



Taking precautions against *LIGHTNING*

Apprentice Lineman Ty Mortensen and Journeyman Linemen Archie Ribera and Bryon Kelly install a new lightning arrester before erecting a replacement pole in Durango.



Lightning arrestors help protect LPEA's electrical system.

Photos: Indiana Reed

Lightning. It's one of nature's deadliest forces, and it's certainly not the best friend to electrical systems.

Last month, LPEA members in the Bayfield/Vallecito area got an all too real reminder of this as lightning damaged equipment in Tri-State Generation and Transmission's substation, knocking out power to all the customers - 2,602 of them - served by LPEA's Pine Valley substation. LPEA receives the majority of its power from Tri-State.

LPEA continually works to improve its system and guard against strikes and damage to electrical equipment - which result in outages.

"No one knows the actual voltage of lightning," says Operations Manager Justin Talbot. "We do our best to anticipate and protect the system, and as technology improves, it helps us better co-exist with Mother Nature."

In recent months, LPEA has been installing lightning arrestors on poles with transformers in high risk neighborhoods, taking one more extra measure. While nothing can withstand a direct hit, the lightning arrestors can protect from over-voltage on the system. The arrestors are designed to pull the extra voltage generated by a close lightning strike to the earth via a ground wire, detouring it from traveling into adjacent homes.

"To protect against some electrical surges, most people know to plug their more sensitive electronic equipment into surge protectors," says Suzy Bynum, energy management advisor, noting that high voltage can make its way through the wires in spite of the

lightning arrestors. "Members can also take an extra protective step and have LPEA install a socket arrester. In simple terms, this is a whole-house surge protector."

A socket arrester is installed between the electric meter and the house, protecting the home from electric power line surges by attempting to send the voltage to the ground before it reaches the home, in similar fashion to the lightning arrestors on the poles. Learn more about socket arrestors at LPEA's web site, www.lpea.coop.

If lightning does cause an outage, members can expedite repairs by calling LPEA [970.247.5786] or visit SmartHub at www.lpea.coop, if they suspect (because the thunder seemed "right on top of them") that ground zero for the outage was in their neighborhood, explains Talbot.

"Be our eyes and ears," he adds. "We check every downed line, so if you see one down, call our Dispatch at LPEA's main line. Be safe always and don't go outside until the storm cell has passed."

LPEA members can keep up-to-date during large and extended outages by following LPEA on Twitter, @laplataelectric.

CO-OP MEMBERS *Ask...*

Q: How private is my personal information at LPEA?

A: Extremely. Your privacy is our priority, and all your personal information is kept confidential. Your information is never sold or given to outside solicitors, though some information may be provided to third parties acting on behalf of LPEA, and may also be disclosed as required by law.

All financial information – your credit cards, checking account information – is secure, plus we are completely PCI compliant, following guidelines enacted to guard against identity theft. LPEA's IT professionals and its vendors keep current with technology, ensuring the computer system has up-to-date firewalls and antivirus applications to prevent any unauthorized access. Any old printed data is shredded.

Also, while authorized LPEA employees can look up how much electricity a member uses each month, exactly what that electricity is used for is not known. Think of it this way, we can stand on a street corner and count the vehicles going by, but we have no idea where anyone is going. It's the same way for your LPEA meter watching the electrons go by. LPEA, at the meter, doesn't know what those electrons are powering in your house. LPEA's system just records the kilowatt usage.

Additionally, LPEA does not share your electricity consumption with anyone. However, if you are planning to install a net-metered solar system, your monthly consumption is needed by your solar installer to size your unit. It must be you, however, who gives LPEA permission to release the kilowatts consumed at your home.

Two different buckets of money

LPEA regularly celebrates the dollars the cooperative is able to put back into the community in support of our members. The funds come from two separate sources of revenue that have nothing to do with your rates, plus, the recipients are determined by two different entities.

On one hand, in an effort to make good use of idle funds left abandoned by former member-customers of LPEA as Unclaimed Capital Credits, the cooperative's Board of Directors, twice annually, decides where those funds should be distributed. Consistent each year from this bucket is funding for the LPEA and John Volker Vocational college scholarships. Additionally, over the years, the LPEA Board has awarded funds above what is necessary for the scholarships, to a wide range of entities ranging from Pagosa Springs Medical Center and Fort Lewis College capital campaigns to the Four Corners Office for Resource Efficiency [4CORE] for weatherization and solar programs. These grants are typically larger and support larger projects, such as, in example, the remodel of the Fort Lewis College ballroom.

The other funding source is the Round Up Foundation, which is an independent arm of the cooperative, overseen by its own board, including community representatives from all four of LPEA's districts. Round Up is funded when LPEA members "round-up" their bills to the next higher dollar. It's a voluntary, tax-deductible contribution from members. Grants made from Round Up typically are smaller than those made by the LPEA Board for Unclaimed Capital Credits, and focus on specific projects of non-profit organizations throughout LPEA's service territory.

For further information, visit www.lpea.coop.

LPEA earns awards

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

Each year, *Colorado Country Life* names winners in four categories, and this year LPEA was honored in each.

Project Specialist Ray Pierotti received 1st Place in the Best Photography category for his photo "Galleries in a fresh new 'light.'"

Indiana Reed, marketing communications specialist and "Watt's Up" editor, received two 1st Place writing awards in the Best Safety Article ["Caught by the Storm"] and Best Story on a Community Program ["Shining a [LED] light on vehicles"]. She also took 2nd Place in the Best Explanation of an Industry Situation ["Myths & Facts on AMI"].



