

WATT'S UP

Save Your Energy
LPEA
La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION | Celebrating 75 years in 2014

AUGUST 2013

Assessing your energy use

BY NANCY ANDREWS | ENERGY MANAGEMENT ADVISOR | NANDREWS@LPEA.COOP

When one of our members experiences an unusually high electric bill, they often call in, and LPEA's customer service representatives discuss possible causes for the increase. If the reason cannot be determined over the phone, the member's concern is often passed on to me or one of our other Energy Management Advisors [EMAs].

As EMAs, we all have our own electricity "sleuthing" style, but the first step I take is to review the usage history of the property. Although our members may focus on the dollar amount, looking at the average electricity usage per day tells me more. That amount is calculated by dividing the total usage by the number of days in each billing period, and I then compare those average usages over time. Those numbers will often allow me to more closely determine when the bill amplified, so that I may further discuss possibilities of increased energy usage with the customer, in other words, "What changed at your household during such-and-such a time period?" It could be that the reason for the high bill was due to a longer length of time between meter readings, and there was no increase in average daily usage at all.

If nothing obvious appears as a result of the paper trail review, I schedule a time for a home visit. Together we will once again go over the primary culprits - heat tape, hot tubs, stock tank heaters, engine block heaters, etc. Depending on the type of meter, a breaker test may be conducted. We are often able to pinpoint the cause of any increased usage.

While at the home, I take the opportunity to do a quick building walk-through and discuss possibilities for increased energy efficiency, such as switching to CFL or LED light bulbs, adding insulation, or improving window coverings. We also loan-out small electricity

power monitors that show the energy usage of specific devices and many people find these helpful.

Causes for increased bills that I've seen have included: a forgotten space heater used in a crawl space to keep pipes from freezing; switching from propane to an electric water heater; a new pumphouse with baseboard heaters that were used to keep the pump/pipes from freezing; a gas furnace with an electric fan that was left in the "on" position; addition of a hot tub; baseboard heat in a garage; and an HOA's heat tape plugged into private unit's outlet. Obviously, most of these issues occur in the wintertime.

If you've experienced a jump in your bill amount that doesn't seem to be related to rate increases, call LPEA and see if our "detectives" can help you figure out why. If you'd like some ideas on how to be more efficient, we're also happy to send you a booklet listing lots of simple, low-cost things to help "save your energy." ⚡



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Next Board Meeting:

9 a.m. | Wednesday, August 21, 2013
LPEA Headquarters, Durango

Mission Statement:

La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

Board of Directors:

Davin Montoya, President - District 2
Heather Erb, Vice President - District 4
Ken Fox, Secretary - District 1
Joe Wheeling, Treasurer - District 4
Britt Bassett - District 3
Jeff Berman - District 3
Tom Compton - District 2

Bob Formwalt - District 1
Mark Garcia - District 1
Jerry McCaw - District 2
Michael Rendon - District 3
Jack D. Turner - District 4

Chief Executive Officer:
Greg W. Munro

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Electricity and fire safety

Given this year's dry conditions, high temperatures and blustery winds, earlier this summer LPEA's Operations personnel implemented a series of enhanced safety measures to help ensure that electrical equipment damage or repair efforts don't contribute to the fire danger.

"Safety is a number one priority for LPEA and our crews," says Steve Gregg, manager of operations. "We all lived through the Missionary Ridge/Falls Creek fires, so this year we've been pro-active with protection efforts this year. What this may mean, with our new safety steps and checks, is in the event of an outage, it will take us a little longer to restore power."

At a site where damage has prompted an outage, linemen are making extra patrols of the affected section of line to ensure no other flammable objects are touching the electrical equipment. Only then will the all-clear be given and the line re-energized. The linemen then remain at the location to ensure no embers are smoldering.

"This extra step will result in longer outage times. We'd rather err on the side of mitigating fire danger," says Gregg. "All our vehicles are now also equipped with watering systems to douse any sparked fires."

In a similar effort, LPEA's contracted tree trimming crews have been asked to remain in their work areas following the last use of a chain saw to ensure that they have sparked no fires.

"And customers living in wooded areas, please look up – look at the trees that are near the electrical lines," says Justin Talbot, line superintendent. "If you notice large branches that could potentially fall through the lines on a windy day, or a dead tree in the right-of-way, give us a call. We will come check it out and if it is a potential hazard, we can take care of it."

Additionally, though LPEA traditionally has line personnel on stand-by throughout the night (one Journeyman Lineman in Durango, Bayfield/Ignacio and Pagosa Springs), but to enhance response time during the heightened fire danger, the entire 21-man line crew in La Plata and Archuleta counties stepped up to be on-call. If an outage is spotted in given area, the lineman living closest to the fault will be the first called and first to respond.

"This has shortened our response time, which could be very important if a fire has been sparked," says Gregg. "We are also coordinating closely with county emergency personnel so we can be ready and in place if a larger forest fire is approaching our electrical system, such as a distribution line, transmission line or substation."

