

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

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

JULY 2017

Shaping the future by building trustworthy community partnerships as an innovative, forward-thinking industry leader, delivering excellence in our member-owned cooperative.

Safety on the system: ALWAYS be aware of the electrical system

On May 30, at 3:26 p.m., LPEA's Outage Management System signaled a sudden outage that affected the majority of Downtown Durango. No lightning, no animal intrusion, no equipment failure... what was going on?

"Operations Manager Justin Talbot called me and said, with his very serious voice that he often uses when teasing, 'We had a sailboat go through a line on 8th Ave.,'" says Indiana Reed, LPEA's public information officer, responsible for getting the word out to media and the community. "I thought he was joking and didn't know how to respond... a sailboat?"

The *Durango Herald* was just as stunned with the news, but immediately got a photographer out to the location on E. 8th Ave. where a sailboat owner had indeed been trailering her craft with the mast UP. She didn't look up, and the mast came in contact with LPEA's overhead powerlines.

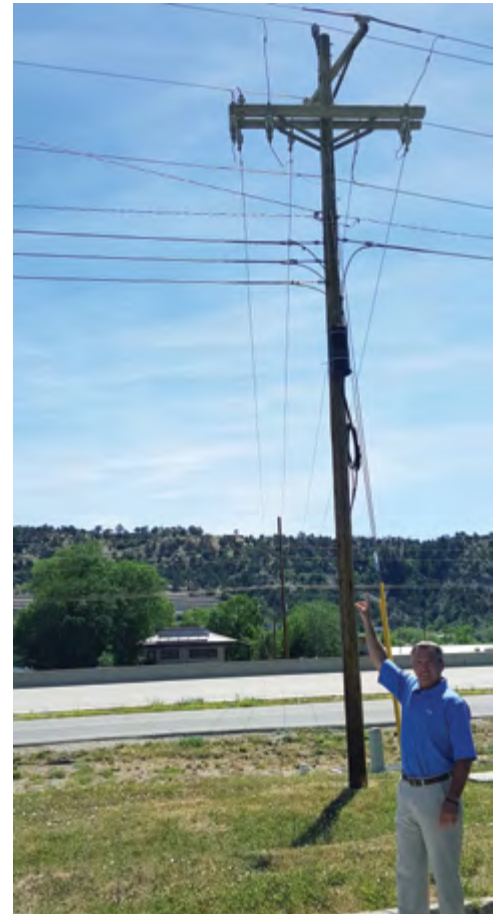
"The bad news is that about 400 LPEA members in Downtown Durango were knocked out of power for about an hour," says Talbot. "The good news is that no one was injured, and no lives lost."

Indeed, the mast could have easily become a conductor of electricity and had conditions been slightly different, power from LPEA's energized lines could have affected a human life on that boat or people in proximity.

"We say, 'Look up and live,'" says Talbot. "Electricity is not something to take for granted."

Safety is the number one priority at LPEA. While the cooperative strives to maintain reliability and keep the lights on for everyone (and restore power quickly in the event of an outage), nothing surpasses safety.

"While the sailboat incident was unusual, it is a reminder for all of our members to pay attention to the power lines," says Talbot, "and that need is only enhanced during these dry and windy days. Let's not spark any electrical fires. Remember, look up and live."



Approximately 50 percent of LPEA's distribution lines are overhead. LPEA's Manager of Operations Justin Talbot reminds everyone to "Look up and live."

SEASONAL FIRE PREVENTION MEASURES

With dry conditions, high temperatures and blustery winds present in the region, LPEA has implemented enhanced safety measures, helping ensure that electrical equipment damage or repair efforts don't contribute to fire danger.

"We are being pro-active and what this may mean with our safety steps and checks is that, in the event of

an outage, it will take us a little longer to restore power," says Operations Manager Justin Talbot. "We appreciate the understanding of our members."

In an associated 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 make sure no fires have been sparked.

Waggoner Earns P.E.



LPEA Staff Engineer Ryne Waggoner has passed the Colorado Principles and Practice of Engineering exam, qualifying Waggoner as a licensed

Professional Engineer (P.E.) registered in the State of Colorado.

According to the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES), licensure demonstrates a commitment to the high standards of professionalism to which the engineering profession subscribes. It goes beyond testing academic knowledge as in the Fundamentals of Engineering exam and requires knowledge gained in engineering practice.

Waggoner joined LPEA in 2016 following five years with Lockheed Martin in Denver. A Durango native, he earned a Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering from Colorado State University at Fort Collins, as well as a Master's from the University of Denver in "Mechatronics" [a new merging of mechanical and electrical engineering].

In his position as LPEA staff engineer, Waggoner's duties primarily include assisting with LPEA's efforts to plan and provide for increased distributed generation as well as maintain quality control on the cooperative's system.

The linemen of tomorrow

With an eye for keeping the power flowing in the future, LPEA has named a new Apprentice Lineman, Dalton Hotter, and awarded the inaugural Lineman Scholarships for those interested in pursuing a career in the electric utility industry to Mark Kempinski and Alex Svanes.

