steps last June prior to their departure for Washington, D.C.

The weeklong Washington D.C. Youth Tour is jam-packed with sightseeing where history comes to life. While touring, students will visit many of the major monuments and memorials, including the Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument.

Students will also visit Capitol Hill where they will meet with Colorado senators and congressmen. Many past participants were so inspired by this experience that they later served as interns on the Hill, and many pursued a career in politics.

But Youth Tour is so much more than sightseeing. Students spend every waking minute together for a solid week and it's not uncommon for lasting friendships to form. In fact, many of Colorado's past participants ended up being college roommates, professional colleagues and lifelong friends. Youth Tour inspires many students to discover who they want to be.

"Colorado's electric cooperatives have participated in the Rural Electric Youth Tour program since 1994 and we've had a lot of

fun along the way," said Liz Fiddes, director of member services and education at the Colorado Rural Electric Association. "Each year, we take a group of approximately 34 students. To see their reactions to these breathtaking sights is an experience in itself. Not only do they live and breathe many of the most important moments in U.S. history, they also meet with student leaders from across the nation. It's a great opportunity to make lasting connections."

The 2019 Washington D.C. Youth Tour will take place June 13-20. Colorado's electric cooperatives are currently accepting applications and finalizing their selection process.

In addition to Colorado, more than 40 states also send students to D.C. for Youth Tour. On Monday, June 17, more than 1,800 students will gather for Youth Day and listen to inspiring guest speakers, including Mike Schlappi. Schlappi, an Olympic Gold Medalist, will share his emotional story and challenge students to take responsibility and be empowered throughout life's challenges.

"Youth Day is really something to see," Fiddes said. "Every year, we see a new group of students, but one thing is constant: the energy. These students are excited to be a part of this tour and it shows."

"I will always treasure the memories I made during my trip to Washington, D.C., and I cannot express how thankful I am to my co-op for sponsoring me," said one student about the 2018 Youth Tour. "I learned about how electric cooperatives work and visited historic places that brought history to life for me. This opportunity enabled me to head into my future strengthened and with a better understanding of my country."

Sangre de Cristo Youth Tour: June 13-20, 2019

- Open to current sophomores, juniors and seniors whose parent or guardian receives electric service from Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc.
- Deadline for application to be received: 4 p.m. Thursday, January 10.
- Application and instructions on SDCEA's website: myelectric.coop, click the Youth Tour icon.
- Questions? Email communications@myelectric.coop

"Being a part of Youth Tour means you're a part of a family," according to Chris McGinnis, communications specialist from Sangre de Cristo Electric Association. "It's more than a sightseeing trip, and these relationships don't end just because the week is over. Whether it's writing a letter of recommendation or providing career advice, we want our participants to know that we're here for them and we care."

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Virginia-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Q&A with Mallie Miles, Accounting Clerk II



Job description: Audit and close work orders, manage accounts payable, calculate and pay sales and use taxes, provide backup for customer service, support purchasing and managing material inventory, prepare closing journal entries, and assist with anything else that finds its way onto my desk.

Hometown? Buena Vista

How long have you worked at Sangre de Cristo Electric? 3 years

What is your favorite podcast? Criminal

Name a skill you have, unrelated to work. Needlepoint

Please share a fun fact about yourself. I grew up on a small ranch where my family raises buffalo.

What do you do outside of work for fun? I love to spend time on the river, riding horses, hiking in the high country and working in the garden. I also enjoy spending time with my family preserving the garden produce that we grow.

What outdoor activity haven't you tried, but would like to? Axe-throwing

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream? Salted cookie – from Louie's!

What's your favorite holiday movie? "Groundhog Day"

Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc. 2019 SCHOLARSHIP INFO

In 2019, Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc. will award one four-year scholarship at \$2,000 per year (which is available to a graduating high school senior only) and thirteen \$2,000 one-time scholarships. Industry associates may fund additional scholarships.

One application form covers all of these available scholarships. To obtain the application, please visit SDCEA's website, myelectric.coop. Click on the Community Tab> Youth Programs> Scholarships to download the application and for more information. You may also inquire about the scholarship at your high school counselor's office.

The scholarships may be used by any **full-time** student at any **accredited** two- or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school and at any level of the student's education.

To be eligible for these scholarships, **the applicant must be a DEPENDENT of a Sangre de Cristo Electric Association member (claims you on their tax return)**. Anyone with an active electric account in his or her name is considered a member. For

scholarship purposes, the **member must be a person, not a business or organization**.

Scholarship applicants will be judged on grade point average, ACT/SAT tests, activities, goals and need. One of the \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to the dependent of a Sangre de Cristo Electric employee or director. Another two of the \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded by draw from the remaining applicants not otherwise selected.

Scholarship applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, February 1, 2019.

Submit scholarship applications to:
Tracy Linza, Administrative Assistant III
Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc.
P. O. Box 2013, Buena Vista, CO 81211
Direct Line: 719-395-4136, FAX: 719-395-8742
Email: linza@myelectric.coop



Scholarship
&
Youth Tour
opportunities

APPLICATION DEADLINES:

Washington, D.C. Youth Tour
Thursday, January 10, 2019
4:30 p.m.

Scholarship application
Friday, February 1, 2019
4:30 p.m.

Please visit SDCEA's website, myelectric.coop. Click on the **Youth Programs** tile with the capitol icon on the home page for more information, directions to apply and to download applications for these programs **OR**, visit your high school's counseling office for information and application materials.

For more information or to have information and an application packet emailed or mailed to you, call 719-395-2412; toll-free 1-844-395-2412 or email communications@myelectric.coop.