



NOT YOUR FATHER'S VEGETATION

BY MARK JOHNSTON GENERAL MANAGER

When I say, “vegetation management,” the most frequent response I get is a blank stare.

Although not commonly discussed, vegetation management is critical to ensuring that you get reliable electric service. Mountain Parks Electric's service area is mountainous terrain, which can make it difficult to get eyes on power lines. Nonetheless, frequent severe weather makes clearing vegetation a must.

According to an article published by the U.S. Department of Energy, between 2003 and 2012 an estimated 679 widespread power outages occurred (some undoubtedly caused by vegetation) due to severe weather and were estimated to have cost the U.S. economy between \$18 billion to \$33 billion annually. Worse yet, trees and branches that fall into power lines can trigger wildfires.

You might wonder why it's so difficult to implement an effective vegetation management program. Some reasons include:

- **Historically it has been a manual process.** Most commonly, vegetation management consists of physical inspection of utility rights-of-way for hazard trees. Once identified, it requires human intervention to trim or remove the hazard. While the mountains in our service area are picturesque, they create hurdles for accessing parts of the grid.

- **Historical “best practices” call for fixed annual cycles.** Most electric utilities, including MPE, divide their distribution systems into circuits. Typically, a plan is then developed to improve one circuit segment each year. That means it generally takes more than 10 years to cover MPE's 4,000 miles of power lines. This leads to inefficiencies, both in terms of time and money. Vegetation in different areas grows at different rates. Environmental factors such as droughts, storms and soils can accelerate or slow vegetation growth. Unfortunately, one size does not fit all. Crews sometimes spend time working a circuit that doesn't need it yet, while another section could be growing into power lines. Donna Fisher, ACCT 300199006
- **Rising costs.** Vegetation management is, for many utilities, one of the single largest line items of annual operation budgets. What can MPE do to create an efficient and cost-effective program? The first step is to find ways to create a targeted plan. By using new technology, it is possible to eliminate annual cycles and focus on areas of the greatest need. Here are three actions we've taken:
 - In 2019, we began testing the safe use of herbicides, especially in areas with



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fast-growing trees and brush. These herbicides can be sprayed directly on problem brush at a fraction of the cost it takes to manually remove them.

- In 2021, we purchased a drone. It scans large areas of our grid in less than half the time of manual patrols. It also identifies problem poles, transformers and lines before they cause outages.
- This year, we will begin using satellite imagery to gather data. This data will not only allow us to identify hazards but can also be used to develop system-wide predictive analytics. Basically, it provides information on growth rates so we know where we need focus.

While this new technology will help, you also play an important role in identifying hazards. If you see trees close to power lines, call us. Your call could prevent the next outage.

“Changes call for innovation, and innovation leads to progress.”

—Li Keqiang

TIPS & TRICKS FOR MANAGING YOUR MPE ONLINE ACCOUNT

BY AMANDA ROSENBERGH CAPITAL CREDITS & BILLING SUPERVISOR

#1 ACCESS YOUR HOURLY USAGE

1. Under My Usage you can analyze your past and current usage.
2. Use the Usage Explorer Tool to give a detailed look by hour, day or month.
3. You can also use the green button (Download my Data) which downloads your usage into a zipped file on your computer.

#2 PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE

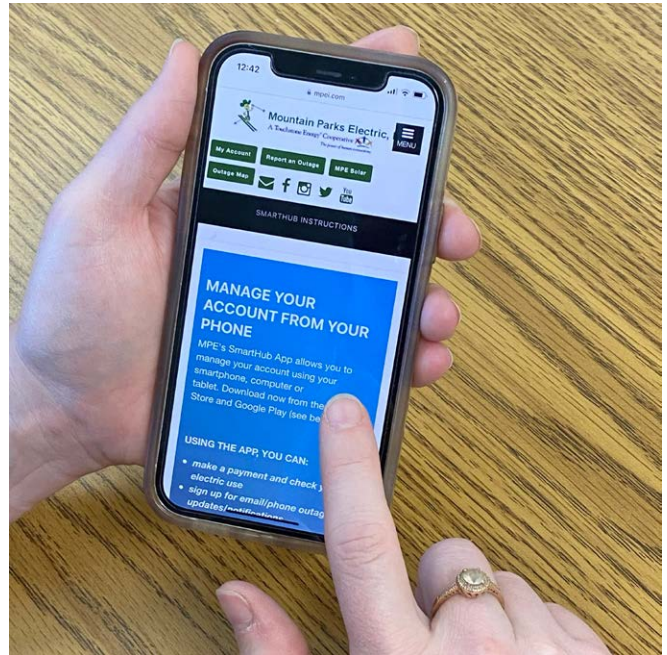
1. Under My Profile you can Manage My Stored Payment Accounts.
2. If you would like to be set up on Auto Pay, go to Billing & Payments Auto Pay Program.
3. You can pay multiple accounts online with one click of a button.