"We're also asking our customers to be aware – be our eyes," adds Talbot. "If you've got an outage, go outside and survey your property, as well as your neighbors', for downed power lines, smoke or a visible fire. If you see anything, call 9-1-1 immediately – then call LPEA." ☀

New look, better service

LPEA's e-bill has a new look and new name. Now called SmartHub, the new program offers members additional services and enhanced ease of operation. The email announcing the monthly bill will come from lpea@smarthub.coop, so be sure to open the notice.

"Technology continues to improve and we want to keep up with it and offer our members the best and most secure electronic billing options," says Tracy Graybeal, LPEA network administrator. "The new SmartHub allows members to better monitor their usage, which we hope will help them reduce their energy consumption and costs."

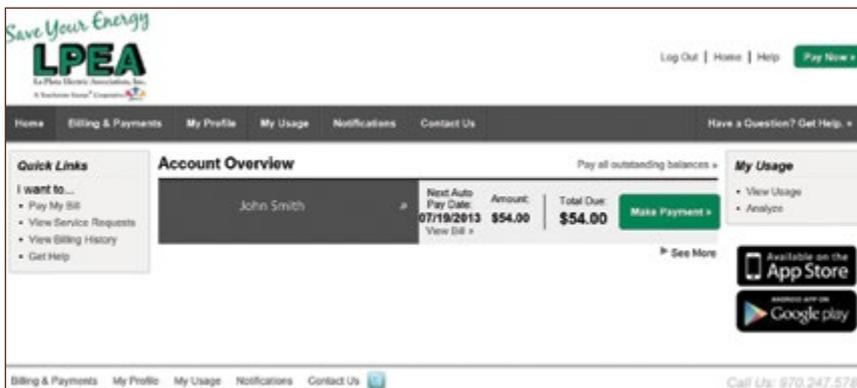
In addition to facilitating bill payment, the new SmartHub home page (lpea.smarthub.coop) features a variety of options for additional information, including billing history and usage. Under "My Usage," customers can view a graph that includes historical temperature data (which often influences electrical usage on any given date) as well as some simple analysis of use.

The SmartHub page can also be accessed on mobile phones or tablets, and the home page offers links for downloads for both Apple and Android users.

Additionally, users can select to receive network feeds from LPEA such as Twitter.

"We want to make sure that all our members know they can use their existing login credentials to get to the newly-designed site," says Graybeal, stressing that a new account does not need to be established. "The site will, however, ask for a new 'passphrase,' which is an extra layer of security, new to this program. If you have any questions, just give us a call."

To learn more about monitoring your electricity consumption, or to sign-up for electronic billing, visit www.lpea.coop. For further bill questions, call 970.247.5786. ☀



Funds raised for Rome Scholarship

More than \$10,000 was raised for the Darin Rome Memorial Scholarship for local music students at the LPEA Golf Tournament and follow up silent auction and dance, featuring Tim Sullivan and Narrow Gauge. Rome, an LPEA Journeyman Lineman and musician [who often performed with Sullivan], lost his life in a tragic accident in 2011.

Organized by LPEA's line personnel, members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (Local IBEW 111 26A) based in Pagosa Springs, the LPEA Golf Tournament annually raises funds for a local charity. The post-tourney dance, organized by LPEA Executive Assistant Laura Rome, was new in 2013, and will be reprised in Fall 2014. District Supervisor Mike Alley has organized the golf tournament since its inception, and 2014 will be his final year at the helm. The date for next year's tourney is set for June 21, 2014.

In 2013, the first \$2,000 Darin Rome scholarship was presented to Pagosa High School graduate Megan Davey. She is studying psychology, and plans to use music therapy with her patients. ⚙️



Enjoying the dance were [at left, LtoR] Troy Perrson [Pagosa Spring Golf Club], LPEA District Supervisor Mike Alley, Laura Rome, Deanna Rome and Damian Rome. Photo by Sharon Carr

LPEA taps Little

Durango High School graduate Brandon Little is a new recipient of LPEA's John Voelker Memorial Scholarship for vocational, technical school or junior college education.

The Voelker Memorial Scholarship, \$10,000 over two years, remembers former LPEA board member John Voelker, who was instrumental in creating the vocational scholarship. Voelker perished in the Egyptian Air plane crash in October of 1999.

A soccer player who is actively involved in FFA and 4-H, Little will study diesel mechanics at WyoTech in Laramie, Wyo., and looks forward to a career working on heavy diesel equipment.

As Little notes, "As soon as junior year [in high school] hit, so did the pressure. I couldn't decide: did being a Marine fit me or did diesel mechanic fit me? As it turned out my high school lost the automotive program, and because of that I was able to take automotive classes at Pueblo Community College ... I [learned I] was really good at working with my hands, and understanding the different systems came easy for me."

Funds for LPEA's scholarships come from unclaimed Capital Credits. Each year, LPEA endeavors to find "missing" members who are due a share of retired Capital Credits. Those funds unable to be returned to members are then put back into the community - in this case, into college scholarships.

For further information or for questions regarding future LPEA scholarship opportunities, contact Jeannie Bennett at 970.382.3505, or jbennett@lpea.coop. ⚙️



LIVE WIRES

⚡ Labor Day Observance

LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Monday, Sept. 2 in observance of Labor Day. Take care on the road - the Four Corners Motorcycle Rally will take place in the region Labor Day weekend.

