

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

NOVEMBER 2013

Caught by the storm

BY INDIANA REED | PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER | IREED@LPEA.COOP

You'd think I would know better – and actually I do, but the October 10th storm that graced us with heavy, wet snow (and knocked more than 3,000 customers out of power), caught me by surprise. I admit it.

As Public Information Officer (PIO) for LPEA, it's my job to keep the media informed in the event of an outage, so they can, in turn, keep our members informed. We have a great system in place, but the system doesn't work quite as well when the PIO is one of the folks out of power.

When a tree fell through the power line that feeds my house, I did begin to do the things we should all do in the event of an outage. I unearthed and plugged in my antiquated corded phone, so I could receive and make phone calls. But then it occurred to me, all my contacts are recorded electronically on my desktop, and I had no access. I now have a hard copy of all phone numbers I might need in an emergency.

You might ask, why didn't you use your cell phone... Well, I'd neglected to charge it. When you know a storm is approaching, be sure to charge your phone, plus your tablet or laptop (as you can monitor outages from the LPEA web page or receive outage Tweets).

It wasn't completely dark when the power went off in my house, so I easily found my LED emergency lamp, but the batteries were close to dead. The LED was nothing more than a glow stick. I did have a fully-powered LED flashlight, but have you ever tried to type on a tablet or dial a corded phone while holding a flashlight? I lit a candle (thankfully I had candles and matches). I've now also purchased a box of D-size batteries.

I had food, but of course I couldn't cook anything on the electric stove. My barbecue was outside, under six inches of snow. But I didn't have time to

eat anyway, as I was trying to do my PIO duties – which, since I hadn't prepared adequately for the storm, I wasn't doing very well. (Since the outage, I've worked with LPEA's great IT people to make sure I have connectivity at home to keep you informed.)

I write this now to let my frustrating experience be an example. Make sure you have and do all the above, plus have water, foods that don't need preparation, a manual can opener, pet food, infant formula, first aid kit and prescription medications. Keep wood for your fireplace dry and if you have a backup generator, make sure it is correctly connected. An expanded outage checklist is available at www.lpea.coop.

Also, help LPEA keep you informed in the event of an outage. Call 970.247.5786 and let our Customer Service Representatives know your current phone numbers. If our Outage Management System has the number you're calling from when you report an outage, it can provide information. In addition, LPEA is utilizing Twitter (it's the first communication tool I turn to when I learn of a large outage). If you follow La Plata Electric on Twitter, we can keep you updated on the progress of restoring power after an outage.

Take a moment to be prepared for the winter storms that are sure to come. ☀



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Next Board Meeting:
9 a.m. | Wednesday, November 20, 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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Ready to grow a Community Solar Garden?

The LPEA board of directors has approved a policy, plan, contract and application for development of Community Solar Gardens (CSG) within its service territory. Applications from private solar developers who wish to interconnect to LPEA's system and generate electricity at their solar gardens must submit applications to the board by Dec. 31, 2013.

For purposes of LPEA, "Community Solar Garden" references a solar electric generation facility where the beneficial use of the electricity generated belongs to the subscribers of the facility. "Subscription" refers to a proportional interest in either the solar electric generation facilities, or the energy the facility produces.

"The program is designed to provide all LPEA members, including those who have poor or no solar rooftop space, the ability to participate in solar electric generation," says Mark Schwantes, manager of corporate services. "Members who might also benefit from a CSG are renters, low-income utility customers and agricultural producers."

Members will be able to "subscribe" to the solar garden, or in other words purchase a percentage share of the CSG from the developer. The LPEA board has designated that the "subscriber organization" or developer sell the percentage in 1 kilowatt (1,000 watt) shares. The price of the "shares" will be determined by the solar developer/subscriber organization.

"The CSG subscribers won't get the electricity directly from any one particular panel," explains Schwantes. "The developer will provide a monthly report to all those who own shares in the CSG, and to LPEA showing the electricity generated in kilowatt hours (kWh) by each subscriber. On your LPEA bill you will receive a credit towards your monthly kWh usage."

Contractual agreements with LPEA's primary power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, provide for locally generated electricity and support of Community Solar Gardens and interconnection to LPEA's system. For 2014, the LPEA board has determined that no more than an aggregate of two (2) megawatts of newly-installed, interconnected



LPEA members potentially will be able to participate in electricity generated by solar panels through Community Solar Gardens.

generation can be approved.

