

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

MVEA Partners with Conexon Connect to Close the Digital Divide

BY JIM HERRON CEO | HERRONJC@MVEA.ORG

By now, many of you may have heard about Mountain View Electric Association's June 21 public announcement that we are partnering with Conexon Connect to bring access to high-speed fiber broadband internet to 100% of MVEA's membership. As this is currently the largest broadband project in Colorado, and it will have a profoundly positive impact on the communities that we serve, we invited members of the media, elected officials, and community leaders to attend "Closing the Digital Divide" kickoff events in Black Forest and Limon. From MVEA and Conexon Connect leadership to Colorado State senators and representatives, one theme was shared by all of those who spoke: access to high-speed internet is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity.

"Access to fast, reliable internet is important for our economy and Colorado families. From helping a student log on for virtual learning to powering a conference call for Colorado's small businesses helping them reach new customers and markets, universal broadband connects us all," shared Gov. Jared Polis. "I'm thrilled to see this partnership between MVEA and Conexon Connect come to life as it will transform central Colorado's ability to connect within the state and across the world."

It may be surprising to some, but this is a project that has been over 25 years in the making! MVEA has long sought a partner with whom to develop and deploy a broadband network to better serve our co-op communities. The partnership with Conexon Connect is a model that fits the needs of the cooperative, benefits the members, and received unanimous support from the MVEA Board of Directors.

Under the partnership, design and construction of the fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network will be led by Conexon, with the network managed and operated by Connect, powered by Mountain View Electric Association. The first Conexon Connect

customers will be connected as early as the second quarter of 2022. Together, MVEA and Conexon Connect are committed to build the approximately \$190 million network. It will enable MVEA members to access a world-class fiber broadband network without electric rate adjustments to subsidize the buildout or deployment.

The entire FTTH buildout, encompassing nearly 5,800 miles of fiber, will ultimately reach all of MVEA's members in portions of Arapahoe, Crowley, Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Lincoln, Pueblo and Washington counties within five to six years. MVEA members will have access to a competitively priced FTTH broadband network with speeds and reliability that rival (or exceed) services available in major urban centers.

In 1941, MVEA's first members gathered at the Black Forest Community Center and made the decision to form an electric co-op. Eighty years later, and we now serve more than 51,000 members and over 60,000 meters across a 5,000 square-mile service territory. We are proof that small groups of people can make a significant impact on their community for generations to follow. It is a legacy we are proud of, and one that we look forward to continuing as we partner with Conexon Connect to close the digital divide by bringing world-class FTTH broadband internet to our membership.

We are sure you have questions about this exciting project, and invite you to explore the "Broadband" section on our website at www.mvea.coop/broadband for answers to frequently asked questions, the kickoff event press release, a highlight video of the events, and to visit the Conexon Connect website to pre-register and to receive service updates.



JIM HERRON

CLOSING THE Digital/Divide

Fiber broadband is on its way to rural Colorado.

Connect, Powered by Mountain View Electric Association, Broadband FAQs → www.mvea.coop/broadband

GO ELECTRIC! Giveaway Winner Spotlight: Jim Knepshield, Calhan

MVEA's GO ELECTRIC! Outdoor Power Equipment Giveaway promotes the expanding selection of electric outdoor power equipment products eligible for its popular rebate program. While the first products were announced in 2020 and included an electric mower, chainsaw, snow blower and more, the 2021 offering was expanded to include a power-washer and electric bicycle. The two winners of MVEA's Summer Series Electric Outdoor Power Equipment Giveaway were announced on June 3. Giveaway entrants had the option of registering to win an electric mower and trimmer package or an electric power-washer.

Jim Knepshield, an MVEA member since 2019, didn't know what to think when he received the call that he had won an electric mower and trimmer, "I thought it was a scam. Leslie (an MVEA employee) had to convince me. I'm glad she did!" he shared while talking about his new electric outdoor power equipment.

How does the new electric mower and trimmer stand up compared to the old mower? Jim says that while the mower takes



▲ Jim Knepshield, Calhan, sent a recent photo of his electric mower in action. Jim is one of two winners of MVEA's Summer Series Electric Outdoor Power Equipment Giveaway.

some getting used to, he appreciates how light weight it is. "It will save my body from a heavy gas mower, causing me to slow down." And, the trimmer? "It does a great job and works fast!" In parting, Jim said, "Thank you MVEA. I will make use of the trimmer and mower. Next time Leslie calls, guess I will believe her!"

The next promotion period, for an electric snow blower, begins on September 1 and ends on October 28. Two winners will be selected. Don't miss your chance to GO ELECTRIC: look for promotions to start in September!



Save Some Green With MVEA Rebates

MVEA and Tri-State Generation and Transmission, our power supplier, work together to create an Energy Efficiency Rebate program to promote the smart use of fuels and conservation of resources.

In the last five years, through 2020, we have processed over 30,000 residential and commercial energy efficiency rebates and issued more than \$627,000 back to our members! In addition to electric outdoor power equipment, rebates are available for LED bulbs, energy-efficient appliances, heat pumps, electric vehicle charging equipment and more. MVEA's rebate program is a great way for co-op members to save some green, while going a little greener.

