

MORGAN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2022



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MCREA Mission

Morgan County REA, a member-owned cooperative, is dedicated to serving our members by providing safe, reliable energy with a strong tradition and vision for the future.

 This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

MORGAN COUNTY REA: PROUD MEMBER OF TRI-STATE G&T

BY DAVID FRICK GENERAL MANAGER



DAVID FRICK

The cooperative model is unique in many ways, but perhaps the most significant is that cooperatives are owned and run by the members they serve. As a Morgan County REA member, you know this well. You may not know that MCREA itself is a member of a cooperative: Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, which is composed of 42 electric co-ops and public power districts across four states. MCREA buys wholesale power from Tri-State, then we distribute that power through our system to you, our members.

There are many ways that MCREA benefits from being a member of Tri-State, including its grid resiliency efforts, technology improvements, and state and federal regulatory compliance. In February 2021, widespread winter storms created issues for electric cooperatives across the U.S. However, Tri-State's diverse resource portfolio and robust transmission network mitigated many of the risks associated with the massive outages. As a result, Tri-State avoided any significant operational or financial issues and has continued to deliver reliable, affordable power to each of its member cooperatives—including MCREA.

Tri-State is also an invaluable resource when it comes to complying with various state and federal regulations. Through our membership with Tri-State, MCREA is less burdened by regulations, such as renewable energy requirements, which Tri-State helps us meet. Tri-State also works tirelessly to stay


informed on all trends and energy industry changes, allowing MCREA to do the same.

Tri-State is celebrating the two-year anniversary of its Responsible Energy Plan. Among other goals, the REP aims to maintain or reduce wholesale rates for Tri-State's members, which it has already achieved. MCREA's wholesale power rates decreased by 2% in March 2021, with an additional 2% decrease in March 2022. This played a part in MCREA's ability to lower the rates our members pay for power at the beginning of this year.

MCREA is a proud member of Tri-State G&T and appreciates all it does to help our association and you, the members we serve.



MORGAN COUNTY REA

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



TRI-STATE

Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Win
\$25 Off
Your
Electric Bill

Each month, Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a chance at a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congrats Gregory Skalla and Luke Queen! You each spotted your names in the April issue and received a \$25 bill credit! There are two more MCREA member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call MCREA member services at 970- 867-5688 by June 30 to claim a \$25 credit on your bill.



▲ MCREA Manager of Member Services Rob Baranowski explains safety procedures around downed power lines to Morgan County Ambulance Service personnel.

MCREA SAFETY DEMONSTRATION

In April, Morgan County REA was pleased to join the Morgan County Ambulance Service to share about electrical hazards and downed power line safety. MCREA proudly supports all of our first responders and appreciates the chance to discuss electrical safety with them, especially since they are often the first on scene in situations where power lines may be down. (Naill Farms LLC, acct. #xxx0800) However, it is important that all of our members are aware of the safe steps to take when power lines are down.

- If a power line has landed on the ground, the area nearby is potentially energized. Stay far away and warn others to do the same.
- Contact emergency personnel and MCREA to address the downed line.
- If a line should fall on your vehicle while you are inside, do not attempt to drive away or get out. Call for help and stay inside until utility crews say it is safe to get out. The only exception is if fire or other immediate danger is present. In that case, jump—not step—with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Jump clear. Do not let any part of your body touch the vehicle and ground at once. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together.

If you are interested in Morgan County REA's safety demonstrations, please contact MCREA member services at 970-867-5688.

JOIN US THIS SUMMER

— 2022 —



MORGAN COUNTY REA

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION EVENT

• MCREA HEADQUARTERS •

FOOD • GIVEAWAYS • FUN

THURSDAY | JUNE 16 | 5-7 PM

YOU'RE INVITED

MORGAN COUNTY REA CUSTOMER APPRECIATION EVENT

Please join us for our first-ever Customer Appreciation Event on Thursday, June 16, from 5-7 p.m. at MCREA headquarters in Fort Morgan. After three years of virtual annual meetings, MCREA's board, staff and employees are excited to gather with members once again. Those in attendance can take a look at a Tesla Model Y, learn more about all the great things happening at their electric cooperative, and enter to win a brand-new electric chainsaw. There will be food, giveaways and fun for the whole family.

Planning on coming? Feel free to visit mcrea.org and click the Customer Appreciation Event button, where you can submit an RSVP. While RSVPs are not required, submitting one will enter you to win a \$25 credit on your next bill. Winners will be drawn at the event and must be present to win.

If you have any questions regarding this Customer Appreciation Event, please call MCREA member services at 970-867-5688. We hope to see you there!

