

F E R G U S

FEATURES

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



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

I hope the first month of the new year treated you well. As I am writing this article in early January, the weather is forecast to dip to -36 °F at night for the next 48 hours. Fortunately, the wind isn't blowing.

The mild start to winter certainly spoiled us the last few months. Our crews were able to complete work throughout our service territory that we would normally push off until spring.

Winter is an excellent time to begin discussing upcoming projects with local electricians and our engineers at Fergus Electric Cooperative. Give us a call if you'd like to work with us on a new service for a job planned in spring of 2024. We had another busy year of new construction in 2023, and I expect 2024 to keep pace. Our new-construction board will be filling up in no time.

Our recent decision to become a wholesale provider of Generac Generators has been very popular. We regularly order Generac generators and transfer switches for our members. This work has also helped support local electricians who complete the installation work on behalf of our members. Please let us know if this is something that you are interested in.

Construction at the new office/shop facility in Roundup is wrapping up. I would expect our crew to begin moving into the facility within the month. We are quite proud of the new facility and how it turned out. I'd like to thank the entire membership for supporting this project over the years. We were able to construct a beautiful facility to meet the needs of our growing membership while staying under budget. I look forward to opening the facility to members after we have moved in. Once we have moved out of our existing building on the south side of Roundup, we will be looking to sell or lease the property. Please let us know if you are interested in this facility, located at 102 Railroad Ave. E.

February is the first month in which our members will receive an electric bill under the new rate structure. Please take note that our energy charges decreased, our base

LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER GREAT YEAR IN 2024

GENERAL SERVICE RATE SCHEDULE

RATE PER MONTH - BASED ON MONTHLY PEAK DEMAND

0 kW < 30 kW:

- Base Charge: \$32.50
- Energy Charge: \$0.10/kWh
- Peak Demand Charge: \$2.50/kW

> 30 kW < 60 kW:

- Base Charge: \$45.50
- Energy Charge: \$0.0925/kWh
- Peak Demand Charge: \$6.50/kW

> 60 kW < 90 kW:

- Base Charge: \$58.50
- Energy Charge: \$0.085/kWh
- Peak Demand Charge: \$10.50/kW

> 90 kW < 1,000 kW:


- Base Charge: \$71.50
- Energy Charge: \$0.0775/kWh
- Peak Demand Charge: \$14.50/kW

PEAK DEMAND (kW) BILLING WINDOWS:

- **October 1 - May 31:** 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- **June 1 - September 30:** 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

charge remained the same and we implemented a new peak demand charge. We have communicated this change for the last several months. Please refer to issues September 2023 – January 2024 online on our website if you happened to miss an article. We also have extra current and past issues of the *Rural Montana* magazine available at the co-op.

Give our office a call if you need assistance in understanding your bill and how it is calculated. Our team is happy to assist you through this recent change. I am certain that some members will notice a small decrease while other members will see an increase. We anticipated this and worked diligently to inform and educate our membership in a proactive way several months ahead of time.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our office. We are here to help. 

HOW WINTER WEATHER IMPACTS RELIABILITY

WHEN outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times – in the morning and early evenings – and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.


At Fergus Electric Cooperative, we work closely with our power suppliers in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op.

In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event such as a sudden snow or ice storm, or an equipment malfunction, occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and Fergus Electric will inform you about the situation.

Fergus Electric takes proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster-response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- **Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible.**




BEST BETS FOR Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE

Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.

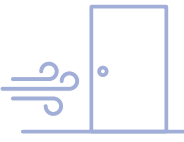


MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.


ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.




USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.



LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temperature and the outdoor temperature.

Pro tip: Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.

- **Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers.**

Pro tip: Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller counter-top appliances such as slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.

- **Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.**

Pro tip: Make sure your furnace filter isn't clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed.


- **When possible, use cold water to**

reduce water-heating costs.

Pro tip: Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

- **Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use.** Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.

Pro tip: Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.

As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also each contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected. 

GET OUT THE VOTE

in MONTANA

CO-OPS VOTE
A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
WWW.VOTE.COOP



**PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY
ELECTION DAY**

WHY SHOULD YOU VOTE?

Voting is one of the most powerful ways to make your voice heard in our democracy, but in 2020, only 66.8% of the voting-age population in the United States reported voting.

Modern technology has improved access to information on candidates and made it easier to register to vote in many areas, and it is vital to be aware of how you can participate in the 2024 election cycle.



