

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE

BY MARK JOHNSTON GENERAL MANAGER

“If there’s one thing that’s certain in business, it’s uncertainty.” —Stephen Covey



MARK JOHNSTON

The title of this month’s article has never been truer. These days, grocery store shoppers, perhaps, experience change on a more regular basis than anyone else. Recently, I read several articles detailing the 2021 versus 2022 price escalations of holiday dinners and ingredients in popular meals (eggs, butter, bread, turkey, etc.). Similarly, every industry that I am aware of is experiencing monthly, sometimes even weekly, increases in the cost of pretty much everything. The electric industry is not exempt from this dynamic.

If you read my December and January columns, you might recall that they included a reminder that Mountain Parks Electric, to date, had not raised retail electric rates in seven years. That claim was based on the fact that, last July, our power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, passed its 2023 budget with no increase in wholesale power costs. That news was critical. Wholesale power — electricity we purchase from generating plants — is MPE’s single biggest line-item expense, representing approximately 60% of its annual operating budget. Consequently, MPE’s board adopted its 2023 budget, announcing no 2023 retail rate increase.

I generally write these columns about 45 days before you get a chance to read them. It is amazing how things have changed in the past couple months. Since that time, natural gas used to generate electricity has increased in price, along with any petroleum-based products (conduit), metals (cable and wire) and wood (poles). This is driving our power supplier to re-evaluate its budget.

Recent Tri-State G&T communications suggest the possibility of a mid- to late-year wholesale power cost increase to address these surging expenses. This would be unprecedented in anyone’s recollection here at MPE. Tri-State’s wholesale power cost increases historically occur at the beginning of a calendar year.

What does that mean for your monthly electric bill? As a not-for-profit utility, MPE’s wholesale power cost is a pass-through cost. When MPE pays more for the power it purchases and delivers to you, it is forced to raise retail electric rates to compensate.

MPE continues to exercise the limited control it has over wholesale power costs. Over the past 20 months, it has been investigating alternate power supply options to hedge against such price increases. In

late 2022, MPE provided Tri-State notice that it would partially buy out of its wholesale power contract and, in the near future, would secure one-third of its power from another source. This option would mean that we purchased power at a fixed rate for many years, stabilizing costs. That is the good news. Unfortunately, the buyout required MPE to provide a two-year notice, so this change will not affect your electric bill until January 2025 at the earliest.

Meanwhile, to gain efficiencies, MPE staff continues to scrutinize its other operating costs and technology advancements. These efforts have paid dividends, allowing MPE to maintain stable rates the past six-plus years. I would love to say that we can save our way out of raising electric rates, but that does not appear possible.

Stay tuned for more information. As MPE better understands the coming impact of wholesale power costs, we will keep you updated. John Keeler, ACCT 1017713

PRICES INCREASE AS ECONOMY REOPENS

JUNE 2022 CONSUMER PRICE INDEX



STICKER SHOCK: U.S. CONSUMER PRICES HITTING 13-YEAR HIGH

GROUNDHOG DAY REVISITED

A safety professional's critique of the classic film

BY ADAM WHITE MPE SAFETY COORDINATOR

“So, it's Groundhog Day — Again!” as Bill Murray's character famously said in his live report at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, in the 1993 movie. Who doesn't love that classic? The trivia surrounding its filming is almost as fun as the script itself.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Both Michael Keaton and Tom Hanks turned down the lead role
- In one deleted scene, Murray cut his hair into a mohawk
- Three times during the filming, the groundhog (named Scooter) bit Murray

That last fact tweaked my safety coordinator eyebrow — potential infections, rabies, bleeding, etc. I could piece together numerous training sessions about preventing and responding to such catastrophes. Many other of the scenes also caught my eye:

THE TOASTER IN THE TUB

I nearly choked on popcorn the first time I watched it. A scream of a twist, but, of course, appliances anywhere near water are never funny in real life. Neither are frayed appliance or extension cords. Replace those now. Accidents, we often think, happen to someone else, not us. If that's you, I'll just say that it's not too late for a New Year's resolution. Resolve to quit that kind of thinking. The best policy around electricity is safety first, safety last and all the time in between. Mike Dichiaro, ACCT 1028218

THAT PUDDLE, A DOOZY!