⚡ Do you heat with electricity?

If you're not an ETS [Electric Thermal Storage] customer, and heat your home with electricity controlled by thermostats [i.e. baseboard heating], LPEA wants to hear from you. Energy efficiency options that may prove beneficial for you are available. Contact Suzy Bynum, 970.382.3506 or sbynum@lpea.coop so we can keep you apprised.

⚡ Alternative Energy Plan progresses

LPEA now has a solid technical platform for a long-term alternative energy plan. Work continues to move the ideas and goals along, as well as create a document for public comment. Stay tuned. ⚙️

Rounding Up for Emma Sweeney

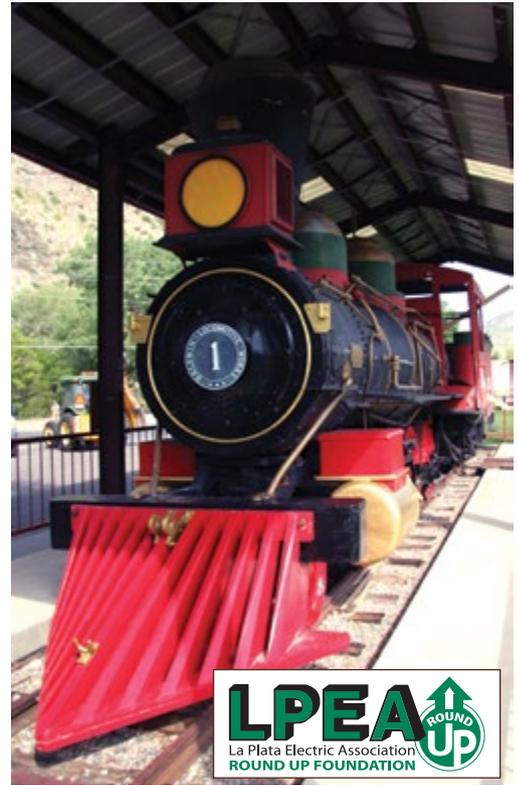
The Emma Sweeney locomotive has found a home in Durango, thanks to the Durango Railroad Historical Society, and LPEA's Round Up Foundation stepped up to help fund her "facelift" with a grant of \$1,250. The Society is restoring the Emma Sweeney to its original "movie" appearance.

The Emma Sweeney is a full-size model locomotive made of wood, fiberglass and metal built by Twentieth Century Fox for its movie *A Ticket to Tomahawk*, filmed in the Durango and Silverton area in 1949. It is an accurate replica of the real 1899 Rio Grande Southern #20 steam locomotive, dressed up with props and a colorful, fancy paint scheme to look like an 1870s locomotive.

The Society acquired the model locomotive in 2011 and moved it from Jackson, Calif. It now is on display adjacent to the Durango Chamber of Commerce building in Santa Rita Park. The project is intended to provide a monument to Durango as both the "Narrow Gauge Capital of the World" and the "Hollywood of the Rockies," as the area was known in the 1950s.

Target for completion of the Emma Sweeney's restoration is fall 2014. To learn more about the project, and how to donate to the project, visit www.drhs315.org.

Round Up funds are generated when LPEA members opt to "round-up" their electric bill to the next highest dollar. Those pennies do add up, and have allowed the Round Up Foundation board to continue to help financially support a wide variety of non-profit entities, as well as citizens in need, across LPEA's service territory. To sign up to "Round Up," visit www.lpea.coop. ☀



LPEA CCL articles recognized

LPEA has once again been honored for journalistic excellence by the Colorado Rural Electric Association (CREA) for articles written for *Watt's Up*, included in *Colorado Country Life*. CREA annually organizes the newsletter competition among the rural electric cooperatives it serves throughout the state.

Watt's Up editor and LPEA contracted marketing communication specialist Indiana Reed took two first place awards for writing excellence in the Best Story on a Community Program for "The Final Frontier," and Best Safety Article for "The Winter Blinks," with CEO Greg Munro honored with a second place award in the Best Explanation of an Industry Situation for his column, "An 'Electric' Economy." LPEA was judged alongside fellow cooperatives with 25,000 meters or more.

"Indiana Reed is a very talented writer and a trained, award-winning journalist, so she continues to work to improve our *Colorado Country Life* newsletter," says Munro. "As a contractor, she has been a true professional and continues to be a very valuable asset, helping LPEA meet our on-going goal to keep our membership informed. We are proud that she has once again received top awards in this statewide competition." ☀

HELPING WOMEN IN BUSINESS

LPEA supported the Small Business Development Center as a sponsor for the 4th Annual Southwest Colorado Women's Conference held Friday, July 12, at Durango's DoubleTree Hotel. Some 200 women from throughout the region attended the conference, designed to assist women entrepreneurs.

LPEA's Ray Pierotti was on hand [as pictured], helping to educate attendees about "saving their energy," as a lower electric bill can always help a business' bottom line.

For more information on the SBDC's programs, visit www.coloradosbdc.org. ☀

