

# LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

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## Watt's Up

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SEPTEMBER 2020

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### DURANGO ADDRESS

45 Stewart Street  
Durango, CO 81303-7915

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### HOURS

Monday – Thursday  
7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.



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Facebook.com/laplataelectric/  
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## NEWS RE: COLORADO COUNTRY LIFE SUBSCRIPTION

After evaluating costs, readership rates, and member preferences, the LPEA board voted to discontinue our subscription to Colorado Country Life Magazine. Starting in November 2020, you will receive a newsletter in your bill and an e-newsletter in your inbox monthly. This change will save our members \$110,000 annually. Questions or concerns? Email [comments@lpea.coop](mailto:comments@lpea.coop).

# LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# SMART METERS + SMARTHUB = SMART SAVINGS

A great deal has changed in the 81 years since LPEA was incorporated and we aim to keep up with advancements to better serve you, our members.

As one example, LPEA replaced our outdated analog meters with Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), or “Smart Meters”. **Smart Meters are digital, electric meters that wirelessly provide secure, two-way communication between the meter and the LPEA server. They are especially beneficial for our terrain, with its mountainous and remote areas.**

Smart Meters record information such as consumption of electric energy, voltage levels, current, and power factor. They typically record energy use in near real-time, and report regularly, in short intervals throughout the day.

Three key benefits of Smart Meters:

1. **More data on your energy use can help you adjust consumption habits and save money.** Smart Meters allow our members and staff to troubleshoot high-bill issues by providing detailed data on power consumption patterns, outage and blink count history, and voltage information. Thanks to Smart Meters and SmartHub – LPEA’s free online account management tool – you can access detailed information about your electricity use and find tools to manage it. Access real-time usage data, manage your account, pay your bill, report issues, and set up notifications regarding your electric usage all via your phone or computer. Sign up by creating an account online at [lpea.smarthub.coop/](http://lpea.smarthub.coop/) or call us at 970-247-5786.
2. **Automated meter readings eliminate bill “estimates” and save on meter-reading costs.** Smart Meters produce significant savings to LPEA members by reducing meter reading and administration expenses. They also improve billing accuracy, eliminating misreads or inaccurate readings. LPEA’s meters are programmed to retrieve voltage and kilowatt-hour readings.
3. **Automated reporting means quicker more efficient outage restoration.** Smart Meters provide LPEA with important diagnostics to help increase power quality, increase ways to optimize the electrical system, and pinpoint outages. Meters notify our dispatch team immediately in the event of meter tampering and pinpoint the exact location of outages.

Very little radio frequency (RF) power is emitted from the meters. LPEA’s Tantalus meters are tested in accordance with Title 47, Part 15b of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, and have been certified by the FCC. When the meter is transmitting, the exposure to radio frequencies is 25,000 times less than the exposure limits set by the FCC.

Smart Meters send their data through a secure communications system. Unlike social media or emails, none of your information is sent through the internet. No personal information is stored or transmitted by your meter – only data relating to your energy usage. In this and all matters, LPEA takes every possible precaution to keep your personal information safe and secure.

**For more information and to create an account, visit [lpea.smarthub.coop](http://lpea.smarthub.coop) or call us at 970-247-5786.**

# LIFE ON THE LINE: EAST CANYON FIRE REPAIR



On June 14th 2020, a lightning storm sparked the East Canyon Fire southeast of Mancos. Part of the 2,905 acres burned include an old coal mine and some of LPEA’s electrical infrastructure.

For three weeks in July, an LPEA crew worked with a helicopter contractor to replace the damaged equipment, including the power line feeding a 40-year-old cell tower. The crew had to re-set six poles and replace the wire, which under normal circumstances would be all in a day’s work for our lineman. But these were not normal circumstances.

**“We had to dodge hot spots, dust, mud, rain, and lightning,” said Eddie Quintana, LPEA Journeyman Lineman. “Communication was challenging because of the incline, the rock was hard, and existing poles had to be re-set deeper with bigger poles. The crew dug the holes manually and set them with the help of the helicopter.”**

The repair work was located near an old coal mine. Upon arrival, the crew discovered the wildfire was still smoldering – even a month later – thanks to the remaining coal. The hot and steep terrain had also eroded due to the fire, which required the team to pack generators and electric jackhammers to dig the 6’ holes needed to set the poles in hard rock.

“Helicopters aren’t new to line work, but their use is fairly new to LPEA,” Quintana said. “It saves time and effort and is a welcome

**Meeting in the field**

LPEA line crew meets with the helicopter pilot to discuss plans for the pole-setting work ahead.

