

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2021



MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 958
Meeker, CO 81641-0958



STREET ADDRESS

233 6th Street
Meeker, CO 81641



ph 970-878-5041

tf 800-734-9809

fax 970-878-5766

email wrea@wrea.org

web www.wrea.org



facebook.com/wrea.org

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.



CO-OP CULTURE FOR ALL

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ
GENERAL MANAGER

White River Electric Association has enjoyed sharing this monthly magazine, *Colorado Country Life*, with our membership for many years. Based upon evolving communication platforms and readership interest, WREA has determined to transition out of the monthly *Colorado Country Life* subscription. March 2021 will be the final month that members receive an issue of *Colorado Country Life*. First and foremost, we want to thank the *Colorado Country Life* staff for years of a great quality magazine. It has helped us share important WREA and electric cooperative information. Equally important, it has provided us all with years of great recipes, great photos and interesting articles. We know many members will miss the magazine, but please be reassured that WREA is in the process of developing new and more local ways to stay in touch with our membership. Please look for articles, efficiency tips and WREA information in *The Rio Blanco Herald Times* and on our website (www.wrea.org). We are excited to share more details over the next few months as we transition into new ways of communicating with our membership.

Committed to a co-op culture for all

Through our articles in *Colorado Country Life*, you have read about why and how WREA is different — it's because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.



ALAN MICHALEWICZ

Electric cooperatives, including WREA, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We helped facilitate the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of having an electric account at WREA, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in WREA's director elections every September, and we invite all members to call with

[continued on page 8]

CO-OP CULTURE FOR ALL

[continued from page 7]

questions or raise concerns that may come up throughout the year.

Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right

here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when WREA was founded in

1945, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you — the members we proudly serve — is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all.



Safe & Easy Ways to Pay WREA Bills



PAY ONLINE 24/7 with SmartHub

View and pay your bill online with checking, savings, or credit card. Visit www.wrea.org and click on the SmartHub icon.

A free app is available for both Apple and android phones and tablets.



PAY BY PHONE

Pay your bill by phone 24/7. Call 833-526-0180 or 970-878-8676. Enter your account number or phone number on file and follow the prompts to pay by check, credit, or debit card.



FAST PAY/ONE-TIME PAYMENT

Visit www.wrea.org and click the Fast Pay/One-Time Payment icon, enter your account number, last name and submit. Select Pay Now.



AUTO PAY – CREDIT/DEBIT/CHECKING/SAVINGS

Choose an automatic deduction from the account of your choice. This is set up as a recurring payment drafted on the 10th of each month, or the next business day. Complete an authorization form to sign up using your checking or savings account. Call 970-878-5041 to set up autopay on your credit/debit card.



IN PERSON – Monday through Thursday 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Payment forms accepted: Cash, Check, Money Order, American Express, Mastercard or Visa.



DROP BOX – Located outside our front door at 233 6th Street.

MAIL – PO Box 958, Meeker, CO 81641

For additional information about payment options, please call 970-878-5041 or stop by WREA.



Stay Comfortable.

Photo Credit: Consumers Energy

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.



February 2021 Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static. Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source: energy.gov

MOTHER NATURE AND SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

Although we work hard to maintain our equipment, monitor power delivery 24/7 and do all we can to keep the lights on, there are circumstances beyond our control that can interfere with power delivery. Winter weather is one example. Winter storms can impact the distribution of electricity due to ice, heavy winds, sleet and other extreme conditions.

Regardless of the reason, please know that when the lights go out — even during extreme weather — we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power. At White River Electric, we work hard to maintain and even exceed our 99% reliability index. We take our mission to provide our members safe and reliable power, no matter the weather conditions.

Along with causing outages, wintry conditions can cause hiccups with power delivery that include blinking lights or ebbs and flows in the amount of power that comes into your home. Although blinking lights can be a symptom of other problems, such as loose wiring connections or overloaded circuits, they can also be caused by extreme weather conditions.

Ice and freezing rain

Ice accumulation on power lines makes them heavy. One-half an inch of ice can add as much as 500 pounds to a power line. This added weight can impact power distribution and even bring down a power line. Ice that forms on power lines also increases its surface area, which means gusts of wind have more to catch. The weight of ice on tree limbs can cause them to fall on power lines as well.

Wind

Wind can cause tree branches to brush power lines, which can result in blinking or flickering lights. This is why it's so important for us to keep trees cleared around power lines and poles. In addition, heavy winds or extreme wind plus ice can cause lines to move and sway. If they gain enough momentum, they can gallop or jump. This, in turn, can cause disruptions in service since the extreme motion can cause lines to either break or make contact with each other, which they are not meant to do.