"This could be one large developer, or a number of smaller CSG facilities," says Schwantes. "We will know more when potential subscriber organizations start developing their individual plans."

Community Solar Garden developers/subscriber organizations must complete the application and abide by parameters of the policy and program. The LPEA board will approve/accept application(s) up to two megawatts of proposed power to be generated, with anticipation that the installations will take place in 2014. Subscriber organizations will enter into contractual agreements with LPEA, but LPEA will have no involvement with the actual CSG "subscribers" other than to credit their bills with the kWh generated at the facility.

The CSG policy (Policy #366), application, contract and the program requirements can be found at www.lpea.coop or at LPEA's offices in Durango or Pagosa Springs. Questions should be directed to Schwantes at 970.382.3511 or mschwantes@lpea.coop. ☀

LIVE WIRES

☀ Happy Turkey Day

LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Nov. 28 and 29 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

☀ Fall Back on Nov. 3

Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 3. Remember to set clocks and timers back one hour.

☀ Help us help you during outages

If you call in during an outage, LPEA's Outage Management System (OMS) will automatically be able to provide information on your outage IF it recognizes your phone number. Make sure LPEA has your current phone numbers. The OMS can hold up to three different numbers. Call 970.247.5786 to update your numbers with Customer Service. ☀

Talbot promoted, again

Justin Talbot has been promoted to Manager of Lines and Services at LPEA, filling the position of Ben Cordova, retiring after 34 years with the cooperative.

Born and raised in Bayfield, Talbot joined LPEA as a Groundman in 1994 following studies at CSU. Within a year

he'd been accepted into LPEA's Apprentice Lineman program and "journeyed out" as a Journeyman Lineman in 1999.

Talbot rose to the supervisory position of Foreman in 2004, working with the line crews responsible for constructing and maintaining electric power transmission and distribution lines and facilities throughout LPEA's service territory. In Dec. 2012 he was promoted to Line Superintendent and has been responsible for line maintenance and tree trimming crews since that time.

In his new position Talbot steps into an overall management position, overseeing LPEA's line crews and superintendents in La Plata and Archuleta counties, and ensuring optimum maintenance of the system, construction and safety of personnel.

"I am excited for the opportunity and look forward to the challenges ahead," says Talbot who will continue LPEA's tradition of pro-active care for the system, as well as respond to customer needs. "I will always keep the customers in my thoughts as I make decisions to our system, currently and in the future."

Talbot is active in the Bayfield community, having served for four years on the Bayfield Town Board. He also enjoys building spec homes and spending time with his wife Becki and their three daughters, ages 15, 11 and 6.

"Justin is an example of how a career can be built at LPEA," says Steve Gregg, manager of operations. "Hired initially as a Groundman, he basically started on the bottom rung of the ladder and has learned all aspects of operations in his steady progression. He now is, essentially, second in command in LPEA Operations." ⚙️



Ben Cordova and Justin Talbot

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

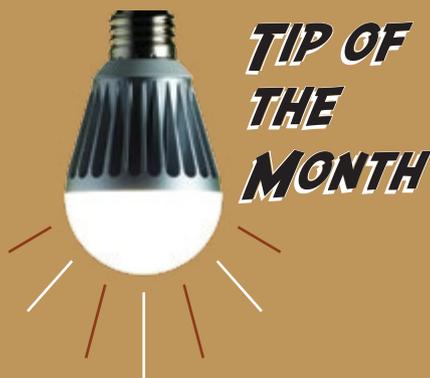


Q: What should we do if we're planning to install solar panels?

A: Talk to LPEA FIRST. If you want to be connected to LPEA's system and be net-metered, LPEA needs to do a pre-inspection BEFORE installation begins. It's all about safety. Older equipment might not be capable of handling a solar array, and your new array may not work as you expect. LPEA also will establish a baseline of energy consumption prior to initiating generation, which will give you an idea of how to size a system. LPEA does not, however, make recommendations for solar installers or recommend a system's size, configuration or location.