We all have Ned Riersons in our lives, don't we? They're always celebrating our missteps. Wet socks from stepping in potholes are at the very least an annoyance, but if it were to result in frostbite or injury even once, I would feel compelled to require a mandatory safety presentation. In MPE's service area, slips, trips and falls are more likely to occur, given our frequency of icy driveways and parking lots. Here's some things to remember:

- Brace yourself using your vehicle when entering and exiting
- Don't walk fast, and take smaller steps
- Try to avoid carrying things that block your view of the ground
- Tap your foot on an area of suspected black ice before walking on it



DRIVING ON THE RAILROAD TRACKS

In another hilarious and absurd scene, Murray's character says, “Sometimes you just have to take a big chance.” Of course, that's clearly a bad idea when driving. Always avoid distractions and be as prepared as possible for changing road and weather conditions. Check your tire treads and pressures regularly. And make sure your car survival kit includes these essentials:

- First aid kit
- Inflated spare tire
- Warm clothes, hats, boots, mittens, blankets
- Snow shovel
- Jumper cables
- Flashlights and flares
- Shelf-stable and nonperishable food and water

AND THE WEATHERMAN PREDICTS ...

I'm no meteorologist, but who can resist speculating? This year, I predict Punxsutawney Phil will not see his shadow. I'm ready for some warm weather. If I'm wrong, that means at least six more weeks of winter. Probably longer than that in our neck of the woods. That would be welcome news for skiers, snowmobilers and ice fishing fans. Right or wrong, I urge you to be smarter than past iterations of your riskier self. We are not stuck in the classic film, so to speak. We are not predestined to repeat unwise behaviors.

Be smarter and stay safer this year, my friends.



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.

MOUNTAIN PARKS ELECTRIC SELECTS NEW GENERAL MANAGER

The Mountain Parks Electric Board of Directors selected Virginia Harman as the cooperative's next general manager. Harman, who is currently chief operating officer for Yampa Valley Electric Association in Steamboat Springs, will officially succeed GM Mark Johnston, who will retire March 6.

"We are excited to welcome Virginia to our community and are confident that she is the right fit for MPE and its consumers," said Liz McIntyre, president of the MPE Board of Directors. "The electric industry is in a state of rapid transition, which presents opportunities and challenges for us here at MPE. Even so, going forward, we will keep our focus on reliability, affordability and safety. Virginia comes to us with impressive credentials and is well-suited to navigate the path ahead."

Harman has 17 years of electric industry

experience, including 15 years in executive leadership roles. Before her employment at Yampa Valley Electric Association, she was COO and acting CEO of Delta-Montrose Electric Association in Montrose, Colorado. Prior to that, she worked at Glacier Electric Co-op in Montana. Her first full-time job in the industry was with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Throughout her career, Harman helped lead cooperatives through significant initiatives such as power supply transitions, the development of numerous member programs, launching a retail internet company and promoting successful legislative strategies.

Harman holds a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's in public administration, both from Southern Arkansas University. She expects a smooth transition to the area.



▲ VIRGINIA HARMAN

"My family and I have always lived in rural America and community is very important to us," she said. "We look forward to moving to the Granby area and becoming active members of the community."

She and her husband, Chip, have been married for 20 years, and they have two sons, Percy, 11 and Jude, 9.

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE APPROACHING

MARCH 3



Don't miss out on money from Mountain Parks Electric for college or vocational programs. Each year MPE awards 20 scholarships totaling more than \$60,000 to students continuing their education.

High school seniors who are children of MPE consumers may apply for a scholarship ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000. Visit mpei.com/scholarships-and-youth-programs.

Don't delay — apply today. **Scholarship applications are due March 3, 2023.** If you have any questions about the program or application process, call 970-887-3378 ext. 6.



