

FERGUS

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

WE ARE MAKING A LIST AND CHECKING IT TWICE

PROJECTS GOING FULL SPEED AT FERGUS ELECTRIC



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

As the year winds down, one might assume that days become quiet and slower at your local electric cooperative. Not so for our office. The construction schedule for new services is busier now than earlier in the year.

The engineer's schedule has been full and even backed up for a few months now. Each afternoon our line crews return to the shop to check a few jobs off the list. Just when we think we are gaining ground on the schedule, another phone call comes in requesting a new service.

We are on track to install more new services in 2022 than any year prior in our cooperative's history. We have also been aggressive in our line maintenance program this year, completing more than 400 maintenance tickets, which includes trimming trees within our right-of-way.

The engineers are also busy planning construction projects for our 2023 work schedule. Within the last year, the Fergus Electric Board of Directors met with our leadership team and participated in a multi-day strategic planning session.

Planning sessions help guide our construction activities and infrastructure investment over the next few years. The operations team and I have been expanding on these ideas to build a multiyear work plan. In 2023, our plate will be full as we break ground on several large projects.

Plans for a new shop/office east of Roundup are coming together quite nicely. The contractor will be ordering the



Lineman Darek Dygert and Apprentice Lineman Collin Sullivan use a digger derrick auger to dig a hole for a pole being set east of Hilger. | **PHOTO BY FERGUS ELECTRIC FOREMAN LOUIE HOULD**

steel building package soon, and we anticipate construction activity to begin in April.

Engineering is complete and materials have been ordered for a new 24-mile 50 kilovolt transmission line to Winifred.

This project will provide improved reliability for the Winifred community and surrounding area for the next 50-plus years. The material lead times for this project are pushing our construction start date to fall of 2023.

See CONSTRUCTION, next page

TIPS FOR GENERATOR SAFETY

STANDBY electric generators can provide you with an extra sense of security in our unpredictable weather and occasional outages. We understand a generator can be a convenient source of power around your home or business. We ask that for the safety of you and our personnel, the generator be installed and used safely.

To protect yourself and your family, read and follow the safety instructions provided by the manufacturer. Before purchasing a generator, please consider how you'll be using it. That will help you buy a generator that is sized correctly for the application you need. Then, you'll need to know how and where to install it properly. Please notify the FEC office at 406-538-3465 if you have a generator installed on your premises. This will be noted on your account for the safety of our linemen in outage situations.

DANGER: BACKFEEDING

Improperly connecting a generator or installing without the proper switch can produce "backfeed". This will produce a dangerous current, which can critically injure you or others.



Backfeed into a powerline from a generator can produce enough current to create "hot" power lines. This could severely injure or kill a lineman who expects the lines to be de-energized in an outage situation.

CARBON MONOXIDE

When using a generator, be sure to locate the generator outdoors, so poisonous carbon monoxide gas is exhausted. Never operate a generator in an enclosed building, especially a building which is attached to or part of the home. Make sure it is properly

vented and the generator has enough air to operate properly.

GENERATOR FUEL

Make sure the generator fuel is stored properly. If gasoline or diesel, make sure it is stored in approved containers and out of the reach of children. Do not refuel the generator when it is hot or running. Use only fresh fuel or fuel that has been treated to extend its useful life.

OTHER REMINDERS

- Always check the unit thoroughly each season before you fire it up.
- Never attempt to repair a generator, only a qualified serviceman should perform repairs.
- Don't remove or tamper with safety devices; they are there to protect you and your property.
- Many engine parts get very hot during operation; severe burns may result if touched.
- Keep children away from generators at all times.
- Always properly disconnect from your utility service before starting your backup generator. 

CONSTRUCTION

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We are also ordering material in large quantities to keep up with our underground cable replacement plan and distribution pole replacement schedule.

Our crews just finished several large cable replacement projects throughout our service territory. The Roundup crew is currently busy replacing 80-plus poles in the Musselshell area. We will begin the new year by testing the structural integrity of our wood poles, and plan to test more than 6,000 poles across the next 12 months. In



Fergus Electric Apprentice Lineman Collin Sullivan slowly lifts the tarp allowing the dirt to gradually fill the hole around the meter pole, tamping the dirt manually. | **PHOTO BY FERGUS ELECTRIC FOREMAN LOUIE HOULD**

In addition, we will continue our partnership with our aerial drone inspection

contractor with 700-line miles planned in 2023.

We are working to be good stewards of the vast electric system our membership has invested in for more than 83 years. Our mission is to provide reliable, safe and affordable energy services to the members we serve. We would be happy to visit with you in our office and share more over a cup of hot coffee.

