

# RELIABILITY CHALLENGES IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD

BY TOM WALCH CEO

Do we provide power when you need it? That's the fundamental test that the Grand Valley Power team must pass if we are to deliver on our mission: *Empowering Lives with Hometown Service.*

While we have a track record that is the envy of many utilities, during this time of year power outages seem to crop up with increasing frequency. Over the past few weeks our consumers have experienced outages resulting from high winds blowing a tree into our lines, a motorist knocking down one of our poles, an airplane striking our power lines and a squirrel that made the mistake of climbing on equipment in one of our substations. This summer we can expect more of the same, along with outages due to lightning, wildfires and equipment failures.

Since we live in an imperfect world, we can't expect perfection when it comes to system reliability. Where do we stand? Over the past five years, Grand Valley Power has finished either second or third among Colorado's 22 cooperatives when it comes to reliability benchmarks. Our average service availability is 99.99% — a mark referred to in the industry as “four nines.” For a system as complex as our electric distribution grid, these are excellent results. This means our consumers enjoy uninterrupted electric energy 99.99% of the time.

Sustained performance like this does not happen by accident. It is the result of careful planning, continual investment in system upgrades and replacements, attention to detail in design and construction and prompt response to outages. Can we do better? While we can always improve, any significant improvement comes with a significant cost. At some point, there is a diminishing benefit from chasing greater service availability. Our challenge is to strike the right balance between reliability and affordability. The balancing effort includes a constant search for new and better ways to guard against the forces of nature

— lightning, wind, trees and all kinds of critters — that impact reliability.

Communications with consumers during big outages is also challenging. During normal, day-to-day operations, our local, hometown character provides many opportunities for personal interactions with GVP team members. These communications enhance the consumer experience. I can't tell you how many times our members have reached out and thanked me because we strive to personally answer all phone calls during business hours, instead of routing calls through a seemingly endless menu of voicemail options. This hands-on, personal contact becomes problematic when hundreds of consumers are trying to contact us at the same time for outage information. Since our resources to handle high call volumes are limited, callers will get the dreaded voice recording or busy signal in these situations. Again, we could address the problem by spending more money, but we have concluded that this kind of investment does not return the best value for our consumers.

Using modern technology that many of us have at our fingertips, will give consumers new ways to stay up to date on outage status. Our communications staff provides the most current outage information available on our GVP website, Facebook and Twitter platforms. Soon we will be able to provide real-time updates with text messages and emails to consumers. As more consumers use these tools, phone lines will be freed up for more critical communications, and staff members will be able to devote full attention to outage restoration.

The enhanced metering infrastructure that we are currently deploying will also help us improve reliability. The data provided will enable us to identify and address weak spots, overloads and failing equipment before they ever result in a power outage. When an outage occurs, it will notify us



TOM WALCH, CEO

instantaneously. It will also help us confirm when power has been restored.

The silver lining in the dark cloud of major power outages is visible when I see the way GVP team members come together during the restoration process. Everyone is pitching in so that our workers are kept safe and consumer inconvenience is minimized. Of course, our tone may change from friendly and accommodating to workmanlike and efficient during times like these. No matter the tone, believe me when I say that the focus of the team is always on providing the best service that we can for our members, and we will do everything we can to get the lights back on as soon as possible.

## COMMENTS TO THE CEO

You are a member of a cooperative and your opinion does count. If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please let me know by writing to Ask the CEO, P.O. Box 190, Grand Junction, CO 81502, or send an email to me at [twalch@gvp.org](mailto:twalch@gvp.org). Check out our website at [gvp.org](http://gvp.org).

## BOARD MEETING NOTICE

Grand Valley Power board meetings are open to the members, consumers and public. Regularly scheduled board meetings are held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the headquarters building located at 845 22 Road, Grand Junction, Colorado.

The monthly agenda is posted in the lobby of the headquarters building 10 days before each meeting, and posted on the GVP website. If anyone desires to address the board of directors, please let us know in advance and you will be placed on the agenda.

## Director Petitions Due June 24

There are three director seats up for election at the Grand Valley Power Annual Meeting in August. Nominating petitions are available at the Grand Valley Power office located at 845 22 Road. Signed petitions must be returned no later than close of business on June 24, 2019.

A few reminders for those running for the board:

1. To be eligible to become or remain a director, a person must be a Grand Valley Power member for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the election and receive electric service from Grand Valley Power at the member's primary residence.
2. A director cannot be engaged in a competing enterprise or in other businesses involving a conflict of interest. Grand Valley Power's bylaws provide in-depth information on director qualifications, terms, elections, meetings and officers.

