

YOUR UNIQUE SOURCE OF POWER

BY PAUL WESSLUND

You have a unique story to tell about yourself because you are part of an electric cooperative community. But if you're like a lot of electric co-op consumer-members, you might not feel you know enough to tell that story well. So, here's some help.

About one in 10 Americans receives power the way you do: from an electric co-op. Electric co-ops belong to the people they serve: you and your neighbors. Electric co-ops were first developed in the 1930s because city utilities, owned by investors wanting to make a profit, ignored rural America — they didn't think there was enough money to be earned there. So, people in rural communities met with each other and formed their own local electric co-ops.

October is National Co-op Month, the time of year when cooperatives across the

country celebrate the many ways co-ops are unique and, more importantly, the consumer-members they serve. This year, we're focusing on our ties to the local community. Your co-op was built by the community, for the community, so let's take a look at what that means for you, the consumer-members of Morgan County Rural Electric Association:

Your co-op is here to stay. Since Morgan County REA belongs to the consumer-members it serves with safe, reliable, affordable energy, it's not going to move out of the country or even across the state. It's staying right where it is.

Your co-op knows you. No two co-ops are alike. Across the country, there are more than 900 electric co-ops. Because each of those co-ops belong to the people who live there, the co-op listens to the community it is a part of. Whether it's working with

the latest energy efficiency technologies or keeping the electric grid safe and secure, your electric co-op can offer solutions that make the most sense locally.

Your co-op cares about your community. The co-op's top priority is to power the community. It is not owned by faraway, or even nearby, investors looking only for a good return on their money. MCREA also partners with local organizations on community events, fundraisers, youth programs and more. Your co-op is made up of your friends and neighbors. By investing in the local community, your electric co-op supports economic development and prosperity for all, right here at home.

And these are just a few ways you and your electric co-op are one of a kind.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



October 2019

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Cooler weather is on the way! Heating requires more energy than any other system in your home, typically making up about 42% of your energy bill. With proper equipment maintenance and upgrades like additional insulation and air sealing, you can save about 30% on your energy bill.

Source: energy.gov

MCREA Celebrates National Cooperative Month

October is National Cooperative Month, and Morgan County REA will celebrate by giving consumer-members the opportunity to win \$25 off their regular electric bill.

Beginning Tuesday, October 1, MCREA will have a box in the office lobby for members to register for a drawing. **Each Friday in October, one member's name will be drawn from the box and that member will receive a \$25 credit on their electric bill.**

To enter, members must register at the MCREA office at 734 Barlow Road during regular business hours. Only one entry will be allowed per member for the entire month. MCREA will not discard the entries throughout the month, so once you register in the office, your name is eligible for all remaining drawings. (Guy and Sherry Gould, acct #xxx6100) Thank you to all MCREA consumer-members for being a part of your local electric cooperative.



Too Hot to Handle

Watch out for **overheated outlets**. If an electrical outlet becomes so hot you cannot leave your hand on it, there is potential for a fire. Unplug everything from the outlet and contact a licensed electrician immediately.

IT'S LARGE AND IN CHARGE: RESPECT THE MIGHTY SUBSTATION

You may live near or drive by a substation each day and not give it much thought — unless you happen to be an electrical engineer or utility employee.

Although they look like something that could transform into a giant-sized, building-stomping futuristic robot, substations play an important role in providing electricity to your work or home.

Fenced-in substations are part of the electrical generation, transmission and distribution system. Transformers are contained inside many of them, and their job—as its name implies—is to transform voltage from high to low or vice versa, depending on its location on the distribution path.

Besides containing transformers, substations usually house switches, protective devices and control equipment. In large substations, circuit breakers are used to interrupt any short circuits or overloads that may occur.

Substations carry high voltages of electricity and they should be respected. Here are some safety tips from Morgan County REA:

- Never go near a substation.
- Teach children to never go near a substation or climb its fence to retrieve a ball or pet. Let them know to tell a parent or adult who should call Morgan County REA to report the incident at 970-867-5688.
- In general, teach children about the dangers of electricity from a young age.
- If a transformer near your home catches on fire, do not try to put out the fire yourself — water and electricity don't mix. Call 911 to report the fire.
- If you see an issue with or notice something unusual about a substation, transformer or power line, contact Morgan County REA. Never try to address a problem yourself.

Once you have the safety tips down, consider a fun fact to know about transmission substations. There are three types: step-up, step-down and distribution. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

- A step-up version receives electric power from a nearby generating facility and uses a large power transformer to increase the voltage so it can travel to distant locations.
- Step-down transmission substations are located at switching points on an electrical grid and connect different parts of the electrical system.
- Finally, distribution substations are located near end-users like you and me and change voltages to lower levels to power homes and businesses.

For more information about substations, transformers and anything else concerning electricity, call us at 970-867-5688.



▲ Substations carry high voltages of electricity and they should be respected. Never go near a substation.

COLORADO COOPERATIVES SPONSOR TOUCHSTONE ENERGY JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SALE

On Tuesday, August 27, over \$500,000 went to rural young people who brought championship livestock to the Colorado State Fair. The annual Junior Livestock Sale, sponsored by Colorado's electric cooperatives, is the largest event of its kind in Colorado and the championship event for the state's 4-H and FFA youth. According to state fair officials, the 2019 sale included the record \$66,000 sale of the grand champion market beef raised by Shae Stone of Eaton.

