

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2020



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White River Electric Association, Inc., strives to provide its member-consumers with safe, reliable and responsible electric energy and other services at the most reasonable costs possible while remaining committed to customer and community service.

We Love Our Community

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ GENERAL MANAGER



ALAN MICHALEWICZ

Our community and membership received difficult news last month when Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association made the announcement that it will close the Colowyo Mine and the Craig Station Units by 2030. When we heard the announcement our thoughts immediately went to the employees and our communities and we recognize that the impact will be far reaching. Colowyo Mine has been a valued consumer-member of WREA for decades and the Craig units have provided our region with safe and reliable power since the 1970s.

The electric utility industry is undergoing rapid evolutions as it moves away from traditional load-based resources to more renewable generation. White River Electric would prefer to see Colowyo produce coal for the Craig Station power plant for generations to come but those decisions are not within our control. White River Electric was vocal as an advocate for the recent Collom Pit Expansion as it faced the stringent permitting process. Prior to that, we were excited to join with Tri-State on the “We Can” campaign to help educate the public on Colowyo’s environmentally-sound operations, which featured local stories and WREA member faces. Unfortunately, these campaigns were no match for the legislative and regulatory pressures that drove the recent closures of these facilities.

Tri-State serves a diverse membership and many of their 43 members have long pushed for an increase in renewable energy and a departure from coal generation. The

combination of Tri-State member and regulatory pressures led Tri-State to develop its Responsible Energy Plan that increased the use of cost competitive renewables and addressed coal production and generation in Colorado and New Mexico. Tri-State considered a full array of options, including converting the coal plants to natural gas, selling them to other buyers, performing upgrades or other efficiency improvements, and whether technological improvements like carbon capture could postpone retirement, but these options were either not cost effective or not technologically viable — or both.

One of Meeker’s greatest strengths is its resilience and the determination to stand together as a community during challenging times. That has not changed. White River Electric is pleased that so many of our members have been vocal in their support for the affected employees, families and businesses. We are eager to work with Tri-State and community leaders on economic development efforts over the next several years. We are also grateful that local and statewide political leaders have recognized the impact these closures will have on our region.

White River Electric is a member of Tri-State, but most importantly, we are a cooperative that is made up of our consumer-members who are our friends and family. We appreciate your comments, your passion for our community and your patience as we work through the challenges that face our industry in the years to come.

DO YOUR PART TO KEEP LINeworkERS SAFE

Imagine this scenario: It's nearing 5 p.m. on a workday. Your boss wants that last-minute report, your kids need to be picked up from basketball practice and you are running late. You jump in your car and, on the way, you approach a utility truck on the side of the road, lift extended and crews working. You don't have time to slow down so you rush through it and ignore the orange cones nearby.

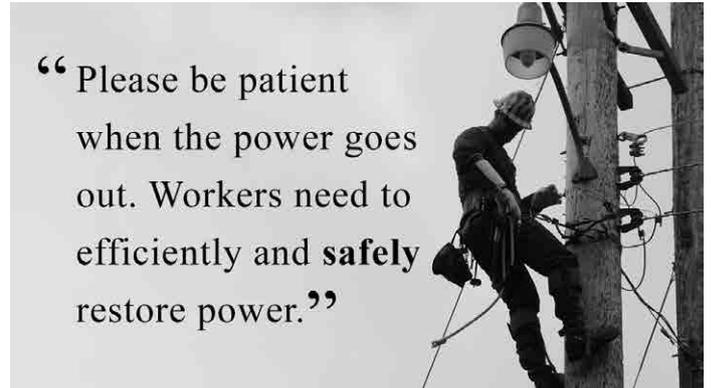
Or this one: You're having a garage sale and you think posting a sign on a utility pole won't hurt. Everyone does it, right?

In reality, both of these scenarios could injure or kill one of our lineworkers.

The job of an electric lineworker is not easy and the dangers don't just include working with high-voltage lines. Lineworkers take great pride in providing a service to their community, but their job involves several hazards.

We ask you to do your part to keep them safe:

1. Slow down and move over in work zones. Cars or trucks that go too fast not only endanger workers on the ground, but driving too fast or not moving over can also put a lineworker who is working high up in a bucket in danger by causing it to move or sway.



“Please be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to efficiently and safely restore power.”

2. Do not post anything on a utility pole, especially with staples, nails or tacks. These can puncture insulated gloves or other protective clothing and expose workers to high voltages.
3. Never plug a generator into an indoor or outdoor wall outlet. The power that backfeeds into the electric line could electrocute a utility worker.
4. Please be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to efficiently and safely restore power.

We appreciate your help in keeping your White River Electric family safe while they work to keep the lights on for you and your loved ones.

Four Electrical Safety Tips for Winter

BY ABBY BERRY

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because, during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, such as space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the United States due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1. Don't overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or power strips

for appliance connections — they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed a minimum of 3 feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and

heating pads. Look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator before plugging in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Keep Your Furry Friends Safe Around Electricity

You do all you can to keep your pets healthy: You take them to the veterinarian for checkups, feed them well and ensure they are up to date on vaccinations. After all, for many people, pets are part of the family.