Election procedures for the board of directors are governed by Colorado statute. The cooperative's bylaws and election policy comply with statutory requirements. These bylaws and policies can be found on GVP's website at [gvp.org/director-elections](http://gvp.org/director-elections). Upon request, these written documents can be picked up at GVP's headquarters or mailed to you.

### MEMBERS PARTICIPATION REQUESTED!

As a cooperative member, each Grand Valley Power eligible account holder or spouse has the right to vote for up to three directors to be elected. Members have only one ballot per election, regardless of the number of accounts with Grand Valley Power. Ballots will be mailed during the month of July. Members can return these ballots by mail or at the annual meeting.

The Annual Meeting of Grand Valley Power and the election of directors will be held on August 8, 2019, at Colorado Mesa University at 5:30 p.m.



## REDUCE YOUR CLUTTER!

Tired of sorting through junk mail and bills every evening? Take the simple step of signing up to receive a paperless GVP bill!

### How to Go Paperless

In your GVP SmartHub account:

- Click My Profile
- Click My Information
- Find, Update My Paperless Settings
- Turn the service ON

We'll notify you each month when your bill is ready.

Don't have a SmartHub account? Start one today!

It's FREE. Visit [gvp.org/ways-pay](http://gvp.org/ways-pay) for more information.

### GLADE PARK MOVIES UNDER THE STARS PRESENTS:

# INCREDIBLES 2

- FREE admission
- Children's games and hay rides
- Food and beverage available for purchase

Proceeds benefit the Glade Park Volunteer Fire Department

Sponsored by



Visit [gvp.org/hometown-partnerships](http://gvp.org/hometown-partnerships) for more information.

**Fri. July 12**  
Grill opens at 6 p.m.  
Movie at dusk

Glade Park Volunteer Fire Department  
16400 DS Rd.



## YOUR POWER OUTAGE PANTRY

We do our best to avoid power outages, but unfortunately, Mother Nature occasionally has different plans. Stay ahead of the storm by stocking your pantry with a variety of non-perishable items.

Set these items aside for extended outages only, and your storm prep will be a breeze!

- BEANS
- CANNED FRUIT
- CANNED TUNA
- CANNED VEGETABLES
- CEREAL
- DRIED FRUITS
- DRIED MEATS/JERKY
- GRAHAM CRACKERS
- PASTA
- RICE
- SPAM
- OATMEAL



Don't forget to stock up on disposable goods, like paper plates, napkins, plastic cutlery and cups.



# TEN WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

BY CHRISTMAS WHARTON



Never use electrical cords that feel warm to the touch or are damaged in any way.

Safety starts with you.

#NationalSafetyMonth



June is National Safety Month and a great time to take a look around your home to ensure that you are doing all you can to provide a happy and safe place for your family and loved ones. Kick off this important month by taking a few minutes to make 10 easy changes to your home for year-round safety.

1. **Keep a list of emergency numbers** in your cell phone, on paper and in your emergency kit. Include such numbers as emergency (911), poison control (800-222-1222), doctors' numbers, parents' numbers and other close relatives, neighbors or friends.
2. **Check your home for furniture or devices that may not be stable**, such as bookshelves, television stands and televisions. You can purchase safety straps or hardware to secure these items to the wall to avoid any accidents.
3. **Check any cords you may have**, including blinds, phones and electrical devices. Cords can lead to a tripping accident or children can become tangled in them, so they should be tied up and out of their reach.

4. **Get a pill organizer** if you're taking one or multiple medications on a prolonged schedule. It can be quite easy to lose track of your doses. Don't put your personal health at risk.
5. **Put together a first aid kit** and keep it in your home for emergencies. Part of staying safe is being ready to take care of injuries quickly and appropriately. Make sure it includes adhesive bandages, gauze pads, a wound-cleaning agent, scissors, tweezers and adhesive tape.
6. **Test your GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupters)**, which are outlets that have a red test button — usually in bathrooms, kitchens and outdoors. Plug in a nightlight and push the test button. If the power goes off, the GFCI is working. Press the reset button to restore power. If the power does not go off, replace the GFCI.
7. **Keep your car keys next to you while you sleep.** If you hear any suspicious noises in the middle of the night, you can turn on the alarm on your car to scare away any intruders.
8. **Ensure fire extinguishers are on every floor** and in locations where there may not be an exit.
9. **Make sure your house number is clearly marked** on your mailbox and on your house so it can be seen easily.
10. **Check electrical cords for any frays** or to see if they exhibit any warmth. If so, unplug them immediately.

Taking these quick steps now can do a lot to reduce the risks of potential problems later on. When you keep these items on your mind and review them from time to time, you will be sure to provide your family with a happy, safe home.