Melting ice

Melting ice can be extremely heavy, putting extra strain on power lines and causing the lines to touch or rest on one another. Because of this, melting ice can cause outages even though the temperature is rising. Depending on conditions, melting ice can cause as many or more problems than the ice itself.

Wind or ice plus tree branches

In any weather condition, tree-related issues cause the most power outages in many service areas. Branches, limbs or tree trunks can fall onto power lines and cause problems. Add wind, freezing rain or ice to the mix for an increased potential for problems.

Icy roads

Vehicles sliding on ice or that collide with one another can strike a power pole or pad-mounted transformer, causing an outage or other problems.

Blizzards

Heavy snowfall, icy roads or reduced visibility can make it a little more difficult for our crews to get out and fix problems, although we do all we can to get out there to address service issues as soon as possible.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. Items to gather include bottled water, nonperishable food, blankets, warm clothing, hand sanitizer, first-aid kit and medicine, flashlight, radio, backup phone chargers, extra batteries and toiletries.

To learn more about preparing for storms and electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

PLEASE MOVE OVER FOR ROADSIDE CREWS

It's polite and it's the law

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Every year, workers along the sides of roads are injured or killed when a car crashes into the crews' site, even though it's marked with bright cones and warning signs.

There's an easy way to reduce those incidents that harm police officers and other first responders, road construction workers and utility crews. There's a slogan to help remind drivers. There's even a law.

The slogan is "slow down or move over." It's good advice and a decent thing to do to keep people safe. It's also a requirement in all 50 states.

Legislatures first started passing Move Over laws about 25 years ago to reduce the year-after-year statistics of harm to roadside emergency workers. In the past five years, states started to specifically add electric and other utility projects to their Move Over or Slow Down laws.

It's an addition that's welcomed by White River Electric because it was part of the effort to expand the law to help protect line crews.

Protecting line crews is a top priority for Colorado's electric cooperatives, and it's a safety measure everyone can help with, says Dale Kishbaugh, director of safety and loss control at the Colorado Rural Electric Association.

"Move Over is not only a good law, it's also the courteous thing to do," Kishbaugh says. "Our crews already perform dangerous work to keep the lights on every day. They deserve a work environment that's as safe as possible."

There are slight differences in each state's Move Over laws, but not so much that you

can't figure out the right thing to do, even if you're traveling from state to state. Here are the basic requirements:

- Within 200 feet before and after a work zone — which will be marked with bright signs and marker cones and often flashing lights — change lanes if there is more than one lane on your side of road if possible, so there is an empty lane between your vehicle and the roadside crew.
- If it's not possible or safe to change lanes, slow down. Many states specify slowing down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit if it's 25 mph or more. Yes, that means if the posted speed limit is 25 mph, slow down to 5 mph.
- Drivers must obey all traffic directions posted as part of the worksite.
- Keep control of your car. Yes, this seems obvious, but this is a requirement in many Move Over laws. And, yes, it is more of a general guidance than a rule for a specific speed. It means you need to pay attention and respond to weather conditions — heavy rain or a slick road might mean you're required to slow down even more than 20 mph. Also, no texting, fiddling with the radio or other distractions.
- Penalties for violating those requirements range from \$100 to \$2,000, or loss of your driver's license.

The AAA website states that, in Colorado, "state law requires drivers approaching stationary emergency vehicles



that are displaying flashing lights, including tow trucks, traveling in the same direction, to vacate the lane closest, if safe and possible to do so, or to reduce to a speed safe for weather, road and traffic conditions. Also included in the law are utility vehicles and road maintenance vehicles."

Electric utility crews are special cases to watch for. A study of utility worksite accidents found that the relatively temporary nature of power line repairs could surprise motorists. A roadside construction operation might close a lane for days or weeks, giving time for people familiar with the area to anticipate the changed traffic pattern. Utility work, however, can start and finish in a few hours, possibly raising risks with drivers who might think they know the road ahead.

Another risk to watch for is when worksites are being put up or taken down. Roadside accidents can happen as crews are setting up signs and traffic cones.

My father-in-law used to tell his daughter every time they parted, "Drive all the time." What he meant was that she should pay attention, and it's good advice for all of us.

Don't drive distracted. Drive according to the conditions of the road. Be courteous to roadside work crews. Watch the signs and obey them. And certainly, follow laws like Move Over or Slow Down. It's good advice that could save a life.

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