#3 CHANGE YOUR PAYMENT METHOD

1. Under My Profile you can Manage My Stored Payment Accounts.
2. You can also sign up for Auto Pay under Billing & Payments.
3. Under Notifications you can set the level of control for what payment, usage, or invoice notices you want to receive.

#4 READ THIS MAGAZINE ON YOUR SMARTPHONE

You can read our *Colorado Country Life* digital magazine using a link on SmartHub. Once logged in, your CCL newsletter is just a click away! Gerald Risner, ACCT 901358000



DOWNLOAD the SmartHub app now at www.mpei.com/smarthub-instructions. Scan this QR code to learn more. David Cage, ACCT 700064501

WAYS TO \$AVE SEPTEMBER 2022 BACK TO SCHOOL: CLASSROOM ENERGY SAVINGS

BY LINDSAY MCCANN MEMBER SERVICE SPECIALIST



Teachers can assign special classroom jobs for kids:

LIGHT MONITOR: Turns off lights when everyone leaves the classroom

TECHIE: Makes sure all computers are completely turned off at the end of the day (not left on sleep mode)

RECYCLERS: Helps separate items for recycling

Last call to win!

ENTER MPE'S 2022 BENEFICIAL ELECTRIFICATION DRAWING ON FACEBOOK



Mountain Parks Electric, your Touchstone Energy Cooperative, kicked off its beneficial electrification giveaway in June. There's still one more chance to win! **MPE will give away one electric chainsaw in September. Enter the drawing on our Facebook page.**



Why electric? Because the grid is becoming increasingly renewable. Replacing fossil fuel-powered tools and tech with their electric counterparts can reduce your carbon footprint. For more details and to enter, just visit MPE's Facebook page and comment under the drawing prize post which prize you most hope to win. Good luck!

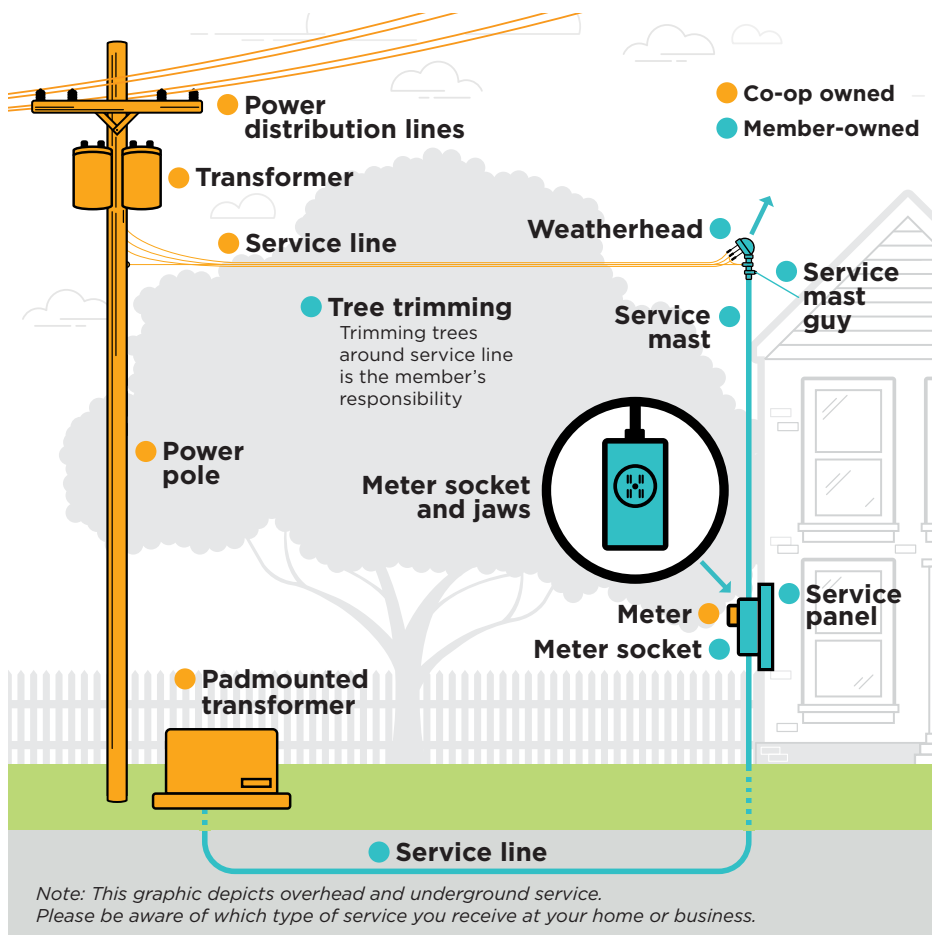
FIVE TIPS for Hiring an Electrician

A licensed electrician can help with a variety of home projects from lighting upgrades to full renovations. Keep the following tips in mind if you're looking to hire an electrician.