Find more tips online at [gvp.org/safe-homes](http://gvp.org/safe-homes).

## Grand Valley Power Takes Home COMMUNICATION AWARDS

Grand Valley Power came home with four awards this year for excellent newsletter content. *Colorado Country Life's* Excellence in Newsletters awards are given to organizations with outstanding articles and photography in four different categories: best safety article, best newsletter photo, best story on a community program and best article on an industry situation.

Each year, Colorado's cooperative editors — from all 22 electric cooperative organizations — gather together and, during the meeting, award winners are

announced. Cooperatives have three divisions, which is dependent on the number of meters within each service area. GVP is a Division 2 cooperative.

"I was so surprised and elated to accept these awards for Grand Valley Power's *Colorado Country Life* magazine," said Christmas Wharton, GVP communications specialist. "Each and every day, whether it's in print or online, my colleagues and I strive to be a source of information to our communities and members. Thank you to all who were involved in the selection, and congratulations to all the winners!"



Christmas Wharton is the communications specialist at Grand Valley Power. The awards were for the following 2018 newsletter photos and articles:

**First Place – Best Newsletter Photo**

*(Lives Wires and Fires)*

**First Place – Best Safety Article**

*(Home Checkup)*

**Second Place – Best Story on a Community Program**

*(Women In Power)*

**Second Place – Best Safety Article**

*(Call Before You Dig).*

# Avian Protection and Diverting Birds

BY CHRISTMAS WHARTON



Two ospreys are now much safer from the possibility of striking a live wire thanks to a new nest platform.

Osprey wingspan can be upwards of 5 to 6 feet, according to National Geographic. New construction power lines (and retrofit of old line) take long wingspan into account to help large birds of prey avoid striking two points of contact on a live wire.



With the help of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Grand Valley Power constructed a large osprey bird nest from approved materials. Seen in the pictures is before and after final construction.



Raptors, otherwise known as birds of prey that include osprey, eagles and owls, hunt high in the air and often perch on large pine or cottonwood trees. When these natural perches are not available, these raptors unfortunately see utility poles as a great location. Grand Valley Power is doing its part to help mitigate that as much as possible. GVP has had an Avian Protection Plan for a number of years. The operations department is highly conscientious about protecting migratory birds in GVP communities (as well as other animals, such as raccoons and squirrels). It's an important set of guidelines that help reduce risks to bird species that can result in electrocutions and collisions with distribution lines. This can cause problems for both birds and GVP members.

These guidelines were cooperatively developed by the Avian Power Line

Interaction Committee (APLIC), EDM International, Inc. and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They are intended to provide a “toolbox” from which utilities can tailor a plan that will best fit their needs while furthering the conservation of avian species and improving system reliability and customer service. It's not as easy as it may seem though. Within the mitigation plan, knowing what types of birds and what time of year bird nesting is high is just part of the legwork necessary. Grand Valley Power also works closely with local agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure all permits and regulations are met. Ultimately, if regulations are not followed, fines can be in the thousands of dollars.

Recently, we worked with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to partner on constructing a new home for a pair of ospreys that wanted to build a nest atop one

of our power poles in De Beque. With these guidelines on nest building, our linemen put together the base for a new home (see photos). The pole was set and we crossed our fingers that the pair would decide to nest there. Luckily, when we visited in late April our plan had worked —the ospreys were new homeowners!

“Many of our protection measures aren't necessarily visible from the ground, and technology, like many things, keeps evolving to better protect our bird and animal population,” says Bill Barlow, operations supervisor. “When feasible, we place lines underground to further reduce the risk. We look at all avenues and decide accordingly.”

If you want to report a bird issue near GVP power lines or facilities, please call GVP's main office at 970-242-0040.

## On the Road to Retirement: Steve Don

BY CHRISTMAS WHARTON

After more than 27 years of working at Grand Valley Power, Steve Don, manager of engineering, retired.

“I was first drawn to work for GVP because I wanted to be with a smaller power company and directly involved in the day-to-day engineering of the system. I first started as a staff engineer and eventually moved into the manager role,” Don said.

For those of you who don't know, electric engineers who work with electric distribution systems help design, plan and study it to ensure safe and



After 27 years of working in the engineering department at Grand Valley Power, Steve Don's last day of work was April 10.

reliable service. They are the brains of the network and provide input for planning electricity needs for the future.

“Some of the best times I've had were working on challenges of maintaining and expanding the GVP power system,” Don reminisced.

For now, Don's plans are to enjoy the great outdoors and fish more often. You'll see him exploring more of the West. Grand Valley Power wants to thank him for his dedication not only to our organization, but also to each and every member.