The sale is sponsored each year by Morgan County REA, *Colorado Country Life*, the Colorado Rural Electric Association, the Colorado Rural Electric Member Services group, Tri-State Generation and Transmission and 18 other electric co-ops in Colorado. The young exhibitors who won champion; reserve champion; first, second and third place in their livestock divisions have the opportunity to auction their animals at this sale. All proceeds from the sale go directly to the education funds of the youth exhibitors. (Brenda and Dana Sharp account # XXX3900)

"The electric cooperatives in Colorado are honored to sponsor this event, especially since most of the exhibitors live in electric co-op territory," said Dave Henderson, MCREA's director of external affairs.

For the last 39 years, gross sales have totaled more than \$10.8

million, all of which went directly to the agricultural youth who raised the animals.

According to the sale's preliminary report, participants in and around MCREA's service territory at this year's Junior Livestock Sale included:

- The Grand Champion Beef exhibited by Shae Stone of Eaton earned \$66,000 (bid by Sam Brown and Family).
- The Grand Champion Hog exhibited by Avery Kimble earned \$19,000.
- The Grand Champion Lamb exhibited by David Vetter of Bennett earned \$14,000.
- The Grand Champion Goat exhibited by Soren Freund of Elizabeth earned \$6,000.
- The Grand Champion Rabbits exhibited by Chloe Smith of Yuma earned \$3,700.
- The Grand Champion Chickens exhibited by Miles Rutledge of Yuma earned \$4,000.
- The Grand Champion Turkey exhibited by Colton Steinke of Eaton earned \$4,000.

Congratulations to all these great kids from MCREA and Colorado's Touchstone Energy cooperatives.

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— Dave Henderson, MCREA director of external affairs



▲ Jordan Kendrick from Fort Morgan with her first place lightweight blackface lamb



▲ Courtney Griffith from Brush with her Reserve Champion middleweight crossbred hog

SMART DEVICES: SMART, BUT NOT ALWAYS SECURE

For many of us, buying and using technology to make our homes smarter and interconnected is as tempting as walking through a candy store as a kid.

Although not found in every household, many U.S. homes have one or two components, such as a smart security system complete with cameras, a smart thermostat or a know-it-all “voice assistant” like as Amazon’s Alexa. The rest of our homes range from doing things the old-fashioned way — no smart devices at all — to having a home decked out in every smart technology one could imagine.

According to Statista, a company specializing in market and consumer data, it is forecasted that North Americans will spend \$63 billion in the smart home market in 2022.

Although convenient, smart devices come with their own set of security concerns. Canada’s CBC News hired “ethical” hackers

to hack a family’s smart home and they got in, literally. “All it took was a white van, a team of three hackers and a phishing email to remotely unlock ... the front door,” CBC reported.

This eye-opening scenario is not intended to scare people; rather we encourage you to give your smart devices serious thought before diving in. Security measures for smart devices are similar to the steps we should take in our daily lives to protect us against seedy scammers and hackers everywhere.

For example, be leery of emails or calls asking for personal information, such as login info or passwords. And although everyone loves to use the same password like “abc123” for everything, doing so can make your smart devices vulnerable. (Note: It’s not a good idea to use “abc123.” Be creative and make them hard to crack.) And although it seems obvious, never use the

factory-set password; change it immediately.

Many tech companies are considering and others have already switched to two-step authentication for the smart devices they sell. Although the extra step can feel like a pain, the two-step process is a good thing; it is a valuable step in keeping you and your family safe and your conversations private.

Outsiders can’t access your device or account without the code provided in the second security step — even if they guessed your “SweetHomeAlabama1973” password (or whatever). For more in-depth technology advice, consult an information technology professional. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org. And if your password is actually “SweetHomeAlabama1973,” we apologize; it was intended for illustrative purposes only.

Keep Cyber Invaders at Bay: Smart Device Technology Tips

Although not an exhaustive list and not written by security experts, Safe Electricity and MCREA recommend these basic tips to make your smart devices less hackable and more secure:

1. Never click a link in an email claiming to be from a security- or smart home-related company, even if it looks official. Scammers and hackers get sign-in information and passwords this way, which they can use to hack your smart technology.
2. Although tempting, don’t use the same

- password for all of your devices.
3. Absolutely change factory-set passwords provided by the manufacturer.
4. Make your passwords complex and challenging.
5. If you do receive an email from your smart device manufacturer, see if the email address the company used is the same as the one it used to contact you in the past. These emails should be general in nature and should never ask for personal or login information.

6. Never give out login, password or other personal information in an email, over the phone or for any other reason unless you are the one contacting the company directly via verified phone number or other trusted method of contact.
7. Regularly update the device’s software so that it is protected by the latest security.
8. Unless hackers make themselves known, it can be hard to detect if a smart device was hacked until the obvious happens.
9. If it was hacked, your gadget might be slower than usual or unresponsive or it might compulsively reboot.
10. If you are tech savvy, keep watch on the IP addresses that access the devices.

Disclaimer: Tips are designed to increase awareness. For expert and in-depth technology advice, contact an information technology professional or manufacturer. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

 **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 Jason Bowers (account #xxx3600). You saw your name and account number in the August edition of *Colorado Country Life*. You received a \$25 credit on your bill.

Sorry, Clint Langley (account # xxx9400); we didn’t hear from you. Your name and account number appeared in August’s *Colorado Country Life*.

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 October 31 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

■ Morgan County REA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.