

MORGAN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 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.

GRID RESILIENCY: TOP OF MIND FOR MCREA AND TRI-STATE G&T

BY DAVID FRICK GENERAL MANAGER



DAVID FRICK

Record high energy demands straining the electric grid; renewable energy resources faltering during Texas' brutal heat wave;

and possible rolling blackouts affecting the West Coast and the Midwest are making national headlines. This month, I want to take some time to highlight the efforts being made by Morgan County REA and our wholesale power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, to avoid these energy challenges we're seeing in other parts of the country.

As our wholesale supplier, Tri-State is committed to making sure MCREA and the members we serve have a reliable source of power. Tri-State energy experts closely monitor current and future markets, which helps create a diversified and stable energy mix utilizing different generation sources. It is due to these efforts that Tri-State avoided any significant operational or financial shortfalls during February 2021's record-setting winter storm Uri that created difficulties for other utilities in the region.

Tri-State also strives to guide MCREA members to make energy efficient choices through energy efficiency rebates. It may seem strange, but both Tri-State and MCREA actually prefer that local members use less electricity, as efficient choices lead to more capacity on our grid. Extra capacity promotes both resilience and reliability. Not only do these rebates provide an up-front financial incentive for members' energy efficient choices, they also lead to lower monthly bills in the future.

Closer to home, MCREA continues to improve and strengthen our distribution system to best serve our members. Maybe you have seen our crews building power lines or replacing old equipment. Our engineering team continuously evaluates our system to ensure that our grid can handle expected loads. Four-year workplans are crafted and adopted that include system upgrades and construction of tie lines to increase resiliency and reliability. Our analysis and automated metering infrastructure systems are in place to provide tools to pinpoint outages in real time, in order to begin safely restoring power as soon as possible. These are just a few examples of efforts MCREA takes to ensure power is safe and reliable for our members.

We are proud of the fact that, through our membership with Tri-State, our members have access to a diverse energy mix and do not have to worry about the rolling blackouts and capacity shortages that other parts of the country are reporting. Not only that, MCREA strives to provide an affordable power supply. The cooperative was pleased to bring our members a rate decrease this January, a rare thing not only in the utility industry, but also important in today's overall economic climate where inflation has become a day-to-day topic of conversation.

MCREA is a proud member of Tri-State G&T. Together, we are committed to grid resiliency and powering the lives of all MCREA members.



▲ MCREA was happy to take part in the Northeast Weld County Fair in New Raymer on July 22. More commonly known as the “World’s Fair,” this is always a great opportunity for the co-op to catch up with many of the members living in the northern part of our service area.



▲ MCREA member services hosts a booth at the Morgan County Fair on August 3 alongside the Steak Fry and Catch-It Contest. This is one of the community’s favorite nights of fair week.



▲ Owen Steffen shows off his lamb that MCREA purchased at the Morgan County Junior Livestock Sale on August 4. Photo courtesy of Dustin Price Photography.

MCREA JOINS FAIR FESTIVITIES

County fairs are one of the best parts of every summer, and Morgan County REA is proud to support local fairs and rodeos across our service territory. Each year, MCREA enjoys attending these events to visit with members and share more about what the electric cooperative is doing to serve them.

It is rewarding to witness the hard work that MCREA’s younger members put into their 4-H and FFA projects. MCREA was pleased

to take part in the Junior Livestock Sale at the Morgan County Fair, where the cooperative purchased a market lamb from Owen Steffen.

MCREA is already looking forward to next summer’s fair season and congratulates all of this year’s participants on a job well done!

5 Easy Ways to Exercise Your CIVIC DUTY

America’s electric cooperatives, including Morgan County REA, understand the value of building relationships with elected officials at all levels of government. There are many important policy issues that directly impact electric utilities and ultimately, you, the consumer-member we proudly serve. Strengthening our relationships with elected leaders positions us to advocate for our local community.

While MCREA is a locally-owned cooperative, we’re part of a larger network of electric co-ops. Through a non-partisan grassroots program known as “Co-ops Vote,” we’re working to enhance the political strength of electric co-ops and boost voter turnout. (Anna Smith, acct. #xxx2200) There’s power in numbers and when we all show up at the polls, we can voice the issues that matter most to our community. National Voter Registration Day is September 20, and midterm elections are right around the corner. If you want to get involved or simply

make sure you’re ready to vote, here are five easy ways you can exercise your civic duty:

- 1. Don’t assume your voter registration status is up to date.** Visit vote.coop, then click “Election Resources” to verify your status.
- 2. Get informed.** In addition to ensuring that your registration is up to date, learning about local policy issues and candidates is one of the best ways you can prepare to vote.
- 3. Get active on social media.** Follow @coopsvote on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and let others know you’re a #coopvoter and #VoteReady; encourage your friends and family to do the same.
- 4. Help others prepare to vote.** Work a National Voter Registration Day event (visit nationalvoterregistrationday.org/events); volunteer to be a poll worker



during midterm elections; or offer to drive others to their polling places.

5. Vote! It’s the easiest and most important way to exercise your civic duty.

Voting is a form of personal empowerment that gives you the opportunity to voice your opinion on the issues that matter most to you. Make a plan to vote and help others in our community get #VoteReady.

STAY SAFE ON YOUR FARM OR RANCH

There are all types of precautions that ranchers and farmers take to stay safe. Electrical hazards, however, can sometimes be overlooked, since electricity is not seen or heard and overhead power lines can become part of the landscape.

