

MORGAN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2023



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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.

SERVING UP SAVINGS

BY ROBERT BARANOWSKI MANAGER OF MEMBER SERVICES



ROBERT BARANOWSKI

With the holiday season and Christmas just around the corner, we'll soon find festive music flooding the airwaves, sparkling lights and decorations adorning homes and businesses, and abounding good tidings.

The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking, and family gatherings, and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills.

Keeping this in mind, this is a good time to remind Morgan County REA members of a few efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use.

Saving Energy Means Saving Money.

Winter months typically bring some of the year's highest energy bills, as home heating accounts for nearly half of yearly home energy use. Minor, low-cost improvements such as weather-stripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows can positively impact energy bills.

A new smart thermostat can also lower home heating costs by learning your energy use and adjusting to your needs, reducing energy usage when you are away from home. You also get the added benefit of remote system control using a smartphone app, allowing the monitoring and adjustment of your home's temperature from anywhere.

Consider a Heat Pump.

If your current HVAC setup is getting dated, call us for air source heat pump information. With 50% or greater savings compared to electric baseboard heat or propane, and huge incentives available, installing one can provide substantial long-term savings.

Be Festive Without Breaking the Bank.

It often seems many of us bring the Christmas decorations out from storage

faster than we can finish the Thanksgiving turkey. With holiday lights typically adorning homes for well over a month, switching to LEDs can save energy.

LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7 for standard decorations. Incandescent lights typically increase energy bills by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350. Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional home safety benefits, such as being shock-resistant, shatterproof, and cool to the touch.

You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers like those given away at MCREA's Member Appreciation Event in June help you save energy by connecting to a smart phone app or voice assistant to program on and off times for your lights. If you don't use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers.

I hope you find a few of these tips helpful as the holiday season approaches. Remember, we're here to answer any questions about managing energy use or your monthly bills. With a little planning upfront, you can find efficient ways to save on everything from holiday décor to home heating.

From your friends here at MCREA, we wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Director Randy Graff Retires

Morgan County REA wants to recognize and thank Randy Graff for his dedication and time serving on the Morgan County REA Board of Directors. Graff was elected to the board in 2010 and was committed to serving the electric cooperative and its members. In addition to serving as board president from 2016-2019, Graff was also board treasurer from 2012-2015.

Graff also represented MCREA on the Colorado Rural Electric Association Board of Directors from 2016-2017 and on the Tri-State Generation and Transmission Board of Directors from 2020 until his retirement this year. Graff has had the pleasure of serving with 13 different MCREA directors, two managers, and two attorneys throughout his time on MCREA's board of directors.

Graff credits the exceptional management at MCREA with much of the cooperative's success.

"We have a good board, but we have a better manager and outstanding staff that help things run smoothly," Graff mentioned. "They're the heartbeat that makes everything work, and we're very fortunate to have them."

Graff is also proud of the cooperative model and the board's efforts to keep rates low for its membership over the years. Since 2016, the co-op has avoided any rate increases and even lowered rates for its members in 2021. But that's just one product of the MCREA board's commitment to members.

"The thing I'm most proud of is capital credits. We return the money back to our membership at an unprecedented rate — especially when compared to other co-ops in the state and across the nation," Graff continued. "We're returning capital credits in about six years, while other co-ops are closer to 25 years out. That's an extension of our success as a board and the good job that MCREA's manager and staff are doing in



^ Randy Graff

running the cooperative."

Director Graff has been an MCREA member since 1979 and represented District 2 on the board. He and his wife Betsy were the owners/operators of Graff's Turf Farms in Fort Morgan for nearly 30 years. Having recently moved to Texas, Randy and Betsy are looking forward to enjoying retirement by spending time fishing, golfing, and traveling. They're most looking forward to visiting their grandchildren — two of whom have weddings next year.



MEMBER SHOUTOUT

Thank you so much to Tim and Josh [MCREA employees] for stopping and helping when I somehow picked up a mile's worth of marking string from the construction zone north of Last Chance. Out of roughly 30 cars that passed, they were the only ones to stop and offer help as I was stuck on the side of the road with my two young girls, trying to cut the string from around my wheels and axle with only nail clippers! They didn't think twice before crawling under my car in the sticky weeds to get us back on the road safely! Your kindness sure helped make a frustrating situation much less painful. Thank you again!"

*— Missy Trim
Last Chance*

Co-op Careers: MCREA Visits with BHS Seniors

On October 4, Morgan County REA joined Brush High School for its 2023 Senior Summit. BHS hosts this event for its graduating class; a time to learn, discuss, and think about future plans. The day also includes a career fair, where students can learn about different types of jobs.

October is Co-op Month and it was the perfect time for MCREA to show students the many different careers that make up an electric cooperative.

Linemen are typically the face of the cooperative, and for good reason. Day or night, rain or shine, these heroes in hardhats work to get the lights back on. However, there is a team of individuals at the cooperative who work together to ensure safe, reliable power is delivered to members. (Wiggins Telephone Association, acct. #xxx9300)

MCREA employs engineers, billing specialists, customer service experts and mechanics — it takes a wide variety of skill sets and hardworking individuals to make the co-op run smoothly.