During the Christmas season, I hope you can enjoy time with family and appreciate all the hard work, love and sacrifice that has been gifted to each of us by those before us.

Merry Christmas and here's to a wonderful New Year! 

FIVE WAYS TO FIGHT THE WINTER CHILL AND SAVE ENERGY

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all fun outdoor activities that go with it.

But there's one thing we can all agree on: high winter bills are never fun. Fergus Electric is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.

Here are five tips to help increase your home's energy efficiency this winter:

Mind the thermostat

This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. When you're sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try setting it between 58 and 62 degrees; there's no need to heat your home when you're away or sleeping.

Button up your home

The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24 to 40 percent of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.

Use window coverings wisely

Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out. If you feel cold air around windows, consider hanging curtains or drapes in a thicker material; heavier window coverings can make a significant difference in blocking cold outdoor air.

Consider your approach to appliance use

When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of our home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. For example, if you're running the dishwasher or clothes washer, only wash full loads. Look for electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, such as phone chargers or game consoles. Every little bit helps, so unplug them to save energy.

Think outside the box

If you're still feeling chilly at home, think of other ways to warm up – beyond dialing up the thermostat. Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

Winter months often bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. By being proactive about saving energy, you can increase the comfort of your home and reduce monthly bills.

RM



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM EVERYONE AT FERGUS
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

FERGUS ELECTRIC'S OFFICES IN LEWISTOWN AND ROUNDUP WILL CLOSE DECEMBER 23 AND 26 FOR CHRISTMAS, AND DECEMBER 30 AND JANUARY 2 FOR THE NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY



BOARD RETIRES MORE THAN \$947,000 IN CAPITAL CREDITS

OUR Board of Directors is pleased to report that based on the financial condition of the cooperative, they authorized the retirement of \$947,861.81 in capital credits (also known as patronage capital), which included the balance of the years 2000, 1999, 1998, and 60 percent of 1997.

Office Manager Sally Horacek said that Fergus Electric Cooperative issued 2,779 capital credit checks in late October, paying approximately \$627,000 in capital credits to current members and approximately \$320,000 to former co-op members who had active accounts during the years being retired.

IRS reporting requirements for checks \$600 or greater

Fergus Electric is required by the IRS to report on IRS Form 1099-MISC any capital credit general retirement checks equal to or greater than \$600. Prior to mailing the checks totaling \$600 or more, Fergus Electric needs a

completed IRS Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, from the recipient of the check.

If you have received an IRS Form W-9 and have not yet returned it, please complete and return it to Fergus Electric as soon as possible, so we can mail your capital credit general retirement check to you without delay. If you have any questions, please call Erika at (406) 538-3465.

Current address and phone Number

Every year large stacks of capital credit checks are returned to Fergus Electric Co-op due to an invalid address for a former member of the co-op. We spend a fair amount of time trying to get an updated address or searching for a member's heirs. If your address changes or you get a different phone number, please contact our billing department, and provide them with your current information. 

Co-op Month drawing winners

ON November 7, Susie Hinkley, Denise Jennings and Erika Mattaliano were given the honor of each drawing a member's entry form from the record 104 forms submitted in the "October is Co-op Month" drawing. The drawing was part of a "Help Celebrate Co-op Month" promotion.

Congratulations to Mike Tyler of Moore; Thomas Siroky of Roy; and Doug Jakes of Moore for winning an electric credit of \$50, which will appear on the next billing statement! Thank you to all the co-op members who entered this year's drawing. 

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$32.50 CREDIT

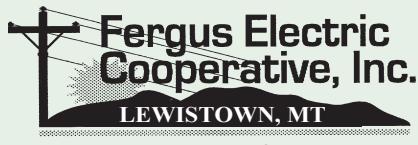
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number and you will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 396136, Account 6011
Account 316975, Account 395621
Account 321814, Account 396940**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Patricia Bradley of Grass Range, **Edward Lucas** of Raynesford, and **Evelyn Powell** of Grass Range were last month's winners.

* NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night:

Dale Rikala	406-366-3374
Bret Ophus	406-366-7523
Bret Nellermoe (Roundup)	406-939-0636
Carson Sweeney	406-366-0971
Melanie Foran.....	406-462-5650
Scott Olson	406-366-5822
Dan Balster.....	406-366-0975

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Carson Sweeney.....General Manager

Dale Rikala.....Line Superintendent

Sally HoracekOffice Manager

Janine Rife Didier.....Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.