MCREA's office will close at 3:30 p.m. on June 16 before the event.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

If you're looking to add smart technology to your home, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs are inexpensive and can be used to control lighting and other electronic devices through a smart phone app.

With smart plugs, you can conveniently manage lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. By powering off unused devices when you're away, you can save energy (and money!).

Source: energystar.gov



NEW BILL DESIGN OUT NOW

Last month, members may have noticed that their Morgan County REA bill looked a bit different. This is because MCREA completely redesigned them. Though our bills have gotten a makeover, their content has remained the same. Now, members can easily view any payments and/or adjustments that have been made to their account. Also, all metering information is now in one convenient location, making the monthly bill easier to understand.

MCREA also added an energy usage comparison to your bill. This provides insight into how you use electricity at different times, while also factoring in the average temperature during each billing cycle.

If you have any questions regarding the new design, please call MCREA's billing department at 970-867-5688.

Account #	Balance Summary
Account Name:	Previous Balance \$20.42
Statement Date:	Payment(s) \$38.42
Current Bill Due Date:	Balance Before Current Charges \$0.00
Mailing Address:	Total Current Charges \$79.49
	Total Amount Due \$79.49

MCREA MAKES DONATION TO BREAK THE SILENCE



▲ MCREA's Maddie Pollart (right) presents Kelly Paris, Break the Silence director and founder, with a check for \$1,000.

With concern for community being one of the seven cooperative principles, Morgan County REA strives to contribute to the communities it serves. That is why MCREA, along with Tri-State Generation and Transmission, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and CoBank, is proud to donate to Break the Silence.

Break the Silence is a nonprofit organization located in Fort Morgan that is focused on raising awareness for mental health and suicide prevention. MCREA sincerely thanks this organization for everything it does to help those in our community.

MAKING SAFETY A HABIT ON THE JOB

There are many reasons your electricity might go off, with weather by far the leading cause. But to a lineworker, all power outage repairs have one thing in common: safety. If watching a line crew, the first thing you'll notice is the deliberate, careful pace. They deploy signs to alert motorists. They mark the work area with orange cones. Always in hard-hats and fire-protective clothing, anyone working on a live power line pulls on heavy rubber gloves and spreads insulating blankets over the wires. The gloves they use are first meticulously tested by a machine that blows air into them to ensure there's not even a pinhole that could allow an electric current to pass through.

And there's more you won't see. That morning, they likely huddled at the back of a truck to discuss each lineworker's workplan that day, with an emphasis on safety. **It's a best practice in the industry—so common it's often called a "tailgate meeting" or "toolbox talk."**

Safety is common sense, and it is drilled into the minds of utility workers. In their pole-climbing contests, the fastest time will get disqualified by the slightest safety misstep. **Line crews attend lectures aimed at driving home the importance of safety protocols.**

So, if you ever wonder why restoring electricity after an outage can take awhile, there's a good answer. Line crews never compromise on safety.

The next thing you can learn from watching a line crew at work comes from seeing what task they're performing. There's a good chance they're replacing old equipment. Poles and transformers wear out, and failing equipment is one significant cause of power outages. (Edward Knoll, acct. #xxx1500) **The crew you watch might be restoring an equipment outage, or they**



▲ MCREA crews restore power line after a series of tornadoes in 2018. You can learn a lot about power outages and restoration by watching — from a safe distance of course — a utility crew at work.

might be switching out an old device to prevent a future outage.

You might see them replacing a downed utility pole, **a process of removing the old and hauling in and raising the new**, using trucks specifically designed for the job.

WEATHER VS. POWER LINES

The pole might be down because a motorist ran into it — another cause of outages. Or it could be weather-related. Natural disasters, such as wind, ice and fire, cause about 80% of power outages. One characteristic of natural disasters is possible widespread damage. If one pole is down, lots of others could be as well. That means crews will be repeating the pole-replacement process, one job at a time. That's why bringing the lights back on after a major storm with widespread outages can take some time.

It's also likely the crew you're watching will be trimming trees. Trees are beautiful but a common cause of outages as wind and nearby branches can lead to wires getting

knocked to the ground. Electric cooperatives devote a lot of time and resources to urging and enforcing limits on planting anything too close to power lines. And crews regularly set up to trim limbs that get too close to the wires.

One common cause of outages you probably won't learn about by watching a crew make repairs is wildlife. Birds and other critters routinely hang around utility equipment, occasionally making a connection between high-voltage wires. Snakes that slither into an electric substation bring consequences — for them and the utility. Sometimes crews need to investigate and correct the cause. **Often the system will reset itself after only a brief power interruption.**

Outages can be caused by a variety of factors, and restoring power is an intricate process in a complex utility system. And safety — for crews and the community — will always be the top priority.