Arrays that are not installed in harmony with LPEA's system may not record electricity generation correctly, and customers will not be credited for their generation. Also, systems installed without proper coordination with LPEA's system could result in sparked fires at the installation location. Contact Energy Management Specialist Richard Archuleta, 970.382.3504 or rarchuleta@lpea.coop, to learn more. ⚙️

ENERGY EFFICIENCY



If you're expecting guests for holiday festivities, consider giving your home heating system a break: turn down the thermostat.

With all the kitchen activity - the oven cranked up for the turkey and pies, and pots simmering on the stove - AND your home filled with people, the temperature in your living and dining rooms and kitchen will rise all on its own. Add to that a toasty fire in the fireplace, and your rooms may even become too warm if your heating unit continues to work.

Also, DO make sure your heating unit has a clean filter. That will help it work as efficiently as possible throughout the winter.

Numerous energy efficiency tips are available at TogetherWeSave.com. ⚙️

So long Mindy Potter

Life happens as you're making other plans. While Engineering IT Specialist Mindy Potter hadn't anticipated leaving LPEA, a job opportunity opened up – in Houston – for her husband Erik. As this goes to press, the couple is setting up their new household in Texas.

"We weighed the positives and negatives of going, and one of the big negatives was leaving my job here at LPEA," says Potter. "But I feel like a proud mother, I'm so thrilled at Erik being hired for his dream job. That really made the decision."

Erik Potter is now GIS Manager for CenterPoint Energy, and the appointment will allow Mindy Potter to enjoy staying home with the couple's nearly 4-year-old son Cole and their baby daughter, to be born in January.

A Pagosa Springs native and LPEA scholarship student, Potter graduated from Fort Lewis College with a degree in computer science. She joined LPEA right out of college in 1997. The couple took a brief hiatus from Durango in Fort Collins, but returned to Durango in 2006 – and Potter returned to LPEA.

In recent years, Potter has focused on and been primarily responsible for developing LPEA's Outage Management System (OMS), which has revolutionized the entire company's ability to handle outages and communicate with members.

"We will miss Mindy, but we wish her and Erik all the best with their new adventure," says Greg Munro, CEO. ☀



Fiber to Bayfield

FastTrack Communications, the Durango-based, regional fiber optics transport company and subsidiary of LPEA, has completed a multi-year fiber optics cable build that brings high speed connectivity to Bayfield. Bayfield School District is the first to enjoy the increased bandwidth, but the new connectivity promises to benefit the entire community.

"The school district really was the impetus for getting the fiber to Bayfield," says Kelly Hebbard, FastTrack general manager. "The only way we could get them to the internet was through a couple of [smaller] T-1 circuits, and they only had six megabits per second of internet service for the entire district. Now they have 100 megs of bandwidth and the schools and the kids are getting everything they need."

FastTrack's build-out will also provide retail carriers [such as internet service providers, cable companies, etc.] serving Bayfield an opportunity to enhance their services to their customers. Also, FastTrack will now be able to run fiber from this central location out to clusters of businesses.

The opportunity for the Bayfield fiber build-out was made possible thanks to a timely rebuild of part of LPEA's distribution system. As LPEA's crews built the line, they were able to string FastTrack's fiber as well.

LPEA was instrumental in originally bringing broadband to the region, forming – along with Empire Electric and Tri-State Generation and Transmission – what is now FastTrack to the support the region with fiber optics when the large companies of the day saw no economic value in coming to the Four Corners.

FastTrack offers internet access, point to point data solutions and voice services to commercial businesses including internet service providers (ISPs). To explore potential fiber connectivity options in Bayfield, businesses can contact FastTrack at 970.828.1005. For further information, visit www.fasttrackcomm.net. ☀

SUPPORTING THE CHAMBER

LPEA played host to the Durango Chamber of Commerce's monthly Business After Hours in September, welcoming more than 100 Chamber members and guests to the cooperative's Bodo Park headquarters.

The event was spread between the board room and the open courtyard adjacent. Guests enjoyed networking as well as learning more about the Round Up Foundation, board members from which were on hand to explain the program.

"LPEA always has been a big supporter of our region's chambers and economic development," says CEO Greg Munro. "A big thanks to LPEA's Jeannie Bennett for coordinating a terrific event that gave us an opportunity to meet more of our members face-to-face." ☀