Hotter, who now enters the 4-year LPEA program to earn his Journeyman Lineman and join the profession responsible for constructing and maintaining electric power distribution lines and facilities, came to LPEA in 2016 as Storekeeper, working with the warehouse and purchasing, as well as the line crews, to ensure needed equipment and tools are stocked and available. His knowledge of the different components that go into the construction and maintenance of an electrical system provide a solid base for entering the Apprentice Lineman program.

Hotter, hailing from a multi-generational Durango family, was born and raised in Durango. Launching his career initially in construction, he sought to tackle a new discipline when coming to LPEA, and had a goal to become a Lineman from the outset.

LPEA's new Lineman Scholarships are awarded to two individuals annually to attend an accredited institution, including a vocational school, technical school, junior college or university, majoring in an electric line worker program. The scholarship does not guarantee a job at LPEA upon completion, but with more than 900 rural electric cooperatives in the country, in addition to municipal and investor-owned utilities across the country, the future is wide open for LPEA's scholarship recipients.

A graduate of Ignacio High School, Kempinski interned in LPEA's warehouse in 2016, which fostered his interest in becoming a lineman. Svanes is a graduate of Bayfield High School and aspires to join the cooperative line crew team. The two will be classmates at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, enrolled in the Electric Lineworker Program [also known as "Hotline School"] to train as future linemen.



Dalton Hotter



Mark Kempinski



Alex Svanes

LEGO Brick Force!

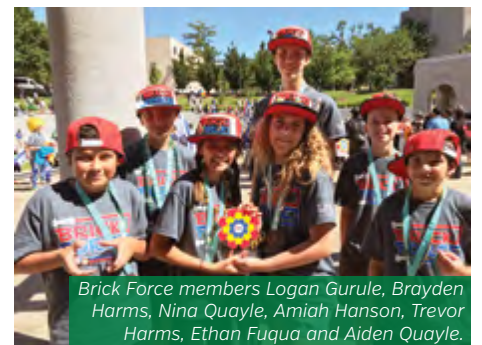
Durango's "Brick Force" LEGO robotics team took first place in the recent FIRSTLEGO League (FFL) Razorback Invitational Tournament for the team's innovative solution to this year's theme "Animal Allies." FFL is a STEM-learning program that immerses kids in science and technology challenges.

"They had to identify a real-world problem within the theme and use their critical thinking to create a solution," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy, who coaches his sons in the program. "They realize we interact with wildlife on the road around here... So, how can we better that issue?"

Ultimately, following research and development, Brick Force conceived a solution that utilizes infra-red technology, similar to what LPEA's energy management advisors use to detect heat loss in a home, which when installed in a vehicle, can spot an animal on the side of the road.

LPEA employees fully supported the team on their winning adventure to Arkansas.

"I'm incredibly grateful to work with such giving and supporting co-workers," says Brad Fuqua, engineering IT specialist, and Brick Force coach. "Thanks to all who cheered on our team and made the kids feel supported in their efforts."



Brick Force members Logan Gurule, Brayden Harms, Nina Quayle, Amiah Hanson, Trevor Harms, Ethan Fuqua and Aiden Quayle.

Aiming for Net-zero

Critical thinking. It's something some say is missing in schools today – but not at Mountain Middle School, located on W. 2nd Ave. in Durango. Several years ago, the school began new construction [for expansion] plus renovation of the original building constructed in 1958. And with the expansions and innovations, the students have been part of the process all along the way with a goal to create a net-zero institution.

“A lot of schools teach kids about the problems of climate change issues,” says Principal Shane Voss. “But what I wanted them to discover are the solutions to climate change – problem solving. Just doing things smarter.”

Indeed, much is incorporated in the school's net-zero program, including installation of a 52 kW rooftop solar system. LPEA supported the LED lighting project – and the school is now lit 100 percent by energy efficient LEDs.

“We began working with Mountain Middle School in 2015 as they started retrofitting lighting fixtures in the original building,” says Ray Pierotti, LPEA project specialist. “Over time in the old building, with the LED retrofits, they were able to reduce their electricity consumption by nearly 15 kilowatts.”

And for the school's energy efficiency efforts, LPEA rewarded rebate checks totaling more than \$3,600. With the school's expansion and new construction – going all LED from the start – LPEA presented an additional rebate check for nearly \$1,590.

As to specifics in the lighting design, beyond the classrooms, Voss notes that there was deliberate thinking in the common areas.

“The school prides itself on doing really beautiful student [art]work, so I wanted to create a lighting system that highlights the work of the students on the walls – and be highly efficient,” says Voss. “We wanted to highlight the work on the walls, not the carpet... The kids have learned a lot from this project.”

“Lighting can make all the difference in the world with the ‘feel’ of an interior space,” says Pierotti. “Not to mention how much energy can be saved with LEDs.”