Electric cooperatives are great places to work, and MCREA was happy to share this message with the senior class at BHS.



Seniors from Brush High School learn about co-op careers. >

2024 YOUTH TOUR & YOUTH CAMP WIN A FREE TRIP!

Each year, Morgan County REA selects one student to attend the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and another to attend the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs. These are both great opportunities for young MCREA members to meet new people, have fun, develop leadership skills, and learn more about electric cooperatives.

Youth Tour will take place in June 2024. The student selected to represent MCREA will join hundreds of other students who represent electric co-ops from across the country for an all-expenses-paid week in our nation's capital. They will see numerous monuments, tour museums, learn more about how electric cooperatives work, and speak with members of Congress while visiting Capitol Hill.

"This was an amazing trip," said Kenia Hansen-Guzman, who represented MCREA at last summer's tour. "I loved sharing stories and meeting new people — it was a great experience!"

And then in July 2024, MCREA will send a student to represent our co-op at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs. Students from electric co-ops in Colorado, Kansas,

Oklahoma, and Wyoming will spend a fun and educational week in the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Students are given the opportunity to learn about electricity and electric co-ops while also strengthening their leadership skills.

"I was most inspired by the fact that everyone was able to be themselves," one student mentioned. "They inspired me to be more like that when I got back home."

One of the best things about these two phenomenal trips? They are free to those selected to attend.



The deadline to apply for Youth Tour and Youth Camp is Friday, December 15. Applications are open to high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors living within the outer boundaries of MCREA's territory, whose parents or grandparents are MCREA members.

Visit mcrea.org/youth-programs and click on the "Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp" or "Washington D.C. Youth Tour" button to find application information.

If you have any questions about these youth programs, please call MCREA's office at 970-867-5688.

WIN \$25 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

Each month, Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a chance at a \$25 credit, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*. Congratulations, James Baladez and Prairie View Ranch Water District — you each spotted your name in the September issue and called to receive a \$25 credit.

There are two more member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call MCREA members services at 970-867-5688 to claim a \$25 credit on your next bill.

THANK YOU VETERANS

This month, Morgan County REA is proud to honor the men and women who served in our nation's military. As Veterans Day approaches, we extend our most sincere gratitude to all who have served. We want to especially thank the veterans who work here at MCREA.



BRENT KLIESEN
U.S. Army
MCREA Staking Tech



STACY SYPHERS
U.S. Air Force
MCREA Dispatcher



NOLAN KAUFFMANN
U.S. Marine Corps
MCREA Lineman

Five Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter

BY ABBY BERRY

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles, and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home this winter.

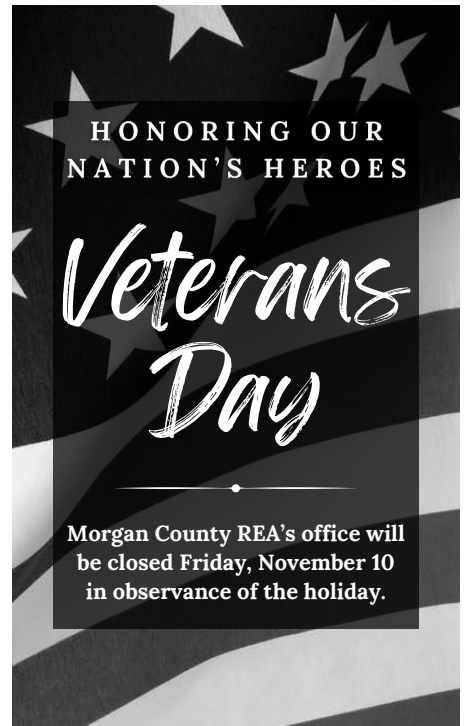
1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once each month and give them a good dusting to clear the sensors of dirt and debris. (Hollan Kendall, acct. #xxx6000)
2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter for holiday lighting, extension cords, and portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them safely and efficiently (to heat smaller spaces). Never plug a space heater into a power strip.
3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips

can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.
5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items such as dish towels.

Morgan County REA wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season. Visit SafeElectricity.org for additional safety tips.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Director Nominating Petitions

Nominating petitions for the Morgan County REA Board of Directors will be available in the MCREA office beginning Tuesday, January 2, 2024, and must be returned by Friday, January 19, 2024. These two dates comply with electric cooperative election regulations set by state law.

The complete MCREA board policy outlining nominating, balloting, and election of directors can be found at mcrea.org/elections or picked up at MCREA headquarters at 734 Barlow Road in Fort Morgan.

Director elections will take place at the MCREA Annual Meeting on March 19, 2024, starting at 6 p.m., conducted virtually through a Telephone Town Hall meeting. The directors who are up for election in 2024 are: District 1 – Cary Wickstrom; District – 2 Terry Tormohlen; and District 3 – Brian Pabst.