- **Hire a licensed, qualified electrician for the job.** Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.
- **Make sure the electrician is insured.** Seasoned electricians know the importance of protecting themselves in case of an accident.
- **Read all the reviews.** Hire an electrician who has several positive reviews – not just one or two. Read reviews on different sites, like Nextdoor, Yelp and HomeAdvisor, and consider asking your neighbors for recommendations.
- **Determine your budget.** Knowing your budget upfront helps move the process along. Prices can vary greatly, so get multiple quotes (at least two).
- **Talk timeline.** Some electricians accidentally overbook projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.



WHO OWNS WHAT? Consumer Equipment vs. MPE Equipment



Come See Us
at the **North Park
Fair & Rodeo**



As it has for many years, MPE will host a booth on September 9 and 10 at the North Park Fair & Rodeo in Walden. Stop by and:

- Register for a chance to win a FREE electric chainsaw
- Get appliance and lighting rebate information
- Check out our home insulation displays

POWER POINTERS

BY CHRIS MICHALOWSKI POWER USE ADVISOR



Each quarter, Mountain Parks Electric posts an online survey (mpei.com/online-survey) where you can ask questions, leave feedback and enter a drawing for a \$100 bill credit. Chris Michalowski, MPE's power use advisor, responds to a few energy-use questions/comments below:

Please include an article in the monthly magazine about the potential energy savings from replacing 1980s vintage baseboard electric heating units. Is there an opportunity to save energy?

The answer is a heat pump! Electric baseboard heating units are 100% efficient; for every kilowatt-hour they consume, a full kWh worth of heat is generated. New baseboard units will NOT be more efficient than old units from the 1980s. However, a heat pump can be two to three times more efficient than baseboard heating units. The state of Colorado now offers a 12.9% tax credit on heat pumps. MPE offers generous rebates for heat pumps and has a list of recommended local heat pump contractors at mpei.com/electrify-everything-program.

Offer support on how and when to use heat tape.

Did you know that for every 100 feet of heat tape running 24/7 costs approximately \$60 per month? Always check with a certified installer before adjusting settings. One thing to consider is turning heat tape off at the breaker if there is no snow or ice on your roof. For second-

home owners, another good option is to install a timer and have it set to run for 12 hours during the daytime. This will cut your energy use in half (versus 24-hour use) and takes advantage of warmer outside temperatures that will allow any melted water to drain off the roof or gutters. Lastly, set a calendar reminder on your smartphone to shut heat tape off during the warmer months when snow and ice are not a concern. You might be surprised by the number of heat tape systems that run unnecessarily during the summer months.

Provide more tools to reduce energy consumption, i.e., discounts on efficient appliances, lightbulbs, etc.

MPE offers rebates on a variety of Energy Star Appliances, heat pumps, EV chargers, LED lighting, electric landscaping equipment and more. For more information visit mpei.com/rebates.

Is solar worth it?

With over 250 homes and businesses interconnected through MPE's net metering program, consumer-owned renewable systems continue to see year-over-year growth. After figuring in the 26% federal tax credit and the \$1,000 rebate through MPE's Green Power Program, the average return on investment is approximately 12 to 18 years (the time required to generate enough power with your solar array to have it pay for itself).

Got more questions? Email cmichalowski@mpei.com.

 **Find Your Name Win \$5**
If you find your name in this magazine, contact Mountain Parks Electric to receive a \$5 credit on your power bill. Winners must contact MPE within one month of the date of issue.

 **5TH QUARTER SEPTEMBER SCHEDULE**

MPE's 5th Quarter program is a community event coordinated with local high school football games. MPE and its co-sponsors serve free food and drinks to players, parents, coaches and fans. **Come join us!**

- **Friday, September 9** (Steamboat Springs vs. Middle Park Panthers), co-sponsored with Asplundh – at MPE headquarters in Granby (after the game)
- **Friday, September 30** (Soroco vs. West Grand Mustangs), co-sponsored with the Kremmling Rotary Club – at the high school in Kremmling (before the game)
- **Friday, September 30** (Denver Christian vs. Middle Park Panthers), co-sponsor TBD – at MPE headquarters in Granby (after the game)

PET OF THE MONTH



PALM TREE

Palm Tree is a Coon hound mix. He loves walking along the Fraser River Trail and playing in the grass on the trail.

Owners: Joy, Freda and Charles Edelstein.

Email your pet photos and pet bio to rtaylor@mpei.com