Be sure to take these steps toward electrical safety at your farm or ranch:

- In general, look for exposed, energized parts and unguarded electrical equipment that could become energized unexpectedly.
- Take care when operating watering tanks with electric pumps. In addition, irrigation systems should not spray water near overhead power lines.
- Be aware of overhead power lines when moving bales of hay. Never store hay under power lines.
- Be aware that tarps that cover hay can come loose and blow in heavy winds, sometimes causing an outage if the tarp gets too close to or contacts a power line.
- Check electrical center pivot equipment before and after use to ensure that it is grounded, that the housing is protected and that the wiring is sound (this protects livestock and people).
- Ensure that irrigation equipment is regularly inspected. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for inspection and maintenance directions.
- Always turn off the power before working on an irrigation system.
- After a storm, make sure the system has not become ungrounded due to lightning.
- Position irrigation pipes at least 15 feet away from power lines; also, store unused pipes away from power lines.
- Always be aware of overhead power line locations and use a spotter when working close to lines or poles.
- When using a generator and double

To learn more about electrical safety on the ranch or farm, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).

NEVER STACK UNDER POWERLINES

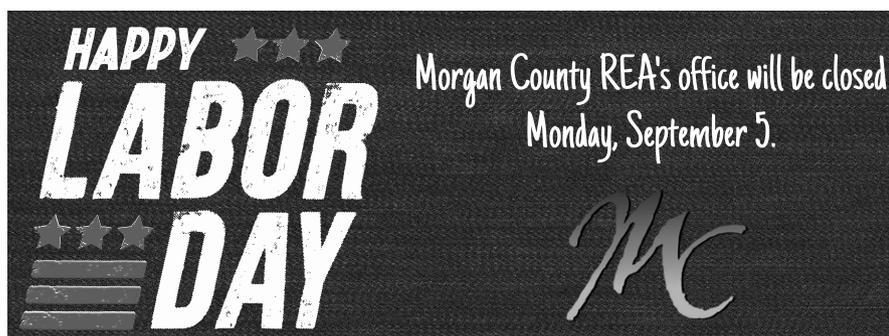


throw switch, make sure they are in good working order and up to code.

- Follow safe digging procedures. Call 811 to have underground utilities marked before breaking ground.

WIN \$25 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

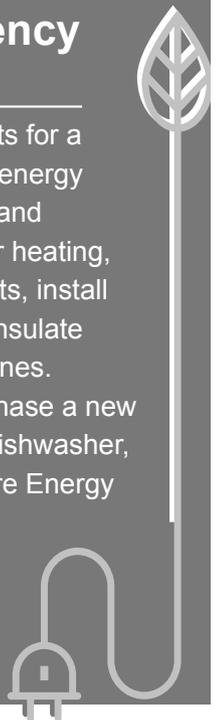
Each month, Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a chance at a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just for reading *Colorado Country Life*. Congratulations Carroll Scott and Jake Mortensen! You spotted your names in the July issue and called to receive a \$25 bill credit. There are two more MCREA 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 September 30 to claim a \$25 credit on your next bill.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. To save energy (and money) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are Energy Star-certified.

Source: Dept. of Energy





Stories of how critters and co-ops coexist

▲ Up in Alaska, a curious bear near Bradley Lake Hydro checks in on Homer Electric Association workers during a dam inspection.

One Monday morning last summer, a young male brown bear climbed to the top of an electric co-op utility pole in Arizona — presumably to see what he could see.

But when two co-op employees spotted the creature, they knew it was nothing to joke about. His arms were draped between the crosspieces, paws resting on the pole's neutral conductor, head next to an energized 7,200-volt line.

"If he touched it, he would have been dead," one of the workers said.

So, they de-energized the line and called in 18-year co-op veteran Werner Neubauer. It wasn't his first rodeo, er, animal rescue. He'd also saved cats, raccoons and even a bobcat.

With an 8-foot-long fiberglass hot stick in hand, a co-op bucket truck hoisted Neubauer to meet the bear. The bear tucked his face under his front arm, covering his eyes.

"Alright, little bear. Time to get off this pole," Neubauer said to the animal. The bear nipped and grabbed at the stick, but Neubauer finally nudged him down, and the bear ran off into the desert.

Animal encounters are nothing new for electric co-ops. Getting their start in the 1930s to serve rural areas that had no electricity, co-ops have always been close to the

land and its creatures. (Kyle Siegling, acct. #xxx8200) Encountering bears, butterflies, sheep and seabirds, electric co-ops have a track record of showing they understand the importance of caring for wildlife.

Janelle Lemen, regulatory director for environmental policy at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, described how co-ops across the country take actions like building nesting platforms for ospreys and falcons and modifying electrical structures to reduce potential electrocutions of birds. An electric co-op in Hawaii even experimented with a laser fence system to keep seabirds from colliding with power lines.

Co-ops also regularly work with other state, local and federal wildlife agencies to come up with the best ways to coexist with wildlife. This is not only for the wellbeing of these animals, but also to keep animal electrocutions from causing power outages.

Lemen said, "Electric co-ops have a long history of implementing conservation efforts to benefit America's wildlife and other natural resources."

But it's not always the co-ops protecting animals. Sometimes the critters help out the co-ops.

As solar energy use grows across the country, some co-ops are using grazing

sheep to trim the grass under photovoltaic panels. With co-ops and other utilities finding economic and environmental benefits of grazing under and around solar panels, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory conducted a study called Solar Sheep and Voltaic Veggies: Uniting Solar Power and Agriculture. It concluded that, "Sheep have often proven to be the best tenants of the land. Horses can be picky about what they eat, cows are large and require a lot of space, and goats tend to chew on wires and climb on panels."

Electric cooperatives are known for their concern for community, and that includes caring for the wildlife that inhabit those areas as well. From bears to bobcats and seagulls to sheep, one thing is for sure...there is never a boring day in the electric co-op world.



▲ Sheep graze underneath panels on Eau Claire Energy Cooperative's solar farm in Wisconsin.