Two-thirds (67%) of U.S. households, or about 85 million families, own at least one pet, according to the 2019-2020 National Pet Owners Survey. The survey was conducted by the American Pet Products Association and the numbers are up 11% from 1988.

There is something else you can do for your pets: Keep them safe around electricity. White River Electric and Safe Electricity offer these tips:

- Puppies and other pets love to chew on electrical cords. Keep cords out of sight or hidden with a cord cover. Provide teething or play alternatives.
- Watch your pet around dangling or sagging cords, including phone or tablet charging cables. Unplug charging cables once your devices are charged. Not only do they draw a small amount of energy when not in use, but the dangling cords are just too tempting for curious animals.
- Watch where you place lamps and other plugged-in items. Lamps can be a fire hazard if they are knocked over, especially if they have halogen bulbs.

- Do not leave your pet alone around items that get hot: curling irons and straighteners, an outdoor grill, a portable heater and other electric appliances, including cooktops.

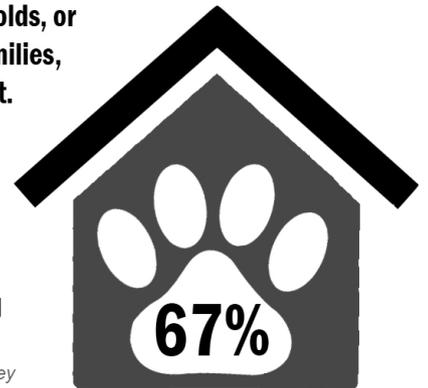
Pet proof your home much like you would for a baby or toddler. If you suspect your pet has been shocked or burned, take it to the vet right away. Owners may not realize a pet has been shocked until a few hours later when it has trouble breathing. Other symptoms include ulcers in the mouth and lesions on the tongue and gums.

67% of U.S. households, or about 85 million families, own at least one pet.

Keep pets safe around electricity.

Safe Electricity.org

*Source: 2019-2020 APPA National Pet Owners Survey



SWEET SENTIMENTS CAN GO WRONG

Having red and silver heart-shaped metallic balloons delivered to a loved one on Valentine's Day is a sweet gesture, but metallic balloons are filled with helium and are made of a type of nylon with a thin external metal coating. The metal coating has the ability to conduct electricity. If released outdoors, metallic balloons can come into contact with overhead power lines or electrical substations, causing power outages and fires. For more power line safety tips, visit SafeElectricity.org.



February is "scholarship season" for White River Electric. Using funds from unclaimed capital credits, WREA is fortunate to be able to offer renewable scholarships to graduating seniors. Scholarship applications and details can be found at wrea.org.

Application deadline is Thursday, February 6.

Wildlife Woes With Electrical Equipment



◀ Although small birds can sit on power lines without a problem, larger birds tend to build nests at the tops of poles, which can cause faults and other problems.

Besides being cute, fun to watch or simply slithery, animals can disrupt power. Although we do all we can to prevent animal interference by using equipment guards, anti roosting devices or other animal-friendly deterrents, sometimes our efforts are no match for persistent and curious critters who use overhead power lines as a superhighway or substations as a nesting ground.

According to the Electrical Engineering Portal, the following classes of animals have caused shorts and subsequent power outages or service disruptions:

1. Squirrels love to use power lines as their overhead highway and Meeker has plenty of them. They are agile and crafty — oftentimes equipment guards and other deterrents cannot keep them away, much like a squirrel outsmarting a bird feeder. If they touch the power line and pole simultaneously, the electric current travels through them and their demise can cause problems with power transmission.
2. Mice, rats and gophers sometimes cause interruptions in service by gnawing through underground cables. These offenders and others can also try to make a home in a substation, which often does not

- turn out well for them and can cause a hiccup in power distribution for us.
3. Birds of different species can cause different types of problems. Although small birds can sit on a wire without a problem, some larger varieties like to build nests at the tops of poles, on transmission towers and in substations. Nesting material can cause faults (abnormal electric currents), and bird droppings can contaminate insulators, according



to EEP. Other times, large birds with long wing spans can touch a live power line with one wing tip and something else with the other and become a conductor for the voltage to pass through them. This is called “bridging.”

4. Snakes can disrupt service in both substations and underground service. They can squeeze through

small spaces, travel upward and have enough length to bridge from one current to another, causing a problem.

5. Fire ants are often classified as animals. Although they are originally from South America, they have migrated to the southern United States and they like to build nests in pad-mounted transformer cabinets. Their presence can cause short circuits and they can eat conductor insulation. Needless to say, they can also make it a challenge to maintain equipment.
6. Large animals like cattle, horses, bison and bears can cause damage to guy wires and poles. They can cause physical damage, creating an outage or making the system more prone to outages in the future. Feisty bears can climb wooden utility poles and make contact with live conductors.

In Rio Blanco County, squirrels and birds are our most common offenders. If you suspect that animals have compromised electrical equipment and are at risk of endangering themselves while nesting, please call White River Electric at 970-878-5041 so they can be safely removed. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.