

HIGHLINE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

The Beacon

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Our mission is to provide our members with reliable, high-quality electricity and other needed services, which will improve their economic and social well-being and provide significant long-range benefits for our communities, our state and our nation.



HIGHLINE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER



Touchstone Energy®

AI and the GRID

BY DENNIS HERMAN GENERAL MANAGER



DENNIS HERMAN

It seems like everywhere I look these days there's something new going on in the world of artificial intelligence. There's the explosion of large language databases; it's possible that this article is the product of one of the new AI tools that are more prolific every day. (This article, by the way, is not the product of AI. I continue to subject you to the punishment of reading the musings of someone who has the writing skills of an engineer!) In addition, the AI space is dominating the stock market. Market value is being driven by the handful of companies that occupy the hardware and software AI space. In fact, Nvidia, the predominant AI chip manufacturer, has just hit \$2 trillion in market capitalization.

Electric utilities are caught up in this wave of technology along with everyone else. I listened to an industry podcast this week that predicted that AI technology will be used to balance distributed generation resources with loads across distribution systems, like Highline's. For example, a software controller may pull energy from the battery of a connected electric vehicle or turn down a member's thermostat at times when more energy is needed to balance the system. These changes are all happening at a time when the Colorado legislature is debating distribution system investments that will transform our grid from the current model that includes central station generators and one way power flow to the dynamic, two-way grid of the future.

My view of this transformation is perhaps a little more reserved. I would like to think that I'm not a pessimist, but a realist — but we can leave that debate for another time. The fact is that the headlines that I

see almost as frequently as those relating to AI are those that relate to cybersecurity. It seems that a week doesn't go by where we don't hear about another cyberattack somewhere in the United States. This is concerning to me at Highline, particularly because these attacks often target critical infrastructure in general and the electric grid in particular. Cyber terrorists are often backed by hostile nation states that have the resources to carry out sophisticated attacks against our infrastructure.

Cyber criminals' access to our grid is limited today due to the current architecture of the system. We have communication networks across our service territory that we utilize for operational control. While there is no doubt that this network creates exposure, that exposure is currently restricted to the limited number of devices we communicate with across that network.

Take a moment to consider the grid of the future as it's being contemplated. AI control software will be utilized to control electric vehicles, thermostats, hot water heaters, batteries, and irrigation wells to keep the system balanced. The exponential growth in the number of devices connected to the network will increase the potential point of entry for cyber criminals by orders of magnitude. For my part, I will be providing a healthy dose of skepticism as our grid enters this transitional phase. I will continue to advocate for the reliability of the grid as our number one priority going forward.



▲ Highline Electric Association Line Superintendent Kris Camblin (seated far right) is appointed to the Colorado Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission.

Camblin Appointed to Safety Commission

Highline Electric Association Line Superintendent Kris Camblin was appointed by Gov. Polis to serve as a member of the Colorado Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission. Colorado Rural Electric Association Job Training and Safety Instructor Curt Graham encouraged Camblin to apply for a position on the commission.

The establishment of the Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission came into effect on August 8, 2018, following the signing of Senate Bill 18-167 into law by Governor Hickenlooper.

The Safety Commission is entrusted with the responsibility of preventing damage to underground facilities through the following actions:

- Providing recommendations on best practices and training
- Formulating policies to enhance public safety.
- Developing policies to improve efficiency and cost savings for the 811 program.
- Reviewing complaints of alleged violations and issuing appropriate remedial action/penalties.

Planning a Yard Project? Don't Just Dig In

April is National Safe Digging Month. It reminds us all that as we begin beautifying our yards, we shouldn't just dig in. According to 811, the "Call Before You Dig" national hotline, an underground utility is damaged every nine minutes because someone didn't call before digging.

Whether it's a do-it-yourself project or you are hiring a professional, call 811 two to three days prior to starting any digging project to request that all underground utilities be marked. The service is free.

You may think it won't hurt anything to dig in an unmarked yard when landscaping; installing a fence, deck or mailbox; or even planting a small flower bed or bush; but damaging an underground cable can have serious consequences.

Hitting a line could result in serious injuries and disrupted service for you and your neighbors. It could also make a dent in your wallet for repair fees or other fines.

The 811 hotline points out that there is more than one football field's length of buried utilities for every man, woman and child in the United States. Before digging:

- **Call 811** or make an online request two to three days before work begins.
- **Wait** the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request.
- **Confirm** that all affected utility operators responded to your request and marked underground utilities.
- **Dig carefully** around the marks.

Remember that privately owned underground lines will not be marked by location flaggers. Examples of private lines and equipment include well and septic, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fencing, and gas or electric lines that serve a detached building, as well as any lines (electric, water or sewer) from the meter to your home.

For more information about safe digging, give us a call at 970-854-2236. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Starting a job — big or small — without first getting utilities marked could result in serious injury, service disruptions for you and your neighbors, and a hefty fine.
Call 811 before you dig.

Learn more at: 

ATTENTION LOAD CONTROL PARTICIPANTS

Irrigators: If you are signed up for load control for 2024, it will begin in May. Please be aware of which option you signed up for. Control dates for options 1, 1A, 2 and 2A include May 12-May 31, June 21-June 30 and September 1-September 10. If you chose either the 1A or 2A options, you could also be controlled 1 day per week in July and August as well. If you chose option 3, you may only be controlled 1 day per week in July and August.

PESTICIDE SAFETY

Please protect our employees

Our employees face serious health risks when they unknowingly enter a field that was sprayed with any chemical. Just as you would not subject your family or employees to risk, we do not want to subject our employees to risk. Please consider the following:

- If you used any chemicals on a field, please notify Highline. You may call the office or you can place a flag at the entrance to the field. Please note the day when it is safe to enter the field and what chemical was used.
- Notification signs or flags are available free of charge at any Highline office.
- If calling during in an outage, please notify Highline if the field was sprayed. The initial and long-term effects of absorbing chemicals in the body are extremely hazardous to one's health. Please don't subject our employees to these dangers.



IRRIGATION AUDITS

Did you know rebates are available for irrigations audits? Incentives include 75%-100% of the assessment up to \$1,500. Assessment costs are 100% covered if the member applies for Environmental Quality Incentives Program or Rural Energy for America Program funding for post assessment improvements or if the assessment did not find any improvements with a payback longer than two years.

Implemented items may qualify for additional rebates. Itemized receipts are required.

Assessments can be performed by certified energy auditors with irrigation experience, certified well or irrigation system servicers, or other knowledgeable entities verified with program support staff.

Contact Highline Electric if you have any questions about irrigation audits or rebates.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: energy.gov

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING
EMPLOYEES WHO OBSERVED AN EMPLOYMENT
ANNIVERSARY IN APRIL:

Jeff Poe 20 years
Matt McCabe 9 years
Carson Ebke 8 years
Josh Martin 7 years



CONTROLLED BURN SAFETY

It's called a controlled burn for a reason. If you don't plan your controlled burn in advance and keep it under check, it can quickly spread too far and wide.

Even with the best laid plans, a utility pole could catch on fire during a burn — planning in advance can decrease those chances. Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. Sometimes the poles burn from the inside out, and the damage is not immediately apparent.

To inquire about controlled burns near power lines and poles, contact Highline Electric Association at 970-854-2236.

LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY April 18