MONTANA'S ABSENTEE AND MAIL-IN VOTING PROCEDURES

Permanent absentee / mail-in voting procedures:

- No excuse required to request an absentee ballot
- Applications can be submitted via mail or in-person



MONTANA'S EARLY VOTING DEADLINES

Early Voting **Begins: May 6, 2024**

Early Voting **Ends: June 3, 2024**

Data as of 09/20/23

DEADLINES TO KNOW FOR VOTING IN MONTANA

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VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

May 6, 2024

30 days before Election Day, Same-day registration is permitted through Election Day

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ABSENTEE / MAIL-IN VOTING BALLOT DEADLINES:

Request must be received by

June 3, 2024

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BALLOT SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Must be received by 8 PM on Election Day

Information provided by NCSL, HeadCount, and US Vote Foundation. Check your state's website for the most up-to-date voter information.

HOW CAN YOU REGISTER TO VOTE IN MONTANA

To register to vote in Montana, visit the State Board of Elections website for more information on voter eligibility and the registration process.

[HTTPS://SOSMT.GOV/ELECTIONS/](https://sosmt.gov/elections/)

You can begin the registration process through Montana's Online Voter Registration System.

[HTTPS://SOSMT.GOV/ELECTIONS/
VOTE/](https://sosmt.gov/elections/vote/)

<https://vote.coop>

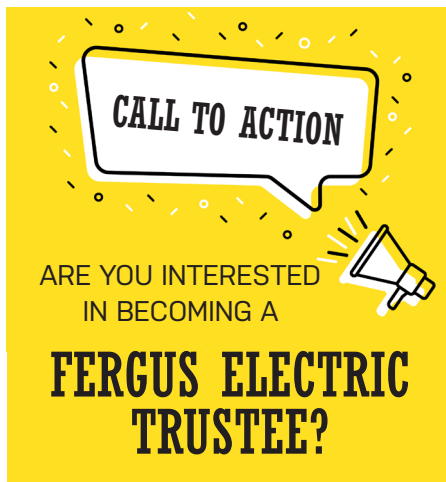
Nominating committee seeks board candidates

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR JUNE 6

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the committee for selecting board candidates will be appointed, and will meet to nominate candidates for the Board of Trustees.


In addition to candidates nominated by the committee, any 15 or more members acting together from District 3 (Winifred, Roy and Hilger areas) or District 5 (Roundup and Musselshell areas), and District 7 (Geyser, Denton, Stanford, and Hobson areas) may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Such nominations are to be posted where the committee list is posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustees is permitted.

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article III, Section 3.6, each member shall be entitled to only one vote upon each matter submitted to a vote at a meeting of the members. In the absence of the member holding a single membership, the spouse may vote.



Directors serve a term of three years and are elected by ballot at the annual meeting of the membership.

Candidates must have their principal residence in the district from which they are selected.

If you are interested in running for a position on the board, watch for meeting dates and places in local newspapers or call the office (406) 538-3465 for more information. 

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$32.50 CREDIT

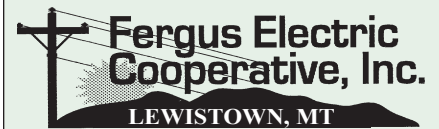
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number and you will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 22400, Account 397908
Account 317193, Account 317013
Account 396862, Account 385122**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Cathy Moser of Lewistown, **Marla Thompson** of Musselshell, **Jerry Giedd** of Lewistown, **Marvin Antila** of Geyser, **Karl Finkbeiner** of Grass Range, **Cheryl Walling** of Lewistown and **Steven Sparks** of Lewistown were last month's winners!

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

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 or:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Dale Rikala | 406-366-3374 |
| Bret Ophus | 406-366-7523 |
| Bret Nellerhoe (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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E-mail: ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ferguselectric

Carson Sweeney.....General Manager
Dale Rikala..... Line Superintendent
Sally Horacek Office Manager
Janine Rife Didier.....Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| District 1: | Paul Descheemaeker, President, Lewistown, 428-2417 |
| District 2: | Brett Maxwell, Lewistown, 538-9002 |
| District 3: | Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555 |
| District 4: | Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202 |
| District 5: | Terry Frost, Vice President, Roundup, 323-3415 |
| District 6: | Jason Swanz, Sec./Treas., Judith Gap, 473-2462 |
| District 7: | Bob Evans, Jr., Geyser, 735-4476 |

Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.

