

# GOOD NEWS TO START THE NEW YEAR

A local viewpoint

BY DAVID FRICK GENERAL MANAGER

On behalf of everyone at Morgan County Rural Electric Association, we wish everyone a happy New Year. As we roll into the last year of the “twenty-teens,” I’m pleased to provide some good news to our members.

At their November meeting, the Morgan County Rural Electric Association Board of Directors approved a budget for 2019 that did not require any changes to the rates charged to our members for electric service. In other words, the MCREA board and management team are proud to announce that there will not be a rate increase to our members again this year.

I think that it’s important to note that this is the third straight year that Morgan County REA has not raised our rates for electric service. The last rate increase MCREA enacted was in 2016, and that increase was less than 1 percent overall.

One of the important considerations for the decision to keep our rates steady stemmed from Tri-State Generation and Transmission’s announcement that it will not be increasing MCREA’s cost of purchasing wholesale power this year. Generally speaking, an increase in wholesale power costs from Tri-State (MCREA’s power provider) would be a major component in a decision to raise our rates we

charge to distribute electricity to our members. Tri-State’s decision to not increase our power costs was a significant factor that allowed the board of directors to make the determination to not raise rates to our membership again this year.

In addition to the purchased power expense, there are other components that must be considered when dealing with rates and rate increases. Electric cooperatives like Morgan County REA are not-for-profit entities, so our operating margins are narrower than investor-owned utilities. Electric cooperatives also generally serve rural areas; we have more miles of line to maintain and fewer meters per mile of line than more densely populated regions to offset those maintenance expenses. Other factors include (but are certainly not limited to) rising overhead costs and compliance with environmental regulations.

In the face of ever-increasing costs of doing business, keeping expenses to a minimum can be challenging. However, through continued and ongoing diligence by MCREA’s board, management staff and employees, we have done just that. We have a fantastic team of directors and employees that I feel have a genuine sense of service to our members, and I commend them all for their outstanding work.



DAVID FRICK

In addition to no rate increase for 2019, there’s more good news. In October, the Morgan County REA Board of Directors authorized patronage capital retirements totaling \$2.5 million for a complete retirement of 2003 and 2004 and partial retirement of 2005 MCREA allocations, along with a complete retirement of 1998, 1999 and 2000 and partial retirement of 2001 generation and transmission margin allocations.

This means those of you who received electric service from Morgan County REA during those years were sent a capital credits check in the mail last month, reflecting your contribution of capital to, and ownership of, the cooperative. If you were an MCREA member during the years listed above and you have not received a capital credits check, please contact the MCREA billing department.

Thank you to our members for allowing us to serve you. We’ll do everything we can to keep your lights on, keep you informed, provide quality service, and do so for as low an electric bill as possible.

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January 2019

## Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

### HOT WATER TANK TIP

Is your hot water tank warm to the touch? Consider insulating it to save 7 to 16 percent annually on water heating costs. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Source: energy.gov



## Stay Invulnerable Indoors

Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups. Test them to make sure they work.

# Deadline for College Scholarship Applications Around the Corner

A reminder to high school seniors and current college students: Completed application materials for Morgan County REA's college or vocational school scholarship opportunities must be post-marked or delivered to MCREA headquarters by February 1, 2019.

Morgan County REA, along with Tri-State Generation and Transmission and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, will sponsor a total of nine college or vocational education scholarships for students who reside in MCREA's service territory boundaries and whose parents or grandparents receive electric service from Morgan County REA.

MCREA will award five \$1,000 scholarships, with Tri-State offering two \$500 scholarships and Basin Electric sponsoring one \$1,000 scholarship, all for graduating high school seniors. Additionally, MCREA is offering one \$1,000 scholarship to a current postsecondary student who will return to college or trade school.

Only one set of application materials is necessary to apply for all college and postsecondary scholarships from all three cooperatives. (Christopher and Tamara Dreher, acct #xxx8100) Students applying for the \$1,000 current college student scholarship do not have to be previous MCREA scholarship winners to qualify.

Required application materials for all these scholarship opportunities may be delivered to the MCREA office, 734 Barlow Road,



▲ MCREA Board President Randy Graff (right) congratulates scholarship recipient Jonathan Gertner from Fort Morgan at the Morgan County REA annual meeting this past March.

Fort Morgan, or mailed to:

Scholarship Committee  
Morgan County REA  
P.O. Box 738  
Fort Morgan, CO 80701

Applications and more information about these scholarship opportunities can be found at Morgan County REA headquarters, on our website ([www.mcrea.org](http://www.mcrea.org)) or at your school's counseling office.