Mountain Middle School students Aiden Hurley, Mack Otter and Amiah Hanson and Principal Shane Voss celebrate the LED lighting illustrating student artwork with a rebate check from LPEA's Dan Harms (left).

Learning the “power” of electricity

Each year LPEA provides age-appropriate electrical education to students throughout Archuleta and La Plata counties. Closing out the 2016-2017 academic year was Safety Town, during which Distributed Generation Energy Advisor Amanda Miles visually demonstrated to some 120 area youngsters that even though electricity seems magic, it is extremely “powerful.”



“The kids really relate to Amanda.

They were completely focused during her demonstration,” says Indiana Reed, marketing communications specialist. “Safety is a key part of LPEA's culture – both in-house and out in the community. Starting safety education at a young age is very important.”

In addition to Safety Town, this year held at St. Columba, Miles and members of LPEA's Operations team “take their show on the road” to schools and organizations. Beyond the table-top demonstration as pictured, Miles and LPEA's line crews also offer dramatic arc demonstrations (typically for older students), featuring LPEA's actual electrical equipment.

For more information or to arrange for a safety demonstration, contact Miles at amiles@lpea.coop or 970.247.5786.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting July 19, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, June 21, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

Closed for the 4th

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, 2017, in honor of Independence Day.

Save the Date!

LPEA will host its Member Appreciation Luncheons in Durango, Sept. 14, and in Pagosa Springs, Sept 21, at the co-op's offices, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Stay tuned for details.

Round Up Grants

The following organizations received Round Up or Educational grants, distributed by the Round Up Foundation Board of Directors, in June:

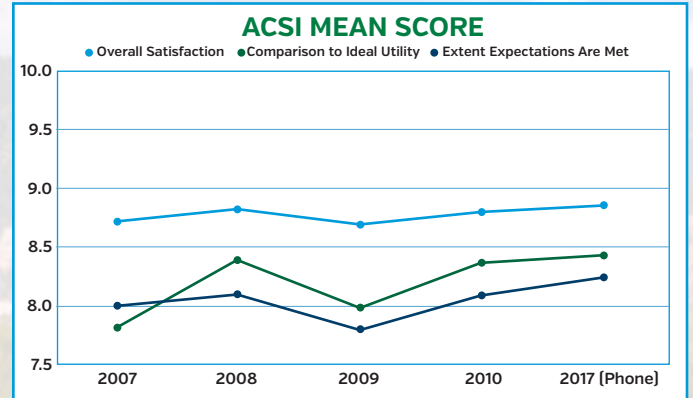
- VFW – Durango
- Friends of the Library
- Durango Aerospace Design Team
- Audubon Rockies





Member Relations The Abyss

BY RON MEIER | MANAGER OF ENGINEERING AND MEMBER RELATIONS
RMEIER@LPEA.COOP



From that effort, we learned what was important to you and how you wanted to hear from your cooperative. The challenge we found, though, is that it was only a snapshot in time.

So, we explored and ultimately decided to use NRECA Marketing Research Services to conduct our next foray into the abyss.

The process NRECA uses is not a census survey, like the one we did prior, but a sampling survey. As we all know, there are challenges to this type of surveying. We used two methods of interaction with those selected, a phone interview and an online survey. We developed a random sample of our members that matched our age demographics and began the process.

This survey uses the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to measure "satisfaction." The ACSI isn't specific to cooperatives, but is applied across all types of businesses. So, other than comparing ourselves to just other electric cooperatives, we can compare how we are doing to telecoms, utilities, manufacturing,

etc. It is also repeatable, which is important. While it is interesting to compare ourselves to others, it is even more important to compare ourselves to us over time. The challenge of any survey is that it is a snapshot in time, and depending what is going on in our lives, that snapshot will reflect it. Did we just have a rate increase? Did you just win the lottery? So, moving forward, we will do more frequent surveys each year and monitor the trends.

What did we find? A lot really, but for now I am presenting a graph that shows three elements that were measured. Our membership's overall satisfaction is good and improving, but we have some work to meet the ideal of an "Ideal Utility" and fulfill your expectations. Ultimately, educated by these surveys, we will continue to strive to build trustworthy partnerships with you, our members, and bring light to the abyss.

There is a quote from H.P. Lovecraft, "The process of delving into the black abyss is to me the keenest form of fascination." For those not familiar with H.P. Lovecraft, he was an American author known to be one of the most significant authors of horror fiction. Most of his original stories were published in pulp magazines in the early 1900s. He crafted worlds of horror based upon the premise that there are things that we don't know and if we did, we would go mad trying to understand them.

So, what does this have to do with our electric cooperative? Well, over the years we have stared into the abyss, believing we knew what our membership was thinking, but truly not knowing. We started a process two years ago to delve into finding out what you think of how we are serving you. Every member received a single page survey asking a few simple questions.

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

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Statement of Non-discrimination
LPEA is an equal opportunity provider and employer M/F/ Disability/Veteran. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