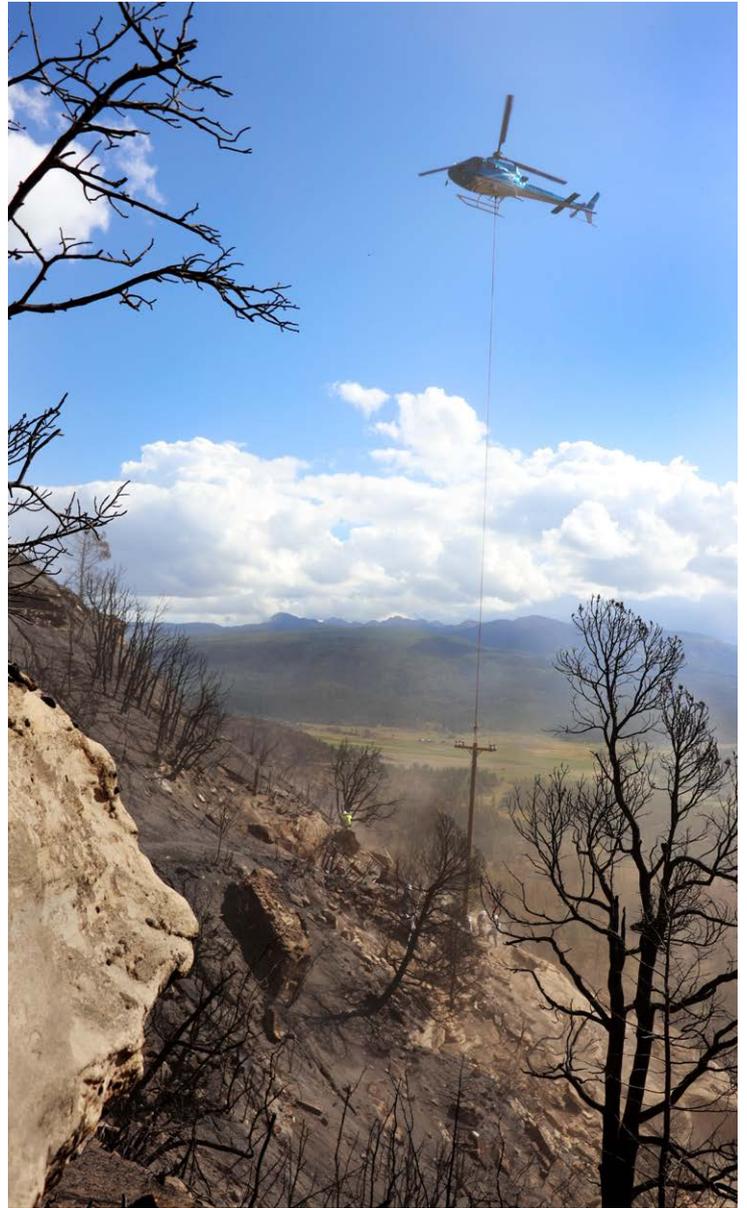
change from our new management. We have a lot of remote line built prior to new standards and zoning,” he explains. “When the lines were set 40 years ago, they likely just bulldozed and set up ‘man camps’ to work on and establish lines on the hills. Those old lines were never upgraded and became grown in and grown over.”

Without a helicopter, Quintana says he’s not sure how the work would have been done. “You would have had to use mules to drag the poles in there. It’s the lightest footprint we can make. Helicopters can’t be beat for work in remote, mountainous areas and crews can’t match the speed of a helicopter, especially if it’s a well-organized job.”

He and the crew agree the job went smoothly thanks to the helicopter and good planning. The job was physically challenging and hot, but they found ways to stay in good spirits, including team lunches and ice cream after the job was complete.

Quintana said working on this job has been one of the highlights of his time with LPEA. “It’s exciting! Plenty of line on our system could benefit from heliwork.”

**See Eddie Quintana’s interview on LPEA’s YouTube channel at [youtu.be/Ca5nCTtRAfc](https://youtu.be/Ca5nCTtRAfc)**



## DID YOU KNOW?

PEA will pay you money for purchasing Energy Star® appliances. Get \$20 for dishwashers, and \$30 for refrigerators, freezers, and clothes washers and dryers. We'll also pay you \$60 to recycle your old refrigerator or freezer. Applications must be made within 120 days of purchase.

**Submit your rebate application online at [lpea.coop/energy-star-appliances-rebates](https://lpea.coop/energy-star-appliances-rebates)**

# LPEA EXPANDS COVID-19 EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

LPEA expanded its COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund to include small business owners needing electric bill assistance due to COVID-19 related financial hardships. Commercial members can receive a bill credit of up to \$200, while

residential members can receive up to \$100. Applications will be accepted while funds remain available.

**Apply online at [lpea.coop/covidrelief](https://lpea.coop/covidrelief).**



## WINTER IS COMING. ARE YOU READY?

If you're one of LPEA's 2,000+ members with an Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) Heater unit in your home, it's time to think about turning it back on. It's easy to forget but ETS units require maintenance just like any electronic or mechanical device.

Remove any items you've placed on or around the heater in the off-season to prevent fire hazards and make an appointment with a local electrician familiar with

ETS units. Summer dust and accumulated pet hair can cause issues, but a knowledgeable electrician can clean the unit and test the breaker to ensure the ETS will power up when needed to heat your home efficiently and cleanly this winter.

**For more on ETS heaters, visit [lpea.coop/electric-thermal-storage-ets-heater](https://lpea.coop/electric-thermal-storage-ets-heater)**



The latest news, services, programs, and resources from LPEA. Have a question or comment? Email us at [comments@lpea.coop](mailto:comments@lpea.coop).



### **BOARD MEETING:**

The September LPEA Board of Directors meeting is Wednesday, September 16th. The agenda, board packet, and access details will be posted online in advance of the meeting. Public comments are heard at the beginning of the meeting shortly after 9 a.m. All meetings are open to the public and live streamed

More at: [lpea.coop/board-directors](https://lpea.coop/board-directors)



### **FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING:**

The September Finance and Audit Committee meeting is Thursday, September 10th from 2 – 5 p.m. All meetings are open to the public and live streamed.

More at: [lpea.coop/finance-and-audit-committee](https://lpea.coop/finance-and-audit-committee)



### **ROUND UP GRANTS**

In July, the Round Up board approved more than \$5,000 in funding for The Women's Resource Center (Durango), Thingamajig Theatre Company (Pagosa), and Our Savior Lutheran Church (Pagosa).