Small changes can have a big impact on the world around us. A good example? The humble lawnmower. The U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency reports that each summer weekend, about 54 million Americans mow their lawns, amounting to 800 million gallons of gas per year. The emissions from one four-stroke lawnmower operating for one hour are equivalent to an average vehicle traveling 500 miles. Those are some pretty big numbers made by a humble little mower.

By upgrading to electric outdoor power equipment and using one of MVEA's rebates, MVEA members can make the beneficial electrification switch while offsetting the cost to go a little greener.

Download a copy of MVEA's Rebate Product Guide to take advantage of wallet-friendly rebates that help make energy efficiency work for you.

Get started today! Visit www.mvea.coop/rebates.

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Two Common Factors For A Surprising Summer Bill

Air Conditioning. Keeping your home cool in the summer can increase your electric use in a big way.

School's Out For Summer. The number of people in the home, using electricity throughout the day, increases energy use.

We Don't Just Brighten Homes, We Brighten Futures.



High School Sophomores & Juniors Win a Summer Trip! MVEA Youth Leadership Trip Contest

High school sophomores and juniors are just a couple of short questions away from an opportunity to win a once-in-a-lifetime all-expenses paid trip. Top-placed winners will receive either a trip to Washington D.C., with students from across the U.S. for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, or will be invited to the Colorado Electric Education Institute's Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in the mountains outside of Steamboat Springs. For additional details and an entry form, visit www.mvea.coop/leadershiptrip. Deadline: Thursday, November 11, 2021.

Need Cash For College? Win a Scholarship! \$26,000 In Scholarships Available

MVEA's scholarship program includes scholarships to accredited colleges, universities, junior or community colleges, as well as Vocational/Technical Scholarships. Additional scholarships include Power Lineworker Scholarships for students pursuing a career through a lineworker training program, as well as a Power Engineer Scholarship for current college students pursuing a power engineering career. Visit www.mvea.coop/scholarships to learn more. Deadline: Monday, January 17, 2022.

Questions? Contact Erica,
(719) 494-2654,
erica.m@mvea.coop.



Tree Trimming Helps Prevent Storm-Related Power Outages

Downed trees can create power outages for you and your neighbors. Let's work together to keep the lights on! Visit www.mvea.coop/tree-trimming to learn more about MVEA's tree trimming services.



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MEMBER ADVISORY

BEWARE OF SCAMMERS PRETENDING TO BE MVEA



Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages, online or in person. Scammers will try just about anything to get money or personal information — most recently, they are pretending to work for or represent area utilities.

As a rule of thumb: beware of scams asking for personal information or immediate payment, and **NEVER** click on a suspicious link or attachment. If the knock at your door says they are partnered with or represent MVEA, call us at 1-800-388-9881 to verify. We do not need to enter your home or need pictures of your billing information. Please send the person at your door away if you have any doubts.

Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important to stay on top of the latest scam trends. We want you to be aware of two trending scam tactics that have been reported by utility customers across the country. One is the overpayment trick,

where a scammer contacts you and claims that you overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam. If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, MVEA will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to your next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). While most people know to watch out for suspicious emails, we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. Always question suspicious texts, including ones claiming to represent a utility. MVEA will only send you important updates via text if you've signed up for outage SmartAlerts.

Take your time. Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially over the phone. Take a moment to think about the situation before acting.

Be suspicious. Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.

Confirm before you act. If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent MVEA but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call us directly. You can reach us at (800) 388-9881 to verify the situation.

Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting utility customers. Be vigilant and please report any utility scams to MVEA so we can let others in our community know. Learn more, visit MVEA's scam alert center at www.mvea.coop/scams.

Renewable Energy Options • MVEA's Energy Mix • Rebates • www.mvea.coop/save-energy-money



MAKING THE SOLAR SWITCH: COMMON MVEA MEMBER SOLAR INSTALLATION CONSIDERATIONS

MVEA regularly works with co-op members and solar contractors to transition to solar power through our net metering program. In fact, we currently have more than 2,000 (and counting) net metered accounts spread throughout our service territory! As the demand for solar power has increased, so has the number of calls we receive from members regarding costs and logistics. If you have questions about going solar, please call us at (800) 388-9881 or visit www.mvea.coop/interconnection. We have a talented team who work with members and solar companies to navigate the process of transitioning to solar power within MVEA's service territory.

Thoroughly investigate the company: Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? Does it meet local and state licensing requirements? Important note: If a representative from a solar company contacts you claiming to be "with MVEA" or that they are "part of MVEA's solar efforts," please know that MVEA does not have preferred solar installation contractors. We work with the solar companies that our co-op members hire.

Know all the costs, not just those for equipment and installation. In addition to equipment and labor, there are also pricey "soft costs" that can cost more than the system itself, according to Energy.gov. Soft costs include permit acquisition, financing charges and "pass-along" marketing, advertising and research costs.

How will the installer work with MVEA to meet interconnection requirements? Does the installer have experience coordinating and integrating solar systems with the electric grid? How much energy will the system provide and is it enough? Too much? This is a substantial investment. We encourage members to contact us prior to purchasing a solar system to ensure that it can fully integrate and connect with MVEA's system.