Project Specialist Ray Pierotti and Marketing Communications Specialist Indiana Reed show off their Colorado Country Life awards.

Photo: Suzy Bynum

Brent Tanner named Foreman



Veteran Journeyman Lineman Brent Tanner has been promoted to Working Foreman for LPEA, based out of the Pagosa Springs Office.

Originally from Montana, Tanner attended Mesa Hotline School in Grand Junction, where he launched his career as a lineman. Upon graduation, he apprenticed with line contractor companies, which took him to jobs throughout the mountain west, including Idaho and Montana. During this time he studied for his Journeyman Lineman, and "journeyed out" in 1981.

While on a contract job in the Pagosa Springs area, he happened to meet his wife, Suzy, which proved an incentive to secure a job with LPEA, which he did in

November 1989. Tanner has served on the Pagosa line crews since that time, seizing the opportunity to become Foreman when Jerry Wills vacated the position to become Line Superintendent in Archuleta County.

A Working Foreman is one of the four men who make up a hot crew, which works on LPEA's system in the field. Tanner's responsibilities include supervising the crew, ensuring his men know the scope of the job or project, and making sure they're doing it efficiently and most of all safe.

Pagosa office in a new "light"

Walking the talk... LPEA continues to take steps with its own energy efficiency, recently completing a LED lighting retrofit of the lobby and front office area in its Pagosa Springs office.

"The retrofit increased the lumens, throws off a better light in addition to the energy savings," says Project Specialist Ray Pierotti. "The existing lamps and ballast were the old T-12 with magnetic ballasts, which were discontinued as a result of the 2007 Energy and Independence Act."

LPEA invested \$6,615 for labor and materials with Tim Iverson of Pagosa Electrical Service doing the install. After the \$1,261 rebate on the lights, LPEA's investment was \$5,354.

"We will save about 4918 watts with the new lights," says Pierotti. "That's 14,174 kWh, which will reduce LPEA's electric bill by \$1,133.90 annually. Based on that, our payback is 4.72 years, and the life of the bulbs is around 18 years."

Not quite complete, the lighting retrofit of the Pagosa office is scheduled to extend to the warehouse and exterior lighting by the end of the year. To learn more about commercial lighting retrofits and rebates, contact Pierotti at 970.382.7770.



Customer Service Representative Tracy Allen enjoys new "light" while counting change for an LPEA customer.

Photo: Ray Pierotti

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting July 15, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, July 15, 2015, 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 Friday, July 3, 2015, in honor of Independence Day.

Rome Foundation awards scholarships

Two Pagosa Springs students are the recipients of the 2015 Darin Rome Memorial Scholarship for music students. The late Darin Rome was a Lineman and Serviceman for LPEA. Leo Baughman will study music at Fort Lewis College. Johanna Laverty will attend the Berklee College of Music, pursuing a degree in musical performance/music therapy.

2016 Annual Meeting set

LPEA's Annual Meeting will return to the Sky Ute Casino & Resort in Ignacio in 2016. Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 7, 2016, and plan to attend.



From the CEO Prepping a road map with strategic planning

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEA.COOP

For an industry that's been around for more than 100 years, one might think strategic planning would be a pretty straightforward exercise. In reality, because the electric utility industry is going through dramatic change – and we're working hard to keep up with it – the planning process is significantly more challenging.

For example, a number of states have operated a deregulated electricity market for in excess of 10 years. The jury is in on that, deregulation works. What that translates to is that being deregulated opens the electricity market to competition, giving consumers the power to choose their electricity provider in much the same way they choose telephone carriers. Advocates of deregulation say reducing government control of the industry will benefit consumers – lowering prices while expanding services.

In addition, the United States and other countries are looking at nuclear and coal as fuel sources for electricity generation in a new way, and trending

away. Renewable production from wind and solar have declined in costs and are now a major part of some utilities' energy portfolio. Indeed, the industry is beginning to see utility scale application – in other words, renewable generation in multiple megawatts, as opposed to the single digit kilowatt generation we have with small projects like our Community Solar Gardens.

Locally, in Archuleta and La Plata counties, LPEA is seeing interest in a diversified range of distributed generation projects, including geothermal, wood biomass and solar, plus we're hearing some initial discussion about micro-hydro. When we process this and the other issues confronting our industry and our local economy, our strategic planning effort develops some clarity and direction.

Let's start with LPEA's mission. In the past nine months, LPEA's directors and management team explored new and different ideas and mission statements, but did ultimately decide LPEA's current mission appropriately states our purpose and vision - La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

Drilling down, we then developed Areas of Focus for us going forward, which include:

- Technology
- Risk Management

- Power Supply Price, Reliability and Resource Mix
- Energy Efficiency
- Communications

There are several more, and once your Board of Directors finalizes the full plan, we will post the list of LPEA's Areas of Focus at www.lpea.coop, along with the specific strategic objectives for each area. Going forward, at least quarterly the management team and I will report on our progress in each area during LPEA's monthly board meetings, which are the third Wednesday of each month and open to members. We hope you'll be interested in learning more about the strategic direction of your cooperative. Be on the lookout on our website for updates.

The program we're now putting in place allows us to adapt as our circumstances and industry issues change. All of the decisions and commitments we make today must enable us to be flexible in the future.

Even with all of our concentrated work, our strategic planning process and the ultimate areas of strategic focus don't necessarily guarantee success, but it does give us a road map. We'll have a more structured picture for organization of the company, and the strategic planning will help us improve how we perform in serving you, our members. After all, LPEA is your cooperative, and what we're working toward is all about your energy future.

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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.

Board of Directors:
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Michael A. Dreyspring

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.