## MCREA Employees Recognized for Years of Service

Five Morgan County REA employees were recognized for their years of service to the cooperative at the MCREA Christmas party. From left, Bill Annan (25 years); Dave Henderson (20 years); Rob Baranowski (5 years); Ray Mann (5 years); Geoff Baumgartner (10 years). 

## MCREA Updating “Pull-Out List”

Our outside crews work diligently to keep the power going to our members — in good weather and bad. While we certainly hope that outages don’t occur during inclement weather, the possibility exists that our crews would need assistance from our members should these situations arise, primarily with pulling out equipment that might become stuck in heavy snow, mud, etc. (Robert and Bethany Grupp, acct #xxx8100) With this in mind, several years ago we created the “Pull-Out List”: a list of members who volunteer to assist crews with stuck vehicles. We are looking to update that list with existing and new volunteers.

Morgan County REA is asking members with the equipment to assist in adverse conditions to provide updated contact information so MCREA can contact you quickly should the need arise. If you are willing to help, please contact Deb Strauch at 970-867-5688.

## MCREA Conducting Pole Inspections

Morgan County REA will conduct pole inspections in its service territory, utilizing independent third-party contractors. The independent contractors are tentatively scheduled to begin inspecting MCREA’s electric poles sometime in January and are expected to run inspections through March.

These crews will be seen on four-wheelers around MCREA poles and infrastructure and they are authorized by MCREA to conduct their inspections. Inspectors will also have photo ID cards that identify them as authorized contractors for Morgan County REA.

If any members have questions about the pole inspections, please call MCREA headquarters at 970-867-5688.



### WIN \$25 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

Each month Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*!

Congratulations, James and Jeanie Collins (account # xxx9600) and Kerry and Sheri Hulkovich (account # xxx8300). You saw your names and account numbers in the November edition of *Colorado Country Life*. You received a \$25 credit on your bill!

There are two more MCREA member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call Member Services at 970-867-5688 by January 31 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Have You Ever Seen a Power Line Gallop?

Galloping power lines may sound ridiculous, but they really do occur and can be dangerous. These lines can bounce and buck enough to hit another line, damaging themselves enough to cause a power outage or even fall to the ground.

The most common cause of galloping lines is ice that builds up on one side of a power line as a result of strong winds. This buildup creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the normally round line. This change in airflow can cause the power line to bounce.

Once galloping starts, there is not much a power company can do to alleviate it until winds die down. This is why many power lines have objects like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to the line. These are devices placed on power lines to help reduce the galloping of lines and prevent potential danger.

If you encounter galloping lines, stay away, warn others to stay away and contact Morgan County REA. In addition to the possibility of power outages, there is a danger of the lines or other electrical equipment breaking loose and falling to the ground.

Storms at any time of the year can pack damaging winds, which can knock down power lines and blow trees and limbs onto power lines, ultimately causing power outages. Keep the following safety tips in mind after a wind storm:

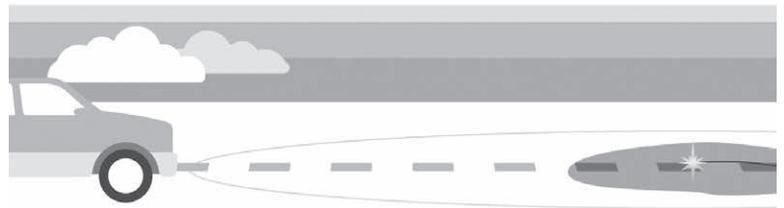
- When you see power lines on the ground, stay away, warn others to stay away and contact Morgan County REA or 911. Lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live.
- Any utility wire, including telephone or cable lines that are sagging or down, could be in contact with an energized power line, also making them dangerous. So, stay away from all lines.
- Be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard. Downed power lines can energize objects around it, such as chain link fences and metal culverts.
- Keep in mind that a line that is “dead” could still become energized during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators.
- Never drive over a downed line. It could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.

# Downed and Dangerous

If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 ft.** away – so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify the local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed power line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a non-conductive item – this will not prevent injury or death!

Source: *ESFI.org*

- If you are in a car that comes in contact with a downed power line, stay in your vehicle. Wait until the utility crew arrives and de-energizes the line. Warn others not to approach the car. Only exit the car in the case of fire; and, in doing so, be sure to jump out and away from the car with both feet together. Then hop away while continuing to keep both feet together.