

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

MARCH 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.

Stay in the Know

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ
GENERAL MANAGER

In our 75 years as your electric cooperative, we are certain of one truth: things change. At White River Electric Association we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for you, our consumer-members. We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help.

Accurate contact information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system narrow down the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members. Keeping White River Electric updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use, capital credit refunds or to help us notify you of important events occurring within White River Electric — like our board of director elections held each September.

Many of you have been consumer-members of the co-op for decades and it's likely your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many consumer-members now use a cellphone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.



ALAN MICHALEWICZ

Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by logging in to your SmartHub account online at wrea.org or by calling our office directly at 970-878-5041 to verify the information we have on file for you. By doing so, you will help us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.

I want to emphasize that, in providing your contact information to the co-op, we will never share this information or sell to a third party — it is only used by White River Electric to send important information to you so that we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve.



Let's Go Fly a Kite ... Safely

Open areas are great places to fly kites, but do not fly them near overhead power lines or electrical substations. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead power line to the person on the ground.

Local Lawmakers Play Key Role to Help Rural Communities

Washington politics have become so polarized that it can be tough for Democrats and Republicans to come together to tackle big challenges. But recently, on Capitol Hill, dedicated lawmakers from Colorado came together to argue on behalf of the RURAL Act to protect the tax status for electric cooperatives.

Sens. Michael Bennet (D) and Cory Gardner (R), as well as Reps. Joe Neguse (D-Dist. 2), Scott Tipton (R-Dist. 3), Ken Buck (R-Dist. 4), Doug Lamborn (R-Dist. 5), Jason Crow (D-Dist. 6), and Ed Perlmutter (D-Dist. 7) listened to thousands of electric cooperative member-consumers as they worked diligently to add important legislation to the 2020 spending bill. The bill was signed into law in December and included a provision known as the RURAL Act, which solved an existential issue for electric co-ops and America's rural communities.

Electric co-ops work to secure government grants to help pay for numerous activities that benefit the communities they serve. These include grants for storm recovery, broadband deployment, renewable energy and economic development.

In order to maintain their tax-exempt status, electric co-ops may receive no more

than 15% of their income from nonmember sources. Historically, government grants to co-ops were counted as contributions to capital, but, due to a glitch in the 2017 tax law, government grants were reclassified as income, pushing some co-ops beyond the 15% threshold and jeopardizing their tax-exempt status.

The tax problem left co-ops with an unfair choice: Do they take the money they need to turn the lights back on for their members as quickly as possible after a disaster? Do they accept the broadband grants to help close the digital divide between rural and urban America? Or do they turn down those grants so they wouldn't have to spend their consumer-members' money paying taxes rather than improving service?

Thanks to Congress, electric co-ops across Colorado don't have to make those trade-offs. This is good news for both co-ops and their consumer-members because some co-ops would have had to raise their electric rates to pay new taxes.

We at White River Electric are grateful to our senators and representatives for their support of the RURAL Act. In standing up for Colorado's local communities, they proved that our voice does have value.

Notably, the legislation drew the bipartisan support of more than 300 lawmakers in the House and more than half of the Senate before it was passed. That's a rarity in Washington these days.

Thanks to the policymakers listed above for looking out for rural communities across Colorado and for working to solve this problem.



Spring into Action

In Colorado, spring storms can be sloppy, slushy and precarious. Stay tuned to the National Weather Service for severe storm watches and warnings, and be sure to have an emergency kit assembled in case you get stuck in a road closure. For travel information within the state, visit cotrip.org where you can watch live streaming of traffic flow and road conditions in specific areas.

March 2020

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Placing hot food in the refrigerator makes the appliance work harder than necessary, using more energy. Allow food to cool down before you place it in the refrigerator.

Source: energy.gov



▲ Carter Strate



▲ Cleone McPherson



▲ Tatum Kennedy



▲ Zagar Brown

White River Electric Association Awards Unique Experiences to Four Local Students

WREA will sponsor four high school students as they embark on an experience of a lifetime at the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Leadership Camp in 2020. Four WREA consumer-members judged anonymous essays submitted by Meeker High School sophomores and juniors to determine the 2020 winners.

Carter Strate and Cleone McPherson will represent WREA in Washington, D.C., this summer. While at the nation's capital, they will tour several of Washington's landmarks and museums and will

join dozens of other Colorado students to meet with senators and representatives.

Tatum Kennedy and Zagar Brown were selected to attend the Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs this July. The camp is designed to teach students about the cooperative business model by allowing students to create their own "camp cooperative" and hone their leadership skills through teamwork. Kennedy and Brown will be joined by approximately 80 students from Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Oklahoma for the weeklong camp.

Three Ways to Electrify Your Lawn Care

BY ABBY BERRY

Spring is just around the corner, and you can practically smell the freshly-cut grass. If you're in the market to upgrade your lawn care equipment, you may want to consider exploring your options.

Gas-powered lawn mowers and trimmers may be your go-to equipment, but times are changing. Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products compared to their gas-powered counterparts. Here are three ways you can electrify your lawn care this spring.

Electric lawn mowers

Electric lawn mowers improved over the last few years. Early models required corded connections, which were tricky to manage, but now the cord has been cut. Newer cordless electric mowers are certainly more expensive than gas-powered mowers, but much of the upfront cost can be recovered since electricity is a less expensive fuel than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines. Cordless electric mowers typically range from \$200 to \$500.

Electric mowers are suitable for most lawn care needs, with batteries that typically require about one to two hours to fully charge. Most batteries can run for a full hour. That said, if you have a large yard (half an acre or larger), a gas-powered option may be best to suit your needs.



▲ Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver. Photo: Scott Van Osdol

Electric trimmers

Cordless electric string trimmers are a great option for most lawns. Traditionally, like lawn mowers, string trimmers have typically been powered by gas. New versions of electric trimmers are improving and are now considered worthy competitors of gas-powered models.

Cordless electric trimmers are much quieter and easier to use, but most batteries last about 30 to 45 minutes. So, if you have a lot of space to trim, you may want to consider a backup battery or plan to work in short bursts. If you're interested in purchasing an electric trimmer, the main factors to consider are the battery's life, charge time and power. Costs can vary depending on your needs, but you can find a quality version for about \$100.

Electric leaf blowers

After cutting and trimming your lawn, you'll need to clear off those walkways and patios for the finishing touch. If you don't want to deal with the maintenance of a gas-powered

blower or the restraints of a corded blower, a cordless electric version is a great option.

Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver, but they don't offer quite as much power as gas-powered and corded blowers. If your leaf blowing and clearing needs are minimal, a cordless electric leaf blower can get the job done. Costs for a cordless electric blower vary depending on power and battery quality, but you can purchase a dependable model for about \$150 and up.

If you're looking to electrify your lawn care equipment, be sure to do your homework. Search online for the latest reviews and check trusted websites like ConsumerReports.org. With a little research, you'll be well on your way to Lawn of the Month with less maintenance, hassle and noise, which your neighbors will thank you for.

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



New Year, New Rebates

White River Electric is proud to offer its consumer-members a variety of rebates. Outdoor power equipment rebates were recently added to the existing list of rebates for appliances, water heaters and LED lighting. The outdoor power equipment rebate program is a new program to encourage members to explore the functionality of electric lawn mowers, snowblowers, trimmers, chain saws, pruners or leaf blowers. Visit the Products and Services section of wrea.org for details and associated rebate forms.