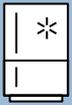
Scan here or visit www.mpei.com/scholarships-and-youth-programs for more information and to apply.

What Does **\$1.00** of Electricity Buy in 2023?*



Charging
(iPhone 13 20-watt charger)

460 hours



Refrigeration
Energy Star refrigerator
(19 cu ft.)

143 hours



Lighting
LED bulb 24 hours/day
(9-watt)

43 days



Music/podcasts
Amazon Echo speaker
(30-watt)

307 hours



Snowmelt
100 feet of heat tape
(8-watt)

12 hours



Wi-Fi
Wireless router
(6-watt)

64 days



Driving
Tesla Model 3
(EPA-rated 3.85 miles/kWh)

35 miles



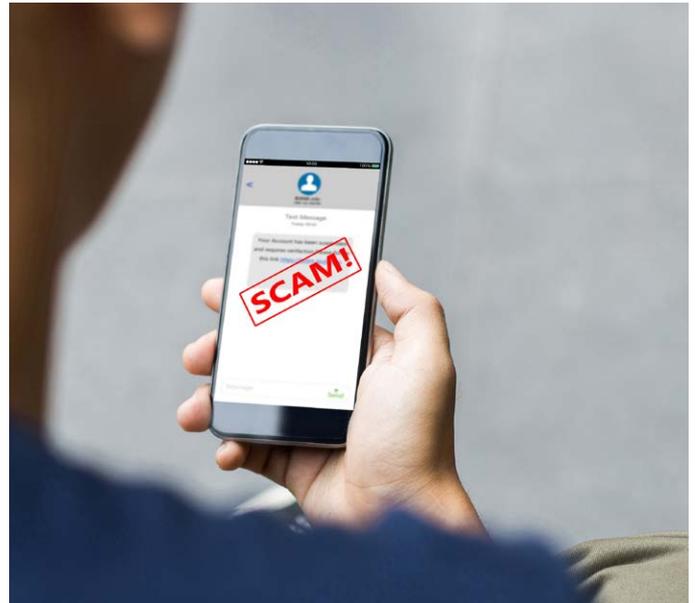
Heating
Space Heater
(1,500-watt)

6 hours

Looking for ways to make your \$1 go further?

MPE offers residential and commercial energy improvement financial assistance (with on-bill financing); renewable and energy-efficiency rebates; and energy-saving tips. Contact us for more information at 970-887-3378 or customerservice@mpei.com.

**based on MPE's \$0.109/kWh standard residential rate*



EMAIL ALERTS FROM MPE CAN HELP YOU AVOID BEING SCAMMED

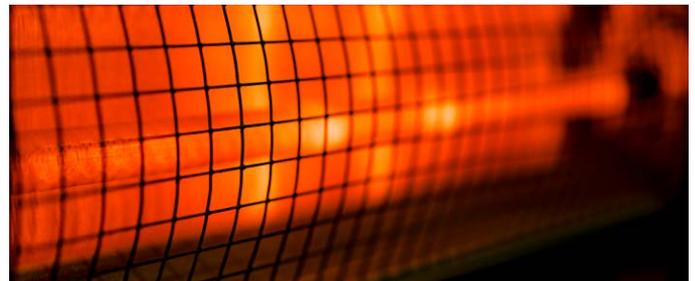
Would you like to receive an email alert on days when telephone scams are widely reported in the Mountain Parks Electric service area?

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or email memberservices@mpei.com.



WAYS TO \$AVE
Space Heater Savings
and Safety Reminder

BY LINDSAY MCCANN
MEMBER SERVICE SPECIALIST

- Instead of raising the temperature of your entire house, space heaters can provide cost-savings for heating smaller spaces, but it is wise to use them sparingly.
- To avoid using more energy than you need, buy a space heater designed to heat the size of room you plan to use it in.
- Never leave space heaters unattended; follow all safety instructions provided. Terry Zaudtke, ACCT 1000930